



**Cover picture** : Real life French Résistance member Simone Seguin, 18 years old, shown while fighting the Germans during the liberation of Paris on August 20, 1944.

# **SINNER AT WAR**

**A mixed Erotica, Urban Fantasy  
and Historical Fiction novel**

**By Michel Poulin**

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## **WARNING TO POTENTIAL READERS**



**THIS NOVEL IS MEANT STRICTLY FOR ADULT READERS. IT CONTAINS GRAPHIC DESCRIPTIONS OF WAR, VIOLENCE AND SEX, AS WELL AS COARSE LANGUAGE AND CONTROVERSIAL SUBJECTS THAT ARE UNSUITABLE FOR CHILDREN. WHILE THIS NOVEL DEPICTS MANY HISTORICAL PERSONS AND EVENTS FROM THE PAST, THIS IS A WORK OF FICTION AND WORDS OR DEEDS ATTRIBUTED IN IT TO PERSONS WHO EXISTED DO NOT REFLECT HISTORICAL REALITY. THIS NOVEL ALSO DOES NOT REFLECT IN ANY WAY THE RELIGIOUS BELIEFS OF THE AUTHOR, WHO IS AN ATHEIST AND HUMANIST.**

### **ABOUT THIS NOVEL**

This novel is a prequel to the novels ETERNAL SINNER and AMERICAN SINNER and was written more as an urban fantasy and historical fiction novel for adults than as a true erotica story. While this book uses many concepts and terms borrowed from the Dungeons & Dragons Role Playing Game, the author did not follow rigidly the background rules, definitions and descriptions of the D & D game. This story thus cannot be described as being fully 'canon' as per the rules of D & D.

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## **TABLE OF CONTENT**

CHAPTER 1 – OCCUPATION .....	5
CHAPTER 2 – FIRST STEPS TO ORGANIZED RESISTANCE .....	42
CHAPTER 3 – THE PAINS OF RATIONING .....	52
CHAPTER 4 – LIAISON .....	73
CHAPTER 5 – INDIRECT ACTION .....	80
CHAPTER 6 – THE COMMUNISTS JUMP IN.....	95
CHAPTER 7 – THE PARIS COMMANDO .....	110
CHAPTER 8 – THE SS ARE COMING .....	130
CHAPTER 9 – SS DEBACLE .....	149
CHAPTER 10 – PARTNERS IN COMBAT .....	169
CHAPTER 11 – REACTIONS .....	193
CHAPTER 12 – THE AMERICANS ENTER THE WAR.....	201
CHAPTER 13 – NEW OCCUPIERS.....	206
CHAPTER 14 – AN UNEXPECTED TRIP TO GERMANY .....	212
CHAPTER 15 – GUNS’R US.....	239
CHAPTER 16 – FREEDOM IN SIGHT .....	247
CHAPTER 17 – PARIS UPRISING .....	253
CHAPTER 18 – THE ALLIES PUSH FORWARD .....	279
CHAPTER 19 – A TRAGIC LOSS.....	291
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	297

## **CHAPTER 1 – OCCUPATION**

**13:42 (Paris Time)**

**Friday, June 14, 1940**

**Avenue des Champs-Élysées**

**Paris, France**

“Damnés Boches<sup>1</sup>!” Muttered Marie Laurent under her breath as she stood in the front ranks of the French citizens gloomily watching German soldiers parading triumphantly down the Champs-Élysées. While that sight infuriated her and deeply hurt her patriotic feelings, she could understand why French leaders had decided to declare Paris an open city to avoid its destruction. With the recent massive defeat of French, British and Belgian armies at the hands of the Germans north of Paris, what remained of the French Army was now withdrawing to the south of the country and was in no state to effectively defend the capital. Marie loved her city of birth and was thankful that it was not going to be reduced partly to rubble, like Rotterdam, Warsaw and other unfortunate cities of Europe. However, that now left her with a most unpleasant reality to deal with.

“What are we going to do now, Mother?”

The 43 year-old cabaret and brothel owner turned her head to look at Mélanie, her adopted daughter. Mélanie was already a bit taller than her, despite being only thirteen years old. Officially, according to the municipal archives, Mélanie had just turned sixteen, since Marie had lied about the girl’s age when she had officially adopted her in 1932, shortly after finding her abandoned in a dark alley of Paris, naked, crying and distraught. In fact, Mélanie easily looked like she was truly sixteen, having already most feminine curves and being five feet and eight inches tall. She also possessed a nearly surreal beauty and was very mature, even compared to a sixteen year old girl.

“I don’t know yet, Mélanie. It will mostly depend on what the Germans in Paris will do next. Let’s go home: we will be more at ease to talk there.”

Going back to their bicycles, which they had tied with chains and locks to a nearby lamp post, the two of them started pedaling through the sparse vehicle traffic,

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<sup>1</sup> Damnés Boches!: ‘Damned Germans!’ in French slang.

rolling down the Avenue Dutuit and heading towards the Seine River. The French government had already imposed the rationing of gasoline, in order to give priority to the needs of the French Army, thus reducing markedly the normally dense vehicle traffic in downtown Paris. Another factor that had helped empty the streets of Paris was the fact that Parisians had been massively fleeing the city in anticipation of the arrival of the Germans, with more than a million citizens having already fled towards rural areas to the South. Turning left on the Cour de la Reine Street and following the Right Bank of the Seine, the duo then crossed the river at the Pont de la Concorde, one of the numerous bridges linking the Right and Left Banks of the Seine. Once on the Left Bank, the woman and the girl followed the Boulevard Saint-Germain, heading towards the Quartier Latin<sup>2</sup>, in the Sixth Arrondissement, where their cabaret was situated. After about a mile, they turned left on the Rue de Buci, which soon became the Rue St-André-des-Arts, finally arriving at their destination, the Cabaret 'Mille et Une Nuits'<sup>3</sup>, a three storey-high stone building, after passing the corner with Rue Séguier. The duo immediately brought their bicycles inside through a side door, not wanting to see them possibly being stolen if left outside: bicycles were presently in very high demand in Paris, with few being actually available for sale. The graying cleaning lady of the cabaret, Réjeanne Bouvet, saw them come in and hurried to them as they were storing their bicycles in a small storage room next to the side entrance.

“Madame! Madame! Are the Germans really inside Paris now?”

“Unfortunately, yes, my good Réjeanne.” Answered soberly Marie Laurent. “They also look like they are going to stay for a long while indeed.”

“What should we do, Madame?”

“I don’t know yet. However, I know this for sure: I am not going to close my cabaret and flee Paris, like too many have done already. Your job is safe here and you can continue living in your third floor room.”

The cleaning lady nodded her head at that, a bit reassured. Many of the employees of the cabaret, including the eight young women working as dancers and strippers, actually lived in the small rooms of the third floor, eating as a group at the kitchen of the cabaret and brothel.

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<sup>2</sup> Quartier Latin : Latin Quarter. District of Paris in the Sixth Arrondissement, where many big schools and universities are concentrated.

<sup>3</sup> Mille et Une Nuits : One Thousand and One Nights, in French.

"Thank you, Madame Laurent. You are very kind indeed."

"Well, someone has to be kind in this tough world. Are the girls all in at this time?"

"They are, madam!"

"Then, tell them to gather together in the main show lounge."

"Yes, madam!"

As the cleaning lady hurried away, young Mélanie spoke in a low voice to her adoptive mother.

"What do you have in mind, Mother? Do you think that the Germans will allow our cabaret to stay open?"

"Believe me, Mélanie: where there are soldiers, there are brothels. Paris will soon enough be awash in German soldiers and they will most probably install various high-level headquarters in this city. On the other hand, our cabaret has always attracted high-end customers, as it is not some kind of cheap place for quickies, as too many Paris brothels are. I thus fully expect that my establishment will attract many German officers as customers."

"Many of our neighbors could eye that in a bad way, Mother."

"If these hypocrites do, then too bad! I have girls to support, girls who would otherwise be mostly reduced to whoring themselves on the streets of Paris if I closed this place. Beside, where would we go? I don't have a property out in the provinces and I invested too much in this cabaret to close it just because the Germans are in town. We will continue our business as best we can, Mélanie."

"Then, I would like to help you in this, Mother. Up to now, you have insisted on me concentrating solely on my education and on honing my dancing and singing skills. However, I firmly believe that I am fully ready to perform in the cabaret. You know perfectly well that I can do the job...fully!"

Marie Laurent stared in silence at her daughter for a long moment as she weighed her answer to that request. She did know what Mélanie was capable of doing, as she had proved to be no normal girl right from the start, when Marie had discovered her at age five, crying in a dark alley eight years ago. Mélanie had quickly proved to be a near-genius in terms of intellectual capacity and mental performance, absorbing the lessons from her various private tutors at an astonishing speed. Shockingly for Marie at the time, Mélanie also had proved to possess a number of incredible powers, which she had discreetly practiced and improved during the following years, powers that only a



supernatural being could have possessed. The fact was that Mélanie truly was such a being. She also had proved to have a difficult, somehow dark character at first, something that had not surprised Marie once she had learned about the true origin of Mélanie. Marie had since worked hard to mellow her character and make her a nicer girl.

“Very well, Mélanie. If you insist, I will start using you as part of my group of working girls. With your most special abilities, you should make a killing on the floor of the lounge and in the private rooms.”

“Thank you for your comprehension, Mother. I promise you to help you keep your cabaret a prosperous and popular one.”

“That I don’t doubt for a second, Mélanie.” Replied Marie, eyeing the nearly supernatural beauty of her adopted daughter. In truth, Mélanie would probably have been able to become a top fashion model, if not for her tender age at the time. She had been attracting boys around the Quartier Latin like honey for years now and had bedded many of them, discreetly of course, lest the authorities react negatively to such sex between minors. Marie should have been scandalized by that but, considering the true nature of Mélanie, she knew that this was par for the course in Mélanie’s case. If anything, Mélanie probably knew as much about sex and was at least as skilled in the matter as any of the eight working girls employed by Marie in her cabaret cum brothel.

“Well, let’s go to the show lounge, to meet the girls there.”

Going past the kitchen and laundry room, situated in the back section of the cabaret’s ground floor, Marie and Mélanie went to the show lounge, a long and relatively narrow room decorated in the oriental fashion, with Persian carpets, brass-framed furniture, large embroidered cushions and deep red curtains. The room was in fact meant to make the customers feel like they were in some kind of exotic Persian harem. The eight young women who soon started to arrive in the lounge also helped reinforce that exotic feeling, with four of them being of Arabic descent and the four others being either Vietnamese or Chinese. All were young, beautiful and sensual. They were however quite nervous and apprehensive as they sat around the lounge, with Marie standing near the musicians’ alcove at one end and with Mélanie sitting to her right. Réjeanne Bouvet and Stéphanie Morin, the young maid in charge of cleaning the private rooms used by the customers when they went upstairs with a girl, were also present, along with Sylvie Renaudin, the cook of the cabaret, and Paul Dujardin, the doorman

and handyman, both of whom lived on the top floor of the cabaret. The only employees not present in the lounge were Marc Aubut, the barman and wine waiter of the establishment, and three Arab musicians, who lived outside the cabaret. Looking around and smiling reassuringly at her assembled employees, Marie then spoke up in a calm voice.

“Thank you for coming this promptly, my friends. Me and Mélanie just returned from watching German troops parade down the Champs-Élysées. While that sight certainly depressed me, I still intend to continue operating this cabaret, no matter what comes. Your jobs are thus safe, unless the Germans decide to force the closure of our cabaret. Such a forced closure is however most improbable in my opinion. I fully expect the Germans to use Paris as a rest and recreation center for their soldiers in France. Masses of soldiers means lots of young men starving for sex, which in turn means potentially lots of business for us. I know that the idea of entertaining German soldiers may feel wrong and even unpatriotic for many of you, but we still have to earn a living in order to survive.”

“What if our neighbors take that as being treasonous, Madame Laurent?” Asked Paul Dujardin, raising his hand before speaking. Marie gave him a sober look as she responded.

“I am sure that some people around here will think so, but they will also have to adapt themselves to this new reality if they want to survive. I can’t say what exactly the Germans will do around Paris in the coming months, or how badly they will treat French citizens, but my experience during the Great War of 1914-18 tells me that they will probably squeeze our country dry and exploit us as much as they can. Remember how much we made them pay for their aggression after their defeat in 1918, forcing them to pay huge war reparation costs. Well, you can be sure that they will most probably return us the favor once they will have forced our government to capitulate, so expect some lean, tough times ahead.”

Stéphanie Morin, the young maid, then protested.

“Don’t you think that our army can’t push them back once it regroups, madam?” Marie shook her head sadly at those words.

“At the rate the German Army is pushing its way through France? I don’t think so. As much as I would like to see that happen, don’t expect some miraculous military recovery on the part of France.”

“But, we can’t just accept defeat and greet the Germans here as if they are simply new customers, madam.” Objected Paul Dujardin, a solid, 39 year-old man who would most probably have volunteered to join the French Army and fight if not for a limp that had been caused by an accident years ago. Marie gave him an understanding smile, knowing that her doorman was no coward. To everyone’s surprise, including Marie, it was young Mélanie that replied to him, jumping to her feet.

“Who says that we have to accept defeat? We just need to be sensible about it and fight the way we can do best. Let’s accept the Germans as customers in our cabaret! Then, us girls can use our charms to make them feel comfortable and push them to brag aloud about their military exploits. If we are smart and simply listen to them, then we may be able to find in a safe way some of their secrets, secrets that could then help France defeat Germany in the long run. Pillow talk will be our new weapon to defeat those Germans.”

The others looked at each other, stunned at first. Then, smiles appeared around the lounge.

“Pillow talk... That could work! A brilliant idea, Mélanie.” Said Marie. “But the girls are no spies: they could draw suspicions if they start asking questions to our future German guests.”

“I did say to simply listen to them, Mother. When we will know that a particular German may be of interest and is loquacious, then I will make it my business to learn what I can from him.”

While Marie, who knew the kind of mental and magic powers Mélanie had, didn’t object to that, a few of the dancing girls looked at the teenager with shock.

“You want to bed customers, Mélanie?” Objected Aïsha Rahal, the oldest stripper present at the age of 26. “But, you are too young for that!”

“Who says? The age of consent in France is still thirteen, right? Beside, don’t you have girls younger than me that get married in Lebanon, Aïsha?”

“Uh, yes, but...”

“And who else here can speak German perfectly?”

Mélanie’s hypothetical question made more than one person present roll their eyes: Mélanie’s linguistic prowess and incredible intelligence were well known in the cabaret. Mélanie was in fact known to speak, read and write fluently at least four languages: French, English, German and Latin. She had also been heard speaking quite a few more languages, including Arabic, Vietnamese and Cantonese. And that was on top of

assimilating via private lessons and self-learning the equivalent of a college education, all of that in a mere eight years. Not seeing anyone else object to Mélanie's proposal, Marie then raised her voice to attract the attention of the group.

"While I intend to apply Mélanie's suggestion, we will have more pressing priorities for today and tomorrow. In particular, we should stock up on as much storable foodstuff, wine, spirits and other essentials as we could find before there is a rush on shops...or before the Germans empty them. In fact, we should start hoarding things right away. I am thus going to use my hidden reserves of cash to send you shopping around this afternoon. Sylvie, you will take with you four of the girls and will go buy foodstuff in the grocery stores nearby. Concentrate on essentials that can be stored for long periods, like flour, cooking oil, rice, sugar, spices and canned meat and fish. Paul, since Marc is not here, I will ask you to go with four girls to Henri's wine store and buy what you can of good quality wine and spirits, like rum, scotch and liquors. But, please, no vulgar table wine! I have standards to maintain. Me, Mélanie and Stéphanie will go our own way to try to find other essentials. Now, go get shopping bags while I get my money."

Splitting into three groups on departing the cabaret, leaving it under the watch of Réjeanne Bouvet, they scoured various shops and stores around the Quartier Latin, buying what they could of essential items. They were helped in this by the fact that so many Parisian had fled the city in the past few days, thus didn't have to contend with long waiting lineups of eager rival shoppers. However, the stores themselves were already half empty, as the normal supply network for food and civilian goods had been severely disrupted by the war in the last couple of weeks. They also found out that they were not alone in having expected future shortages. Still, the three groups came back to the cabaret with their shopping bags mostly full after a couple hours of searching and buying. Marie felt satisfied as she contemplated what they had bought, now piled on the big table of the kitchen where they used to have meals together.

"Good job, girls and guys! At least, we will now have for a couple of weeks' worth of food supplies in reserve if things get tough. Now, go wash and dress for tonight, girls: while I would be surprised to get any customer tonight, we still should be ready to greet them properly. That means you too, Mélanie: make yourself as beautiful and sexy as you can."

"Uh, could that wait a moment, Mother? I need to discuss something with you."

Marie gave her a worried look but nodded her head once and went with her into the nearby laundry room, closing the door behind them before facing Mélanie.

“Okay, what do you want to speak about, Mélanie?”

“Mother, I believe that I could do much more than simply spy on the Germans through pillow talk. What about stealing weapons, explosives and ammunition? We also could steal fuel from the Germans, or even kill some Germans. You know that, with my powers, that would be quite easy for me to do. What do you think?”

Marie stared at her eager adopted daughter, apprehension clear on her face.

“I know that you could do it, my dear Mélanie. But what about the consequences that would follow?”

“Uh, what consequences, Mother?”

Marie sighed as she remembered some of the worst things she had seen during the Great War of 1914-18.

“Over two decades ago, during the Great War, German troops executed by firing squad unarmed civilians on many occasions, accusing them of being partisans sniping at their soldiers or of spying. There were no summary trials then, only snap executions done on the strength of unproven suspicions. They even shot a British nurse whom they accused of being a spy. So, what do you think that the Germans will do today if we start attacking them physically? My bet is that they will shoot civilian hostages in retaliation.” Seeing that her reply was deflating Mélanie’s enthusiasm, Marie patted gently her right shoulder.

“Hey, I didn’t say that we could not steal from the Germans. I just said that we shouldn’t physically hurt German soldiers, so that they wouldn’t have a pretext to shoot hostages. Stealing from a thief is alright with me, Mélanie. While we are discussing how to resist the Germans, we will also need to find a way to pass to our soldiers the secrets we will eventually extract from our future German guests.”

“I will start thinking about that, Mother.”

“Good! Now, go wash and change!”

As Mélanie walked out of the kitchen to go up to her room, Marie watched her with pride: her adopted daughter may have been a huge anomaly on this Earth and may be a bit scary at times, but she was both brave and resolute.

As Marie had expected, the night was very quiet, with no customer showing up, and with the streets eerily empty, save for one German infantry squad on patrol

marching past the cabaret. Marie, who watched them from behind the pulled shades of a window, did see the squad leader stop long enough to read the freshly made sign in German put in the front window, which said that Germans were welcomed. She was pleased to see the soldiers excitedly discussing the sign for a moment before resuming their patrol around the Quartier Latin: with luck, the word was going to spread like wildfire through the units of the German occupation force.

The next day, Marie and Mélanie went out on their bicycles, but on separate ways, in order to cover more ground. Pedaling calmly through the city, they kept a discreet look for where the Germans were establishing themselves in Paris, watching for concentrations of parked German vehicles and on where Nazi flags were flown from buildings. The flags in particular proved most useful, as the Germans seemed fond of decorating their installations with them. Letting Mélanie wander through the districts, known in French as 'arrondissements' on the Left Bank of the Seine, Marie crossed the Seine via the Pont-Neuf, at the western tip of the Île de la Cité, the main island in the middle of the river on which the Notre-Dame Cathedral stood. Once on the Right Bank, she turned on the Rue de Rivoli and rolled past the Palace of the Louvre, which housed the museum of the same name, then the Gardens of the Tuileries, arriving at the Place de la Concorde after about forty minutes of lazy pedaling. She was rewarded by the sight of numerous locations of potential interest along the Rue de Rivoli, mostly luxury hotels which were apparently being taken over by the Germans, judging from the number of German trucks and staff cars parked in front of those hotels. However, she decided not to tempt her luck and didn't stop to ask questions to passersby, instead continuing on along the Champs-Élysées. In the process, she passed by or through a number of German Army checkpoints and patrols, but those didn't appear to be well organized yet.

*'This may all change very quickly in the next few days, Marie.'* Thought the cabaret owner as she went in succession around the First, Eight, Second, Third and Fourth Arrondissement. She was careful not to scribble notes down, something that could have attracted the suspicions of German soldiers, and relied instead on her good memory. At around noon, she stopped at a small restaurant-terrace bordering the Place de l'Opéra, at the limit of the Second Arrondissement, to rest and eat. She used as well that occasion to discreetly watch the German activity around a nearby building, where a number of trucks were unloading office furniture and dozens of boxes. Marie's attention redoubled when a German officer wearing the uniform of a general arrived by staff car

and was greeted with rigid salutes by the soldiers on guard duty before he entered the building with a retinue of subordinate officers.

*"Hum, that place will definitely need some extra attention in the coming days."*

Taking the time to finish her soup and croissant, Marie then got back on her bicycle and continued her exploration tour of the Right Bank.

On the Left Bank, Mélanie had first pedaled along the shore of the Seine, passing slowly in succession in front of the Hôtel de la Monnaie, the Musée d'Orsay, the Palais Bourbon, which housed the National Assembly, and the Gare des Invalides, before arriving at the northern extremity of the Esplanade des Invalides, a huge park area fronting the no less huge Hôtel des Invalides, built by Emperor Napoleon to house the wounded veterans of his military campaigns and now housing a military museum. Seeing from a distance a large number of German vehicles parked along the walls of the big stone building, whose façade measured a good 600 feet in width, Mélanie decided to investigate them from up close. Following the Avenue du Maréchal Gallieni, which ran down the center of the park area, she was stopped at the entrance of the square in front of the building by three German soldiers manning an improvised checkpoint.

"HALT!"

Obedying at once and putting her feet down on the pavement, Mélanie played the innocent young girl as the Germans eyed her with obvious lust. She then surprised them by speaking in perfect German.

"Is it forbidden to pass here, sir?"

The soldier who was apparently the most senior one answered her in a polite tone.

"Access to the Hôtel des Invalides is now forbidden to French citizens, miss. You will have to go either left or right from here and go around the building. By the way, may I ask you where you learned such good German?"

"I studied German with a private tutor, sir."

"Ach so!" Said the soldier, smiling, while not so discretely eyeing her wide cleavage, which showed much of her firm, sizeable young breasts.

"Does this mean that the museum is closed indefinitely, sir?"

The senior soldier, an obergefreiter, or master-corporal, nodded his head.

"Yes! It is now occupied by headquarter units of the German Army. The nearby French Army school is also out of bounds to French citizens, as it is being turned into caserns for us. You would do well not to try to enter either places, girl."

“Thank you for the advice and warning, sir. Bye!”

Mélanie then turned her bicycle to her left and pedaled down the nearby Rue de Grenelle, watched by the three German soldiers.

“Himmel, what I would give to offer myself such a juicy girl!” Said in a low voice the master-corporal, making the two other soldiers with him nod in agreement.

Still resolved to have a better look at the Hôtel des Invalides and at the École Militaire<sup>4</sup>, Mélanie rolled down the Rue de Grenelle for a few hundred feet, then turned right on the Rue Vaneau, followed soon by another right turn, this time on the Rue de Babylone. She stopped for a moment at the corner with the Boulevard des Invalides to detail her surroundings and decide how to proceed next. The southern façade of the Hôtel des Invalides was now visible nearby, to her right, while the upper levels of the École Militaire were in sight ahead of her, across from three street blocks. While German sentry posts and roadblocks guarded the southern façade of the Hôtel des Invalides, she could not see German checkpoints in the direction of the École Militaire, so she started rolling again, turning left, then right, to get on the Avenue Duquesne, which led to the École Militaire and then ran alongside its northeastern façade. She had visited the École Militaire once in the past with Marie, as part of a guided tour, while she had visited two times the military museum in the Hôtel des Invalides. Both places were huge, with many interconnecting wings and with extensive sub-basement levels that connected with the Paris sewer system, which itself connected with the network of abandoned subterranean quarries and catacombs lying under Paris. For someone like her, getting inside either place at night, either via underground passages or by using her power to teleport, should prove easy. However, she needed to know more about how the Germans were going to use those buildings, particularly concerning where they would store their reserves of weapons and ammunition. With so many German soldiers now occupying both places, they were bound to keep at the least some ammunition reserves and weapon storage rooms in location. Those could in turn potentially become a rich pilfering ground for Mélanie, in order to arm future resistance groups in Paris.

She encountered the first German checkpoint at the crossing of Avenue Duquesne and Avenue de Lowendal, near the southeast entrance gate, which was itself

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<sup>4</sup> École Militaire : French military academy for future officers in Paris.



guarded by no less than nine soldiers. The four German soldiers manning the checkpoint didn't point their weapons at her as she slowed down and braked her bicycle to a stop at the level of the sand-bagged sentry post, a positive point by itself. She thus smiled to the soldiers, speaking to them in German.

"Hello! I was heading towards the Eiffel Tower. Am I allowed to pass and continue along the Avenue de la Bourdonnais, sir?"

The German soldier nearest to her gave her a questioning look, apparently not knowing where the Avenue de la Bourdonnais was. Mélanie, still smiling, pointed down the avenue past the checkpoint.

"That's Avenue de la Bourdonnais, sir."

"Oh! I didn't know! My unit arrived in Paris only this morning, so we are not familiar yet with the place."

"You should love Paris, sir: it is the city of love and is full of history."

"We were certainly hoping so, miss." Said the soldier, getting into a happy, easy mood, thanks partly to Mélanie's power to charm people. "Uh, normally, you would need to do a wide detour, but you are obviously no threat to us. You may pass this time, but I will ask you to take another route next time."

"Thank you! Oh, while we are talking about Paris as the city of love, let me give you the address of the erotic cabaret where I work, in the Sixth Arrondissement."

"You work in an erotic cabaret, miss? As a waitress?" Nearly shouted the soldier, not believing his luck, as his three comrades started listening very closely. Mélanie gave them a malicious smile.

"Me, a simple waitress? Hell no! I am one of the strip dancers and hostesses at the 'Mille et Une Nuits'. Uh, would you have a pen and paper, by chance?"

The soldiers nearly raced each other to produce something to write on and give it to Mélanie, who then wrote a few lines, plus did a simplified sketch map of where the cabaret was before handing back the pencil and piece of paper to the German soldier.

"Here you are, sir. The cabaret is a bit pricey, but the shows are top quality and so are the girls. By the way, German soldiers are welcome at the 'Mille et Une Nuits'."

"Do the other girls look as nice as you, miss?" Asked another of the four soldiers. In response, Mélanie briefly pulled up her blouse, making her firm breasts pop in the open and also making the Germans' eyes pop wide open.

"They are all very nice, but they still can't beat my tits. Well, see you soon, I hope!"

She then pedaled away past the checkpoint, leaving behind four drooling German soldiers staring at her firm, well-shaped bum. One of the soldiers borrowed the piece of paper from his comrade and read the information on it before looking at the others.

“Do you think that our officer will let us go visit that place, Heinrich?”

“Hell, Dietrich, Leutnant Mackessen is liable to run first to that cabaret once he learns about it!”

While she wasn't able to enter the grounds of the École Militaire proper, Mélanie passed by enough German soldiers and vehicles while rolling past the northeast perimeter of the complex to become convinced that at least a few thousand German soldiers were in the process of moving in to take quarters inside the École Militaire. Most of the troops were in fact busy unloading tons of supplies and equipment from parked trucks, then bringing those items inside. There were as well dozens of horses being led to the stables of the complex after being unhooked from their various wagons and limbers. She was particularly interested by the sight of a group of parked truck waiting to get inside the crowded parking lots, to be unloaded there: they wore warning panels advertizing them as carrying explosives or ammunition. Now certain that there was going to be something worthy of stealing here, Mélanie continued her lazy pedaling towards the Eiffel Tower, situated at the end of the long park of the Champs de Mars, next to the Seine River.

It was mid-afternoon by the time that Mélanie arrived back at the cabaret, finding out that Marie was still not back. Fervently hoping that her adoptive mother had not run into some kind of trouble, she took a quick sponge bath and changed into fresh clothes before starting to write down the things she had noticed during her meandering trip by bicycle. She had time to finish writing her notes before Marie finally returned, tired by her long outing.

“Oooh, my poor back! I am getting a bit old for this much pedaling around. So, did you see anything of interest, Mélanie?”

“Plenty, Mother!” Replied the teenager before showing her the notes she had just completed and describing in detail what she had seen and heard. Marie nodded her head, quite satisfied.

“Not bad for a first excursion through town. I myself saw what appeared to be numerous German headquarters being established in luxury hotels, mostly in the First

and Second Arrondissement. A couple more days of this and we should end up having a fair idea of what the German deployment in Paris looks like.”

“Agreed, Mother! Uh, by the way, we may possibly get some German visitors tonight: I gave the address of our cabaret to a few Germans near the École Militaire.”

While surprised by that, Marie didn’t get angry at her, apparently approving of it.

“Well, we sure could use some paying customers here: they have been quite rare in the last few days. You still want to perform in the lounge...and in the private rooms, my dear daughter?”

“We attract flies with honey, not vinegar, Mother.” Replied Mélanie, a malicious smile on her face. “By the way, if we get few or no customers tonight, then I will go infiltrate the École Militaire via the underground, to start exploring the German installations there.”

“Oh dear! Don’t you think that is unnecessarily dangerous, Mélanie?”

“Come on, Mother! You know what I can do and what kind of powers I possess. The Germans will be lucky to even see my shadow. Besides, what best source of weapons, ammunition and explosives could we find in Paris but German caserns?”

“Hum, I hope that you are right, Mélanie. Very well, I will go wash and change myself before checking our preparations for our eventual customers.”

As Marie had expected, no French customer showed up that evening, the streets becoming eerily quiet as the Sun went down. However, at a bit past eight o’clock, three German military vehicles screeched to a halt along the façade of the cabaret. Out of the two VW Kubelwagen<sup>5</sup> and one Krupp light truck came five German officers and four soldiers, with three more soldiers staying inside the vehicles. Watched by the fearful eyes of the neighbors of the cabaret, the officers then entered the ‘Mille et Une Nuits’, while the four soldiers took positions on each side of the main entrance, rifles at the ready. Paul Dujardin, the doorman, barely had time to shout a warning to Marie Laurent before the German officers marched inside the vestibule of the cabaret. Marie, nearly running to greet them, stopped in front of the first German, giving him a wide welcoming smile and speaking in her limited German.

“Welcome to the ‘Mille et Une Nuits’, gentlemen! I am Marie Laurent, the owner and manager of this cabaret.”

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<sup>5</sup> Volkswagen Kubelwagen : Military variant of the celebrated Volkswagen Beetle.

To her surprise and relief, the German facing her, a medium-built but fit man in his early thirties with black hair, replied to her in a most decent French while bowing politely to Marie.

“And I am Hauptmann<sup>6</sup> Herman Kummersbach. One of my men informed me this morning about your cabaret and I decided to come with my subalterns and visit your establishment. Before we go further, do you accept Reichmarks? I am afraid that our unit’s paymaster has not had time to get some French Francs yet.”

“Uh, will I be allowed later on to go exchange those Reichmarks for Francs, sir?”

“Of course! After all, we will be controlling the local government. However, if any problem arises, just inform me about it and I will send you my pay officer, who will then effect the exchange. So, how much is the entrance fee, Madame Laurent?”

“The individual entrance fee is forty Francs, sir. Then, if you or any of your officers wish to go upstairs for some private time with one of my girls, it will be subject to an additional fee.”

“That was already understood by us, madam. Here is my entrance fee.”

Marie took the two one Reichmark banknotes and examined them for a second before looking back up at Kummersbach.

“Uh, how much is the exchange rate between the Reichmark and the French Franc, Hauptmann?”

“As per official German policy, the Reichmark’s value is set at twenty French Francs. This will apply everywhere in France, so don’t accept less when exchanging your Reichmarks. Those who will refuse them or will underpay for them will get in trouble with us.”

“I see!” Said Marie, who was just reminded that this polite gentleman was still an occupier. “Well, if you will follow me into the show lounge and make yourselves comfortable.”

“With pleasure, Madame Laurent.”

The five German officers evidently liked at once the exotic décor of the show lounge, with its Persian carpets, embroidered cushions and drapes and comfortable couches. Once they were sitting, Marie asked another question to Kummersbach.

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<sup>6</sup> Hauptmann : German officer rank equivalent to Captain.

"Do all your officers speak French, or should I call in my daughter, who speaks perfect German?"

"Good for her!" Said Kummersbach, pleased. "You certainly make your place most welcome to us up to now, Madame Laurent."

"Wait until my girls start entertaining you and your officers, my good hauptmann. MÉLANIE, PLEASE COME TO THE LOUNGE!"

The eyes of the five Germans turned at once on Mélanie when she stepped in the lounge, coming from behind the musicians alcove, where three men in Arabic outfits already sat with instruments at the ready. The Germans immediately held their collective breaths as Mélanie, dressed in a vaporous harem dancer's outfit worthy of the 'Arabian Nights', walked in and nearly glided quietly to a position in front of the Germans before bowing low and speaking in German.

"Good evening, gentlemen! I am Mélanie Laurent, at your service."

While she bowed, the loose and wide cleavage of her semi-transparent top gave to the Germans a good view of her young, firm breasts, making them stare with lust at her.

"Thank you, miss. Do you by chance perform at this cabaret, on top of playing host?" Asked Kummersbach, hopeful. Mélanie straightened up and grinned to him.

"I am available to satisfy your fantasies to the utmost, sir."

"Excellent! We are truly looking forward to the show."

"Would the gentlemen like something to drink before the first dance?"

"That would be nice! What do you have available?"

"Our cellar is still fairly well stocked, sir. Our Maître D' will bring you our wine and spirits card."

She then looked towards the rear door of the lounge, where Marc Aubut stood waiting with wine cards and menus under one arm, and signaled him to approach. The small, frail gay man, wearing a tuxedo, came at once and distributed his cards and menus, which contained hastily written translations in German, with the prices of various sexual services also discreetly included at the last page. Aubut, who spoke a fair German thanks to his extensive experience in various hotels before the war, took the officers' orders, then disappeared just before the first dancer appeared. Marie announced the dancer as the petite, delicate and most beautiful young Oriental girl came forward, dancing on the music of the three Arab musicians.

"Gentlemen, I present you young and beautiful Hien, from Indochina."

Watched by the captivated Germans, Hien started a slow, gracious dance, making her Oriental outfit flow smoothly around her. It was not long before she started shedding parts of her outfit while still dancing. Lieutenant<sup>7</sup> Karl Mackessen, a tall, blond, blue eyes and handsome young man, couldn't help softly exclaim himself when Hien shed off her top, revealing a pair of small but firm breasts.

"Mein Gott! My loins are on fire!"

"Welcome to the club, Karl!" Replied Leutnant Michel Weissmann, sitting next to him and devouring Hien with his eyes. The petite Vietnamese soon ended up with nothing on but a small G-string and started dancing very close to the Germans, repeatedly offering parts of her body to their eager hands. Then, just after Marc Aubut had served to the Germans the drinks they had ordered, Hien shed her G-string, revealing her closely shaved groin and making the Germans suck in their breath. Going from one officer to the next, she danced very close in front of them while giving them inviting smiles.

"Who wants me?" She said in French, prompting Kummersbach to answer at once.

"Rank has its privileges, miss. I will gladly go upstairs with you."

Hien smiled to him and took one of his hands, making him get up from his couch. With Mélanie taking care of gathering her pieces of clothing lying around the lounge, Hien then disappeared with the German captain via a decorated staircase leading to the upper floor.

The four remaining German officers barely had time to take a sip from their drinks before a second dancer appeared. This time, it was an Arabic woman in her mid twenties wearing a belly dancer's outfit.

"Gentlemen, Aïsha Rahal, from Lebanon, at your service." Announced out loud Marie, who was sitting in a corner near the entrance. With her wide hips and large breasts, Aïsha started dancing close to the Germans, making her abdominal muscles move to the rhythm of the Arabic music. Soon shedding her top and exposing her large, firm breasts, she then went down the line of German officers, bending forward and letting them have a lick or two at her nipples. The four remaining Germans soon built up a second erection as she progressively stripped. This time, it was Leutnant Bruno

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<sup>7</sup> Leutnant : German rank for a junior lieutenant.

Dortmunder who asked for her favors at the end of her strip dance and went upstairs with her.

The three remaining officers, now quite hot under the collar and having ordered fresh drinks, were wondering who would dance next when Marie spoke out loud.

“Gentlemen, please greet the young and beautiful Mélanie!”

The Germans enthusiastically clapped their hands as Mélanie, still wearing her harem outfit, came forward, hypnotizing them at once with her nearly impossible beauty. Dancing slowly at first and showing great suppleness and grace, Mélanie accelerated the rhythm of her dance as the musicians raised the tempo of their music, while shedding progressively her clothes. Soon, she was stark naked, revealing her baby-smooth groin and making the Germans drool as she rubbed herself in turn against each of the three Germans. Finally, Karl Mackessen, unable to resist longer, grabbed her by the waist and made her sit in his lap.

“Himmel, you would make any man mad with desire, girl. Could we go upstairs together now?”

“Why not, my handsome man?” She purred. Karl got up at once with her and went up the stairs to the upper floor with indecent haste, leaving his two remaining comrades in the hands of Sung Li, from Canton. Mélanie guided Karl to one of the small bedrooms reserved for the clients who wanted to sample further the charms of the cabaret’s dancers, closing the door behind her and then going to the German to start undressing him. She kissed him with her open mouth after removing his jacket and tie, inserting her tongue inside his mouth. While Karl eagerly kissed her while fondling her naked body, Mélanie made a ‘Suggestion’ spell before speaking softly.

“You can tell me anything, Karl: I am trustworthy.”

The German, who had already succumbed to her supernatural charm, simply nodded his head at that, letting Mélanie finish to undress him. She playfully used one finger to make his rock-hard, fully erect penis wobble.

“I see that the German Army is at full strength and ready to thrust forward. It however should conduct a proper close-in reconnaissance of the enemy before attacking.”

Amused by her use of military terms, Karl got in the game with her and started licking and fondling her breasts.

“You are right: we should get a good view and feel of the enemy positions first.”

"May I suggest a good preliminary preparation of the terrain after the reconnaissance phase?"

"Right again, my sweet Mélanie." Said Karl before kneeling in front of her and starting to lick her clitoris, making her moan with pleasure. After a good minute of tongue work, Karl then gently pushed her on top of the bed and opened her legs.

"Time for the main attack!"

He closed his eyes from the ecstasy as he slowly slipped his penis inside her vagina, then started pumping in and out of her. Mélanie grinned to him as he was exerting himself.

"You do realize that you are now surrounded on all sides. Time for the French counter-attack to collapse the German forward element."

She then added her own grinding movement, timing it with his thrusts in order to enhance the waves of pleasure they were feeling. Seeing that Karl was about to get to orgasm before her, Mélanie pinched the base of his penis to prevent him from ejaculating, all the while continuing her grinding motion. His face now red and sweating from the effort while his penis sent waves after waves of pleasure sensations to his brain, he nearly roared when she attained orgasm and finally let go his penis, making him explode inside her. Panting, he collapsed beside her on the bed, spent but happy. Mélanie was however not finished with him. Getting on top of him, she took a half-sitting position on his belly, making her breasts hang just above his face.

"Let's stay comfortably together for a while longer, Karl. So, what did you do today?"

His mind obscured by her 'Suggestion' spell and being in a near hypnotic trance, Karl replied in a near zombie-like voice.

"My company was busy taking its new quarters in the French École Militaire. We had to move tons of things in, while also moving a few things around."

"Are there reserves of weapons and ammunition inside the École Militaire?"

"Yes! The French left behind their own reserves of weapons and ammunition, so we had to take these out of the school's armory before we could store our own reserves inside."

"Where did you put those French weapons and ammunition reserves?"

"We piled the French weapons and ammunition down in the basement of the old barracks in the southeast corner of the school, which were originally used to quarantine



sick soldiers. We intend to make a proper inventory of them in a few days, when we get the time to do so.”

“And what about German weapons and ammunition?”

“The individual weapons and ready ammunition are locked in lockers inside each barrack block, but our extra reserves are now in the old French armory, in the storage building at the southwest corner of the school, near Place de Fontenoy.”

Now having the information she needed, Mélanie changed the subject, so that Karl would not remember having spoken about arms and ammunition.

“How about a second round of combat, Karl? You feel up to a second attempt against me? I can help you revive your dick.”

“Hell yes!” Said at once the German. Going first to a wash basin containing some water and a sponge, she cleaned her groin and vagina first, then cleaned Karl’s penis as it grew again. Licking and fondling his penis, she then mounted it once it was fully erect and started rocking back and forth on top of the German, making him groan with renewed pleasure. This time, she let him come in his own time, not wanting to spend too much time with only one German officer. After all, the other Germans could well possess more additional information. After attaining orgasm for a second time, Karl kissed Mélanie passionately while fondling her body one last time.

“You were truly fantastic, Mélanie! Thank you!”

He then went to his clothes and took his wallet out of one pocket, extracting two five Reichmark banknotes and handing them to her.

“For exceptional services rendered, my lovely Mélanie. Be assured that you will see me again in your cabaret in the next few days and weeks.”

Mélanie happily took the money, which actually represented twice the standard price for a sex session, and gave a last kiss to Karl.

“And you certainly proved that the German Army body is strong and vigorous.”

He briefly laughed at that and finished dressing back up as Mélanie left the room with her clothes and money in her hands.

Going back down the show lounge by the decorated staircase. Karl found Hauptmann Kummersbach already back, along with Bruno Dortmunder and Hugo Marburg. His superior gave him a questioning smile as he sat down on a nearby couch to watch the strip dance done by a petite, brown-skinned Oriental girl.

“You took your sweat time, Mackessen. How was your girl?”

"That teenage Mélanie is pure dynamite in bed, Herr Hauptmann. I went at it twice, to do honors to the German arms. And how was your Oriental girl?"

"She was like a true flower: beautiful to the eyes and delightful to the smell and touch. I highly recommend her."

"I may just try her, sir. But you really should try that Mélanie: she is the best I ever tasted."

Kummersbach made a show of looking impressed by his declaration.

"You, the stallion of the regiment, find her the best ever? Mein Gott, I will definitely try her...once I have recuperated from my first encounter."

"Well, I will definitely promote this cabaret to the other junior officers of our unit: it is a truly high-class establishment and the prices are quite reasonable, in view of the quality of the girls and of the shows."

"Agreed! I will personally talk to Major Folkenstadt about this cabaret tomorrow. Maybe we should have it serve strictly German officers: that would make the place safer for our use."

Karl nodded his head at that: most German soldiers and officers assigned to garrison duty were worried about the possibility of acts of sabotage or assassinations by die-hard Frenchmen. Fighting was still hard south of Paris and the French Army had yet to surrender. He however decided to forget that for the moment and concentrated back on the stripping girl.

Karl was the first to go up with a second girl, taking young Hien Min Wa with him upstairs. He was followed by Kummersbach, who eagerly followed Mélanie upstairs, coming down utterly spent after some forty minutes and falling down on a couch next to a grinning Oberleutnant<sup>8</sup> Hugo Marburg.

"Mein Gott! Mackessen didn't exaggerate one bit: that young Mélanie is a true bombshell!"

"The girls are certainly great here, Herr Hauptmann. This is a great way to relieve all that accumulated stress from fighting."

"And the men definitely need such a relief. Thinking of it, go tell our men outside that they can come in two separate groups, so that they can watch a few dances.

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<sup>8</sup> Oberleutnant : German rank for a senior lieutenant.

However, make them understand that they can't go up with a girl: they will have to only watch."

"I am sure that they will greatly appreciate even that, Herr Hauptmann."

Hugo Marburg thus went out to speak with his seven soldiers, selecting four of them to go in first and staying outside with the remaining three to help watch the vehicles and the cabaret's entrance.

The four soldiers who went inside first opened their eyes wide when they saw the beautiful and exotic girl dancing half naked around the lounge. Eagerly paying their entrance fee to Marie Laurent, they then went to sit on couches opposite those used by their officers. While they were told that they couldn't go upstairs to bed a girl, just the visual show made wonders to change their minds from the recent, bitterly fought battles with the French Army. They got even more than they hoped for when Mélanie and Sung Li started a lascivious dance together, stripping each other while caressing and kissing the other and making all the Germans present watch in captivated silence. The two girls then made things even better when they went to rub their naked bodies against the ecstatic soldiers at the end of their dance, letting the Germans' hands roam all over their bodies while two other girls took care of the officers. After a too short half hour, the four soldiers had to regretfully go out and switch places with the three soldiers outside.

The Germans finally left the cabaret just before midnight, plenty content and with the officers half-drunk. Marie put up the 'Closed' sign on the entrance door, then went to count with satisfaction the pile of Reichmarks left by the visitors. As for the dancing girls, they all had received sizeable tips from the Germans, so the initial fears about how German customers would behave had now evaporated. Marie however became both surprised and worried when she saw that Mélanie had changed into a set of dark, loose-fitting trousers and sweater. Going to her, Marie led her to a corner and spoke to her in a low voice.

"You still want to go out tonight, Mélanie?"

"Yes, Mother!" Replied her adopted daughter, her tone firm, while looking straight into her eyes. "One of the officers told me where I could find the weapons and ammunition left by the French Army inside the École Militaire and I want to grab what I can before they can do a proper inventory of them. Don't worry about me: I will be alright."

“Still, be careful, Mélanie.”

Before Marie could say more, her daughter vanished in the blink of an eye from the spot she stood on. The cabaret owner looked down silently at that spot, reflecting mentally on the amazing powers possessed by the young demon girl she had rescued and adopted eight years ago.

**00:33 (Paris Time)**

**Sunday, June 16, 1940**

**Rue d’Estrée, near the Place de Fontenoy**

**Southeast corner of the perimeter of the École Militaire**

Mélanie reappeared behind a tree planted within sight of the southeast entrance gate of the École Militaire, having instantly teleported from the cabaret. As a Succubus, a demon of seduction whose birth name was Delicia, she had the innate power to teleport to and from locations she had seen before or had a good description of, and this at will and without error. Since she had passed by the École Militaire many times in the past and had even visited it once, getting to where she was now had been no problem for her. Seeing at least four German sentries guarding the main gate on Avenue de Lowendal, plus four street checkpoints blocking access to the portion of the avenue running along the southeast perimeter wall of the complex, she decided to take it safe and cloaked herself by switching on her power of invisibility before leaving the cover of her tree and crossing the avenue. Unseen by the German sentries, she got to the stone perimeter wall at a point about 300 feet to the right of the main gate. A number of old buildings were situated along the opposite side of the wall, level with her, plus she could see a long barrack building further along the wall, next to the corner with Avenue Duquesne. Uttering a ‘Spider Climb’ spell, Mélanie quickly climbed the perimeter wall the way a spider would do, then climbed down on the other side, setting foot in a large, empty yard lined with storage buildings. Still invisible and seeing no Germans, she started visiting the various storage buildings, just in case they contained some weapons or ammunition. They didn’t, but they did contain something of great potential value for her and other Parisians: drums and jerrycans full of gasoline, plus drums and cans of lubricating oil and grease. She also found a number of portable manual pumps and rubber hoses with spouts used to transfer fuel into vehicles. Memorizing first the spot she was now at inside the biggest storage building, she then used a door at one end of

the building that communicated with the adjacent barracks. She froze at once on entering the long central hallway of the barrack block: it was fully illuminated, with the overhead lamps switched on. Mélanie then saw the two German soldiers standing guard near a staircase in the center of the building. That convinced her at once that she had found the right place to get at the reserves of French Army weapons: the Germans would not post sentries at night to guard unimportant equipment or installations. Still invisible, she cautiously advanced towards the guards, doing as little noise as possible. Thankfully the two Germans, apparently bored to death by their routine duty, were chatting together, something that helped cover the few weak sounds made by her steps. One of the guards then took a few steps aside to light a cigarette, allowing Mélanie to pass between them and start going down the flight of stairs going to the basement level. Another couple of minutes and she was safely setting foot in another long hallway, this one kept in darkness. That was however no obstacle to her. By basic necessity, every demon possessed the ability to see in the dark, since many levels and corners of the Abyss were either obscure or poorly illuminated. Right now, even without any light on at her present location, she could see perfectly up to a radius of sixty feet, albeit in black and white only. Deciding to explore first the rooms down to her left, Mélanie entered the first room she encountered, pushing open the large wooden door. She found herself in a large, long room made of stone masonry, with twin rows of massive arched pillars supporting the weight of the building above. There was no furniture in the room and the place smelled of molds and humidity, but there were piles of wooden crates and boxes lining the walls of the room. Her heart now beating faster from anticipation and hope, Mélanie approached the nearest pile of boxes and read the French inscriptions painted on them.

“Cartridges, 8 X 50mm R Lebel, quantity: 5,000...”

Mélanie didn't know much about firearms, having used a shotgun only twice while hunting rabbits with her mother at an uncle's farm. However, the doorman of the 'Mille et Une Nuits', Paul Dujardin, had served as a conscript with the French Army before the war and, being a naturally curious girl, Mélanie had asked him about firearms, a category of weapons unseen in the Abyss. While no expert on firearms, she knew enough now to know that she was going to need to make sure to grab four kinds of things if she wanted to create a clandestine arsenal of weapons meant to resist the Germans in the future: the weapons themselves; bolts in the case of rifles and automatic weapons or barrels in the case of pistol; detachable magazines for pistols and automatic

weapons; finally, lots of ammunition of the correct caliber and type. What she was now looking at was a crate of bullets meant for Lebel rifles, the main type of rifle that had equipped the French Army during the War of 1914-18. That pile and the other piles down the same wall actually consisted solely of crates of 8 X 50mm R cartridges totaling at least half a million such rounds. Going to the piles of crates lining the opposite wall of the room, she saw that they were crates of another rifle caliber, 7.5 X 54mm. She estimated the total for that caliber stored in the room to be at least 300,000 rounds. Two other separate piles of crates proved to be pistol ammunition, in either 7.65mm Longue or .38 ACP caliber. Mélanie smiled as she visually embraced the various piles of crates stored in the room: if she could find the appropriate weapons to go with those particular calibers and types of ammunition, then she would have enough reserves to supply hundreds of men for weeks of intensive fighting. A much smaller pile compared to the others then attracted her attention. Situated next to the access door, it proved to be made of a dozen cardboard boxes, each containing fifty small tin cans of lubricating oil for firearms. Quite satisfied by now, Mélanie exited the storage room and went to the next door down the hallway. That room also contained piles of crates, but not in the same impressive quantity as in the first room. Still, she could count a few thousand crates, all apparently of the same type. Going to the nearest pile, her heart jumped up in her chest on reading the French inscriptions on the top crate.

“Grenade, fragmentation, Modèle F-1, quantity: 24. By the Lords of Hell, this is something I really could use in this war!”

Reviewing quickly at random other crates around the storage room, she felt her head nearly spin from the exhilaration she now felt: they were all crates of grenades, with at least 1,500,000 grenades stored in this room alone. Just to play it safe, she forced open one of the crates and looked inside it: it contained four steel boxes with handles, each box containing six grenades held in cardboard tubes. Taking one grenade out of its tube, Mélanie saw that it was fitted with its fuse and arming lever. The other grenades in that crate also proved to be ready for use. Grinning from ear to ear, Mélanie closed back the crate and exited the room, going to a third one. That room had only a few dozen crates inside it, but their content proved plenty satisfying: There were crates full of blocks of TNT explosives, while other crates and metal boxes proved to contain an assortment of detonators, fuses, spools of electrical wires, plungers and slow-burning wicks.

The fourth storage room in the left wing proved empty, as was the fifth and last one, so Mélanie backtracked and started exploring the rooms of the right wing. She hit at once what was the equivalent of a treasure for her, as she found in the first room dozens of wooden crates containing a mix of two different models of pistol and of one model of submachine gun. She also found in separate boxes the pistol barrels and breach blocks that went with those weapons, plus more boxes full of empty spare magazines. Her happiness at making that particular find was increased further when she visited the three next storage rooms, finding in them hundreds of 8mm and 7.5mm rifles and carbines, plus forty FM 24/29 7.5mm light machine guns, along with boxes and boxes of empty spare magazines for the light machine guns. There were even boxes full of individual weapon cleaning kits, plus canvas ammunition carrying pouches and bandoleers. As she calmed herself down, Mélanie thought about where she was going to bring her loot and how much of what kind of weapon and ammunition she would take tonight, for starters. An ideal popped nearly at once in her mind as she thought the problem over. During her eight years spent growing up and getting educated in Paris, Mélanie had found a fascinating playground for herself: the extensive network of underground tunnels and caves that had been dug for centuries under Paris. By using her powers as a Succubus, she had been able to access and explore many passages and subterranean rooms that were difficult of access for Humans. In particular, she had found that the basement of Marie's cabaret was situated above an ancient subterranean rotunda, which communicated with the basement of the cabaret via a well hidden tunnel. That old rotunda was going to be perfect for her use as a secret armory.

Now that she knew where to bring her selected weapons and ammunition, Mélanie thought over what kind of weapons and how many she wanted to carry away. The easy answer would have been 'all of it', but that would prove a stupid mistake on her part, as the Germans would quickly notice such a wholesale disappearance of captured weapons and ammunition. She was thus going to have to be reasonable and take only small quantities that would not be noticed at first glance without a thorough inventory. What Leutnant Mackessen had told her about an incoming inventory to be done of the French weapons then came back to her mind and she decided to take a fair quantity of weapons now, before the Germans could conduct their check. Organizing her priorities in her mind first, Mélanie then grabbed a long, heavy wooden crate containing two FM 24/29 light machine guns and held it at the vertical close to her body. With a single

thought, she then teleported to the subterranean rotunda under the cabaret with her crate of machine guns. Taking the time to properly line up the crate against one wall, she then jumped back to the storage room she had left less than two minutes ago and grabbed another machine gun crate, jumping for a second time to the subterranean rotunda. She ended up carrying away six light machine guns, along with boxes containing hundreds of spare magazines, cleaning kits and breach blocks for the weapons. Next, she went back to the room containing the pistols and submachine guns, weapons that would prove especially useful in any clandestine actions against the German occupiers. There, she took a total of eight submachine guns and forty pistols, along with spare magazines, pistol barrels and breach blocks, careful to take crates and boxes from piles hidden behind the front piles of crates. The next weapons to go to the subterranean rotunda were a total of 29 rifles and carbines, with their bolts and cleaning kits. After dozens of teleportation jumps to and from the rotunda, Mélanie was finally ready to start hauling away ammunitions and explosives. This time, in view of the huge quantities she had found, she was able to take much greater quantities without making suspicious dents in the piles of crates, thus grabbed over 50,000 cartridges of various calibers, plus nearly a thousand hand grenades and many crates of TNT and detonators. Her last trips of the night, at around five o'clock in the morning, were used by her to carry away ten jerrycans of precious gasoline.

She was utterly exhausted and quite dirty from her work but also very satisfied with herself by the time that she emerged from the basement of the cabaret to go up to her room and wash and change. Mélanie was naked and busy sponging herself when the door of her room opened, with Marie appearing in her nightshirt, her eyes still blurred with sleep.

“Did you run into any trouble while out, Mélanie?”

“Not at all, Mother!” She replied with a big smile. “Nobody saw me and I was able to grab and bring to the subterranean rotunda under our basement a significant amount of weapons and ammunition that had belonged to the French Army, along with some gasoline. I intend to return again tonight, to grab more stuff before the Germans can conduct a proper inventory.”

Marie took a moment to digest those words before speaking again.

“Well, those weapons will certainly prove useful in the future, but right now the country is still disorganized and we are no military strategists. I thus believe that we



should abstain from armed actions until the picture is clearer and we can find more people willing to resist.”

“That is a reasonable line of action, Mother. I will thus concentrate on acquiring discreetly information on the Germans...after my second night visit to the École Militaire.”

Marie seemed satisfied with that and left, closing the door behind her. Finishing her sponge bath, Mélanie then laid down on her bed to rest for a few hours after her long night of physical labor.

## **14:02 (Paris Time)**

### **Laundry room, ‘Mille et Une Nuits’ cabaret**

Mélanie was helping Stéphanie Morin, the maid in charge of cleaning the rooms used by the customers of the cabaret, in washing bed sheets when an excited Fatimah Kassem burst in the laundry room and shouted at the two girls.

“COME, QUICKLY! RADIO PARIS IS PASSING SOME BIG NEWS!”

Mélanie and Stéphanie didn’t need to be told twice and rushed out the laundry room, following Fatimah to the large combined kitchen and dining room of the cabaret, where they found Marie Laurent and the other employees of the establishment gathered around the radio set sitting on top of a counter. In 1940, radio was the only means available to get news quickly, the only other alternative being to wait for the next morning newspaper.

“What is happening, Mother?”

“Prime Minister Reynaud just announced his resignation. Marshall Pétain, who is replacing him at the head of the government, is about to speak.” Explained quickly Marie to Mélanie before returning her attention to the radio set. While starting to listen as well, Mélanie thought about the implications of that latest piece of news. No good news in terms of French military actions had filtered yet, a sure sign that things were going badly for the French Army. The resignation of the prime minister also meant that the government was in disarray and all but giving up on the situation. As for Marshall Philippe Pétain, a widely admired hero of the First World War, his taking charge of the government was possibly one reason to keep some hopes. Those hopes were however dashed quickly as the old soldier spoke in a tone that presaged more bad news to come. Marie did a double take on hearing one particular part of Pétain’s speech.

"The French Third Republic is dissolved? And what is that new 'French State' going to be like? I don't like this at all!"

There were however more news following the Marshall's speech, with an announcer saying that a new ministry was being created on orders from Pétain and the Germans, in order to organize and administer a future rationing program. The men and women assembled around the radio looked gloomily at each other as the news program concluded.

"Rationing?" Said in a downcast voice Sylvie Renaudin, the 45 year-old cook of the cabaret. "I had to live through rationing during the past war and it was no fun. Black marketeering and corruption is sure to play havoc with any fair distribution of food. I can bet that all the food shops will be emptied by the end of this day after this announcement: people are going to rush to buy what they can before this rationing program is started."

"You're unfortunately right about that, Sylvie." Said Marie. "Thankfully, we already bought sizeable reserves of food on Friday which will sustain us for a week or two. After that, we will see."

The rest of the group didn't speak up after her, too preoccupied by what the future had in store for them. Except for Mélanie, who simply twisted her head, they collectively jumped nervously when someone knocked loudly on the front door of the cabaret.

"I'll get it!" Said Mélanie, who then walked quickly out of the kitchen and through the show lounge to get at the main door. She however felt some anxiety when she saw through the window of the vestibule that her visitors were Germans...armed Germans. Taking a deep breath to compose herself first, she then unlocked and opened the door, coming face to face with a German officer with some gray hair. She relaxed a bit when she recognized a smiling Hauptmann Herman Kummersbach as part of the group of officers and soldiers accompanying the leading visitor.

"Welcome to the 'Mille et Une Nuits' cabaret, sir. What can I do for you?" She said politely in German, making the senior officer nod once his head.

"Good afternoon, miss. I am Major Hans Folkenstadt and I came to bring some news to the manager of this cabaret."

"That would be my mother, Marie Laurent, sir. Please come in and make yourself comfortable in the show lounge while I go get her."

"Thank you, miss." Replied Folkenstadt, who then entered with four officers and two soldiers armed with submachine guns. The two soldiers then took position at the

entrance to the show lounge while the officers sat down on the various couches and chairs, looking around and commenting on the exotic decoration of the room. Mélanie nearly collided with her mother when the latter emerged from the back room of the lounge.

“What is it, Mélanie?”

“Germans officers are here, supposedly to give us some news. They are led by a Major Hans Folkenstadt.”

“Very well! Could you stay with me to act as translator? My German is so limited.”

“Of course, Mother!”

Returning together in the show lounge, Marie stopped in front of Folkenstadt, while Mélanie stood slightly back and to her left, ready to translate. Marie then used her best German to present herself.

“Welcome to the ‘Mille et Une Nuits’, Major. I am Marie Laurent, owner and manager of this cabaret.”

Folkenstadt, who had got up on his feet when she entered, took her right hand and gallantly kissed it in the old Prussian fashion, then spoke in good but accented French.

“And I am Major Hans Folkenstadt, Commander of the First Battalion, 326<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment. I was sent by my regimental commander, Oberst-Leutnant<sup>9</sup> Steiner, to pass to you some important news concerning your cabaret. First, I would like to visit and inspect your cabaret and meet with your girls, if you don’t mind.”

“Not at all, Major! I will first call in my girls to the lounge, so that you can see them.”

“Thank you, Madame Laurent!”

Marie then turned her head to speak to her adopted daughter.

“Mélanie, please go get our dancing girls.”

“Yes, Mother!”

Mélanie then left at a near run, returning within a minute with the eight strippers of the cabaret and making them line up in front of the German officers, whose eyes lit up at once while they admired the young women. While more restrained in his reaction,

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<sup>9</sup> Oberst-Leutnant : German rank for lieutenant-colonel.

Folkenstadt apparently appreciated himself their beauty. He however gave a questioning look at Mélanie while speaking to Marie.

"I was made to understand that your daughter herself also dances in your cabaret, madam?"

"That's correct, Major. I adopted her when she was seven." Lied Marie, using the false age she had given to the local authorities when she had officially adopted Mélanie. "She is an excellent dancer and also a gifted singer, on top of being extremely beautiful."

"She is indeed very beautiful, madam. Well, with this said, would you mind if our regimental medical officer, Major Nordling, makes a quick medical examination of your girls while I tour your cabaret?"

"He is most welcome to them, Major." Said Marie with a smile and a tone that made the junior German officers briefly laugh, while Nordling, a tall and thin man with unassuming manners, reddened a bit from embarrassment. Marie then led Folkenstadt and three officers in an inspection tour of the cabaret, leaving Nordling and the two armed soldiers at the entrance alone with the girls. Mélanie then stepped forward, smiling to the German doctor.

"Why don't you start with me, Doctor?"

"Thank you, miss! Uh, I will need a more private setting to examine you: I wouldn't want to make you strip in front of my soldiers."

Mélanie, who was in reality very leery about being examined medically because of her abnormal anatomy as a demon, replied with a grin.

"But we ARE stripping girls, Doctor. Let your hard-working soldiers enjoy the moment while they are here."

"Uh, very well, miss. Please undress and then sit on that couch."

With the two German soldiers guarding the entrance repressing grins while watching, Mélanie shed off her clothes, then sat on the couch designated by Nordling. However, before the German doctor could start his examination proper, she silently put on him a 'Charm' and a 'Suggestion' spell. With his mind now pretty well controlled by Mélanie, Nordling started taking her vital signs, or believed he was doing so. In fact, while he went through the motions of examining her, he saw, felt and heard what she wanted him to. In reality, the bodies of demons like Mélanie were vastly different from those of Humans. For one thing, she did not have a real pulse, so she mentally suggested to Nordling that he was feeling a normal, healthy pulse and blood pressure, which he

recorded on his note pad, along with her name, age and other vital signs. Next, he made her lie down on the couch to examine her body in detail, concentrating on her genitals. He finally told her to get dressed while writing notes on his pad.

“You seem in excellent health, miss.”

“Thank you, Doctor!”

“You’re welcome! Next!”

Nordling was examining the last girl, Dinh Fam Tieu, when Folkenstadt and his officers returned to the lounge with Marie, looking quite satisfied and in a good mood.

“I must say that you run a clean, well furnished establishment, Madame Laurent. You also have a quite impressive wine cellar, with some fine vintage bottles in it.”

“I do, Major, but I am worried that restocking my cellar will become quite difficult as the war progresses. I just heard on the radio that a program of rationing is going to be put in place in the weeks to come.”

“Ah, yes, the rationing... This actually leads me to the main reason of my visit here. Doctor Nordling, are you satisfied with the health of Madame Laurent’s girls?”

“Yes, Major! They all are in good health.”

“Excellent! Well, Madame Laurent, here is the deal: since your establishment has proved to be both of a high standard and also most welcoming to German officers, Oberst-Leutnant Steiner, with the approval of our divisional commander, has designated your cabaret as a favored establishment to serve the needs of the Wehrmacht. As a consequence, your cabaret is to serve strictly German officers, Nazi Party officials and their guests from now on. In return, this will guarantee for your cabaret a steady, well-paying clientele. You will also gain privileged access to rationed goods, notably wines and liquors, so that you can keep serving a high quality standard to our officers.”

Marie was left speechless for a moment, stunned by that announcement. She however regained her composure quickly and politely asked a question to Folkenstadt.

“I am flattered by the confidence your commander is showing towards my establishment, Major. You mentioned German officers, Nazi officials and their guests, but not German soldiers. Will simple soldiers be allowed to use my cabaret?”

“No! Their needs will be catered to by other, less luxurious and cheaper establishments.”

“Oh, I see! Uh, if I could make a suggestion, I could still entertain your men by occasionally bringing my troop of girls and musicians to your barracks and make a public

show there for your soldiers, just a strip show with no sexual intercourse. What do you think, Major?"

Folkenstadt took only a short moment to think that over, finally nodding his head while smiling to Marie.

"That is actually an excellent idea, Madame Laurent. I will have to run it by my regimental commander first but I expect him to agree to it."

"We could make our show in the chapel of your barracks, Major." Proposed Mélanie, a devilish smile on her face, making the German officers laugh. Folkenstadt could only shake his head in amusement at her proposition.

"A strip show in a chapel... That's quite a sinful idea, young girl."

"Sinning is my specialty, Major." Replied Mélanie, making the Germans exclaim with false indignation. Now in a really good mood, Folkenstadt pointed one of his accompanying officers, a captain in his early thirties.

"I decidedly have come to the right establishment today. Madame Laurent, I would like to present you Hauptmann Lansdorf, our regimental paymaster. He brought French Francs with him, so that you could exchange the Reichmarks my officers spent here yesterday. He will regularly visit your cabaret to continue exchanging your German money. Doctor Nordling, on the other hand, will supply you with an ample reserve of condoms, courtesy of the German Army, so that you could provide them to our visiting officers."

Marie Laurent could only nod in agreement with all that, realizing at once the kind of fantastic access to German installations and personnel this was going to give to her and, particularly, to Mélanie, with all her special abilities and powers. There was only one sour point she could see in all this.

"Major, I am truly honored by all the favors you are bestowing on me and my cabaret, but I have one worry."

"And that would be?" Said Folkenstadt, becoming serious at once.

"I am talking about the public perception of my cabaret, Major. Many of my neighbors may react badly to the favors you gave me and I am worried about the future safety of my girls. On the other hand, permanently posting German soldiers at the entrance of my cabaret would probably only inflame French opinion against me."

Folkenstadt, who was no idiot and understood too well the dilemma facing Marie, replied at once, his voice firm.

“Well, if your neighbors have any brains, they will abstain from harming you and your girls, unless they want to land in big trouble with us. I however agree with you that posting a permanent guard duty in front of your cabaret would be a bad idea. If you ever run into any kind of trouble because of the hospitality you are showing to us, then don’t hesitate to come see me at the French École Militaire, where my regiment is lodged.”

“Thank you, Major! That is very much appreciated, truly.”

“That is the least I can do for you, Madame Laurent. As a privileged provider of services to the Wehrmacht, let me give you now a few news and information ahead of the rest of the French population. First, starting tomorrow night, a night curfew will be enforced around Paris, from nine in the evening to five in the morning, Paris time. Anyone violating that curfew and not having a special permit will be stopped and questioned. Second, in one week, all French citizens in Paris will be asked to turn in to us any weapons and short-wave radio receivers they may have in their possession. I saw your radio in your kitchen, so you will have to turn it in then. Enjoy it while you still can. Third, a rationing system for foodstuff and various other items is being organized and will be implemented across the territories occupied by us in the next few weeks. However, as I told you earlier, you will enjoy a privileged access to rationed goods. Hauptmann Lansdorf will visit you then to explain to you the rules of the system and to bring you special rationing coupons for your use. Well, I believe that I gave you all the information I needed to give you, Madame Laurent. I will leave now, but you can expect many German officers to show up at your cabaret tonight.”

“My girls will be ready for them, Major.” Replied Marie, doing a curtsy in front of Folkenstadt. The latter replied with a nod of the head before turning around and leaving, with Doctor Nordling staying behind with Hauptmann Lansdorf. While Nordling had a soldier bring in a large box of condoms, Lansdorf exchanged for French Francs the Reichmarks held by Marie, using the official rate of one Reichmark per twenty French Francs. Mélanie, who was discretely watching everything around her, saw soldiers outside gluing some kind of signs on the main entrance door of the cabaret and on the nearby windows. Going briefly outside, she saw that the signs were official declarations in both French and German, declaring the cabaret to be opened strictly to German officers and their guests. Mélanie glumly contemplated in silence the sign on the door while thinking.

*‘This is going to bring us trouble, big time!’*

**12:17 (Paris Time)**

**Tuesday, June 18, 1940**

**Service entrance of the 'Mille et Une Nuits' cabaret**

Marie was in the kitchen of the cabaret, about to have soup and bread with her employees, when she saw from the corner of one eye Mélanie discreetly entering with her bicycle via the nearby service entrance. A large cardboard box sat on her bicycle, tied to its rear rack. Marie went to her daughter as the latter was storing her bicycle in the nearby storage room, closing the door of the service hallway before speaking to her.

"You've been doing a lot of comings and goings in the last two days, Mélanie. What are you up to?"

The young Succubus gave her a no-nonsense look while answering her frankly.

"Buying things that could soon prove both vital and impossible to find, and this before the shops get emptied by panic buyers or get closed by the Germans. Major Folkenstadt's warning about the incoming seizure of all weapons and short-wave radio receivers prompted me to act while I still could find useful things. I visited a number of shops yesterday and today, notably an electrical appliance shop, a pawnshop and a garage. In total, I have bought to date two short-wave radio receivers, one of which can work on batteries, spare batteries, an electrical transformer, wires, connectors, two car batteries and, finally, a hand-powered dynamo. With those last items I bought this morning, we will now have a short-wave radio receiver set connected to car batteries and a manual dynamo, the lot hidden inside the underground rotunda, while also having a portable radio hidden in our basement."

"And where did you find the money for all that, Mélanie? You didn't steal that stuff, I hope?"

Mélanie's face then became most serious.

"No, Mother, I didn't steal those items. What I did was exchange them against some of the gasoline I stole from the Germans. Right now, gasoline is like liquid gold in Paris, Mother. To return to the subject of that equipment I bought, getting news and information from outside that is not tainted by German or collaborationist propaganda will become vital to us if we ever are to be effective in resisting the Germans. Now is the time to prepare, Mother, before the Germans truly turn the screws on French citizens."

Marie was silent for a moment as she stared into the resolute eyes of her adopted daughter. Mélanie, or rather Delicia by her true birth name, had proved to be an



extremely intelligent and resourceful young girl with a strong survival instinct. From what little Delicia had told her after Marie had found and sheltered her at age five, such resourcefulness and survival instincts were a must for any demon wishing to survive and thrive in the Abyss, commonly known on Earth as Hell.

"Very well, Mélanie. You certainly make a lot of sense in view of our situation. Talking of situation and outside information, I heard this morning on the radio, while you were gone, an address on the French channel of BBC Radio given by a Brigadier General Charles de Gaulle. He is a French Army officer who fled to London after our armies were crushed by the Germans in Belgium and around Calais."

"So, what did he say, Mother?" Asked Mélanie, instantly curious.

"He appealed to every French patriot able to reach England to do so and join the Free French Army, which he is forming there, to continue the fight against the Germans. He also called on all French citizens to continue resisting the Germans as best they could."

"So, all is not lost..." Said dreamily Mélanie, making Marie nod her head.

"No, all is not lost, effectively. However, we are presently totally on our own, until some kind of organized resistance movement is formed here in Paris. How are you doing in terms of weapons and ammunition stolen from the École Militaire?"

"Pretty well indeed, but I am afraid that it will now become more difficult to get any more from there: the Germans have now started to do a detailed inventory of what is in the basements of the school, so I have to be quite cautious now. To answer your question, apart from a sizeable stock of both ammunition, explosives and gasoline, we now have in the rotunda 66 handguns, twenty submachine guns, ninety rifles and carbines and ten light machine guns, along with 1,200 fragmentation grenades and plenty of spare, empty magazines."

Even with knowing the kind of powers and supernatural abilities held by her adoptive daughter, those numbers still made Marie open her eyes wide.

"My God! You have enough there to arm a whole infantry company."

"God had nothing to do with that, Mother." Corrected Mélanie, serious about that. "You should know by now that he never does anything to help Humans. The only thing he is good at is punishing them."

Somehow, Marie had to agree with Mélanie on that: too many bad things had happened in the past years, with no miracles happening to compensate for those bad things.

More bad news actually piled on in the coming days, first with the announcement on June 22 of the signing of an armistice between France and Germany that signaled the official defeat and surrender of France and the imposing by the Germans of very harsh terms and conditions. Those sanction notably included a country-wide night curfew and blackout, massive war repayments by France to Germany and the systematic looting of the French economy, meant to support German forces and the German economy. On June 23, the next day, the Germans ordered all the French citizens to turn in any weapons and short-wave receiver radio sets in their possession. On that occasion, Marie managed to keep her original short-wave radio by appealing to Major Folkenstadt and telling him that she wanted to put it inside her show lounge, tuned to Berlin radio stations and playing German music. That last factor, while gaining Folkenstadt's quick approval, also proved to be surprisingly effective in attracting more German officers to the cabaret and putting them even more at ease, thus helping greatly Mélanie's efforts at gathering useful military intelligence from their guests. Unfortunately, while business went very well for Marie Laurent and her cabaret, the dark looks she and her girls got from other French citizens in the Quartier Latin kept becoming more frequent as the days went by.

## **CHAPTER 2 – FIRST STEPS TO ORGANIZED RESISTANCE**

**09:10 (Paris Time)**

**Saturday, July 27, 1940**

**Local bakery, Rue de l'Éperon, Quartier Latin**

**6<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement, Paris**

Mélanie was in an increasingly bad mood as she entered the small bakery shop adjoining a café-terrace on the Rue de l'Éperon, some 600 feet from the 'Mille et Une Nuits' cabaret. Two other bakeries nearer to the cabaret had already refused to serve her, ignoring her requests to buy bread. Such cold hostility to her and the other occupants of the cabaret was now spreading around more and more every day and she was getting mightily pissed by that. This time, she found only a handful of customers in line at the counter of the bakery and joined the lineup, anxious to buy fresh bread for the cabaret. Thankfully, nobody seemed to recognize her here, at least for the moment, so she was able to buy without problems a half dozen long and thin crusty French 'baguettes', plus three big loaves of whole wheat bread and a dozen croissants. Feeling better, now that her fishnet bag was full, she stepped out on the sidewalk, next to the café-terrace. The smell of strong coffee, something she liked a lot, made her debate for a moment if she should take the time to enjoy a cup of espresso coffee. She was about to go take place at one of the small, round tables of the terrace when a male voice tainted with sarcasm made her snap her head around.

"HEY, IF IT ISN'T ONE OF OUR LOCAL GERMAN-LOVING WHORES FROM THE 'MILLE ET UNE NUITS'!"

The Parisians nearby who were either walking around or sitting at the café-terrace all looked at once at Mélanie and at the man who had called her up, a tough-looking man in his thirties dressed in informal, cheap clothes. An angry Mélanie quickly recognized the man as being one of her more obnoxious and annoying neighbors.

"And what do you want my mother to do, you moron? Refuse to serve Germans and then get her cabaret closed by them as a result?"

The man, swaggering up to her and getting nearly nose to nose with her, nearly shouted in her face in response.

"THERE IS ONLY ONE WORD TO DESCRIBE YOU AND YOUR MOTHER, LITTLE SLUT: COLLABORATORS!"

The man then slapped her hard on her left cheek with his open hand. He did not have time to slap her a second time, as Mélanie replied in a flash with a powerful uppercut to the jaw that made the man literally fly off his feet before falling flat on his back on the pavement, moaning and bleeding.

"You want to look tough but you are only talk and no action, asshole. There is more than one way to resist the German occupation but you are too stupid to understand that. You attack me again, Lagrange, and I will kill you!"

She then walked away quickly, making a point of stepping on the man's stomach as she started heading back to the cabaret, making him jerk and shout with pain. A man close to his forties and dressed in a good but well used suit got up from his chair at the café-terrace, where he had been sipping a cup of coffee, and hurried to catch up with her after putting some money on the table to pay for his cup. Mélanie turned around quickly when she heard him approach at a near run, ready to defend herself. The man stopped at once and raised his opened hands to show that he was not going to attack her.

"Calm down, miss: I want you no harm."

"Then why were you running after me?" Asked Mélanie, suspicious. The man slowly put down his hands and gave her a friendly smile.

"I was having a cup of coffee at the café-terrace and I saw and heard the altercation between you and that man. What you said about more than one way to resist the German occupation struck me."

That only made Mélanie reinforce her suspicion and she gave him a sharp look.

"Why? Are you a German or a collaborationist of some kind?"

The man shook his head briefly and answered her in a calm voice, unaware that Mélanie was scanning him telepathically to see if he was telling the truth.

"Oh dear, no! In fact, I fought the Germans as an army officer until the armistice was called. I now run a bookstore specializing in Russian literature on Rue de la Pompe, in the 16<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement."

"So? That doesn't tell me why you came after me."

"Uh, could we go somewhere a bit more discrete to continue this conversation, miss?"

Sensing that he was not lying and had no hidden hostile feelings towards her, Mélanie looked around her and pointed at another café-terrace, situated on the corner with the Rue Suger.

“Very well! Let’s go to that café-terrace.”

Walking together to one of the tables of the terrace, they sat opposite each other and eyed each other in silence for a moment. Mélanie found the man fairly handsome, with a long, oval face, high forehead and eyes full of intelligence. He was tall and fit, but not really muscular. On his part, the man devoured her with a mix of curiosity and lust.

“I must say that you are extremely beautiful, miss. I am happily married, with children, so I am not saying that to try to date you, though.”

Mélanie giggled briefly at that.

“Mister, I have met tons of happily married men who wanted to bed me. Men will be men!”

It was the turn of the man to look amused before becoming very serious and speaking in a low voice.

“So, what did you mean when you spoke outside the bakery, miss?”

She put up a hand to make him stop talking, then twisted her head to look at the approaching waiter and ordered an espresso coffee. The stranger also ordered a coffee at that time, but it was Mélanie who spoke next once the waiter was gone, keeping her voice low while bending forward.

“First off, I don’t know you and you don’t know me. Let’s keep it as is as much as possible: the less we know about each other, the less the Germans could learn if they ever interrogated or investigated one of us. Just call me ‘Lilie’ for the time being.”

The man stared at her for a moment, impressed by her surprising maturity and sense of operational security.

“And how old are you exactly, miss? You sound like quite an experienced person.”

“I am sixteen, mister. So, by what first name can I call you?”

“You may call me Pierre, miss.” Replied Pierre Brossolette. “Sixteen, you say? You look more like eighteen or nineteen to me.”

*‘Try thirteen, buster!’* Thought Mélanie before speaking. “My age is not important, Pierre. What is important is that I have acquired and still am acquiring every day some interesting German military information by using pillow talk with German officers. Unfortunately, that moron at the bakery could not see further than his nose and

believes that I bet Germans because I side with the Nazis. My big problem actually is that I have no one to which I could pass on that information so that it could be acted upon. Would you know by chance someone who has ways to transmit information to General de Gaulle and his Free French Forces in London?”

Pierre slowly shook his head while looking soberly at Mélanie.

“Unfortunately, no. People in France are still under the shock of our defeat and things are still disorganized in terms of resistance. However, I know a few people here in Paris who are talking about forming a group and resist the Germans, mostly by countering their propaganda with patriotic leaflets. As for me, I want to do something but I am alone, with very few means at my disposal, no radio and no weapons.”

Mélanie sighed, a bit discouraged by his words.

“I suppose that I will have to wait a while then, until someone from London establishes some kind of clandestine information pipeline between Occupied France and England. Uh, you did say that you were an army officer and fought the Germans until the signing of the armistice, correct?”

“Yes! I held the rank of captain and commanded an infantry company. Why do you ask?”

“An infantry officer? Excellent! Then, you must be knowledgeable about firearms, right?”

“Of course, miss!” Said Pierre, now frankly intrigued. “Again, why do you ask?”

“Because I have hidden a few weapons that previously belonged to the French Army, weapons that I may want to use in future months. However, I have no training whatsoever in firearms and need to at least learn how to handle and maintain them and, hopefully learn as well how to shoot them.”

“You have hidden weapons? Why not simply give them to men who would be willing to fight?”

Pierre realized that he had just said something wrong when he saw her face harden with anger at once.

“Why give them to men? You think that I have no business in fighting in a war, just because I am a girl? Is that it?”

“Uh, please don’t take my words as an insult to you, Lillie. It is just that women are not usually involved in fighting.”

“And I could say that girls normally don’t knock down a strong man with one single punch, Pierre.”

"Touché!" Recognized Pierre, who was quickly reevaluating that most unusual girl. "So, you want some basic courses in small arms care and handling, that's it?"

"Correct! Would you accept to teach me about firearms?"

"I see no problems with that, Lillie. The only thing is that it will be impossible for you to actually fire weapons to practice your aim, unless you want to alert all the Germans in the neighborhood. We would thus be limited to what I call dry firing, practicing aiming and pressing the trigger with an empty weapon."

"That would already be very helpful to me, Pierre. So, you would accept to train me in firearms use?"

"I do, yes!"

"When could we start? Are you busy today?"

"Uh, I came to the Quartier Latin this morning to look for more used books on Russian literature, but I certainly could give you a couple of hours at the least today and some more hours tomorrow. We will however need a safe and discreet place to conduct that training."

"Of course! Since that moron at the bakery mentioned out loud that I work at the 'Mille et Une Nuits' cabaret and since you heard him, I figure that you know already where I live. We could thus go train in the basement of the cabaret."

"That sounds alright with me, Lillie."

"Good! One last thing before we go to the cabaret: stay as discreet and anonymous as possible there and don't give out your name: if we get burned by the German secret police, then all the girls at the cabaret could suffer consequences."

"I perfectly understand that, Lillie. I must say that you speak and act like a true professional, compared to the members of the group I told you about. Those members are intellectuals with somewhat naïve notions of how clandestine resistance works."

"Thanks for telling me that, Pierre. In that case, I would appreciate if you never mention me in any way to them. They sound like an accident waiting to happen."

Mélanie could not know then how right she was about that. The waiter then came with their cups of coffee and served them. They quietly sipped their cups dry in a few minutes, then paid and got up. However, before leaving, Mélanie got close to Pierre and whispered in his ear while acting as if she was hugging him.

"I will go ahead first, to get weapons out of their hiding places inside the cabaret. Wait around here for about half a hour, then approach the service entrance of the cabaret on Rue Séguier but wait until I appear in the doorway before coming in."

“Uh, okay! You really sound like someone who has played that game a long time already, Lillie.”

Mélanie gave him a strange look then.

“Pierre, before I was adopted, I lived in a Hell where you had to watch yourself all the time if you wanted to survive and where you couldn’t trust anyone. Remember: wait another half hour, then come within sight of the service door but don’t enter it until you see me.”

“Understood!”

Watching Mélanie walk towards the ‘Mille et Une Nuits’, whose sign was visible one street block away, Pierre was able to see the side entrance she used once at the cabaret. With now a half hour to kill, he looked around him, trying to decide what to do during that time. He smiled on seeing nearby a used books store that he had visited a couple of times in the past and walked gingerly to it.

Inside the cabaret, Mélanie went at once to the kitchen, to drop off her fresh bread. There, she found her adoptive mother, along with their cook, Sylvie Renaudin. Marie, who was sipping a cup of coffee, gave her a questioning look.

“It took you a long time to buy bread Mélanie. Did a nice-looking man cause that delay?”

Mélanie sighed as she put her bag of baguettes and loaves on the kitchen counter.

“Actually, I had to go to three bakery shops before they accepted to serve me, Mother. The bakers at the two first ones wouldn’t even talk to me and refused to sell me bread. I finally had to go to the bakery on Rue de l’Éperon to be accepted as a customer.”

Marie Laurent shook her head slowly in discouragement at those words.

“The business is good, thanks to all these German officers coming to the cabaret and spending freely, but I really don’t like the bad name we are earning with our neighbors. I hope that this won’t result one day in one of my girls being attacked in the street by so-called patriots.”

“That’s already old news, Mother: that moron of René Lagrange loudly called me a whore and a collaborator as I was exiting the bakery on Rue de l’Éperon. He then slapped me hard in the face. I broke his jaw in return.”

Both Marie and Sylvie Renaudin gave Mélanie sharp looks then, with Marie becoming very serious.



"I was hoping somehow to avoid that kind of incident, but it seems that I was way too optimistic in that regard. You however acted in self-defense, so I certainly can't fault you for shutting up that idiot. Did anybody else attack or insult you?"

"No! Uh, could you come for a moment to our storage room, Mother?"

"Sure, Mélanie!" Replied Marie, who understood at once that her daughter wanted to speak in private with her. Getting up from her chair, she followed Mélanie to the small storage room near the service entrance, where her daughter closed the door behind them before looking at her somberly.

"Mother, I made a mistake at the bakery: after knocking down that Lagrange, I told him that there was more than one way to resist the Germans, but that he was too stupid to understand that. Another man drinking coffee at the adjacent café-terrace heard that and approached me to ask what I meant. Don't worry: I scanned him telepathically and saw that he was no German undercover agent or collaborator. In fact, he is an ex-army officer who fought the Germans until the armistice. On learning that, I asked him if he could train me on the care and use of firearms and he accepted."

Marie became alarmed at once.

"And you told that stranger that we had weapons hidden inside the cabaret? What were you thinking, Mélanie?"

In response, Mélanie touched her right temple with her right index.

"Like I said, Mother, I scanned him telepathically before asking him to train me. I also was vague about our weapons. Right now, he believes that I have only a few old French Army weapons that I hid after the armistice. I intend to conduct my training with him in the basement, but I won't show him the rotunda where I hid all the weapons I stole at the École Militaire."

Marie nodded her head slowly then, a bit reassured. Mélanie had returned to the basement storage rooms at the École Militaire on half a dozen consecutive nights, stealing and teleporting weapons and ammunitions to the cabaret while the Germans, who seemed then to be busy with more pressing tasks, delayed their planned inventory of the captured French weapons and ammunition they held. As a result, and with Mélanie giving priority to stealing the most modern types of weapons and their ammunition, they had now in the subterranean rotunda an impressive arsenal of over 300 weapons, going from pistols to light machine guns, along with more than 2,000 fragmentation grenades, over 140,000 rounds of ammunition of various calibers, 350 pounds of TNT explosives in one pound blocks and spare magazines and accessories to

go with those weapons. There was as well a reserve of gasoline and of coal briskets stolen from the Germans at the École Militaire.

“Very well, Mélanie, but be very discrete with that man and tell him as little as possible. To be frank, I am not too confident about the pretended patriotism of some of our neighbors: they would sell their mothers if that could get them more food and luxury goods. Others could as well denounce us out of plain jealousy.”

“Believe me, Mother, I know that too well. Well, I am going down to the rotunda to go get a few choice weapons to start my training, then I will signal my new friend to enter via the service entrance. Could you try to keep our domestic staff away as much as possible from the side entrance for the next half hour or so?”

“No problem, Mélanie. Have a good training session.”

“Thank you, Mother. Afterwards, if you would like, I could teach you in turn how to handle a pistol.”

“That could indeed be a useful thing for me, Mélanie. Thanks for thinking about that.”

While Marie returned to the kitchen, Mélanie went to the old stone staircase that went down to the basement of the cabaret and climbed down the well-used steps, arriving in a small room with a single basement window and two doors, one on each side of the staircase. Going through the right side door, Mélanie entered a large, semi-obscure and dusty room containing an eclectic assortment of old pieces of furniture, foot lockers, travel chests and cardboard boxes, the lot well sprinkled with spider webs and dust. The air of the storage room was quite stale, as there was no ventilation system per say in the basement. Going to the end of the room, Mélanie used her superhuman strength to move a massive wooden locker aside by a few feet, uncovering an opening in the stone masonry wall big enough for a man to pass while bending down. Going down the ancient stone spiral staircase beyond that opening, Mélanie soon stepped into what she now called her ‘Ali Baba Cave’, a large rotunda carved out of the rock in medieval times and into which connected six tunnel entrances and one other cave. However, except for two of them, those entrances had been blocked or had collapsed a long time ago. Now, apart from the staircase leading up to the basement of the cabaret, a person could use the two remaining tunnels to move around under Paris, one connecting with the sewer system, the other connecting with the city’s subway system. If things went really bad, Mélanie would thus be able still to escape through these

tunnels, helped by her power of dark vision and her extensive knowledge of the complex subterranean network to be found under this part of Paris. Not bothering with lighting one of the oil lamps hooked near the staircase and using her dark vision, Mélanie went to a pile of wooden boxes and opened the top box, uncovering six MAB Model D French Army pistols. She took one of the pistols, then closed back the box and went to another pile. In five minutes, she had taken from her reserves two pistol, one MAS Model 38 submachine gun and one MAS Model 36 rifle, along with empty magazines for those weapons and a box of cartridges for each model, plus the appropriate cleaning kits. Thinking for a moment, Mélanie took as well two extra magazines for a MAB Model D pistol, along with two more boxes of .38 ACP caliber rounds. With her arms loaded down with weapons and ammunition, she climbed back to the basement and spread the lot over the top of an old travel chest in the storage room. She took the time to put back in place the large wooden locker hiding the staircase entrance and lit two oil lamps before going up to the cabaret's ground level. Looking at her watch, she saw that there was still about ten minutes left before Pierre was supposed to approach the side entrance. She thus took the time to wash off the dust and spider webs she had collected in the basement, then returned to the service entrance, looking through its small window. To her annoyance, she saw that Pierre had already approached the cabaret and was sitting on a nearby street bench, pretending to read a newspaper. Waiting for a couple of minutes, until there was only a few other people around on the sidewalks, Mélanie half opened the service entrance door and made a discreet sign to Pierre. The man saw her and got up from his bench, then crossed the street and quickly slipped inside the cabaret, past Mélanie, who closed and locked at once the door behind him.

"Follow me, Pierre!"

Leading Pierre down the staircase to the basement, Mélanie brought him inside the storage room, where she showed him the weapons, ammunition and accessories laid on top of the old chest.

"We can start with these weapons for the moment, Pierre. You have here a Model 1935A pistol in 7.65mm Longue, a MAB Model D pistol in .38 ACP caliber, a MAS Model 38 submachine gun and a MAS Model 36 rifle, plus empty magazines, cleaning kits and ammo for them."

Pierre's eyes lit up as he examined the weapons spread before him and he slowly went to take in his hands the MAB Model D pistol.

"All these weapons appear to be in good condition and well maintained. My personal weapon until the armistice was signed was a MAB Model D pistol like this one and I know that type of weapon well, like the others. Unfortunately, I was forced to give back my pistol when I was demobilized."

"Well, as a thank you for accepting to train me in firearms, you will be able to keep this pistol, along with two extra magazines and two boxes of fifty rounds of .38 ACP, plus a cleaning kit."

A big grin appeared on Pierre's face on hearing that.

"Really? That is quite a gift, in view of the actual situation in Paris."

"Maybe, but I believe that this pistol could be useful to you, if the Germans ever go after you. Just don't start shooting German soldiers left and right around Paris with it: the key word here and now is 'discretion'."

"Don't worry, Lillie: I am no idiot or hot head. Well, let's start your training with this MAB Model D..."

Helped by her high intelligence, near-photographic memory and superb eye-hand coordination, Mélanie quickly assimilated what Pierre taught her in the next two hours and was now comfortable with handling all four types of weapons she had practiced with by the time Pierre left by the service entrance, his new pistol hidden on him. She however took the time to kiss him quickly on the lips as he was about to open the door.

"Can I see you again here at the same hour, next Saturday? I will have more weapons to teach me about."

"More weapons? Decidedly, you are a girl full of surprises, Lillie."

"You have no idea, Pierre." She replied with a malicious smile before letting him out and closing the door behind him.

## **CHAPTER 3 – THE PAINS OF RATIONING**

**11:46 (Paris Time)**

**Saturday, August 3, 1940**

**Kitchen of the ‘Mille et Une Nuits’ cabaret**

**34 Rue Saint-André-des-Arts, Quartier Latin, 6<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement**

**Paris, Occupied France**

Marie Laurent threw with frustrated anger on the kitchen table of the cabaret a small package of meat wrapped in waxed paper.

“Look at what our rationing coupons gave me for all fifteen of us for today: less than a pound of poor quality beef! And I spent over three hours in line for this!”

Marie then sat down heavily at the kitchen table as the cabaret’s cook looked with discouragement at the small slab of fat beef.

“I am afraid that I am going to have to use it to make a soup, if I want to have something for everyone, madam. Were you able to get some cooking oil at the same time?”

“No! When my turn came, it was only to be told that there was already no cooking oil left. This is crazy! How the hell are we supposed not to starve on such rations?”

Mélanie, who had been helping Sylvie Renaudin in the kitchen, looked down grimly at the piece of beef. She herself needed very little standard food, thanks to her demonic nature, her main source of feeding being the sexual energy she collected from her bed partners. However, that left the other girls of the cabaret and her mother with near starvation diets, if she could judge from that first day of official rationing. A look of resolve then appeared on her face and she made an announcement in a calm voice.

“Don’t worry, Mother: I will take care of finding adequate food for all of us.”

While Marie understood quickly what she had in mind, since she knew the kind of powers held by her very special daughter, Sylvie Renaudin gave Mélanie a cautious look. While everybody in the cabaret loved the teenage girl, and while Mélanie was returning their love, there was a mysterious, sometimes sinister aura about her. For one thing, Mélanie had never hesitated to become violent, even cruel, when angered or

insulted by someone, especially during her first years of life at the cabaret. She also had proved to be abnormally strong for a girl and was also way more mature than what one could expect from such a young girl. Mélanie then walked out of the kitchen, prompting a shouted question from Marie.

“WHERE ARE YOU GOING, MÉLANIE?”

“GOING OUT FOR A WALK, MOTHER. I WILL BE BACK IN TIME FOR OPENING TIME.”

Mélanie effectively came back about one hour later, her hands empty. Marie accosted her at once near the service entrance, speaking in a near whisper to her.

“So, where did you go, Mélanie?”

“At the Gare de Lyon<sup>10</sup>, Mother. I simply went there to conduct a little reconnaissance and find out when trains of interest would pass by there on the way to Germany. The main reason why we are now suffering this food rationing system is because the Germans are pilfering most of what France produces in terms of foodstuff and other goods. What better way to solve our food supply problems than to steal from the thief who is starving us?”

While stunned for a moment by the audacity of Mélanie’s project, the idea made Marie smile with amusement.

“To steal from a thief... A quite elegant and righteous solution indeed, my dear daughter.”

## **02:11 (Paris Time)**

**Tuesday, August 6, 1940**

**Rail yard of the Lyon train station**

**12<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement, Paris**

The rail yard of the Gare de Lyon, one of the four main train stations in Paris, was a truly vast space, extending for a mile and a half long and up to 400 yards in width, with up to twelve main lines and rail sidings running in parallel. It was also quite congested, with many trains and hundreds of rail cars occupying the rail sidings in the

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<sup>10</sup> Gare de Lyon : Lyon Train Station, one of the main train stations in Paris, with rail lines heading East and South.

triage areas and with more trains along the embarkation quays. While some trains were dedicated to the transport of passengers and commuters, most of the rail cars in the yard area were cargo cars of one kind or another, filled with tens of thousands of tons of merchandises, goods or foodstuff. Tonight, Mélanie was expressly interested in the rail cars loaded with foodstuff and heading to Germany. Having used her power of invisibility to walk past the German soldiers and French policemen patrolling the perimeter of the rail yard, she was now searching for a specific train due to depart for Germany in the morning. She had learned about that train, the nature of its cargo and its schedule, by secretly consulting two days before the yard's arrival and departure schedules for cargo trains, held in the central control room of the yard. She also had the schedule for another train of interest for her that would leave for Germany in two days.

Being back to normal, but wearing dark clothes that made her very difficult to see at night in the middle of the obscure, crowded yard, where she could quickly slip under a rail car if someone approached, Mélanie walked between two parallel files of parked rail cars, checking their shipping codes against the list she had copied in the yard's control center. She suddenly froze on seeing a pair of German soldiers some fifty yards ahead, standing guard near one end of a rail car that was part of another train. Looking carefully, she then saw two more German soldiers posted further ahead and guarding the same train. Mélanie had a mean smile as she visually examined that particular train: the presence of German soldiers denoted a cargo of some importance at the least, even if the numbers on that train did not correspond to the ones she was looking for. This was definitely worth investigating. Returning under invisibility, Mélanie then silently approached the nearest German sentries, intent on walking past them without being noticed. As she did so and passed within maybe five paces of one of them, who was chatting with his comrade while smoking a cigarette, she noticed something curious: they were wearing the uniforms of Luftwaffe soldiers, the German air force, instead of army uniforms. Nearly two months spent bedding and milking for information a multitude of German officers had taught her by now how to recognize German uniform types and ranks. Did that mean that the cargo of that train belonged to the Luftwaffe? Now more curious than ever, Mélanie continued to advance, until she was about midway along the length of that train. Now standing in front of the side sliding door of a rail car, she turned into ethereal form, becoming essentially like an immaterial ghost, and floated up and through the car's closed door. Going partially through a pile of wooden crates, she

rematerialized once in the narrow space that had been left empty in the middle of the rail car, which was nearly filled with piles of crates stacked high. The fact that the piles of crates had been carefully lashed down and protected from shocks by inserting folded canvas and even old bed mattresses between the piles of crates spiked Mélanie's curiosity. Approaching the nearest pile of wooden crates, she read the markings on the crates. She couldn't help step back from the surprise, not having expected this.

"Bottles of Dom Pérignon Champagne? Who the hell could afford such an expensive Champagne and in such a quantity?"

Wanting to make sure, she inspected the other piles of crates and actually found out that the rail car contained an assortment of Champagne of many brands, all of them expensive and of high quality, plus crates and crates of fine vintage wine and expensive bottles of liquors, including cognac. She then understood what all this was about: some Luftwaffe bigwig must have 'requisitioned' all those rare and expensive bottles for his personal use and was having them shipped to his residence in Germany. That would definitely explain the presence of Luftwaffe soldiers guarding the train. But then, why guard the whole train rather than this rail car alone. The truth then struck her like a hammer.

"By Lucifer! This whole train is loaded with luxury goods stolen by some Luftwaffe general! I should be able to find even more treasures, apart from these bottles. Marie is going to be proud of me!"

What she couldn't know and never learned was that she was in the process of plundering a train full of luxury items destined for Feldmarschal Herman Göring, the commander of the Luftwaffe and the number two man in the Nazi Party. She then started taking select crates of bottles out of the piles, piling them by pairs. She next grabbed the first pair of stacked crates and teleported out of the rail car, rematerializing inside of her 'Ali Baba Cave' under the cabaret. Taking only the time to make a few steps in order to put down her crates away from her memorized materialization spot, she teleported back to the rail car full of bottles and grabbed another pair of crates before jumping again. Ten minutes later, with a good forty crates of fine bottles inside her cave, Mélanie decided to go check the rest of the rail cars of this train. The next car didn't disappoint her, as it turned out to be a refrigerated rail car full of meat, fish, seafood, pâtés and cold cuts. Those items then got transferred by her by wholesale boxes to the cabaret, with Mélanie hauling away over 600 pounds of boxes, containers and tins. The third rail car she visited was also a refrigerated car, but this time set at freezing and full



of big slabs of beef and pork, cartons of cut meat, ducks and whole chickens. She however made only selective dents in the content of that rail car, as the ice box and refrigerator in the cabaret had a limited volume capacity. In the fourth rail car, she found and hauled away big bags of coffee beans, dried tea leaves and refined sugar, plus a few smaller bags of varied spices, including black pepper.

Tired from the energy she had spent doing all those teleportation jumps, she took a short break once back in the train. Reviewing mentally all the stuff that she had already hauled away to the cabaret, she decided to concentrate afterwards on more basic foodstuff items. In that she got a bit disappointed, as it seemed that the Luftwaffe bigwig didn't care about stealing such basic items as flour, potatoes or fresh vegetables. She did however find a refrigerated car full of dairy products, where she took away a few crates of butter and a fine selection of cheese, plus a few dozen eggs. Once she had returned from that last trip, she decided that it was time for her to find more basic foodstuff that would also be easier to store in quantity, like flour, potatoes and vegetables. She thus left the Luftwaffe train and continued her search for the train she initially was looking for. After another half hour of looking around the rail yard, she finally found that the train. Mélanie nodded her head with satisfaction when she entered the first car of that train: it was full of big bags of flour.

“Now, that's what I really wanted! Let's get to work!”

**06:50 (Paris Time)**

**Wednesday, August 7, 1940**

**Master bedroom of the 'Mille et Une Nuits' cabaret**

**34 Rue Saint-André-des-Arts, Quartier Latin**

Marie Laurent woke up slowly, not really wanting to get up yet. However, things had to be organized and costumes washed and prepared for the shows to be given to the customers who will come to the cabaret in the evening. Getting out of bed with a sigh of regret, Marie threw a robe over her night gown and put on a pair of slippers, then went to her private bathroom to comb her hair and wash her face with cold water. With that done, she went down to the ground floor via the service staircase at the back of the cabaret, ending up near the door of the combined kitchen/dining room. A delicious smell immediately caught her nostrils and, now curious, she entered the kitchen to investigate.

There, she found her cook, helped by Mélanie, cooking fresh eggs and slices of ham, while half of her dancing girls and employees were sitting around the dining table, hungrily wolfing down full plates of food. Stunned, Marie slowly approached the kitchen counter, where a large ham lay beside two dozen eggs and a pound of butter.

“How...where does all this come from?” Asked Marie, somehow suspecting already what the answer would be. Mélanie, busy cutting slices from a fresh bread, grinned to her in response.

“I went and stole from a big thief, Mother. Do you want a bit of foie gras<sup>11</sup> with your bread?”

“You have foie gras? Mon dieu! I am in Paradise! You didn’t take too many risks to get these things, I hope?”

Conscious that the employees eating around the table were carefully listening while stuffing their faces, Mélanie gave her mother a reassuring smile.

“It was actually much easier than I expected, Mother. I found hundreds of parked rail cars on the sidings of the Gare de Lyon last night, none of them guarded, and found a train loaded with requisitioned foodstuff being shipped to Germany. So, I entered a couple of the cars and helped myself to those goodies. I think that I will have to make such nightly visits to rail yards a habit.”

“That was a brilliant initiative, Mélanie.” Said happily their doorman, Paul Dujardin. “Maybe I should accompany you on your next nightly expedition, to help you carry your loot.”

“With your limp? Thank you but no, Paul: if we get spotted, then you won’t be able to flee fast enough. On the other hand, I am very agile and fast and can carry quite a lot in my old backpack.”

To Mélanie’s and Marie’s relief, Dujardin didn’t insist, recognizing the good sense of the teenager’s objection. However, Marie gave a cautionary word to all present.

“I don’t need to tell you what would happen if any of you brags about this around the neighborhood and if the Germans hear about it: we would then all be as good as dead. Please keep all this to yourselves and act and complain as if we are suffering from that damn rationing program like everybody else. Am I clear on that?”

All her employees quietly nodded their heads in understanding, fully getting her point. Discretely signaling to Mélanie to follow her out of the kitchen and into the nearby

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<sup>11</sup> Foie gras : Liver pâté in French.

storage room, Marie closed the door behind them and whispered a question to her demonic daughter.

“How much stuff did you really steal last night, Mélanie?”

“Enough to serve a perpetual luxury banquet for all of us for a few weeks, Mother. I stumbled on a train loaded with luxury foodstuff and guarded by Luftwaffe soldiers. Those items were probably requisitioned on orders from some Luftwaffe bigwig who likes good food and wine. I even found and brought back many fine bottles of vintage wine, including bottles of Champagne.”

Her last sentence made Marie think for a second.

“Hum, a Luftwaffe bigwig who likes good food and wine... That sounds like that fat pig of Feldmarschal Göring, the head of the Luftwaffe. So, we are going to dine on what he stole in France. I have to say that I like the idea. Well done, Mélanie!”

“Thanks, Mother! By the way, we also have fresh coffee... Real fresh coffee.” Mélanie didn’t have to repeat herself, as Marie rushed back at once into the kitchen.

### **01:17 (Paris Time)**

**Saturday, August 17, 1940**

**Rail yard of the Gare de l’Est**

**10<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement, Paris**

By now, Mélanie had adopted a pattern of visiting different rail yards at intervals of a few days, in order to avoid raising the Germans’ suspicions. This time, she was roaming the rail sidings area of the Gare de l’Est, the Paris train station from which came and went trains from the East...and Germany’s industrial region of the Ruhr. Mélanie was also searching at random, as she had learned from experience that trains used by the German military often were not identified as such on the unclassified schedules posted in the stations’ control centers. She had found instead that reading the various signs attached to each rail car was a better and easier way to know the general nature of their cargo. Of course, any rail cars guarded by German soldiers attracted her immediate attention. She thus knew that she was on to something when she saw a German soldier guarding the tail end of a rail car on which the warning sign for explosives was hooked. That car was in turn the last one of a long train, with more soldiers visible at a distance in the light provided by a near full moon. Using a by now standard tactic for her, she became invisible, then quietly approached the rail car,

passing by the German sentry and going to the side door of the car. Next, she turned into ethereal form and floated up and through the door, rematerializing once inside. In the car, she found only enough free room to stand near the sliding door, staring at big piles of wooden crates. The inscriptions in German on the crate nearest to her face made her smile with satisfaction.

“Anti-tank mines, hey? That could come handy one day.”

Mélanie then started a well-practiced drill by now, extracting crates from the piles and teleporting to her cave under the cabaret with as much as she could carry, then teleport back for more. She decided to move to the next rail car after carrying away twenty of the large anti-tank mines. She again switched to ethereal form to effect that move but, on arriving inside the next car, found it filled with the same kind of anti-tank mines as in the first, so moved again to the next car. To her surprise, the first twelve rail cars she visited all contained anti-tank mines, for a total of at least a few tens of thousands. She paused for a moment then, thinking about what that could mean. While no military expert, she knew that mines were typically used to defend fixed locations. Since the train manifest she had seen, while devoid of much information about the cargo, stated the final destination to be the coastal town of Calais, to the northwest of Paris, then these mines were probably destined to reinforce the coastal defenses presently held by the Germans facing England from across the English Channel. Deciding to continue on, Mélanie went to the thirteenth rail car. This time, she found piles and piles of wooden boxes containing anti-personnel mines. Taking the time to carry away a good quantity of those mines, she then went to the next car. That car, along with the eight ones after that, also contained anti-personnel mines. Starting to wonder if that train carried nothing but land mines, Mélanie went yet again to a new car. She felt her hopes going up when she saw at once that the crates and boxes in that car were very different from those containing mines. There were in fact two distinctly different types of containers, each segregated from the other type. Going to one of the large and flat wooden crates, She used a small crowbar that experience had taught her to carry on her nightly escapades and forced open the nailed cover of the crate as quietly as she could. What she saw inside made her grin with contentment: a modern-looking medium machine gun was packed inside, along with a tall tripod mount, a set of large sights, a spare barrel, belt ammunition holders and a maintenance and cleaning kit, all of it brand new and still unused. She also saw a packing list, which title she read.

“MG34 medium machine gun, caliber 7.92mm, with anti-aircraft tripod and sights kit... That would certainly makes sense to have as a fixed defensive weapon along a coastline.”

Examining carefully the content of the crate, she found a small manual about basic maintenance and operation of the MG34, something that attracted a grin on her face.

“Thank Lucifer for German efficiency and thoroughness! I definitely want a few of these babies.”

She went next to the other type of boxes, much smaller but still quite heavy, piled at the opposite end of the car. She found them to be boxes of linked 7.92mm belts of ammunition for the MG-34s. That spurred her into starting a round of teleporting jumps, carrying away eight of the machine gun kits, plus dozens of boxes of 7.92mm linked ammunition.

As she was jumping back from the cave to the rail yard one more time, she was surprised to bounce back in the open and fall on the gravel between two rail sidings, instead of rematerializing inside the car containing the machine guns. She understood at once what happened when she saw that the car she wanted to return to was now moving, along with the rest of the train: her intended return location now being occupied by solid objects, she had been bounced off to the nearest empty space, in this case the side of the rail line. Looking quickly around her, Mélanie froze at once, her heart jumping in her chest: a German soldier was standing barely twenty feet from her, staring at her with disbelieving eyes and too stunned to point his rifle...yet. Swearing mentally, she teleported again to her cave, not letting time to the German to recover from his shock. Once inside the cave, she blew air out in relief.

“By the Abyss, that was close! I think that I will call it a night. What I did get tonight is certainly not to spit at, after all.”

What she couldn't know was that the same German efficiency and thoroughness she had earlier praised while at the Gare de l'Est was going to eventually bite her in the ass.

**14:40 (Paris Time)**

**Monday, August 19, 1940**

**German military headquarters for the Greater Paris area**

**Hotel Meurice, Rue de Rivoli**

**1<sup>st</sup> Arrondissement, Paris**

The young and dashing captain of the Feldgendarmerie<sup>12</sup> came to a loud halt, clicking his heels while crisply saluting the colonel sitting behind a large desk.

"Hauptmann Michel Koenig, reporting as ordered, Herr Oberst<sup>13</sup>!"

"At ease, Hauptmann Koenig! First off, may I present you Hauptmann Dietrich Mannerheim, of the Abwehr?"

The young and fit man wearing a good civilian suit and sitting in an easy chair to the right of Oberst Karl Brumberg's work desk got up and shook hands with Michel. His grip proved strong, while his face reflected both honesty and intelligence.

"I am honored to meet you, Hauptmann Koenig."

"And I am honored as well, Hauptmann Mannerheim."

"Please, sit down, both of you, so that I could brief you on the reason why I called you in." Then cut politely Brumberg, who spoke again as soon as both junior officers were seated.

"Hauptmann Koenig, you remember that little incident at the Gare de l'Est, early last Saturday morning?"

"About the claim by one of the sentries on duty in the shunting yard about seeing a civilian girl come out of an ammunition train and then disappearing in the night? Yes, I do, Herr Oberst. I investigated it but, lacking other witnesses or evidence, I was forced to close that case with precious little to show for."

"I know and I read your short report on that incident yesterday. We however have now some extra evidence at our disposal, evidence that shows that a sizeable quantity of land mines, plus eight medium machine guns and a large stock of 7.92mm ammunition, went missing from that train. The logistical officer in charge of directing the unloading of that train in Calais noticed serious discrepancies when comparing the shipping manifest with the quantities taken out of the train. It thus appears that someone, possibly French civilians, indeed stole items from that train while it was stopped at the Gare de l'Est."

Michel Koenig's expression sobered up at once on hearing those words.

"If French diehards indeed stole from us eight medium machine guns and a large stock of land mines, then they could cause a lot of damage and casualties with those."

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<sup>12</sup> Feldgendarmerie : German military police.

<sup>13</sup> Oberst : German rank equivalent to a colonel.

"Agreed! That is why I am reopening the investigation on this incident at the Gare de l'Est, with a high priority attached to it. I also alerted our logistics staff to keep an eye for and report any future discrepancies about shipments of weapons and ammunition passing by Paris. We must catch those thieves before they could get more weapons. Since this could implicate French civilians, I asked for the assistance of the Abwehr, who sent me Hauptmann Mannerheim. You will thus be working together on this case."

"Uh, who will have overall charge of this investigation, Herr Oberst?" Asked Michel, glancing at the same time at Mannerheim.

"You will, Hauptmann Koenig! However, I encourage you to fully use the competence of Hauptmann Mannerheim when investigating French nationals. How is your French, by the way?"

"Excellent, Herr Oberst! I was born and raised near the Rhine, opposite Strasbourg, and had many French friends there before the war."

"Good! You may get to use your French during this investigation. Since this could be the proverbial tip of the iceberg, check if other military equipment or supplies have been declared lost or missing around Paris during the last few weeks. We may be facing a French black market network getting fat at our expense. By the way, here is the copy of the list of weapons that went missing from that train. Keep me posted if you find anything new."

"I will, Herr Oberst!" Replied Michel, getting up with Mannerheim and taking the document from Brumberg's hand before saluting him. Both junior officers then pivoted on their heels and walked out of the colonel's office.

Michel Koenig next led Dietrich Mannerheim to his office, located one floor down from Brumberg's office, offering him a chair before sitting behind his desk and looking at his new partner.

"Well, the least that can be said about this case is that clues don't abound."

"True!" Replied the Abwehr agent. "But we still can infer a few things from the little we know."

"Like?"

"Like the fact that it would have taken quite a few men to steal all those machine guns from that train. That girl our sentry saw could not possibly have been able to carry away such big and heavy gun crates by herself."

"Hum, true enough! Then, what was she doing near our train?"

"Maybe she was acting as a scout for the gang of thieves, checking out the content of the rail cars. Maybe she had nothing at all to do with the theft of our weapons: she could have been looking for food to steal and stumbled on the wrong train."

"That last possibility is quite plausible, I must say, Dietrich. On the other hand, we should not jump to conclusions too fast: those weapons may have been stolen before the train arrived in Paris. I think that we should check out if that train did any other stops between Germany and Calais. I can check that out right away."

"And I will check if other thefts of equipment or supplies were reported in previous weeks. I will call you if something comes up on my side."

Mannerheim took the time to note down the telephone number for Koenig's office, then walked out as the feldgendarmerie man placed a call to the head of the German military rail movement section of the headquarters.

### **16:58 (Paris Time)**

#### **Paris headquarters of the Luftwaffe<sup>14</sup>**

#### **Hotel Ritz, 15 Place Vendôme, 1<sup>st</sup> Arrondissement**

Having found nothing at the local headquarters of the Heer<sup>15</sup> about past theft of equipment from trains coming from Germany, Dietrich Mannerheim next went to the Ritz Hotel, which housed the offices of the Luftwaffe in Paris. Getting from the reception in the hotel lobby directions for the office of the head of the supplies department, he went up to the second floor and knocked on the door of a Major Fritz Stammer.

"Come in!"

Opening the door and walking in, Dietrich came to a military halt in front of the large work desk of Major Stammer, a big and slightly overweight officer with a shaved head, saluting him.

"Hauptmann Dietrich Mannerheim, of the Paris office of the Abwehr, Herr Major. I came here as part of an investigation about the theft of army weapons from a train that had stopped in Paris while on its way to Calais. Was there any theft of Luftwaffe

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<sup>14</sup> Luftwaffe : Name of the German air force in World War 2.

<sup>15</sup> Heer : Name of the German Army in World War 2.



supplies from a train in Paris signaled to your services in the last few weeks, Herr Major?"

Stammer's reaction to his question surprised Dietrich by its speed and fierceness.

"Other trains were looted while in Paris?"

"Uh, should I conclude from your reply that the Luftwaffe also had supplies stolen from a train, Herr Major?"

"Damn right you are, Hauptmann! I just inherited this desk because my predecessor was recently demoted on direct orders from Feldmarschal Göring! A train requisitioned by the Feldmarschal and carrying luxury goods to Munich was looted two weeks ago."

"And may I ask what exactly was stolen, Herr Major?"

"Dozens of crates of fine bottles of wine, Champagne and spirits, plus a few hundred kilos of frozen game meat, fine cheese, seafood and even a few bags of coffee beans and of sugar. Give me a moment and I will show you the list of the missing items."

As Stammer searched through the files and papers piled on his work desk, Dietrich's mind went into overdrive: so, it was not only weapons that the unknown thieves were after, but also foodstuff, and expensive items at that. Also, there was the fact that this Luftwaffe train was heading to Germany, instead of coming from it. The whole scope of his joint investigation with Koenig would thus have to be readjusted drastically. Stammer soon found what he was looking for and handed him a document.

"This is the manifest of the train that was looted, Hauptmann. You may copy down the items marked as 'missing'. You will also find the train number, itinerary and timings on the first page."

"Thank you, Major. May I sit?"

"Of course!"

Taking place in a nearby chair, Dietrich then copied down the descriptions and quantities of the items marked as missing. Reviewing the list afterwards made him look with a smile at Stammer.

"This reads like a dream wish list for black marketers, Herr Major."

"It indeed does, Hauptmann Mannerheim. In regular market prices, all of that is worth tens of thousands of Reichmarks. On the black market, you could easily multiply their value by ten."

“That is certainly some very serious incentives for thieves, Herr Major. Is another such train of luxury goods due to depart Paris for Germany in the near future?”  
Stammer settled down somewhat then, a worried look on his face.

“Yes! Feldmarschal Göring has ordered that another train be stocked with replacement goods. That train will depart from the Gare de Lyon on the night of August 22, at eleven. This time, a whole company of soldiers will guard it and make sure that nothing is stolen from it, while its cargo will be triple-checked at various points. Nobody will be able to steal from it, I guarantee you!”

Dietrich nodded his head at those words: thieves would indeed need to be real magicians to make anything disappear from that train. Stammer had a question for him in turn.

“What exactly was stolen from that army train, Hauptmann?”

“Eight medium machine guns with anti-aircraft tripod mounts, along with lots of 7.92mm linked belts of ammunition, plus a number of anti-tank and anti-personnel mines, Herr Major.”

Stammer’s face showed concern at once.

“Medium machine guns with anti-aircraft mounts? Mein Gott! Someone could shoot at our planes as they land or take off from their airfields in France.”

“That is a real possibility, Herr Major. We have no indication that the thieves who stole from your train and from that army train were the same, but that doesn’t diminish the gravity of both incidents.”

“Himmel! I will have to warn our Chief of Staff about this. Could you keep me up to date if you learn anything more about those train robbers, Hauptmann Mannerheim?”

“With pleasure, Herr Major! Thank you for the information.”

Dietrich then left Stammer’s office, his mind working furiously about who could have pulled such daring thefts while not leaving a trace. Right now, the only fact he had was that a teenage girl was briefly seen near the weapons train. That was indeed little to go by for his investigation. He however quickly reconsidered that assumption: after all, how many people in Paris would be able to afford bottles of 1930 Dom Pérignon Brut Champagne these days? Maybe the way to go would be to keep an eye on the various known black marketers around Paris, along with their usual customers. Feeling a bit better at that thought, Dietrich left the Ritz and started walking towards the Hotel Meurice.

**22:05 (Paris Time)**

**Thursday, August 22, 1940**

**Cargo loading quays, Gare de Lyon, Paris**

Mélanie, hiding under a cloak of invisibility, was standing behind one of the steel pillars supporting the roof projecting out of the long warehouse, next to one of the cargo loading quays of the Gare de Lyon. She smiled to herself on seeing the dozens of armed Luftwaffe sentries guarding the train stopped in front of the warehouse.

“Thanks for spreading some honey to attract bees like me, guys! It looks like this Göring fat pig was not happy about not getting his bottles of Champagne last time. Let’s make him blow a real big fuse this time!”

Turning into ethereal form, she then floated towards the train, both invisible, silent and immaterial. Passing just beside one of the soldiers on guard and then entering the first rail car, she quickly read the inscriptions on the crates filling that car.

“Hum, bottles of 1935 Saint-Émillion red wine... Meeh! A good vintage but not a truly great vintage.”

Mélanie however changed her mind nearly at once, as the mischievous side of her demonic nature surfaced.

“On the other hand, if those Germans wanted to dare me to steal from this train, then let’s answer that dare fully: I will steal from every rail car of this train, just to piss them off even more. Come to mama, bottles of Saint-Émillion!”

Taking out of one pile three crates of bottles and stacking them on top of each other, she then grabbed the whole load with both hands and teleported with them to the cave under the cabaret. When she teleported back, she rematerialized behind the same steel pillar she had hidden behind first. That way, she would avoid bouncing off and appearing right in front of German soldiers if that train started to move while she was gone. It however was still immobile at the quay, so Mélanie floated inside the second rail car. She found it to be filled with boxes of tins of seafood.

“Yes! Mother loves lobster and crab! Let’s not forget those canned shrimps and anchovies too.”

This time, she made three consecutive return trips with boxes filling her arms before visiting the next car, which turned out to contain crates upon crates of cognac and other fine liquors and spirits.

"By the Abyss, that Göring pig must have raided the cellars of all the best hotels and restaurants in Paris!"

That made her think about the real possibility that serving too much and too often of those fine wines and liquors to the German customers of the cabaret could well give her game away. She thus resolved to talk to Marie about being more parsimonious with her customers and to keep only a few bottles at a time in the regular cellar of the cabaret. The rest could stay hidden inside the cave and be brought up little by little as the need arose. Starting with the costly crates of cognac bottles, Mélanie made a dozen trips this time, all but emptying the car of its best content. This time, Göring was going to have a good reason to blow a gasket.

The fourth car proved to be the most interesting, containing crates of Champagne bottles. However, knowing that her time window was limited, Mélanie concentrated on stealing only the best of the best, taking away the reserves of Dom Pérignon to the last bottle. The train finally started to move as she was visiting the fifth car, a refrigerated model which contained boxes of game meat, pheasants and tins of truffles, the latter worth a fortune in restaurants. Grabbing the two crates of tins of truffles she had found in the car and topping them with a box full of frozen pheasants, she teleported to her cave and stowed away her newfound treasures, most satisfied with her night outing.

**11:19 (Paris Time)**

**Saturday, August 24, 1940**

**Feldgendarmerie Section, Gross Paris headquarters**

**Hotel Meurice, Rue de Rivoli, 1<sup>st</sup> Arrondissement**

**Paris**

Michel Koenig was listening to Dietrich Mannerheim, who was debriefing him on the little he had found to date, when his telephone rang, making him pick up the receiver.

"Hauptmann Koenig speaking!"

What he heard then was the voice of Major Fritz Stammer, half strangled with anger and indignation.

"THE TRAIN! SOMEONE LOOTED IT!"

"Uh, what train, Herr Major?"

"THE TRAIN I TOLD YOU ABOUT THAT HAD BEEN REQUISITIONED BY FELDMARSCHAL GÖRING AND WHICH DEPARTED PARIS LAST THURSDAY NIGHT. NEARLY A QUARTER OF ITS CONTENT WAS MISSING ON ARRIVAL IN GERMANY, INCLUDING ALL OF THE BEST BOTTLES. THE FELDMARSCHAL IS NEARLY APOPLECTIC!"

"But, but that train was heavily guarded all along, even when it was rolling. How could anybody steal from it without us seeing anyone, Herr Major?"

Stammer then calmed down somewhat, possibly because he was by now nervously spent.

"I...I don't know! It also seems impossible to me, but the fact that much of its cargo is missing can't be denied. As a result, the Gestapo is now getting its nose into the case and I'm afraid that it won't play nice during its own investigation."

Koenig felt very bad on hearing that last sentence: the Gestapo's methods were all but restrained and it had the power to arrest, detain, interrogate and torture even German officers.

"I see! Thank you for informing me, Herr Major."

Michel Koenig then put down his receiver and looked with discouragement at Dietrich Mannerheim.

"That second train full of luxury goods for Feldmarschal Göring was looted, like the first one. The Gestapo is now involved in the investigation. We can soon expect the shit to hit the fan big time around Paris."

Dietrich passed a hand on his face, thoroughly shocked.

"This is sorcery! We saw what the security around that train was in the station and over thirty soldiers traveled with the train to ensure that nothing would be stolen during the trip. How could this be even possible?"

A thought then came to Michel, making him look somberly at Dietrich.

"Well, if someone could still steal from such a well-guarded train, think of what the ones who did this could steal from other trains carrying weapons, ammunition and explosives."

"Mein Gott! The whole Kommandatur of Paris will probably be put on full alert because of this." Said Mannerheim, not knowing how prophetic his words were going to be.

**07:44 (Paris Time)**

**Monday, September 2, 1940**

**Cabaret 'Mille et Une Nuits'**

**34 Rue Saint-André-des-Arts, Quartier Latin**

Mélanie, needing less rest than a normal Human, was already up and about after her night of dancing, stripping and sex and was in the kitchen with the cook when she heard someone starting to pound on the main entrance door of the cabaret while shouting in French.

"OPEN UP! OPEN UP! GERMAN STATE POLICE!"

Sylvie Renaudin froze at once with fear on hearing that.

"My God! The Gestapo! They are coming to arrest us all!"

"No, they are not!" Replied Mélanie, a bit annoyed by Sylvie's lack of fortitude. "Go answer the door, but take your time doing it. In the meantime, I will go hide the incriminating stuff we have in the refrigerator and pantry."

When Sylvie stayed frozen, Mélanie raised her voice, nearly shouting at her.

"I SAID GO, SYLVIE! AND DON'T START PANICKING AND TELLING THEM THINGS. JUST LET THEM IN AND THEN GO WAKE UP MARIE. YOU GOT THAT?"

"Er, yes!"

As Sylvie finally started walking out of the kitchen, Mélanie urgently grabbed from the kitchen's shelves and refrigerator a can full of coffee, a carton of fresh eggs, a brick of liver pâté, a brick of butter, a ham and a pile of steaks, all things that were near impossible to find under the rationing system, then teleported out of the kitchen and to her secret cave under the cabaret. She put the food items on top of a pile of crates of bullets, then jumped back to the kitchen a few seconds before two German soldiers in black uniforms and steel helmets entered it, their sub machine guns at the ready.

"HANDS UP! STAY WHERE YOU ARE!" Shouted in German one of the soldiers, pointing his weapon at Mélanie. She obeyed at once and stayed still while eyeing the soldiers' uniforms: they were not regular German Army soldiers. She did feel a bit of apprehension when she recognized the runes insignias on their collars: they were SS soldiers! More SS soldiers then streamed in, dispersing around the cabaret and taking control of all the exits. Mélanie could now hear shouts in German and French on the upper floor, as the occupants of the cabaret were being rudely awakened by the SS men. Hoping fervently that this was only a search and not an arrest operation,

Mélanie was about to ask a question in German to one of the two soldiers in the Kitchen when a man in civilian clothes entered. He wore a trench coat and a wide-brimmed hat and his facial expression was as cold as ice. His eyes immediately targeted Mélanie, dressed in her night gown and slippers and he spoke to her in a decent French.

“Who are you?”

She decided to answer in German, partly to make herself more sympathetic to the newcomer.

“My name is Mélanie Laurent. I am the daughter of the owner of this cabaret and I also dance and perform at night for her customers.”

The man raised an eyebrow in interest as he detailed her young and incredibly beautiful face and her sexy body.

“You look pretty young to be a stripper, miss. How old are you?”

“Sixteen! May I ask what is going on?”

The man smiled at her question, but there was no warmth in that smile.

“A simple check, really. If we find everything in order, we will go and that will be the end of it. On the other hand, if we find things that shouldn’t be here...”

The German didn’t have to finish his sentence, as Mélanie knew too well what he meant. The man then went to the refrigerator of the kitchen and opened it, looking at what was inside. He found it nearly empty, save for a pot of vegetable soup with small chunks of meat in it, plus a quart of milk, a small piece of cheese and two eggs. Checking next the shelves of the counter and the pantry, he came up with little except bread, a half empty jar of marmalade and some spices. Apparently satisfied, the man turned around to face Mélanie.

“Well, you don’t seem to be profiting from black marketing, miss. Where is your wine cellar? You do serve alcohol to your customers?”

“Of course, mister! It is in the basement. Follow me!”

Before he did so, the man ordered one of the soldiers to come with him. Mélanie then led him to the old stone staircase going down to the basement of the cabaret, mentally hoping that Marc Aubut, their sommelier, had followed her instructions about keeping only a minimal amount and selection of bottles in the cellar at any one time. Mind you, since Mélanie was the only one apart from her mother to know about the subterranean rotunda below the basement and was the one who brought up supplies and bottles every day as needed, the cellar should normally pass the Germans’ inspection. Stepping on the basement level and entering the room used as a wine cellar, Mélanie lit up the

ceiling lamp and showed the long row of bottle racks, most of them empty, to the Gestapo man.

“As you can see, mister, our cellar has known more plentiful days in the past. Most of what we have left in it was bought before the rationing started in early August. Since our establishment serves strictly German customers, we do get preferential rationing coupons that helped us get some half-decent vintage bottles.”

“We will see, miss.” Said the Gestapo man, who then took out a list from a pocket of his trench coat and consulted it while slowly going down the lines of bottle racks. At one point, he stopped and extracted a bottle of Champagne from its rack and showed it to Mélanie, suspicion in his eyes.

“You have a bottle of 1938 Veuve Cliquot Champagne, a vintage no longer in legal circulation in France and also a brand of bottle that is part of a list of items stolen from a train heading for Germany. Would you care to tell me how it ended here, miss?”

“That is quite easy actually, mister: we bought it before the signing of the armistice in June, along with similar bottles. The others have since been bought by our customers and this one is the last we have. Being rare and thus very expensive, few of our customers can afford to buy it when they come to see our girls.”

The Gestapo man stared at her in silence for a moment, hoping to intimidate her, but finally put back the bottle in its rack.

“Very well, miss: I believe you...this time.”

The secret policeman then resumed his inspection, but didn't find other bottles of questionable origin. Once he was done with the cellar, Mélanie guided him around the other rooms of the basement, including the one on which the entrance to her secret cave opened. However, a large and heavy locker hid the hole in the wall giving access to the cave and the Gestapo man only made a cursory tour of the room full of old furniture and chests before declaring himself satisfied and going back up to ground level with his SS soldier and Mélanie. When they entered the show lounge, Marie Laurent came in a hurry to the German policeman, bowing her head to him.

“I am Marie Laurent, owner and manager of this cabaret. May I ask why you came to search my establishment, mister?”

“It was actually a random search, Madame Laurent.” Said the Gestapo man in a polite, nearly apologetic tone. “A large quantity of bottles of Champagne and fine wines were stolen recently from two trains headed for Germany and we are looking for them.



Would anybody have offered you recently some fine bottles for sale, under the table that is?”

“No, mister!” Replied emphatically Marie. “However, if someone ever does, you can be assured that I will inform you about it right away. Uh, where could I contact you in that case, mister?”

In response, the man took a calling card out of a pocket and quickly scribbled a few things on it before handing it to Marie, who took it as the Gestapo agent spoke.

“Here is my card, with my telephone number in Paris. Our offices are at 84, Avenue Foch, in the 16<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement. Thank you for your cooperation, Madame Laurent, and accept my excuses for having disturbed your establishment like this. Have a good day, madam!”

The Gestapo man, his two colleagues and the SS soldiers then walked out of the cabaret, going back to their vehicles and driving off. Marie watched them go from a window of the vestibule, then turned around and blew air out.

“Damn, that was scary! Thank God that they didn’t find anything suspicious.” Mélanie gave her adoptive mother a sarcastic look at her last sentence.

“You don’t need to thank God for this, just me. Anyway, God never helps people: he is much better at throwing calamities on them. This is however a good lesson for us, Mother. We will need to be very cautious about how we store and use our hidden treasures, unless some jealous neighbors denounces us to the Germans. Another good thing about this visit is this: could I keep that card that Gestapo man gave you?”

“The card?... Uh, why not? Why do you want it?”

“Because I will now know where to strike if I decide to beat on those Gestapo bastards, Mother.” Answered Mélanie, a mean smile appearing on her face.

## **CHAPTER 4 – LIAISON**

**21:14 (Paris Time)**

**Saturday, October 19, 1940**

**Cabaret ‘Mille et Une Nuits’, 34 Rue Saint-André-des-Arts**

**Quartier Latin, Paris**

“Is something wrong, my dear Adolf? I feel some frustration inside you. I hope that my ‘attentions’ didn’t disappoint you.”

Major Adolf Galland, certified fighter ace of the Luftwaffe, gave a contrite smile to Mélanie, who was fully naked and still mounting him in one of the small ‘guest’ bedrooms of the cabaret.

“Not at all, my beautiful Mélanie. It is just that all the hard fighting of the last few months against the British was for nothing, after all.”

While Mélanie’s brain switched at once to high gear at those words, she kept smiling while rocking back and forth, still impaled on Galland’s penis. The German fighter pilot was already under her spells but, as usual, had proved to be tougher to influence than most other men, having a will of iron. Mélanie thus had to be cautious with him while attempting to get military information from him.

“But, the radio says that the British are on the verge of giving up, right?”

Galland rolled his eyes at that, while he grunted under the energetic treatment the teenager was administering to him.

“I wish it was true, Mélanie, but what you hear on Radio-Paris is propaganda, pure and simple. In reality, the British are fighting as hard as ever in the air and our losses are quite heavy. Now, we are told that the Führer has ordered the invasion of England to be postponed until at least next Summer. I was able to confirm that myself: during my last flight, I saw that the French coastal ports that had been until recently full of landing barges are now nearly empty. When I think that a third of my pilots were killed...for nothing!”

“I am sorry to hear that, Adolf.” Said softly Mélanie. “What will you do now?”

“Continue to fight in the air as best I can, Mélanie. What other choice do I have?”

"And I hope that you will survive this war, Adolf." Said Mélanie, being sincere. Adolf Galland may have been a German fighter pilot and, technically, an enemy for her, but he had also proved to be a most decent man and a true gentleman. He may not have been the most handsome man around, thanks to his facial scars and big nose, but he was exceptionally fit physically, with plenty of stamina and vigor, and had proved to be a caring sex partner. He proved it again by kissing and caressing her while she was mounting him, until both climaxed nearly simultaneously. Resting on top of him while he caught his breath, she then dismounted him and got out of bed to go wash her groin with the sponge and wash basin left atop a chest of drawers, beside a pair of towels. Galland, still in bed, admired her body as she washed.

"You truly must be the most beautiful girl I ever saw...anywhere."

"Including Germany?" Asked Mélanie with a grin, twisting her head to look at him.

"Including Germany. If it wouldn't be for this war, you would make a fortune as an actress, especially with your talent for dance and singing. You could also easily become a fashion model."

"...Or a magazine pin-up model."

"Or that! Well, I better get up and get dressed, so that I could go check how my pilots are doing downstairs."

"...Or upstairs!"

Galland laughed at that and joined her in front of the chest of drawers, washing quickly his own groin after throwing away the condom he had been using. Having less clothes than him to put on, Mélanie left the room first after a last kiss and a substantial tip from Galland as an extra to the 'service fee' due to her.

Mélanie ended up doing one more strip dance and one sex session before the last German costumers left at closing time, at two o'clock in the morning. Marie had a satisfied smile as she counted the night's earnings, while Stéphanie Morin, Marc Aubut and Réjeanne Bouvet started cleaning up the show lounge and guest rooms. Mélanie approached her once she had finished counting her money and spoke to her in a near whisper.

"Mother, we need to talk...in private."

"Is it about one of your clients, Mélanie?"

"More like what he told me. We now have tons of important, useful military information about the Germans in and around Paris, but we have yet to find a way to transmit it to someone who could use that information. We need a way to contact the British, or the Free French in London, and quickly."

"Very well! Go to your room: I will join you there soon."

"Yes, Mother!"

While Marie nodded her head at that, she had no illusion about who could be the real master between the two of them: while they both deeply loved each other as mother and daughter, Mélanie was by far the most powerful person in the couple, thanks to her demonic nature and powers. However, Marie knew that Mélanie respected and loved her too much to push her around, as a normal demon would probably do. The fact was that Mélanie was no ordinary demon, if Marie could believe the stories about the Abyss that her adopted daughter had told her. Marie could also take credit for mellowing further that young demon Succubus she had found crying and alone in a dark alley, eight years ago.

Going to her own bedroom first, Marie put the thick pile of Reichmarks and French Francs in her strong box, then locked it and hid it back before going to knock on the door of her daughter's room.

"It's me, Marie!"

"Come in!"

When Marie entered the relatively small bedroom used by Mélanie, she found her daughter sitting at her study desk and looking inside a photo album. Approaching her, she looked over Mélanie's shoulder at the album.

"The photo album about our trip together to London just before the war?"

"That's the one, Mother." Replied Mélanie, looking up at Marie. "I think that the only way we will be able to quickly pass all the information we have compiled on the Germans will be for me to personally go to London and hand it to General de Gaulle."

"You, go to London? How?" Asked Marie, surprised and shocked. Mélanie gave her a benevolent smile.

"Mother, I have grown quite a lot since you found me eight years ago and adopted me. I have learned a lot and I also improved my powers a lot with time and practice. You already know that I can jump instantly from one point to another, something I call 'teleporting'. Well, I can now do a lot better than just teleport between

two points in Paris. In truth, I can teleport between any point on this planet, as long as I visited it at least once or saw it from afar, and this with a hundred percent accuracy.”

That left Marie speechless for a moment before she could recover her wits.

“Such powers you have... But, how are you going to explain to General de Gaulle or his officers how you came from France with your information? You are not going to unmask yourself as a demon before them, I hope?”

“Of course I won’t do that, Mother! I am not that stupid! Besides, I won’t need to, as I will wear a disguise in London. You know how good I am at changing my appearance.”

Marie could only roll her eyes at those last words.

**09:36 (London Time)**

**Monday, October 21, 1940**

**Free French Forces (FFF) headquarters**

**1 Dorset Square, Marylebone District**

**London, England**

The two Free French soldiers standing guard outside the entrance of the FFF headquarters, lodged in a townhouse with a ground level façade made of white stones and an upper floor made of reddish-brown bricks, were surprised to see a young girl come to them, a big, wrapped parcel in her arms. She was maybe nine or ten and her face was truly angelic, but her simple dress and coat were obviously well used. The girl came all the way to the two soldiers and stopped in front of the one wearing chevrons on his uniform’s sleeve, speaking to him in French tainted with a Parisian accent.

“Good morning, sir! I was told to bring this parcel to General de Gaulle. It is very important.”

A bit amused but also instantly a tad suspicious, the French soldier looked down at the girl and her parcel.

“And who told you to bring a parcel to General de Gaulle, girl? It could be a bomb, after all.”

The girl gave him a disarming look with her big brown eyes.

“The man was a Frenchman, but he said that he needed to stay anonymous for reasons of personal safety. He told me that this package contains important information about the Germans in France and that General de Gaulle will want to see it.”

"In that case, I will take your package, girl, and will have it transmitted to the general."

"No!" Replied at once the girl, her arms tightening around the parcel. "I have to give it directly to General de Gaulle or to one of his senior officers."

A bit frustrated by now, the corporal looked at his comrade.

"Stay here: I will bring her to Colonel Dewavrin."

"Right!"

The corporal then opened the door and invited the girl to follow him. Inside, they nearly at once ran into a junior officer who looked with disapproval at the girl before raising his voice at the soldier.

"Why did you let that girl in here, Corporal?"

"She says that she has a parcel full of information about the Germans in France and that a man told her to give it to General de Gaulle in person or to one of his senior officers."

"And you believed her, Corporal? Are you completely stupid or what? She could be bringing in a bomb in that parcel."

"It's not a bomb!" Protested the girl. "It is secrets stolen from the Germans around Paris."

"Shut up, girl, and give me that parcel!" Nearly shouted the French captain.

"NO! I NEED TO GIVE IT TO GENERAL DE GAULLE!"

"YOU LITTLE BITCH! GIVE ME THAT PARCEL!"

The captain grabbed the parcel with both hands but, to his astonishment, the girl resisted his efforts and kept her grip on it. The whole thing was about to turn into a near brawl when an officer with some gray in his hair and who had been attracted by the commotion came in at a quick pace.

"WHAT IS GOING ON HERE?"

The captain and the corporal came at once to attention, with the captain answering the newcomer.

"That girl was brought in by the corporal on guard duty at the entrance, Colonel. She pretends to have a parcel full of information about the Germans in Paris, a parcel that a man supposedly gave her with instructions to give it directly to General de Gaulle or to one of his senior officers. I wanted to check first if that parcel contained a bomb or not."

"It doesn't!" Protested the girl, making the French colonel look with curiosity at her for a moment, then looked back at the captain.

"I will take it from here, Captain Courtemanche."

"Uh, yes sir!"

Looking down again at the girl, the colonel smiled to her.

"I am Colonel André Dewavrin, the senior intelligence officer of General de Gaulle. I will take your parcel, girl, but first tell me about the man who gave it to you."

"Well, he accosted me a few street corners from here and gave me money in exchange for me bringing this parcel here. He was definitely a Frenchman but didn't give me his name. The only things he said to me about the parcel is that it came from the resistance cell 'Groupe Paris Liberté'<sup>16</sup>, based in Paris. He said that he and his group wanted to stay anonymous in order to protect themselves from the German secret police and from French collaborators. He said that more parcels like this one will be sent at intervals in the months to come and that they will be marked like this one."

"Marked? How?"

In response, the girl turned the parcel around, making visible a banknote glued to the wrapping. Dewavrin's eyes widened when he recognized the banknote.

"A one Reichmark banknote?! Hell, this is starting to look quite serious to me! Alright, Corporal, you will be able to escort this girl out, gently, once she gives me her package. Okay, girl, you can now give me your parcel. I promise you that General de Gaulle will be informed of its content. Thank you for bringing it to us."

"Here you are, Colonel. Have a good day!" Said the girl, handing over her parcel, which proved surprisingly heavy for its size. She then left with the corporal, leaving Dewavrin wondering about a bomb possibly being inside the parcel. He thus hurried to the back of the building, where he got out in the small courtyard used by French personnel to get some fresh air during their breaks. Putting the parcel on a picnic table, Dewavrin examined it carefully for a good minute, then decided to open it. Cutting the strings wrapped around the parcel, he then cautiously peeled open one extremity of it and looked inside. Seeing only papers and documents, he then ripped open the rest of the wrapping, ending with a cardboard box full of papers topped by a letter. The letter had the lines 'For General de Gaulle, from the Groupe Paris Liberté'

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<sup>16</sup> Groupe Paris Liberté : Paris Freedom Group in French.

written on it. Grabbing first the letter and extracting a folded note from it, he read the said note with increasing curiosity.

“To General de Gaulle and his Free French Forces, from the résistance cell ‘Groupe Paris Liberté’. You will find in this box the sum of what we have been able to collect as military information on the Germans in and around Paris, and this since last July. We intend to send you further packages of information as needed in the coming months. However, due to reasons of operational security, our group intends to stay separate from other résistance groups and to not have direct links with British or Free French agents in France. Please do not try to contact or find us and, especially, do not mention the name of our group to any other résistance group or to British agents. Any transgression of that rule and we will stop sending parcels. Be aware especially of the following important piece of intelligence we found out recently: Hitler has ordered, sometimes before October 19, the postponement of his planned invasion of Great-Britain, and this until at least next Summer. A Luftwaffe pilot confided that the French coastal ports that had been full of landing barges are now nearly empty. One last point: all the future parcels from us will have a one Reichmark banknote fixed to it and the bearer will say that he or she is coming in the name of the Groupe Paris Liberté. Please make good use of our information. Vive la France!”

Now feeling growing glee, Dewavrin quickly sifted through the content of the box, finding lists of German military units and locations in and around Paris, short reports about German supply train movements and other precious information about the German occupation in Paris. Now convinced that he had his hands on a treasure trove of intelligence, Dewavrin picked up the box and nearly ran back inside with it.



## **CHAPTER 5 – INDIRECT ACTION**

**08:43 (Paris Time)**

**Sunday, April 13, 1941**

**Service entrance of the cabaret ‘Mille et Une Nuits’**

**34 Rue Saint-André-des-Arts, Quartier Latin**

**Paris, Occupied France**

“Alright, alright, I’m coming!”

Answering the repeated and urgent knocks on the service entrance door of the cabaret, Sylvie Renaudin looked first through the window of the door and saw a tall man dressed in a civilian suit. A cautious woman, the cook spoke to the man through the door while keeping it locked.

“What do you want, mister?”

“I need to speak urgently to the daughter of the cabaret owner. My name is Pierre. Can you tell her to come here, quickly? It is a matter of life or death.”

Smelling at once that this had to do about their clandestine work against the Germans, Sylvie nodded her head after a second of reflection and unlocked the door, letting in the man and relocking the door behind him.

“I will go get her, mister. Please wait here.”

“Thank you, madam!”

The cook then disappeared in the nearby kitchen for a moment, to return a few seconds later with Mélanie, who was still wearing a night gown. Mélanie gave Pierre Brossolette a severe look before telling Sylvie to leave her alone with the man. She then pulled him by one arm into the storage room next to the service entrance, where she closed the door behind her before staring hard at Pierre.

“I told you not to come back here: you could attract undue attention on me and the cabaret. Now, what is this business of life or death about?”

“It is about the resistance cell I told you months earlier, the ‘Groupe du Musée de l’Homme’: the Gestapo has rounded up and arrested all its main members, probably due to a denunciation. Its last founding member was arrested this week.”

That piece of news didn’t seem to surprise Mélanie much, who simply frowned at it.

"That doesn't surprise me one bit, Pierre, in view of their amateurish methods and poor operational security. One could pretty easily have identified their group just by analyzing their clandestine newspaper 'Résistance'. So, where are those group members now?"

"Either in prison or being interrogated by the Gestapo. The only one I know for sure about her whereabouts is still being interrogated by the Gestapo at its Paris offices, at 84 Avenue Foch."

"And why did you come here to see me, at the risk of attracting attention on me and the cabaret? Do you realize how many of our neighbors on this street are watching us and spreading nasty rumors about us being traitors and collaborators? We already had to fight once a false anonymous denunciation of black marketeering, probably coming from one of our fine neighbors. Thankfully, our very cordial relations with the German military authorities in Paris shielded us from French police action."

Pierre lowered his head in embarrassment, understanding only now the risks of his visit.

"I came because I didn't know what to do next, Mélanie. I barely had time to complete the printing and distribution of the last number of 'Résistance' before Agnès Humbert was arrested, forcing me to flee their clandestine printing shop. I figured out that, since you had weapons, we maybe could try together to free Agnès or other members of the group before it is too late."

"Are you mad, Pierre? Grief is evidently stopping you from thinking properly. The only thing we would achieve by attacking the Gestapo offices would be to unmask my own group and have my mother and all the girls here arrested as a result. No! I am sorry, but those Résistance members will have to deal with the consequences of their lack of prudence."

Pierre gave an angry look at Mélanie at those words.

"So, that's it? You will let them be tortured and then executed?"

The reaction of Mélanie was both fierce and immediate: taking a step forward, she grabbed Pierre by his tie and brutally pushed him against the nearest wall while giving him a fiery stare.

"What I will do is use my head and act sensibly, with a view to the majority's safety, Pierre. Try to do that yourself. I will act against the Germans one fine day, but only when it will be the proper time and circumstances and without endangering others for nothing. Now, go and don't come back here, ever!"

She then pushed him out of the storage room, showing incredible strength for a teenage girl, and made him go out by the service entrance, locking the door behind a clearly disappointed and frustrated Pierre Brossolette. The latter however understood at least partly her reasons for acting like she just did and did not insist, walking away without looking back.

Returning to the kitchen, Mélanie sat back at the dining table and continued to drink her coffee while thinking hard about what Pierre had said. In the Abyss, someone who got into trouble by making a mistake typically got little to no sympathy or support and could in fact only expect to have others profit from the situation. Mélanie, or more properly Delicia, was however not as mean and selfish as a normal Succubus would be, thanks to her mixed blood from her father, a fallen archangel who had died covering Delicia's mother's escape from the Abyss. Other demons who considered her an abomination because of her part-Celestial blood and neutral alignment had tried to kill Delicia, forcing Lilith to bring her five year-old daughter to the Material Plane and to abandon her in a dark alley of Paris, where Marie Laurent had found her crying with despair. Since that traumatic event for Delicia, Marie Laurent had raised and educated her, teaching her the values she believed in, which included kindness, generosity and compassion. While still rather mean of character compared to a normal Human teenage girl, Delicia was now a far cry from what a demon was supposed to be. However, one aspect of her that was still fully demonic was her magical powers and abilities. Maybe it was time for her to use those powers and abilities to the fullest while staying in the shadows.

### **12:07 (Paris Time)**

#### **Empty apartment facing the SD and Gestapo offices**

#### **Avenue Foch, 16<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement**

#### **Paris**

Mélanie had been hiding inside the third floor apartment for a good hour, watching discretely through one window the Gestapo offices on the other side of the street. The apartment she was in had belonged to a Jewish family that had been evicted by the SS and then led away weeks ago, probably to some unpleasant fate. It's location made it an ideal surveillance position for Mélanie, who had used it before a couple of

times to gather intelligence about the Gestapo offices and its activities. Now, she was well positioned to attack indirectly the SD and Gestapo building, from which hideous screams of pain had been coming out of its sixth floor, where the Germans had their interrogation rooms.

The Gestapo agent that had led the search raid on the cabaret last September suddenly stepped out of the building's main entrance to go to the staff car that had just pulled up in front. Mélanie had a mean smile as she watched the Gestapo man, wearing his customary trench coat and wide-brimmed hat, walk to the waiting staff car while being saluted by the two SS soldiers on guard duty at the entrance.

"Time for a few selected spells. Welcome to Hell, Mister Steiner!"

Hauptsturmführer<sup>17</sup> Heinrich Steiner was thinking with anticipated pleasure as he walked to his waiting staff car about the lunch date he was going to have at the 'Maxim's', where he was due to meet with a famous German actress currently visiting Paris. A loud, ferocious growl suddenly made him jerk and snap his head to his right, in time to see a huge, monstrous beast charging him. It had a large, fat body covered with a thick brown fur, four short legs with impressive claws and a relatively small head with two ferocious eyes that glowed red, plus a set of nasty-looking canines. It measured a good eighteen feet from its nose to the end of its flat, furry tail and had to weigh at least a ton, judging from the way the pavement shook as it charged Steiner. His driver, like the two SS soldiers guarding the entrance to the Gestapo offices, froze for a moment with horror and disbelief at that impossible sight, allowing the huge beast to reach the staff car and Steiner before they could react. One of the two forward paws of the animal then went down on top of the Gestapo man, crushing him and sending him on his back against the cobblestones of the street. At the same time, the other forward paw of the beast savagely slashed the unfortunate driver, the four claws ripping his upper torso and abdomen wide open. Steiner, screaming with pain as the claws of the paw crushing him penetrated his belly, then saw the open mouth of the beast come down on him. The head, neck, left shoulder and left arm of the Gestapo man were then ripped off in a single furious bite. The two SS guards, nearly paralyzed with fear, were finally able to fire the first shot from their bolt-action Mauser 98K rifles as the beast was chewing on

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<sup>17</sup> Hauptsturmführer : SS rank equivalent to a captain, or Hauptmann in the German Army.

Steiner's head. The 7.92mm bullets seemingly did little to the beast except to enrage it. As the two SS soldiers were frantically working their rifles' bolts to chamber fresh rounds, the monster turned on them, biting the head of the first soldier and ripping it off, then slashing open the second soldier with one furious swipe of one paw. One unlucky group of four SD men who worked in the wireless radio listening center on the second floor and who were also going out for lunch then caught the beast's attention as it looked for more preys to kill. Frozen with terror at first at the sight of the massacre of Steiner and of the two guards, the four radio operators tried to flee back inside the building. They however only succeeded in giving access to the beast by opening the big double doors. Running just behind them, the Fiendish Dire Wolverine crashed through the entrance and fell on the screaming radio operators, crushing down two of them against the floor while pushing a terrifying growl. It had time to rip to pieces the two men before the panicked survivors saw the beast suddenly vanish into thin air, leaving behind pools of blood and ripped human body parts around the lobby. A young SD officer who had watched the horrible scene from the main staircase of the lobby slowly walked down the steps, his knees weak and his pistol held in his shaking right hand. Cold sweat covered his forehead as he contemplated the carnage in the lobby and outside, on the sidewalk.

"M...Mein Gott! What the hell was that?" He asked himself while visually surveying the mangled, dismembered bodies. The SS female auxiliary manning the reception desk, who had the reflex of diving for cover under her desk, then started screaming loudly, completely hysterical.

The commander of the SD and Gestapo headquarters unit in Paris, Sturmbannführer<sup>18</sup> Josef Kieffer, came down the stairs from his fourth floor office a minute later, his own pistol in hand and with four armed SS soldiers at his back. He was shaken at once on seeing what was left of the two radio operators killed in the lobby. Looking through the opened front door at the bodies outside, he then looked at the still shaking young SD officer.

"What happened here, Obersturmführer<sup>19</sup> Funkel?"

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<sup>18</sup> Sturmbannführer : SS rank equivalent to major.

<sup>19</sup> Obersturmführer : SS rank equivalent to 1st lieutenant.

"I...I don't know really, Herr Sturmbannführer. Some kind of huge impossible beast attacked Hauptsturmführer Steiner as he was about to get in his car, then killed the two guards before pursuing four more men inside the lobby and killing two of them."

"A beast? What kind of beast?"

"I am not sure, Herr Sturmbannführer. It was huge, the size of a car, with a thick brown fur and clawed paws. It was unbelievably ferocious and its eyes glowed red, as if it came straight from Hell."

One of the surviving radio operators, who was still shaking while sitting on the first steps of the staircase, then spoke up with difficulty.

"A...a wolverine. It was a giant wolverine, sir!"

"A wolverine? But there are no wolverines in France!" Said a disbelieving Kieffer. "And they certainly are much smaller than a car."

The shaken radio operator could only sweep one hand in front of him, showing him the ghastly human remains and splattered blood covering the lobby's floor.

"It was a giant wolverine, sir. It did all this in mere seconds."

Kieffer was still trying to make sense of all this when Standartenführer<sup>20</sup> Helmut Knochen, the head of security for the whole Paris area, came down the stairs to see what had happened. His eyes widened and his face paled on seeing the gory scene in the lobby and outside.

"Himmel! What did all this?"

"Some kind of impossible, huge beast, Herr Standartenführer." Answered Kieffer, who then told him what the survivors had just told him. Thoroughly shaken but being unable to deny the reality of the mangled bodies in the lobby and outside the entrance, Knochen started giving orders around, posting new guards at the entrance and making other men clean up the gory remains as best as possible. He then returned upstairs to his office, all ideas of having lunch forgotten.

Feeling a bit sick to his stomach after seeing the gory remains in the lobby, Knochen went to serve himself a glass of cognac, then sat behind his big work desk, wondering what he was going to tell Berlin about this attack by...whatever. He didn't see, nor could he see, Mélanie, standing in one far corner of his office after infiltrating the building thanks to her power of invisibility. What he suddenly saw appear right in

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<sup>20</sup> Standartenführer : SS rank equivalent to colonel.

front of his work desk was the most terrifying thing he could have imagined. His eyes bulging out and his face deformed with abject terror, Knochen could do nothing but watch the apparition rush at him. The nervous shock was too much for his heart, which stopped beating after a last, explosive pulse. Stricken down by a sudden, massive heart attack, the senior SS officer fell backward in his chair, dying as he hit the ground. He finally died after a few more seconds, his face frozen in a grimace of utter terror. Mélanie contemplated with a satisfied smile the dead man, victim of her 'Phantasmal Killer' spell, for a few seconds, then continued on her internal exploration of the headquarters building. She found the office and private quarters of Sturmbannführer Kieffer on the fourth floor, then a guardroom, an administrative office and a number of tiny cells on the fifth floor. Two nervous-looking SS soldiers were in the guardroom, looking down via a window at the mangled bodies on the sidewalk as half a dozen SS men were doing their best to clean up the mess, while most of the French civilians passing by threw up after a single look at the dead Germans. Still invisible, Mélanie decided to not kill the German soldiers then, wanting her attack to appear as some kind of curse and not as an attack by a Human. She however was faced with a dilemma when she went up to the interrogation rooms on the sixth floor, at the level of the attic: there, she found a German, his torso bare and drinking some water, standing a few feet from a naked woman tied to a chair. Approaching the woman, who appeared to be unconscious, Mélanie felt growing disgust and anger on seeing that she had been tortured hard. Her face was puffy and bloody, with one eye completely closed by blows and with both lips split open. Half of her finger nails had been pulled out, leaving her hands covered with blood, while multiple cigarette burn marks were visible on her bare breasts. Staring with hatred at the German interrogator, who was probably waiting for his prisoner to wake up before continuing to torture her, Mélanie used a third spell on him, having expended already her 'Summon Monster' and 'Phantasmal Killer' spells for today.

"Disintegrate!"

A narrow green beam shot out of her pointed index, hitting the German in the chest. The man didn't have the time to scream before being enveloped in a green halo and turning into dust.

"Have a nice time in the Abyss, you bastard!" Proffered Mélanie before approaching the unconscious woman to better examine her wounds. She already had a good idea of who she could be, thanks to the morning visit by Pierre, but she now faced

a severe dilemma. If she left this woman here, the Germans would then certainly torture her more and then either send her to a prison or execute her. On the other hand, saving this woman by transporting her out of this building could expose the secret of her résistance group's existence, and this to save someone who had already proven to be either ignorant or negligent, or both, about basic rules of operational security. An alternate solution then came to her mind. Seeing that the woman would be unconscious for at least a few more minutes, Mélanie untied her, then took her in her arms as if she was a mere baby. With her invisibility field now surrounding both her and the woman, the teenager teleported to a location that she had visited a number of times in the past, namely Pierre's Russian literature bookstore's basement. As she had expected, the store was closed and empty on this Sunday and she was able to gently lay down the unconscious woman on an old couch normally used by customers to sit down and sift through books that interested them. Finding a blanket to cover her nudity took a bit more time but she was able to find one in a closet. With that done, she went up to the ground floor and picked up the receiver of the telephone set on the sales counter, near the cash register. Before using it, though, she morphed temporarily into a male shape, changing drastically her voice at the same time. Composing Pierre Brossolette's home phone number, which she found written down on a small note glued to the counter, she waited patiently as the phone at the other end rang. Someone then picked up and answered in a distinctly female voice.

"Hello?!"

"May I speak to Pierre, miss? It's urgent."

"Uh, one moment, please! PIERRE, IT'S FOR YOU!"

There were shuffling noises before Pierre's voice came on line.

"Pierre Brossolette speaking!"

"Pierre, Me and my friends found at the Musée de l'Homme that rare book you were looking for. We left it for you in the basement of the bookstore. You will however need to bring some supplies to repair it: it was very roughly handled by the previous user. You better hurry."

"Wait! Who..."

Before Pierre Brossolette could say more, Mélanie hung up on him, then returned to her female teenage shape. Hoping that Pierre would not prove so obtuse that he wouldn't understand the secret meaning of her words, she teleported out of the bookstore,



heading back to the Gestapo office: she wanted to explore the place a bit more under an invisibility cloak before the SS men regained some of their wits.

### **15:20 (Paris Time)**

#### **SD and Gestapo offices, 84 Avenue Foch**

#### **16<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement, Paris**

A nervous looking SS soldier challenged Michel Koenig the moment he stepped out of his staff car with Dietrich Mannerheim.

“Halt! Identify yourselves!”

Taken aback by such a suspicious attitude towards German officers in uniform, Michel nonetheless took out his military identity card, knowing how independent-minded and jealous of its prerogatives the SS Corps was. Mannerheim also showed his identity card, finally convincing the SS soldier to step aside and let them pass. Both men then went to a SS sturmbannführer who was standing in front of the main entrance to the SD and Gestapo building, talking in an agitated tone to an Army colonel. The colonel and the SS man cut their exchange and looked at the two newcomers as they saluted militarily and presented themselves.

“Hauptmann Michel Koenig, of the Feldgendarmerie, here to assist the investigation in the attack on these offices.”

“Hauptmann Dietrich Mannerheim, from the Abwehr. I am with Hauptmann Koenig. Who is presently in charge of investigating this incident, sirs?”

“The SD is!” Replied at once the SS senior officer, beating the army colonel to the punch. “Who asked for the assistance of the feldgendarmerie and of the Abwehr in this?”

“I did!” Cut in the army colonel, giving a cold look at the SS officer. “Whether you like it or not, Sturmbannführer Kieffer, this so-called incident happened inside the territory controlled by the Kommandant of Gross Paris. General von Stülpnagel is especially disturbed by the wild, if not demented reports he heard coming from your services.”

“Demented? DEMENTED? I HAD FIVE MEN RIPPED TO PIECES BY A HUGE BEAST ONLY THREE HOURS AGO, WHILE MY SUPERIOR, STANDARTENFÜHRER KNOCHEN, WAS FOUND DEAD FROM A MASSIVE CARDIAC ATTACK. I ALSO HAD

ONE MAN VANISH ENTIRELY, WHILE HALF OF MY STAFF SUFFERED SERIOUS NERVOUS SHOCKS, HERR OBERST!"

Michel Koenig exchanged a knowing look with Dietrich Mannerheim as Kieffer and the army colonel went on a shouting match, each trying to assert primacy of authority in the investigation. With German Army soldiers now greatly outnumbering the remaining SS personnel on the scene, Kieffer finally conceded grudgingly control of the investigation to the colonel, who promptly gave a series of orders to Michel.

"Hauptmann Koenig, I am now putting you in official charge of this investigation. You will in turn report your findings to the Kommandant of Gross Paris. I am Oberst von Metternich, Aide of General von Stülpnagel, and you will find my offices at the Hotel Meurice. If you need anything or encounter a problem, contact me at once!"

"We will do our best, Herr Oberst!" Replied Michel, coming to attention and saluting, imitated by Dietrich Mannerheim. The colonel then walked away, leaving the two young officers standing in front of the main entrance. Michel gave a wry smile to his Abwehr colleague.

"Well, from what this SS officer said, I think that we have a quite interesting and unusual case on our hands, Dietrich."

"Yeah! That will beat chasing after ghostly train robbers for a change."

The first thing that Koenig and Mannerheim did was to go look at the remains of the Germans killed in the noon attack. One look inside each of the body bags was enough to give them the urge to throw up.

"Mein Gott! No small arm or grenade could dismember a body this way. These men were torn apart." Said Michel, making Dietrich nod his head.

"Only high explosives could possibly do this, but then we would have seen some structural damages to the building, which is not the case here. A medical examiner will have to look at those bodies to have a better idea of the precise cause of death. I suggest that we go interview the survivors who directly witnessed the attack."

"Agreed!"

The three direct witnesses available to them, two SD radio operators and one SS female auxiliary receptionist, all showed signs of deep psychological trauma, with the SS female auxiliary in particular being nearly inarticulate. However, what she was able to say corresponded with everything that the two other survivors told the investigators.

After a good hour of gentle questioning, Michel and Dietrich took a break, time to compare notes and discuss possible conclusions. In that, their job was made nearly intractable by the fantastic nature of the depositions they had taken. Dietrich scratched his head as he reread his notes.

“A giant wolverine... Himmel! How are we to make sense of this story?”

“Maybe they were victims of a collective hallucination?” Proposed Michel, not believing that himself but having no other explanation. Dietrich gave him a dubious look.

“A collective hallucination that shreds to pieces five men? I think that we should look for further evidence and witnesses before jumping to conclusions.”

“Uh, you’re right, but this case is looking like a real head-scratcher. Well, let’s look further around.”

Visiting in turn each floor of the building while accompanied by a SS soldier, the two men finally ended in the interrogation room where Mélanie had disintegrated an interrogator. Seeing the empty torture chair in the middle of the room, Dietrich Mannerheim looked at the SS soldier guiding them through the building.

“You said that your senior interrogator, an Ernest Vogt, was last seen in this room, interrogating a prisoner. Where is that prisoner now?”

“Uh, I don’t know, Herr Hauptmann. Maybe she was brought back to one of the cells on the floor below us. Let me check quickly.”

“Go ahead, soldier!”

The SS soldier then ran out of the room, only to return in a near state of panic a few minutes later, a shocked expression on his face.

“WE CAN’T FIND THAT PRISONER ANYWHERE, HERR HAUPTMANN. SHE ESCAPED!”

Michel and Dietrich exchanged a glance at those words, with Michel commenting first about them.

“With the seeming madness and confusion going through this place during the noon attack, I can see how a prisoner could escape this place, possibly by using the roof and crossing to neighboring buildings. The remaining question however is where is that Herr Vogt now?”

Looking around the interrogation room for clues, Michel quickly noticed a thick patch of dust near a table supporting a few papers and a jug of water. That patch had been

seemingly kicked through, spreading it further on the floor. He pointed the patch of dust to the SS soldier.

"Was this patch of dust here when your comrades searched for your Herr Vogt, soldier?"

"Uh, I couldn't say, Herr Hauptmann, as I was not part of that group. I know that four of our men went through this room after the attack, looking for our interrogator." Michel rolled his eyes on hearing that.

"A crime scene contaminated by a group of stampeding men. Great! Could someone tell us who the prisoner being interrogated was?"

"Yes, Herr Hauptmann! I will go get that information from our clerk. I won't be long."

Leaving again at a run, the SS soldier came back after six minutes, a thin file in his hands. Michel took the file from him and sifted through it quickly, with Dietrich reading over his shoulder.

"Hum, Agnès Humbert, 46 years old, French Résistance member. Part of an anti-German propaganda cell based in the Musée de l'Homme. Arrested on April 10 at her home. A diary full of names was found at the time of the arrest. Well, let's look at that diary, then we will go visit the home of that French woman. Where could we find that diary, soldier?"

"At our analysis office, on the next floor below, Herr Hauptmann."

"Then, lead the way!"

"Yes, Herr Hauptmann!"

With the SS soldier in the lead, the trio moved down to the fifth floor and entered a large room filled with numerous filing cabinets, work tables and maps, where Michel cornered a SD NCO and asked him about Agnès Humbert's diary. The SD man nodded his head at once on being asked about it.

"We have been studying it since we arrested that woman, Herr Hauptmann. It actually allowed us to arrest a few more members of the Résistance group she belonged to."

"Was there any other person named in it that has not been arrested yet?"

"Only one, Herr Hauptmann: a 'Pierre', mentioned as helping that woman finish composing a clandestine newspaper. Unfortunately, the diary did not give us more than

the first name of that man, so we haven't been able to identify him yet. We were counting on that woman talking under interrogation to tell us more about that man."

"Hum, with your prisoner gone, I'm afraid that this 'Pierre' will stay a mystery to us. Very well! Here is your file back. Tell your commander that we will keep him informed of any progress we will make in this investigation. Dietrich, let's go to that woman's apartment!"

The SD NCO watched with some mistrust the two army officers as they left his office: the SS Corps disliked very much when people from other German armed services came to dig their noses into its affairs.

**07:48 (Paris Time)**

**Monday, April 14, 1941**

**SD and Gestapo local headquarters**

**84 Avenue Foch, 16<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement**

**Paris**

The three Gestapo agents were understandably nervous as they arrived for work in the morning at their Paris headquarters. Thanking their SS driver, they stepped out of their staff car and passed by the reinforced guard force at the entrance, now composed of no less than ten vigilant and also nervous SS soldiers backed up by an armored troop transport half-track. The three agents barely had time to step inside the reception lobby of the building when an eight foot-high pillar of flames with arm-like appendages appeared between them and the main staircase, two searing blue dots near the top of the pillar looking like eyes. Before the petrified agents could react or run, the arm-like appendages slammed the Germans like giant fists, both crushing and burning them. With lightning speed, the fire elemental then swept its arms around the lobby, striking and putting on fire both Germans and parts of the lobby. Next, the apparition walked down the main ground level hallway of the building, touching off fires all along and blocking the rear exit while killing more Germans on the way. The few Germans who managed to fire at it found to their horror that their bullets seemed to have little to no effect on it and were either incinerated by the creature or fled outside in utter terror, alerting the soldiers guarding the entrance. When those soldiers tried to enter the lobby, their weapons pointed, they were confronted by a fire spreading wildly through the building and soon had to withdraw back outside. One SS soldier screamed with terror

when a screaming human torch ran out of a corner of the lobby, trying to get outside, and collided with him. He barely had time to recognize the torch as being the female SS auxiliary that had been manning the reception desk before his own uniform caught fire, making him run out and roll on the sidewalk to attempt to put out the fire. Two of his comrades did help him do so, saving him from a hideous death, but at the cost of first and second degree burns to their hands and forearms. The SS guards could then do little but to watch the whole building progressively catch fire, with the Germans in the upper floors finding themselves trapped by the flames. A few of them who were on the first and second floors, seeing no other way to escape, jumped out of windows with varying success, many injuring themselves in the process. The Germans on the third, fourth, fifth and sixth floors were less lucky, as few of them had the courage to jump down from so high. Except for two men who jumped out of the third or fourth floors and who broke both legs on landing, the rest of the trapped Germans died of smoke inhalation before being incinerated in the fire. Sturmbannführer Kieffer was one of the Germans who perished in the flames before Paris firefighters could arrive and start dousing the flames.

While the helpless SS guards outside the building watched the headquarters go up in flames, Mélanie worked as quickly as possible to empty the Gestapo's weapons and ammunition vault in the basement, where she had used magic missiles to kill the two SS soldiers on guard there. Making a series of teleportation jumps in quick succession, she had time to carry away to her secret cave nearly all the pistols, submachine guns, rifles and medium machine guns held in the Gestapo vault, along with sizeable quantities of small arms ammunitions and grenades. She finally had to stop and jump back to the cabaret when she saw that the burning ceiling was about to cave in on top of the remaining crates of ammunition. What was left then quickly caught fire and cooked off, exploding and projecting bullets and fragments all around and forcing the Paris firefighters to back away from the fire, like the SS guards. With ammunition continuing to explode for long minutes, the firefighter then concentrated on preventing the fire from spreading to the adjacent buildings on both sides of 84 Avenue Foch. By the time that the fire was finally extinguished a bit before noon, there was only charred structures and human remains left of the SD and Gestapo Paris headquarters. On Mélanie's part, this meant a huge success in many ways. First, she had just killed most of the Gestapo and SD agents in Paris. Second, she had also burned down and

destroyed the German files and archives, eliminating a lot of incriminating information that could have cost more lives among the French resisting the occupation. Third, her second magical attack in two days was bound to make any new SD or Gestapo agents posted to Paris after this extremely nervous and circumspect, something that could only help the cause of the Résistance while not risking to cause the execution of French hostages in retaliation. Finally, she had just added to her hidden arsenal a sizeable number of modern weapons, along with plenty of ammunition for them. All in all, it proved to be a good day by her book.

For Michel Koenig and Dietrich Mannerheim, on the other hand, that day and the ones that followed proved completely fruitless, as they could not find any plausible, realistic explanation for what happened at the Gestapo offices. The autopsy of the bodies from the two attacks on 84 Avenue Foch only reinforced the evidence that something completely out of this reality had happened. However, Michel could not say so on paper, something that would probably have cost him his position in Paris. He was thus forced to officially close his investigation for lack of evidence. Then, to his utter frustration, another German military train was robbed three days later by persons unknown and unseen.

## **CHAPTER 6 – THE COMMUNISTS JUMP IN**

**17:28 (Paris Time)**

**Saturday, July 19, 1941**

**Café-terrace on Boulevard Saint-Michel**

**6<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement, Paris**

**Occupied France**

“But we have to do something, Paul! The Germans started to invade the Soviet Union nearly a month ago, yet we are still sitting around and doing nothing.”

Paul Romanov signaled his friend to lower the volume of his voice while nervously looking around him at the other persons sitting at the café-terrace or walking by on the sidewalk.

“Shhh! Keep your voice down, Pierre! You want some collabo<sup>21</sup> to hear you and signal us to the German secret police? I know perfectly well when the Germans invaded the Soviet Union and it riles me as much as it does you. We do have lots of communist sympathizers ready and willing to act, but the problem is that we have no weapons.”

“Then, let’s steal some weapons from the Germans.” Replied at once Pierre Georges, a 21 year veteran member of the Parti Communiste Français<sup>22</sup>, or PCF. Paul shook his head at that.

“And you think that will be easy? The Germans are already on edge and on their guard because of those fantastic stories of monstrous beasts attacking them at night. There is also this series of rumored acts of looting from German trains passing by Paris.”

“You see?! Somebody is already doing something! It is high time that we do the same.”

Paul Romanov gave his friend a skeptical look and was about to reply rather drily to him when a teenage girl of great beauty suddenly took one of the empty chairs of their table

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<sup>21</sup> Collabo : French short for ‘collaborator’.

<sup>22</sup> Parti Communiste Français : French Communist Party. The French communists were among the most active and best organized groups in the French Résistance and most of them specialized in direct, violent actions against the Germans.



and sat down. Paul eyed the newcomer with immediate suspicion, not pleased at all with this intrusion.

"Excuse me, miss, but I believe that we didn't invite you at our table."

"A sad mistake indeed, mister." Replied the girl while making a spunky smile. Her smile then disappeared and she lowered her voice to a near whisper.

"You were right about your friend, Paul: he does speak quite loudly. I was able to hear him from my table, so I decided to come to see you with a proposal."

"A proposal? Wait! Not so fast, miss! First, who are you?" Asked Paul, ready to leave quickly if things turned sour. Her answer came with a malicious smirk.

"Me? Most of my neighbors call me a traitor and a German-lover, simply because I bed German officers nearly every night. But how is a girl going to make German officers give up military secrets, if not by using the 'pillow talk' method?"

Paul relaxed a bit on hearing those last words but stayed vigilant while detailing her: the girl's beauty was actually stunning and she exuded sensuality in a way many great actresses would have been jealous of.

"So, you pretend to resist the Germans by bedding them and making them talk while jumping their bones. Is that it, miss?"

"Correct, Paul. By the way, you may call me 'Lilie'."

"Well, Lilie, you still crashed into a private conversation between me and my friend. Can you give me one reason why we shouldn't simply get up and walk away right now?"

Her response was to grab one unused napkin from their table and unfold it while looking and smiling at Paul. She then opened her large purse and slid the napkin inside it, rolling it around something that she then put on the table before pushing it towards Paul.

"I think that this should help convince you about my true intentions, Paul."

Nonchalantly covering the unknown object inside the napkin with one hand, Paul felt excitement rise in him when he recognized by touch the object. Cautiously raising a corner of the napkin, he visually confirmed what his sense of touch had told him: there was a pistol under the napkin! Paul looked up and gave a stunned look to the girl, who smiled at his reaction.

"I knew that you would be interested by this, Paul. Now, put discreetly this pistol in a pocket, then give me back this napkin: I have more for you."

Unsure if this was a gift from the sky or an entrapment operation by the Germans, Paul still hid quickly the weapon inside his vest, then gave the napkin back to the girl, who

again put it inside her purse. This time, she passed to him two spare pistol magazines and a box of .38 ACP cartridges, which Paul also shoved inside his vest before eyeing her with intense curiosity.

“Where did you get this pistol, miss?”

“One of my uncles was able to hide away a reserve of French Army weapons and ammunition after the Armistice. Yet, few volunteers have come forward to date to ask for any of them. On the other hand, your Communist Party has the reputation of acting decisively when it wants to, so I decided to approach you, now that the Germans are marching inside the U.S.S.R..”

“You...you were following me around?” Asked Paul, shocked. She then grinned devilishly to him.

“Yes, I was, but only since this morning: you were pretty loud around this neighborhood before the war as a local PCF member and activist, Paul. And if I wanted to denounce you to the Germans, you would have already been arrested...before I gave you this pistol.”

Paul, who acted as a political officer in his local branch of the PCF in the 6<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement and who knew how to play hardball, still gulped hard as he stared at this extraordinarily beautiful girl: this Lilie appeared very serious indeed and was certainly quite gutsy. He thus decided to make a leap of faith and nodded his head.

“Very well, I believe you, Lilie. How many weapons does your uncle have that he could give us?”

“Enough to arm over twenty men, along with plenty of ammunition and explosives. I hope that you do know people in your group who have experience in handling French Army weapons.”

“We do have quite a few Army veterans in our ranks, Lilie. So, how do you want to arrange the delivery of these weapons? Can your uncle drop them inside a hide of our choosing?”

She immediately shook her head at that.

“No! No direct contacts! That would be too dangerous. In fact, this will be the only time that we will meet face to face. What my uncle will do is to leave the weapons and ammunition destined for your group inside one of the subterranean chambers under this arrondissement that are part of the network of sewers, subway lines, quarries and caves running under Paris. My uncle knows well that underground network and is able to move around it at will, out of sight of the Germans.”

Paul exchanged a quick glance with Pierre on hearing that: her story made eminent sense. In fact, the underground of Paris, while not as well known by tourists as its surface monuments and places, was a huge and complex network of tunnels, caves and excavations in which one could easily get lost if not with an experienced guide. It would indeed make a perfect place to hide things and move discreetly around.

“That sounds like a sensible plan, Lillie. When and where will we be able to collect those weapons?”

In response, Mélanie took a folded sheet out of her purse and discreetly passed it to Paul, who took it and pocketed it.

“You will find a rough map drawn on that sheet of paper, along with precise directions. In three days, on Tuesday night, or later if you prefer, you will be able to go collect those weapons, ammunition and explosives. Access to the cache will be through the cellar of the old Collège des Bernardins, on Rue de Poissy.”

“I know that old cellar: it dates back from the 13<sup>th</sup> Century and is fairly easy to access. If this goes well, could we hope for more weapons and ammunition in the future? How will we stay in contact with your uncle?”

“You won’t! The less you know about him, the better for his security. I, however, will know where to find you, Paul. Well, time for me to go! Good luck with your projects!”

Mélanie then got up and walked away, leaving the two communists to look at each other with wonderment.

“Well, I could call this a gift from Heaven, Paul.”

“Or a German trap. We will put that location under surveillance, starting tomorrow, so that we could spot any hidden ambush force near that cellar. With luck, we will then get those weapons you were clamoring to get, Pierre.”

**23:45 (Paris Time)**

**Tuesday, July 22, 1941**

**Cellar of the old Collège des Bernardins**

**24 Rue de Poissy, 5<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement**

**Paris**

“My God! I didn’t know that this underground cellar was so big!” Muttered Pierre Georges as he followed closely Paul Romanov, who held a flashlight in one hand and

was walking slowly in the dark cellar. They and the four other men accompanying them had already passed by a twelfth pair of pillars in the medieval cellar, which would have been totally dark if not for the flashlights held by the communists, and Pierre still couldn't see the end of the cellar.

"Well, according to the sketch that girl gave us, the weapons should be hidden behind the fifteenth pair of pillars, covered by a tarp." Replied Paul while slewing continuously his flashlight from left to right and back... Ah! I see that fifteenth pillar, at last!"

Accelerating his pace a bit, Paul soon was able to point his flashlight past that pair of pillars and was nearly immediately rewarded.

"There is a big pile covered by a tarp behind the pillar! Pierre, help me take it off!"

Once the tarp was thrown aside, Paul's flashlight illuminated a pile of wooden crates and boxes of varying size and painted olive green, making the communist political officer grin with anticipation.

"Looks like that girl kept her promise. Let's check what we have here, men!"

Prying open the crates and boxes with the crowbar conveniently left on top of the pile, the communists were quickly left ecstatic by what they found.

"Twelve pistols, six Model 38 submachine guns, twelve Lebel 8mm rifles and 120 grenades, plus enough ammunition for many operations... This is much better than my most optimistic expectations. Those grenades and pistols in particular will do us a lot of good. Alright, pocket the grenades and pistols, then we will split up the rifles and submachine guns among ourselves, along with the ammunition and spare magazines." Soon, the six men were ready to leave the medieval cellar, heavily loaded with weapons and ammunition. Cautiously making their way out while checking for possible ambushes, the Frenchmen then split in pairs in order to be less conspicuous, as the German night curfew was in effect. As he stayed close to the walls of the buildings he walked by, Paul gave a big grin to his friend.

"Well, Pierre, now you have everything you need to do something about those Germans."

"Damn right! I will just need to learn how to use and care for my new weapons first." Replied the happy militant.

**07:37 (Paris Time)**

**Thursday, August 21, 1941**

**Subway station Barbès-Rochecouart**

**18<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement, Paris**

The first draft of wind out of the subway tunnel announced the imminent arrival of a train at the underground station. Hiding his nervousness as best he could, Pierre Georges stepped closer to the edge of the quay, like the hundreds of other waiting commuters in the station. By doing so, he ended up directly behind a German officer who was also waiting for the train. Pierre didn't know much about German military ranks and uniforms, but the amount of gold braid on this German's vest told him that he would make a perfectly adequate target for his first ever direct resistance action. As the train entered the station, the conductor started applying the brakes to slow it down, making them screech loudly and adding to the noise already made by the wheels. Pierre then decided that this moment was just right for him. Taking out from inside his vest a MAB Model D caliber .38 ACP pistol, he raised his armed hand to just below the level of the right shoulder blade of the German officer and pressed the muzzle of his gun against the back of his victim, its barrel angled so that the bullet would travel towards the man's heart, then pulled the trigger. The pistol's detonation, its muzzle blast partly absorbed inside the German's torso, barely registered above the noise of the train's screeching brakes. The commuters immediately near Pierre heard the shot and jerked in surprise and fear, but most of the other commuters didn't and piled inside the train once it had stopped and opened its doors, oblivious to the drama that had just happened. Pierre didn't waste time to see who would react first to his action and quickly left the quay, pocketing his pistol and taking one of the many access tunnels connecting this quay with other quays in the station. He was long gone by the time that a French policeman alerted by a screaming woman showed up at the scene, only to find that the German officer was dead. Swearing to himself as he imagined the probable German reactions to this, the policeman ran to the nearest emergency telephone in the station and called for reinforcements, then returned to stand guard near the dead German officer. By that time, all the actual witnesses to the crime had left, on their way to other subway stations. Even the single cartridge brass casing left behind by Pierre was gone, accidentally kicked off the quay and onto the rails by a commuter in a hurry to leave the station. That

left very little indeed to work with for the German police and counter-intelligence officers who arrived on the scene a bit over one hour later.

Even though it was faced with a nearly insoluble murder case, the German High Command in Paris was not long in reacting to it: three French civilians taken as hostages were executed by firing squad the next morning, with the news published in all the local newspapers in order to pass a firm message to the French population. Mélanie sighed with frustration when she read the morning newspaper the day after the execution: was it truly worth it to kill Germans as an act of resistance, if that act automatically condemned to death French civilian hostages? On the other hand, doing nothing was about as bad in her mind. Thinking about this dilemma for long minutes, she finally decided that indirect attacks were still the best method for her to pursue.

**07:11 (Paris Time)**

**Sunday, August 24, 1941**

**Dining room of the Hotel Prince de Galles**

**Avenue George-V, 8<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement, Paris**

Being a relatively junior level officer compared to the swarm of senior staff officers lodged like him in the luxurious Hotel Prince de Galles, situated near the famous Arc de Triomphe, Michel Koenig took place at a table relegated in a far corner of the big dining room, where junior officers were expected to sit. Even though it was a Sunday and most German officers in Paris would be off and relaxing today, Michel felt far from relaxed and certainly wouldn't be off work today. The assassination of a Kriegsmarine senior officer at the Barbès-Rochecouart subway station was proving to be a near insoluble case for him, but his superiors still insisted that he kept working at it. His conspicuous lack of success in the two preceding cases he had been given, the looting of German supply trains and the attacks against the Gestapo offices, was starting to badly taint his reputation as a criminal investigator. If this continued, he could very well be sent off to something a lot less nice than Paris, something like the Russian Front.

Michel was about to give his order to the waiter who had just approached his table when a concert of ferocious and very loud barks made him nearly jump out of his chair. His eyes then bulged when he saw the four big, sinister-looking dark hounds who

were now in the middle of the dining room, with each one charging a separate table where senior officers were eating or drinking coffee. Those senior officers, frozen in their seats by terror on seeing those hellish apparitions, never had a chance to run away before the hounds fell on them, their big mouths wide open and showing long canines. The French waiter beside Michel let drop the coffee pot he had in his hands at that sight before running away, screaming. On his part, Michel needed a good two seconds before getting over the shock from seeing the beasts and then react. That was long enough for four of the senior German officers to be horribly mauled by the beasts. One of the hounds then added to the terror among the diners by blowing a wide cone of flames from its nostrils, all the while biting off the head of a German. The flames hit two other officers, putting their uniforms on fire and transforming them into screaming human torches. A second beast was breathing fire when Michel managed to grab his pistol and draw it out of its belt holster. He however quickly realized that he could not fire from that distance without risking to hit one of the German officers being mauled. A hound then turned its head long enough for Michel to see its eyes: they were glowing a fiery red! Severely shaken by that, Michel wondered for a moment about what to do. If he wanted to shoot his pistol without hitting a fellow officer, then he would have to get much closer to the beasts. However, that meant coming within range of their hellish flame breath. Taking a decision, Michel knocked over his round table with a good foot kick, then grabbed it by two of its wooden legs and lifted it. With the table now held like a shield, Michel charged one of the beasts while yelling as loud as he could to attract its attention and thus give a chance to the officer being attacked by it to run away. His desperate tactic actually worked, deciding the beast into switching target. That however also got him a cone of flame, which thankfully hit the table he was carrying instead of him. The thick wood of the table's top dispersed the flames but Michel still felt the scorching heat from them. He continued his charge until his table top smashed into the beast, throwing it on the ground. Now having a clean shot from point blank range, Michel emptied his Luger P08 pistol in the creature. The beast howled with pain and rage but, despite being hit by all eight bullets from Michel's Luger, still got up on its four legs and attempted to bite him. Holding firmly to the table that was its sole defense, he pushed back as hard as he could, sending the beast down on the carpet for the second time. His pistol was however empty and he just couldn't afford to take the few seconds needed to reload it, so he instead smashed his table on top of the hound and stood on top of it, pinning it down and also covering its flame-spewing nostrils. While holding with his weight the

table on top of the beast, Michel was finally able to reload his pistol with a fresh clip. Seeing that another of the hounds was now staring at him and preparing to charge him, Michel did his best to forget the debilitating fear he felt right now and carefully aimed his pistol. His first shot hit the beast in one of its fiery red eyes, making it howl in agony while contorting wildly. Michel's second shot went inside its mouth, penetrating deep inside its cranium. Mortally wounded, the hound fell on its side and started thrashing on the carpet while spewing an ultimate fire cone that put fire to a set of nearby drapes. Michel was about to shoot another time when the beast vanished into thin air. The hound stuck under his table also vanished at the same time, sending the table and Michel down brutally by two feet. Having a hard time to believe that he was still alive, Michel looked slowly around him, embracing the scene of mayhem, carnage and spreading flames that the dining room had become. All four beasts were now gone, vanished! Getting up on his feet and holstering back his pistol, he shouted in French at the nearest waiter he saw.

"YOU! CALL FOR AMBULANCES! ALSO, TELL YOUR COMRADES TO COME DOUSE THOSE FLAMES BEFORE THE WHOLE HOTEL BURNS DOWN!"

"UH, YES MONSIEUR!"

Returning his attention to the officers around him, Michel tried to judge if any of them could still use help in the form of first aid. Sadly, there were now enough wounded, many of them severely hurt, to keep him busy for a long while...if the flames would not soon force him to run out. He thus elected to go help first the nearest wounded man, a Luftwaffe colonel whose left leg was badly mauled and bled profusely. First ripping wide open the left leg of the wounded officer's breeches, Michel next used a table cloth to make a rudimentary bandage. The Luftwaffe colonel winced with pain when Michel tightened the bandage, but he did not scream and gave a grateful look to him.

"You acted quite bravely, Hauptmann. If not for you, me and many others would now be dead."

"I just did my duty, Herr Oberst."

"Maybe, but you did it in exemplary fashion. May I have your name and unit?"

"Hauptmann Michel Koenig, of the Feldgendarmarie, Herr Oberst."

The colonel then looked at where the beast pinned down by Michel had been.

"This...all this, was impossible! How could those beasts disappear like this? And where did they come from? They were no ordinary dogs!"



"No, they certainly weren't, Herr Oberst! The important thing now is that they are gone."

"What if they come back? I heard stories about some terrifying beasts attacking the Gestapo offices some months ago. Is Paris cursed for us?"

That last sentence struck Michel, who paused to think about it.

"Paris, cursed? Then, somebody needs to do the cursing, a somebody that could well be able to play the ghost at our expense."

"Play the ghost at our expense? What are you talking about, Hauptmann Koenig?"

"I am talking about the way someone who is very elusive has been stealing from our supply trains for months now. Anyone able to conjure such monstrosities as what we faced here this morning could probably go around at will, unseen by us."

The colonel thought about his words for a moment before nodding his head. By then, an army of hotel employees were frantically extinguishing the fires with buckets of water and one fire hose.

"I now remember about the thefts from the two trains requisitioned by General-Feldmarschal Göring. They were strongly guarded, yet someone was able to steal from them without being seen. Mein Gott, who could be able to do all this?"

"Someone extremely dangerous, Herr Oberst." Replied Michel, feeling dread. His chances of catching whoever caused those murderous apparitions were about nil, while he doubted that this attack would be the last such incident. He then thought about the possible response of the German High Command to this latest attack. Its response to the murder of a Kriegsmarine officer in the Paris subway had infuriated the Führer, who had deemed it way too timid and who had then ordered that each dead German would result in the execution of a hundred French hostages. Looking around at the bodies littering the dining lounge of the hotel, Michel felt sick to his stomach at the thought of what was going to follow<sup>23</sup>.

## **08:23 (Paris Time)**

**Wednesday, August 27, 1941**

### **Kitchen of the 'Mille et Une Nuits' cabaret**

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<sup>23</sup> During the German occupation of France, an estimated 30,000 French civilian hostages were shot by the Germans as retaliation for acts of resistance.

Marie Laurent felt both sadness and discouragement as she stopped reading the morning newspaper. Putting the paper down on the large kitchen table, she looked up at Mélanie, who had just entered the kitchen.

“Mélanie, you better have a look at the front page of the morning paper.”

Marie’s tone of voice alarmed at once Mélanie, who then walked around the table in order to read the front page of the newspaper. The teenager’s face hardened after a quick read and she swore to herself.

“By all the fires of Hell! Six hundred French civilian hostages executed?! Those damn Germans will have to pay for this one fine day.”

“And then they would execute a few hundreds more hostages, Mélanie? Those hostages were innocent people and I am sure that the Germans have many hundreds more in jail, ready to be marched in front of a firing squad. Attacks on German soldiers, by whatever means, will only cost more innocent lives, while they won’t do anything to help liberate France, Mélanie.”

“So, we are all supposed to sit down and do nothing, like sheep, while the Germans loot and brutalize France, Mother?”

While understanding Mélanie’s reaction, Marie could only lower her head in discouragement.

“It seems so, Mélanie. Any violent attack by French people, or even by unexplained apparitions, will only cause the mass deaths of innocent people.”

Refusing to simply accept this, Mélanie thought over the problem for a moment. Marie suddenly saw a grin appear on her face, while her eyes lit up like under a revelation.

“...Attacks by French people or by apparitions...of course!”

She then ran out of the kitchen, not giving a chance for Marie to ask what she had just thought.

**10:09 (London Time) / 11:09 (Paris Time)**

**Military surplus and collectibles stores, Sloane Street**

**Belgravia District, London**

**England**

The old First World War veteran who owned and ran the military surplus and collectibles store on Sloane Street, in the Belgravia District of London, near the

Buckingham Palace, watched with some surprise as a tall teenage girl entered his small but well packed shop. The great majority of his customers were normally men with graying hair, with maybe a few younger men thrown in the mix. The shop owner let the girl wander a bit around the store, looking at the various pieces of military uniforms, field kits and even a few rifles and revolvers on display, before asking her politely a question as she was getting close to his service counter.

“May I help you with something, miss?”

The girl, a teenager of nearly impossible beauty with sparkling green eyes and long silky black hair, gave him a warm smile that nearly melted the shop owner. She then spoke in excellent English.

“Yes, you may, my good man! To make a long story short, one of my uncles fervently wishes that he could join the army and help defend England. Unfortunately, he has a medical condition that prevented him from being accepted as a recruit and he has already been refused for enrolment...three times. That deeply disappointed and depressed my uncle, who still wishes that he could defend his own country home. When he told me about his broken dream of serving in the Army, an idea came to me to at least make him feel like he is doing his part. What I want is to find and purchase for his birthday a used military uniform and field kit and, if possible, a rifle and ammunition, so that he could dress as a soldier and stand guard in his country house. He may not actually fight, but it would make him so happy to at least feel useful in this war.”

The girl’s story attracted instant sympathy in the heart of the shop owner: he could understand perfectly well the wishes of that uncle to serve and defend his home despite his medical handicap. Why deny a harmless fantasy to such a patriotic and willing man?

“I believe that I have here everything needed to kit your uncle out, miss, including weapons and ammunition. What size is your uncle?”

“Uh, he is about the same height as me but is not very strongly built: he is a bit of a sickly man after all.”

“Very well, miss! If you will follow me around, I will show you what could fit your uncle.”

“Thank you very much, sir. You are very kind indeed.”

Going first to the clothing racks on which various types of used uniforms, both current and old, were suspended, the shop owner selected a pair of khaki wool battledress uniforms, then checked their size against the girl’s height.

"Hum! I guess that both of those battledress uniforms could fit your uncle, but one of them is a bit larger at the waist."

"In that case, I will buy both of them, in case one turns out to be too tight-fitting. What about boots, gaiters, berets, web gear and field kit?"

"This way, please!"

Going to wall shelves containing a wide assortment of boots and other various military gear, the owner helped the teenager pick the equivalent of two full military field kits, along with berets, a steel helmet, boots and one khaki overcoat. Next, the man showed the girl a rifle rack that was locked, plus a glass counter in which a number of handguns and knives were on display.

"The Lee Enfield rifles you see here are old models dating from the Great War, but they are still perfectly serviceable and deadly. In fact, the Lee Enfield rifle has changed very little in the past decades."

Taking one of the rifles from the wall rack, the owner opened the bolt action, so that the girl could see that its chamber and short magazine were empty, then handed her the rifle and showed her the various parts of interest.

"This is a Lee Enfield Mark III rifle, which was mass-produced during the Great War. It is clip-fed and its magazine can hold up to ten .303 rounds. The safety is here, at the back of the bolt. A good marksman could shoot down an enemy from 800 yards with this baby."

That made the girl smile to the shop owner.

"Oh, I'm sure that my uncle won't need to fire from that far if German paratroopers or spies attempt to attack his house, mister. This should be perfect for my uncle."

Seeing a good opportunity to make some really good business today, the owner next guided her to the display case full of handguns.

"If you wish for your uncle to have something more practical than a rifle at very short range, then I have a choice of revolvers and semi-automatic pistols that would be perfect for home defense. I have a number of Webley .455 caliber revolvers, along with some Belgian FN-made pistols and a number of old German pistols captured as trophies during the Great War."

"I believe that a revolver will be safer and easier to use by my uncle than a pistol, sir. I will take that Webley revolver. Do you have a proper holster for it that could be clipped to the web gear I selected?"

"Of course, miss! Let me get one for you."

Returning a minute later to the handgun display counter with the requested holster, the shop owner found the girl examining with interest his wide collection of military badges, rank insignias and unit patches, displayed in a long glass counter.

"Sir, I would like to buy an assortment of various badges, insignias and unit patches, so that my uncle could choose how to personalize his uniform. However, I personally don't know anything about the proper arrangement of such patches and insignias on uniforms. Would you mind give me a few tips on where to fix them once I choose a few sets of patches?"

"I will be happy to help you with that, miss. Let's see what I have in terms of complete sets of patches, insignias and badges... Hum, I could make your uncle look like a lieutenant of the Royal Marines, a lance corporal of the Royal Fusiliers or a Canadian sergeant from the Royal 22<sup>nd</sup> Regiment."

That list seemed to please much the girl, who grinned to the shop owner.

"Perfect! I will take all three sets! Can you do for me a quick sketch on where each patch goes?"

"I will do even better, miss: I will give you a small army pocket book detailing the regulations concerning the proper placement of patches and insignias on battledress uniforms, then will review with you its main points."

"Excellent! Once that is done, my last need will be for as much .303 and .455 caliber ammunition as you can spare."

"Uh, will you be able to carry all that stuff by yourself, miss?" Asked the shop owner, eyeing the slender, sensual body of the teenager. The girl fixed him with resolute eyes as she answered him.

"I am stronger than I appear, sir. Don't worry about me. I will simply stuff everything into two kit bags for easier transportation."

"As you wish, miss!"

After getting the uniform regulations book for the girl and explaining the main rules to her, the shop owner went in the back of his shop and filled a steel ammunition container with boxes of .303 caliber rifle rounds and of .455 caliber revolver rounds, then brought the heavy container to his front service counter.

"Here you are, miss: 700 rounds of .303 rifle ammunition, plus 250 rounds of .455 caliber revolver ammunition. Your uncle will have enough to shoot down quite a few German paratroopers."

"I hope so, sir!" Replied Mélanie, smiling widely while taking out of her purse a thick pile of British banknotes.

## **CHAPTER 7 – THE PARIS COMMANDO**

**22:48 (Paris Time)**

**Saturday, August 30, 1941**

**Cabaret ‘Mille et Une Nuits’**

**34 Rue Saint-André-des-Arts, Quartier Latin**

**6<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement, Paris, France**

The young German fighter pilot, having just climaxed himself, then pleased Mélanie by continuing to stimulate her with his hands and tongue, allowing her to climax as well a minute later. Smiling to the handsome blond pilot, Mélanie knelt beside him on the bed and, taking the spent condom off his penis and throwing it aside, used the bed sheet to clean up his genitals.

“You were a really caring lover, Rudolph: that deserves an extra.”

She then grabbed his limp penis with both hands and started stimulating it manually, to the pleasure of the German pilot. As soon as it started again to harden, Mélanie started licking the tip of the penis, pinching the base once it became fully erect. With Rudolph now unable to ejaculate and with Mélanie applying all her experience and science of oral sex to stimulate him, the pilot soon was jerking with spasms of intense pleasure that turned into a near torture after three minutes of fondling, licking and sucking. After five minutes of this treatment, Rudolph had to give up.

“S...stop, please! My...my groin...about to explode.”

Mélanie then released at once her pinch on his penis, making a jet of sperm shoot up high while Rudolph nearly shouted in an explosive orgasm. The German laid panting on his back for a few seconds before he could speak again.

“M...mein Gott! This must have been the best sex I ever had. You are a true angel, Mélanie.”

That made the teenager smile devilishly as she got off the bed to dress back.

“And you proved yourself to be a top lover, Rudolph. Don’t hesitate to come back anytime...and bring the rest of your squadron with you at the same time.”

Rudolph made a face at that.

"I'm sure that the other guys would love to come as a group, but we still have a war to fight, Mélanie, and these British are tough customers indeed. My unit is also going to be extra busy in the next few weeks, as we are going to be reequipped with a new type of fighter."

Hiding her immediate interest on hearing that information, Mélanie caressed the pilot's face as he sat up on the edge of the bed, while activating her 'Charm' spell on him.

"And that new fighter, is it as pretty as you...or as me?"

"Nothing can be more beautiful than you, Mélanie, but the Focke-Wulf 190 is indeed a racy-looking plane. It is also very fast and heavily armed."

"As heavily armed as you?" Said Mélanie, smiling while caressing his penis, making Rudolph take in a deep breath while closing his eyes for a moment.

"Well, I don't have two 7.9mm machine guns and four 20mm cannons between my legs, but thanks for the compliment. Uh, what time is it now?"

"It is just past eleven o'clock, my dear Rudolph."

"Oops! I better get dressed quickly, before my wingmen depart for the base without me."

"And it would be such a terrible thing for you to be stuck here for the night?" Replied Mélanie in a falsely hurt tone. Rudolph couldn't help stare at her magnificent nude body and oh so tempting breasts before answering her.

"Hell, I wish I could stay more, Mélanie, but my commander would skin me alive if I am not back at base in the morning: he will need me to help receive our first new planes."

"Then, you really better hurry, Rudolph."

She then helped the young pilot to get back in uniform faster and kissed him one last time after he paid her, adding a very generous tip for her. Mélanie watched him leave with decidedly mixed feelings: on one hand, he was an enemy of France and would be a legitimate target for attack by her; on the other hand, Rudolph was actually a decent man, on top of being a good lover. Those mixed feelings then reminded Mélanie that, the more things went, the more she seemed to stray from the standard template of a Succubus: demons were not supposed to care about the fate of simple Humans, or even about the fate of other demons. Maybe that was one of the reasons why she had been run out of the Abyss. Sighing heavily, she picked up her pieces of clothing lying all around the guest room and went to her own room: she had a big and busy night still ahead, but not in a bed.



Once in her bedroom and with the door locked, Mélanie went to the full length mirror sitting in a corner and stood facing it, fully naked. Concentrating while looking at herself, she activated her 'Polymorph' power. A pale halo surrounded her body as it started changing shape according to the mental image of herself she had formed in her mind. Less than twenty seconds later, she had turned into a fit, handsome and strong young man of the same height as she was as Mélanie. Looking critically at her new penis, she found it rather ordinary to her taste.

"Hell, if I can change shape at will, then I might as well be at my best in every aspect!"

Concentrating further, she made her penis grow further, in length as well as in diameter, until she was satisfied with it.

"Now, that's what I call a real dick! Time to jump to my secret cave and dress up as a British soldier."

**01:19 (Paris Time)**

**Sunday, August 31, 1941**

**Avenue Daumesnil, near the Fort of Vincennes**

**Forest of Vincennes, eastern suburbs of Paris**

Having just left the Fort of Vincennes, one of the forts of the Thiers fortification complex built in the 1840s to defend Paris, the German motorized patrol rolled down the Avenue Daumesnil, heading towards the Charenton Gate and the 12<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement, which it was tasked to patrol on this night in order to enforce the night curfew in town. The small convoy, with a SdKfz 231 heavy armored car leading two Henschel 33 medium trucks loaded with infantrymen, was going fairly fast as it travelled through this deserted part of the Forest of Vincennes. Only the headlights of the vehicles and the sparse light from a half moon illuminated the dark woods that the patrol was presently going through. With the poor ambient light and limited visibility provided by the narrow armored windows of his vehicle, the driver of the armored car did not notice two groups of cobblestones in the road that stuck out slightly from the rest of the pavement. The front right wheel of his 2.2 ton armored car rolled over one of those groups of elevated stones, triggering the antitank mine buried under the pavements.

**BOOM**

The front of the six-wheeled armored car flew up, while the vehicle rolled on its left side. It nearly immediately caught fire, its fuel tank ripped open by the powerful explosion. The unfortunate driver and gunner of the armored car, either stunned or unconscious because of the blast of the mine, were not able to get out in time and burned alive inside their vehicle. As the drivers of the two trucks following the armored car braked as fast as they could, the staccato of a machine gun came from between the trees bordering the road on the left side. The infantrymen in the rear of the first truck, holding to dear life to the sides of their vehicle as it braked brutally, were swept by the first machine gun burst coming from the left. Six Germans were killed outright, while four more were wounded and collapsed on the floor of the truck. A second burst swept the survivors as they hurriedly jumped out of the back of their vehicle, killing or wounding four more men. Four seconds later, a rifle shot rang from a position at least fifty yards away from the approximate location of the machine gun, downing one of the German soldiers about to jump out of the second truck. A second rifle shot followed, downing another German soldier. The surviving Germans who could jump out of their vehicles took cover inside the right-side drainage ditch along the road and started firing back in the direction the rifle and machine gun fire had come, with their young officer shouting orders. That officer suddenly stopped shouting in mid sentence and collapsed as a rifle shot rang from the woods on the right side of the road...from the back of the Germans in the ditch! Swearing loudly, the Germans divided their fire in three directions, still shooting blind at unseen enemies. More rifle fire came from the right, then the machine gun resumed firing from the left side of the road. Feeling overwhelmed and with their numbers dwindling steadily, the Germans did as best they could, redeploying inside the woods on the right side of the forest and forming a defensive circle there. A pair of primed grenades suddenly flew in quick succession from inside the forest, falling and exploding among the Germans and causing many new casualties. The survivors then heard short orders being shouted in English from inside the woods. Two Germans then saw an armed man wearing a steel helmet and a khaki uniform and web gear quickly emerge out of the woods and run across the road. He disappeared among the dark trees as one German fired at him but apparently missed. A second armed man then ran across the road and into the left side woods under the eyes of the Germans.

“BRITISH SOLDIERS?!” Exclaimed the most senior survivor, an obergefreiter<sup>24</sup>.  
“HOW COULD THEY BE HERE, IN PARIS?”

The obergefreiter then had to hastily throw himself down as the machine gun fired another burst, sweeping the woods at waist height. Then, the woods fell silent, except from the screams and moans of the wounded and the explosions from machine gun ammunition cooking off in the burning armored car. The obergefreiter waited a good minute, listening and looking, before he decided that the enemy must have retreated through the woods. Getting back up, he gave a few short orders to the nine men still alive and intact.

“Okay, let’s take care of our wounded before they bleed to death! Kruger, Schenck and Dittmar, you go take position in the woods on the other side of the road and protect our flank while we treat our wounded. Reinforcements should arrive soon from the fort after such a firefight.”

The young NCO, still under the shock of that short but brutal fight, soon found out that his platoon had suffered a total of thirteen men killed and eleven more wounded, many seriously. To that had to be added the two crewmen of the destroyed armored car. He was having the dead soldiers lined up beside the road and covered with their ponchos when the noise of vehicles approaching from the direction of the fort made him look up. He then saw the headlights of no less than six vehicles approach fast on the road. Walking onto the road and standing on the right side of it, he waved at the approaching vehicles to slow down. The first vehicle, a SdKfz 222 light armored car, did slow down and stopped once level with him, with four trucks loaded with troops also stopping, but one armored car following the lead vehicle then jumped the line and started speeding along the left lane of the road, having probably been ordered by radio to go take a covering position ahead of the ambush point. Before the frantic obergefreiter, shouting and gesticulating hard, could make it stop, the armored car rolled on another antitank mine and blew up. The hauptmann commanding the relief column swore loudly as he watched the armored car catch fire, then looked down at the distressed obergefreiter.

“WHO ATTACKED YOU, OBERGEFREITER? FRENCH TERRORISTS?”

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<sup>24</sup> Obergefreiter : German rank equivalent to master corporal.

“No, Herr Hauptmann! It was British soldiers! We saw two of them as they ran across the road while retreating. They ran into the woods to our left, going roughly south.”

“BRITISH SOLDIERS, HERE? BUT THAT’S IMPOSSIBLE!”

“I know, Herr Hauptmann, but we clearly saw them: they wore British battledress and had British style steel helmets and web gear. We also heard them exchange orders in English.”

The officer passed a hand in his face, taken off balance by that information.

“British soldiers operating in Paris... The High Command will go bonkers when they will hear about this. And I don’t want to think about the reaction of the Führer when he will learn about this attack.”

“Well, sir, these British were deadly enough: we suffered a total of fifteen men killed and eleven more men wounded, many seriously. Our armored car was destroyed by an antitank mine, then we were engaged with machine gun and rifle fire as we were jumping out of our trucks. These British soldiers were well armed and were ready for our patrol, sir.”

The officer gave another, somber look at the two burning armored cars and shook his head.

“When I think that Paris is supposed to be a rest and recreation center for our troops in France. DAMN!”

## **01:42 (Paris Time)**

### **Fort of Ivry, Thiers fortification complex**

#### **Ivry-sur-Seine, Southeast suburbs of Paris**

The four German soldiers on sentry duty at the main gate of the Fort of Ivry, which was part of the complex of forts surrounding Paris and built in the 1840s, jerked and turned around towards the interior of the fort when an explosion resonated in the night. They were in time to see a ball of flames rise from one of the dozen or so medium trucks parked in the middle of the grassy area in the center of the pentagonal fort. Less than four seconds later, a second truck exploded into flames. One of the German sentries then saw a fleeting silhouette running behind the line of parked vehicles.

“THERE, BEHIND THE TRUCKS! I SEE AN INTRUDER! ALARM! ALARM!”

Two of the Germans then started running towards the trucks as a third vehicle went up in flames, leaving two men to guard the main gate and its entrance tunnel. One of the running Germans then stumbled and fell to the ground as a rifle shot rang out. Tightening his teeth, his companion continued running as fast as he could but started zigzagging in order to become a more difficult target. That saved his life, as a bullet whistled past his ears three seconds later. Finally arriving nearly out of breath at the nearest parked vehicle, a VW staff car, he crouched behind it for a moment, time to catch his breath, then cautiously stuck his head out to try to locate the attackers. He barely had time to see a British soldier, with his typical 'barber plate' steel helmet, standing beside a truck and pointing a rifle at him, before he ducked down, barely avoiding being shot. Taking a deep breath, the German then rose and quickly pointed his MP 40 submachine gun, firing a short burst before ducking down again behind the staff car. The explosion of a fourth truck made him cringe, while his blood froze on hearing the nasty staccato of a machine gun as it started barking with short, aimed bursts. From the sound of it, that machine gun seemed to be firing from atop one of the southern casemates of Bastion Number Three. The German was enraged to see one of the two men left at the main gate, one who was a good friend of his, topple after a machine gun burst. Things got even worse when more German soldiers, rudely awakened by the explosions and shots, started running out of their barrack block, a four-storey stone building with peaked roof. A brief flash from a small explosion in the air at waist level, followed by a concert of screams of pain and the toppling of many of the men running out of the barrack block, made the German sentry swear out loud.

"TEUFFEL! S-MINEN<sup>25</sup>!"

After a second S-Mine exploded, butchering more soldiers, the Germans attempting to leave their barrack block became a lot more cautious and started walking alongside the walls of their building, avoiding the grassy surfaces. However, that only made them ideal targets for the enemy, with a machine gun starting to fire from a fresh location and toppling more German soldiers. Grenades thrown from atop the casemate nearest the barrack building then caused more German casualties. Cautiously sticking his head out,

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<sup>25</sup> S-Minen : German designation for a type of anti-personnel mine designed to bounce out of the ground when activated and then explode at waist level, spreading shrapnel all around. The S-Mine was most feared by Allied infantrymen during WW2.

the German sentry saw one British soldier, then another one, run from behind a small outer shed and enter Bastion Number Three, apparently withdrawing.

“THE ENEMY IS ENTERING BASTION NUMBER THREE!”

His warning was heard by a number of German soldiers, who were now emerging in increasing numbers from the various buildings inside the fort, prompting them to converge on the entrance of that bastion with weapons at the ready. The sentry then ran to join them, gluing himself to the stone wall near the entrance to the bastion. One of the Germans already beside the door looked at him in the dark and asked a question in a less than assured voice.

“What the hell is happening? Who is attacking us?”

“British soldiers: I saw a few of them as they ran around. They seem to want to use the caves and tunnels under the fort to escape.”

The other German nodded his head in understanding: the Fort of Ivory had been built over an extensive complex of old underground carries and tunnels that formed a true subterranean maze, a maze poorly known by the German garrison of the fort. On an order from a junior officer, four soldiers then rushed inside the bastion through its entrance door, only to be greeted by an exploding grenade that downed three of them. Someone then shouted from the inside in English, sarcasm in his voice.

“HEY, FRITZ, YOU LIKE TO PLAY HIDE AND SEEK? THEN COME AND TRY TO GET US! I HOPE THAT YOU ARE NOT AFRAID OF THE DARK!”

That enraged the junior officer, a young lieutenant, who rushed inside with more men while the latter delivered a withering covering fire. The Germans then found themselves near the opening of a stone staircase going down to the basement levels. The young lieutenant looked at two of his men and gave a few short orders.

“You and you, go get as many flashlights and lamps as you could find, and quickly! The rest of us will now go down this staircase to pursue those damn British! GO!”

Leading by example, the young lieutenant then started running down the straight staircase, his Luger pistol in his right hand. He was about to get to the feet of the staircase, with a dozen men close behind him, when the deafening noise of a machine gun fired from inside the basement rang out. The lieutenant, along with five other Germans, was hit by the first long burst and collapsed on top of the stairs, bleeding and dying. The rest of the Germans hastily withdrew a few steps up, then threw a volley of stick grenades ahead. Four grenades exploded, deafening further the Germans, who

then rushed forward, passing by their dead and wounded. To their utter frustration, they didn't find a trace of their fleeting enemy, but they did hear another sarcastic taunt in English, coming apparently from another staircase going further down to the level of the upper network of caves and tunnels.

"WHAT? YOU GERMANS ARE AFRAID OF THE DARK, AFTER ALL?"

A graying feldwebel<sup>26</sup> swore at that and looked at the soldier following him.

"We will need more grenades, lots more, on top of flashlights. There are no lights down there and that maze is way too good to my taste at offering ambush opportunities to these damn British soldiers. The only way we will be able to flush them out is with liberal use of grenades. Now, go! You three, go help our wounded in the staircase and get medics to help them!"

"Yes, Feldwebel!"

The old senior NCO then exchanged a glance with the sentry from the main gate.

"We should have sealed all these damn caves and tunnels the moment we occupied this fort a year ago. Who knows where some of those tunnels end up."

"HEY, WE ARE STILL WAITING!" Someone shouted in English from the lower levels, making the feldwebel swear.

"Himmel! If I catch one of those damn British, I will skin him alive!"

Six minutes later, soldiers arrived with extra flashlights and grenades. Once they were distributed around, the feldwebel, having taken one of the flashlights, pointed two of his men.

"Schmidt, Hartmann, you take point! If you encounter resistance, back off at once and let us throw grenades ahead."

"Yes, Feldwebel!" Replied Schmidt, less than reassured, before cautiously starting to go down the stairs to the upper underground level. To his relief, nobody fired at him or threw a grenade at his feet and he soon emerged inside a huge, dark cavern. His flashlight could not in fact reach all the way to the end of the old underground quarry and the place was otherwise pitch black, putting additional stress on his nerves. Sweeping the beam of his flashlight around after emerging from the tunnel containing the staircase, he suddenly jumped to the side with a shriek of terror: the beam of his flashlight had just illuminated a large pile of human bones and craniums stacked inside a

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<sup>26</sup> Feldwebel : German rank equivalent to warrant officer.

wall niche of the cave. It took him a few seconds to make his heart slow down from his sudden fright.

“Mein Gott! This place is spooky as hell!”

The feldwebel arrived inside the cave a few seconds later and contemplated for a moment the piled bones.

“No need to be scared, men: these ones are long dead. It is the living we have to be careful about.”

“YOU GOT THAT RIGHT, FRITZ!”

A devilish laughter followed those words in English, making more than one German make the sign of the cross. With cold anger filling him, the feldwebel pointed in the direction from which the voice had come.

“Form an extended line and advance in that direction, men. You two, stay here and prevent any British from using that staircase.”

One of the two men designated to stay by the staircase was the main gate sentry, who glanced at the pile of human bones before looking at his companion.

“To be honest, Hans, I haven’t been this scared in a long while.”

“Ditto for me, Heinrich. What a sinister place!”

The two men then fell silent, anxiously looking at the darkness around them as their comrades formed up in extended line and disappeared towards the right side end of the quarry.

About a minute later, with the lights of the advancing Germans barely visible in the distance because of the numerous rock pillars supporting the cave’s ceiling, a rifle shot rang out, followed by the explosion of a grenade. Heinrich, his nerves put to a rough test, switched off his flashlight at once, in order not to be an easy target, and took two steps back before kneeling behind one corner of the staircase entrance, imitated by Hans. They now had only the light filtering down the staircase left as illumination as what sounded like a furious firefight, with multiple grenade explosions, erupted to their right. Hans frowned as he watched the fleeting flash from explosions and small arms fire in the distance.

“Himmel, our men must have encountered those damn British at last. I hope that they will wipe out those bastards.”

“I hope so too! I...”



A much larger and brighter flash than before suddenly made Heinrich blink, with the roar of an explosion following a second later. He then heard distant screams of pain that made his hair stand on his head.

“Teuffel! What was that?”

His answer came a few seconds later, when a screaming human torch appeared between two stone pillars to his right, running towards him. The unfortunate man however stumbled and collapsed, still burning, well before he could get to the staircase entrance.

“Mein Gott! The British used an incendiary bomb on our men!”

Petrified by fear and horror, the two Germans heard the firefight continue for a few more minutes before it gradually died down. With the cave now silent and dark, Heinrich and Hans looked at each other with dread.

“Don’t tell me that all of our comrades are now dead!” Whispered Hans, close to panicking. Heinrich clenched his teeth before answering him.

“I’m afraid so, Hans. We better go get some reinforcements here.”

He barely had time to get to his feet before an English voice came out of the darkness, taunting.

“HEY, WE WERE HAVING FUN HERE! BRING SOME MORE FRIENDS TO THE PARTY!”

Heinrich, who understood English but spoke it poorly, did not reply to that, except by firing a long burst from his submachine gun in the direction from which the voice had come. He then grabbed Hans by one arm and pulled him back towards the staircase.

“Let’s get out of here before those British come for us in strength.”

“Good idea!”

The two Germans literally ran up the stairs, stopping only once they were back at basement level. Gluing his back to the stone wall near the opening of the lower staircase, Heinrich took a number of deep breaths, trying to slow his heartbeat, then looked at his left hand: it was shaking nearly uncontrollably. Tears came next as he thought about all the friends and comrades he had just lost down there.

**09:56 (Paris Time)**

**German High Military Command Headquarters for France**

**Hotel Majestic, 19 Avenue Kléber**

**16<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement, Paris**

General Otto von Stulpnagel, Commander of the German forces in France, grimly listened as his operations officer, a colonel, finished briefing him about the two night attacks at the Fort of Ivry and near the Fort of Vincennes.

"...In total, we lost 48 men killed, plus 26 other men wounded, General."

"And did any of those British soldiers got killed or captured, Herr Oberst<sup>27</sup>?"

To Stulpnagel's intense displeasure, his operations officer shook his head in response.

"None, Herr General! However, a number of them were actually seen and heard by our soldiers during the two attacks. There are little doubts that we were attacked last night by British soldiers, possibly commandos or paratroopers."

Stulpnagel then slammed his right fist on top of the big map table occupying the middle of his command's operations center, letting out his frustration.

"AND HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN THAT A BRITISH INFANTRY UNIT COULD BE OPERATING AROUND PARIS, A YEAR AFTER WE OCCUPIED IT?"

"Er, my best guess is that this is a small unit that was either parachuted recently close to Paris, or that was a stay-behind unit meant to create long-term harassment, Herr General. In view of the long months passed with no prior signs of this unit, I would lean towards it being a unit recently parachuted near Paris. Furthermore, the degree to which it proved dangerous makes me think that those British soldiers are either paratroopers, commandos or Royal Marines, all elite troops."

"Hum, you may be right about that, Herr Oberst." Said Stulpnagel, calming down somewhat. "However good those British soldiers are, they still need a place to hide and rest between attacks. They also would need ways to get regularly resupplied and to move around discreetly. For all that, they would need some active support by local Frenchmen. Alright, here are my orders! First, I want a methodical sweep done around Paris of all the farms, forests, isolated houses, buildings and underground spaces that could be used by that British unit to hide and shelter. Second, I want the number of road check points around Paris to be doubled, so that we could catch those British soldiers while they travel to or from their objectives. Third, I want posters to be circulated around Paris, promising a reward to any French citizen that would provide valid information about the hiding places of that British unit. Those same posters will also state that

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<sup>27</sup> Oberst : German rank of colonel.

anyone found sheltering those British soldiers will be executed. You have all that, Herr Oberst?"

"Yes, Herr General! I will pass those..."

The colonel was interrupted by one of his staff officers who had just answered a ringing telephone and who was now frantically signaling him with one arm.

"HERR OBERST, ANOTHER ATTACK HAS JUST BEEN REPORTED! ONE OF OUR ROAD CHECK POINTS IN THE BOULOGNE FOREST WAS HIT BY BRITISH SOLDIERS. WE LOST SEVEN MEN THERE."

"TEUFFEL!" Swore Stulpnagel. "WE CAN'T AND WON'T LET THOSE BRITISH OPERATE FURTHER! PULL THE 85<sup>TH</sup> INFANTRY DIVISION FROM ITS RESERVE ROLE NEAR THE CALAIS AREA AND HAVE IT COME TO PARIS TO REINFORCE SECURITY AROUND IT AND TO HELP IN OUR SWEEP."

"Er, yes Herr General!" Could only answer the colonel.

**14:05 (London Time)**

**Monday, September 8, 1941**

**Imperial General Staff Headquarters**

**War Office Building, Whitehall District, London**

**England**

The three men, one civilian and two military, who had been called to the office of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, found an apparently annoyed Field Marshal Sir John Dill waiting for them behind his big work desk. Brigadier General Stewart Menzies, the head of the British Secret Intelligence Services, better known as M.I.6, and Admiral Roger Keyes, the head of the Combined Operations department of the War Office, saluted Dill at rigid attention once in, while Sir Frank Nelson, the director of the Special Operations Executive, or S.O.E., politely bowed his head. Dill then pointed to them chairs set in front of his desk and spoke in a dry tone.

"Have a seat, gentlemen: I have some questions for you."

Realizing at once that they had not been called in to get compliments, the three visitors sat down without a word and waited for Dill to speak again, which he did after eyeing them in turn.

"Gentlemen, I called you in so that I could resolve a mystery about something that has created somewhat of a confusion between me and the Prime Minister."

Dill then picked up a document from the top of his desk and showed it to his visitors.

“This is a German High Command transmission from its Paris headquarters, intercepted and decoded by us two days ago and reporting multiple deadly attacks on German units around Paris in the last week, attacks reportedly made by uniformed British soldiers. The Prime Minister was one of the first to see that German message and congratulated me at once while asking me which of our units was involved. He was not exactly pleased when I could only tell him that I didn’t know about any such unit operating in France. Then, I had my staff check with your respective services, to find out who was directing those attacks in France. You can guess that I was not pleased myself when all three of your services claimed ignorance about a British unit operating in the Paris area. So, now that you all are here, I am asking this: who is controlling that British unit in Paris and what game are you playing, gentlemen?”

The three embarrassed men looked at each other, hesitant to speak first. Admiral Keyes, a small and frail man with an iron will, finally spoke up first.

“Sir Dill, I can assure you that none of the units of my Combined Operations department are presently operating around Paris, or even in France. All my commando units are accounted for and in England.”

Sir Stewart Menzies was next to speak.

“On my part, Sir Dill, I can tell you that none of my personnel is involved in those attacks. However, the few agents I have presently in France have sent a couple of reports about the Germans in Paris having suffered a few violent attacks, but have no clue of who is responsible.”

“Did your agents give some details about those attacks, Brigadier Menzies?”

The head of the M.I.6 wiggled in his chair, visibly embarrassed, before answering.

“Uh, yes, Sir Dill! However, the reports I got were so fantastic and ludicrous that they gave me reasons to suspect that the Germans took control of my agents and are sending us disinformation.”

“Well, what did those reports say, Brigadier?” Said Dill, becoming irritated.

“Uh, some nonsense about wild beasts attacking and killing a few Germans at night in Paris.”

“Wild beasts?”

“Yes sir! One report that did make more sense said that the Germans were distributing posters offering a reward to anyone who could give information about British soldiers hiding around Paris. Those posters also warned that any French citizen aiding

or supporting those British soldiers would be executed. That is all that I know for the moment.”

Dill was thoughtful for a moment before looking at the director of the Special Operations Executive.

“Sir Nelson, what do you have to say about all this? After all, the Prime Minister did order you to create mayhem around Occupied Europe and this sounds like what your agents could do. Do you have any agents in France who are operating in British uniform?”

“None, Sir Dill!” Answered the civilian bureaucrat. “In fact, I presently have only half a dozen agents operating in France, with only one of them being in the Paris area, and I can assure you that they operate only in civilian clothes...or disguised as German soldiers.”

“THEN, WHO THE HELL IS GOING AROUND PARIS IN BRITISH UNIFORMS, SHOOTING UP GERMANS?” Shouted Dill at the same time that he slapped down his right hand on his work desk. His three visitors stayed quiet at that, until Admiral Keyes proposed an explanation.

“Sir Dill, if none of our services have directed such attacks, then I see only one possible answer to your question: that a group of British soldiers cut off from their units and unable to evacuate from France with them in 1940, have formed an ad hoc stay behind party and have now started to be active around Paris. Such an ad hoc group would obviously lack any long range communications means, while their members were probably declared missing in action in 1940.”

Keyes’ suggestion calmed considerably Sir Dill, who sat back in his chair, thoughtful.

“Hum, that makes a lot of sense, Admiral Keyes. Certainly more sense than stories of wild beasts attacking Germans at night. And how effective to date in their attacks would have been these soldiers left behind?”

“Effective enough to make the German High Command in Paris scream bloody murder, sir. Pardon the pun but those soldiers appear to be doing a bang up job around Paris, Sir Dill. It would be nice if we could either resupply or reinforce them, but we don’t have a single clue about where they are hiding around Paris, thus are unable to help them in any case.”

“I see! Well, if any of your three services get some hard info about those left behind soldiers, let me know at once: the Prime Minister really wants an answer to that mystery. You are dismissed, gentlemen!”

The three visitors got up as one and saluted or bowed, then turned around and left Dill's office. Once out of the big office, the three men exchanged confused looks.

"Could lost and forgotten soldiers really be able to hide from the Germans for a full year like this, then strike with such efficiency?" Asked Sir Nelson, making Admiral Keyes shake his head in disbelief.

"It is hard to believe, but if it's true, then they would deserve some very high decorations indeed. Whoever they are, let's count ourselves lucky in having them making life hard for the Germans in Paris."

### **00:40 (Paris Time)**

**Wednesday, September 10, 1941**

**Local Paris headquarters of the Abwehr<sup>28</sup>**

**Hotel Lutetia, 45 Boulevard Raspail, 6<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement**

**Paris, France**

On a hand signal from one of his radio operators, the Abwehr officer on duty this night at the radio-goniometry section of the Paris Abwehr headquarters, lodged in the luxurious Hotel Lutetia, approached quickly the operator in question.

"What do you have, Helmut? Is someone transmitting clandestinely around Paris?"

"Uh, no, Herr Leutnant, but one of our radio-goniometry trucks, Unit Number Three, has just sent a very short message that was cut in mid word by what sounded like an explosion or a shot."

The senior lieutenant frowned at once on hearing that: with those damn British commandos being active around Paris and causing all kinds of mayhem, this could well mean serious trouble for that radio truck.

"Try to contact it! If it doesn't answer, then contact our other trucks on patrol to check on their status."

"Yes, Herr Leutnant!"

The officer stayed standing behind his operator as he repeatedly called Unit Three, without success. He became truly alarmed when another radio truck on patrol failed to answer the calls from its headquarters.

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<sup>28</sup> Abwehr : German Army Intelligence during WW2.

"I don't like this at all. I am going to wake up Hauptmann Schumann about this." The senior lieutenant then walked to his small duty desk, on which a battery of telephones and radio repeaters lay, and grabbed one of the telephones' handset. Before he could compose the number for Schumann's room, someone briefly opened the door of the room and threw something inside, then closed back the door. The German officer felt his hair rise on his head when he saw and recognized the two smoking objects now rolling on the floor, towards the center of the room.

"GRENADES!"

Before he or the five operators on duty could either run out of the room or find some illusory cover, the grenades exploded in quick succession. The overpressure alone from the blast waves of the German-made offensive stick grenades was enough to kill or mortally wound the six Germans present in the small room on the eight floor of the hotel, while also blowing out its window. Before dying, the officer had time to see a British soldier enter the room and then shoot up the precious radio sets, already damaged by the explosions, with his revolver. The British then left with not so much as a single glance at the dying German.

In his room three floors down from the radio-goniometry section, Dietrich Mannerheim woke up abruptly at the sound of explosions and shots from within the hotel. Swearing to himself, he threw away his bed sheets and started to dress up as quickly as he could, his pistol near him on the bedside table. More shots and explosions kept resonating as he was putting on his uniform.

"Himmel! It must be those damn British commandos! They got some big balls to come and attack this hotel in the middle of Paris."

Putting on his officer's cap last, Dietrich then opened his entrance door and cautiously looked left and right down the corridor, his pistol at the ready. What he saw was a number of other Germans running around or standing inside their door, watching like Dietrich the confusion around them. Closing his door, the Abwehr officer started heading towards the nearest staircase, intent on investigating what was happening. However, before he could walk down to the end of the long corridor and get to a staircase, a loud explosion came from that staircase, along with a cloud of plaster dust and debris. A dead German soldier then rolled down the stairs, landing on the floor level where Dietrich was. Quickly taking cover as best he could inside a door frame, he saw with a jump of his heart a khaki shape come down the stairs and bend over the dead

German soldier, grabbing the man's MP40 submachine gun and its spare magazines after shouldering his rifle. Anger filled Dietrich at that sight and he pointed his pistol at the British and shot twice. Inexplicably, he missed with both shots, despite being a recognized pistol marksman, and saw his bullets pierce the wall behind the British. The latter then snapped his head up and looked at Dietrich with a cold expression while raising the MP41 he had just grabbed. Unfortunately for Dietrich, the doorframe proved to be very poor cover indeed, while the door itself was locked, and he felt the impact of at least one bullet when the British fired a short burst at him. A sharp, burning pain from his right arm made him drop his pistol, while his right leg suddenly gave up, sending him crumbling down on the carpet of the corridor. Looking at his leg, Dietrich saw an expanding red blotch staining his trousers' right leg and understood that he actually had been hit at least twice. Unable to move quickly and with his pistol a few feet away, he could only watch with dread the British soldier that had shot him walk towards him, his submachine gun pointed. Dietrich clenched his teeth, expecting to be shot dead in the next seconds but, to his utter surprise, the British, who wore the ranks and insignias of a lieutenant of the Royal Marines, simply looked down at him with a somber expression. After a second of suspense, the British officer then took out from a pouch of his web gear an army field dressing bandage and threw it down on the carpet, next to Dietrich, before speaking in good German.

"You better bandage that leg before you bleed to death, Fritz. Nothing personal though: this is war."

The British, who was heavily loaded with grenades, spare ammunition and a Lee Enfield rifle on top of his captured German MP41, then ran back to the staircase and headed down, disappearing from sight to the relief of Dietrich, who couldn't believe his luck. Then remembering that he was bleeding profusely from his right leg, Dietrich grabbed the bandage left behind by the British and did his best to apply and roll it around his wounded leg. The loud detonations of shots and explosions continued around the hotel, coming from many directions, as Dietrich patched himself up. Three armed and very nervous German soldiers finally showed up and, seeing him, went to his help. The senior soldier, a gefreiter, examined him quickly and took his own field bandage to patch Dietrich's arm while his two companions watched both ends of the corridor.

"We are going to bring you down to the main lobby of the hotel, where the wounded are being assembled and treated, Herr Hauptmann. With those British soldiers



roaming the hotel on multiple levels, we can't leave you here without risking that a British find you and kill you."

"Do you know how many British there are inside the hotel, and how they got in, Gefreiter?" Asked Dietrich, clenching his teeth in order not to scream in pain while the soldier bandaged his right arm. The gefreiter shook his head grimly at that question.

"I am not sure, Herr Hauptmann, but there are quite a few of them inside the hotel, spreading mayhem on multiple floors at once. There must be at least a full squad of them, if not a whole platoon."

"Well, the one who shot me was a lieutenant of the British Royal Marines, an elite unit, so my bet is more on a platoon-sized enemy unit."

"It could very well be, sir. We are going to pick you up now, so brace yourself."

"WAIT! Get my pistol for me first, please."

The gefreiter nodded his head and went to pick up the Luger, then put it back in its holster hooked to Dietrich's belt and secured its flap. The three soldiers then picked him up as gently as they could before starting to head down towards the lobby of the hotel. As they were going down the stairs, a ringing alarm suddenly started, making them briefly stop. Dietrich understood first what it was about.

"The fire alarm: those damn British must have started a fire somewhere in the hotel. Damn, that's going to complicate things quite a lot."

"The more reasons to get you down to the lobby as quickly as possible, Herr Hauptmann." Replied the gefreiter. Dietrich did not object to that most sensible declaration and clenched his teeth, enduring his pain as his saviors carried him down the stairs.

In the lobby, the group found quite a few more wounded Germans, along with a number of dead ones covered with blankets. The noise of shots and explosions finally subsided and stopped after a good seven minutes, allowing the Germans to concentrate their attention on their casualties. Another fifteen minutes later, the first fire truck from the Paris Fire Department arrived and extended its ladder in order to start dousing the fires that had been lit on the upper floors. More fire trucks quickly followed, along with a full German infantry company that started combing the lower floors, searching for any British soldier left in the hotel. To everyone's anger, not a single British was found either dead or alive, with only empty bullet casings littering the floors and proving that they had gone around the hotel. On his part, Dietrich was soon evacuated towards a nearby local

French hospital in the 6<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement, along with 28 other wounded Germans. There, he later learned from his visiting superior officer that the British attack had cost the Abwehr no less than 53 dead, plus had destroyed by fire or explosion much precious equipment and files. Also destroyed were three precious mobile radio-goniometry units, which had been vital tools in triangulating the positions of the clandestine radio transmitters used by enemy agents and French Résistance members. Overall, that night raid left the Abwehr services in Paris disorganized and mostly ineffective for weeks, a welcome respite for the British agents and French Résistance fighters that had been hunted down by the Abwehr. However, that British success caused in return a very unwelcome reaction from Berlin.

## **CHAPTER 8 – THE SS ARE COMING**

**12:06 (Paris Time)**

**Friday, September 19, 1941**

**'Mille et Une Nuits' cabaret, 34 Rue Saint-André-des-Arts**

**Quartier Latin, 6<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement, Paris**

**Occupied France**

Mélanie was quite satisfied with her late night to late morning visit to London as she teleported from her secret cave to her bedroom on the upper floor of the cabaret. First, she had visited under invisibility cloak a British armory in the suburbs of London and had 'requisitioned' there two American-made Thompson Model 1928A1 .45 caliber submachine guns, two British-made Sten Mark II 9mm caliber submachine guns, a Bren Gun .303 caliber light machine gun, one Very signal flare pistol, numerous spare magazines and lots of ammunition, on top of a few boxes of smoke and incendiary grenades. In fact, it had taken her a total of five return trips to teleport all that to her secret cave. With those new additions to her already extensive arsenal, her 'Paris Commando unit' would now appear to the Germans as a well-armed British unit armed solely with standard British Army weapons, thus not providing an excuse to the Germans to retaliate by executing French hostages. After that, she had made a final trip to London to drop at the Free French Forces headquarters a package containing the latest military information on the Germans that she and the other dancing girls of the cabaret had been able to milk from visiting German officers. Later on during the next early morning, after she would have finished dancing and stripping for German customers, she planned to pay a visit to the Austerlitz railway station, where she knew that a train full of requisitioned French goods was due to leave for Germany. All in all, she was finding herself busier than ever in this war, but her efforts were definitely leaving their mark by now. Hit nearly every night by ghost-like 'British' commando raids around Paris, the German garrison of the city was now nearly paranoid, with German sentries firing at about anything that moved in the night and causing quite a few accidental friendly casualties. German street patrols and checkpoints were also much less frequent, with troops preferring to stay barricaded inside their barracks as much as possible. Yes, that

had hurt somewhat the cabaret in terms of the volume of its German clientele, but Marie Laurent had been the first to concede that this was a more than acceptable price to pay in order to loosen the German grip over the capital and its inhabitants. The other Résistance groups in Paris, while still not knowing who was causing all this mayhem and the litany of lootings of German supplies, could only be thankful for the diminished pressure from the Abwehr and Gestapo, two German security organizations that had been hit particularly hard during the last few months. One final benefit of all this was more personal for Mélanie: she had quickly learned from combat experience during her raids disguised as a British soldier and could now honestly call herself a seasoned, tactically competent combatant, adding her new martial prowess to her magical abilities and supernatural powers.

First taking a few hours to rest after her busy night and morning, more than enough for a demon like her, Mélanie then started preparing for the arrival of the first customers of the cabaret tonight. She was however surprised when the doorman, Paul Dujardin, came up to her room to tell her that a German officer was asking to see her downstairs. Curious and also a little bit nervous, she went down to the show lounge dressed in her robe and slippers, to find out that one of her most regular customers, Leutnant Karl Mackessen, was the one waiting for her. She gave a warm smile to the handsome German, who had always been very correct with her and the other girls of the cabaret.

“Herr Leutnant Mackessen! To what do I owe this nice surprise visit?”

“To some sad news for me, my beautiful Mélanie.” Replied in a sober tone the tall, blond man in his twenties. “My regiment, along with the rest of our division, is soon to transfer to the Russian Front. The two other infantry divisions in and around Paris are also being transferred to Russia. In exchange, SS troops will soon take our place as occupying units in Paris.”

Mélanie hid as best she could the apprehension she felt on hearing that. By now, she knew enough about the German forces and had heard about the reputation for brutality and viciousness of SS troopers.

“SS units, in Paris? Why such a switch?”

“Because of the depredations of those British soldiers hiding around Paris. It seems that the Führer has grown fed up with the situation and has ordered the screws

tightened on Paris and its suburbs. The three SS divisions coming soon to Paris will arrive straight from the Russian Front, where we will replace them.”

“I am sorry to hear that, Karl: I will miss you and your comrades.”

Those words made Mackessen lower his eyes for a moment before he looked back at Mélanie.

“I will miss you a lot too, Mélanie. However, I am also worried about what could happen to you and the other people in Paris.”

“What do you mean, Karl?”

“What I mean to say is that those incoming SS units have a very bad reputation. My division commander actually think of them as a collection of thugs and murderers in uniform. Rumors are that they massacred in Russia whole villages and groups of Soviet prisoners of war on a regular basis. Unfortunately, SS troops are sanctioned and supported by the Führer, so army commanders were unable to restrain the conduct of those SS soldiers. I am afraid that, with them in charge of the security situation in Paris, things will be much harsher for the citizens of Paris...and for you and the girls of this cabaret.”

Mélanie was left speechless for a moment by those words: she had never dreamed that her actions would have attracted such an outcome, on the contrary. She had in fact expected a relaxation of the conditions in Paris, with occupying troops avoiding it for security reasons. Now, the prospects of what was coming were nothing but bone-chilling.

“And the Paris Kommandantur, will it be able to restrain those SS?”

Mackessen shook his head slowly at her question.

“Not a chance! I do hope those SS will treat you and the girls here decently, but I don't have much real hope for that. Be careful with them, Mélanie.”

“I will, Karl. Be careful yourself while in Russia.”

The German smiled at her last sentence and took a small, wrapped box from inside his greatcoat, then presented it to Mélanie.

“I brought a parting gift for you: Swiss chocolate. I hope that you will like it.”

“You're a sweetheart, Karl! I will think of you while eating them.”

“Thank you! Unfortunately I must go now: I have tons of things to do to prepare my men for our transfer to Russia.”

He then gave a last kiss on Mélanie's lips before leaving. Mélanie stayed motionless near the door for a moment as she thought over what Mackessen had said, prompting Marie into coming to her and asking her a question in a concerned tone.

"Is something wrong, Mélanie?"

"Indeed, Mother! Karl's unit, along with the other German Army units in Paris, are being transferred to Russia. In exchange, we will get SS troops as new occupiers and, if I can believe Karl, those SS are rumored to be thugs and murderers who committed numerous atrocities in Russia against civilians and prisoners of war."

"Oh my God!" Exclaimed spontaneously Marie, prompting a sarcastic reply.

"Don't wait for Him to help us, Mother. I would rather bet on Lucifer's help. So many dark souls coming, ready to be sent to Hell. This is going to become very bloody indeed."

Marie gave a scared look at her adopted daughter then: despite all the years she had spent lovingly raising her, educating her and pushing her towards the good, Mélanie, or more correctly Delicia, was still at least partly a demon at heart.

**09:13 (Paris Time)**

**Monday, September 29, 1941**

**Court of Honor of the French Army Military School (École Militaire)**

**7<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement, Paris**

General-Major Ernst Mandell, Commander of the 30<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, felt nearly humiliated as his successor as commander of the troops garrisoned in Paris, Brigadeführer<sup>29</sup> Theodor Eicke, was approaching the lectern set up in the Court of Honor of the French Military School. Eicke, the commander of the newly arrived 3<sup>rd</sup> SS Division (Totenkopf), had insisted on arranging a formal ceremony of passage of command and had delayed for that purpose the departure of Mandell for Russia, towards which most of the men of the 30<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division were already on the way by rail. The previous day had been enough to show to Mandell that Eicke was true to his reputation as a thug unfit to wear a military uniform. Now, Mandell was going to be forced to pass his authority to that thug in front of assembled SS troopers lined up in the court and under the lens of official German photographers and cameramen. Making a show of looking martial in his

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<sup>29</sup> Brigadeführer : SS rank equivalent to Major General.

department, Eicke, a slightly obese man, tapped on the microphone set on the lectern in order to test it, then started speaking.

“Brave men of the SS Third Division, you are...”

## **POW**

As surprised as anyone else present, Mandell could only watch at first as Eicke, hit in the back of the head by a bullet, crumbled to the ground. Then looking up and behind him, from where the detonation of the shot had come, Mandell was in time to see the flash of a gun firing from one of the top floor windows of the school's library, which was housed in the main façade building in which the main school entrance was. This time, however, it was a machine gun firing and not simply a rifle. The first long burst hit the tight ranks of the assembled SS troopers as they stood at attention, mauling down a good dozen men before the SS men started reacting and broke rank at a run to take whatever cover was available. The courtyard was however quite vast and devoid of cover and more SS men were downed by a second machine gun burst before they could get to the first few trees planted around the parade ground. SS troopers were starting to fire back after hastily loading cartridges in their rifles, which had been kept unloaded for safety reasons for the parade, when a number of grenades started to be thrown from various windows of the buildings bordering the courtyard. Again caught by surprise, the SS troopers suffered heavy casualties from that rain of grenades, which was followed by a second machine gun firing from an eastside building. Mandell, who had gone to check on Eicke, only to confirm that he was dead, understood at once that the infamous British commandos whose depredations had prompted the replacement of his division by SS troops were now greeting the newcomers in their usual deadly fashion. Forgetting about his personal safety, he watched critically how the SS troopers reacted and countered the British attack on them. Overall, he was not impressed at all, the SS men taking a long time to organize and start some kind of true counter-attack. Most of the SS soldiers actually stayed behind whatever cover they had found and simply fired around at the various spots from which fire had come from. That proved quite ineffective, as British commandos seemed to be everywhere, firing each time from different windows and different buildings. In contrast to the SS reactions, British fire proved most deadly, with machine gun bursts alternating with rifle shots and grenade throws and downing scores of SS men. A couple of SS officers finally reacted correctly and led groups of troopers inside the buildings of the school to start chasing the British out of them. From the noise

of fierce gunfire exchanges and grenade detonations coming from the inside during the next few minutes, that task proved to be anything but easy. Mandell, still in the open and exposed, then realized that the British could have easily spotted him and shot him dead, but had not targeted him once, yet. He nearly chuckled when he understood that the goal of the British today was to humiliate the incoming SS men and teach them a lesson right from the start. From what he could now see and hear, it appeared that the British were having much success in those goals today.

As abruptly as it had started, the shooting and fighting stopped maybe fifteen minutes after the first shot that had killed Eicke. Tense and nearly under shock, the SS troopers slowly came out from behind cover or from inside the buildings of the schools, many carrying out wounded German men. Intercepting a SS senior officer who was passing by, Mandell spoke to him in a command voice.

“Sturmbannführer<sup>30</sup>, have any of our attackers been killed or captured?”

“Nein, Herr General! However, our men saw a number of British soldiers running from firing position to firing position. These attackers also left behind hundreds of brass casings from .303 caliber rounds. The last word I got was that those British soldiers were last seen withdrawing towards the underground levels of the school.”

“Hum, that corresponds to what we already know about their favored tactics. It seems that those British soldiers use the various caves, tunnels and old underground quarries of Paris as a way to go around unseen.”

“Should we send search parties in those tunnels, Herr General?”

“NO! That is exactly what those British soldiers will be hoping for: to attract our men into further ambushes on obscure grounds we know very poorly. You better simply collect your dead and wounded and secure the school grounds. How many casualties have you suffered?”

“I am not sure, Herr General, but I have personally seen at least fifty dead and wounded men to date. Our total casualties will probably exceed a hundred men.”

“Very well, Sturmbannführer! Carry on!”

While he could not be said to be satisfied by this, being another clear victory for the British at the expense of German soldiers, Mandell could at least tell himself that the SS

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<sup>30</sup> Sturmbannführer : SS rank equivalent to Major.



troopers were most probably not going to fare any better than the men of his division against those ghost-like commandos.

**15:30 (Paris Time)**

**Saturday, October 4, 1941**

**Near the Porte de Clignancourt, 18<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement**

**Northern suburbs of Paris**

Leutnant Rudolph Zimmermann, sitting with three of his comrade fighter pilots in the small VW Kubbelwagen<sup>31</sup> staff car, saw first the military checkpoint ahead of them, just after the bend on the road that they had just negotiated.

“Slow down, Max: there is a checkpoint dead ahead.”

Max Grundig, who was driving, did so and they soon screeched to a halt at the checkpoint, composed of a chicane made of old steel barrels filled with rocks and guarded by at least ten soldiers backed up by an armored half-track and by a machine gun sited inside a sandbagged position. Rudolph hid his displeasure on seeing that the soldiers were SS troopers: he didn't like the SS, for a number of reasons. His displeasure turned into cold hatred when he saw that two of the SS soldiers were busy beating up with their rifle butts a civilian man lying down in the grass on one side of the road. He quickly understood why the poor man was being beaten when he was forcibly pulled back up and then chased away with ample kicks from the soldiers: the civilian wore a yellow star of David, marking him as a Jew. That didn't quiet Rudolph's anger, on the contrary. The pilot however had to refocus his attention, as a SS soldier was approaching the staff car. The soldier saluted them but his tone was barely polite when he spoke.

“Papers, please!”

The four fighter pilots were in the process of fishing out their military identity cards when the armored halftrack exploded in a big fireball. Less than three seconds later, another explosion projected the machine gunners, shredded and bloody, out of their sandbagged position. With their vehicle stuck between the two lines of barrels of the chicane and with the barrier still down, the unfortunate pilots could only duck as much as they could in their seats as machine gun fire started sweeping the surviving SS soldiers. The SS

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<sup>31</sup> Kubbelwagen : Military variant of the famous VW Beetle.

who had asked for their papers ended up dead, sprawled on top of the hood of their Kubbelwagen. Then, as quickly as it started, the fighting stopped. Cautiously raising their heads to look around them, the pilots saw that all the SS soldiers were either dead or on the ground, moaning with pain. Rudolph's eyes bulged out and his heart jumped in his chest when he saw a British soldier armed with a light machine gun come out from behind a nearby tree, his weapon pointed at the staff car. Rudolph then spoke as calmly as he could to alert his comrades without making them do something regrettable.

"You better put your hands up, guys: a British soldier is approaching us."

"Mein Gott!" Couldn't help say Max Grundig in a weak voice while raising slowly his hands up. Thankfully, Rudolph's two other comrades also raised their hands. The British soldier, who wore the ranks of a sergeant, stopped briefly by the side of a wounded SS soldier, taking the time to coldly finish him off with one bullet before approaching the Kubbelwagen, his face hard. He however smiled after examining for a second the four scared pilots.

"Aaah, gentlemen of the Luftwaffe, hey?" He said in English with a peculiar accent. Rudolph, who could speak English, swallowed hard and answered him.

"Yes, we are from the Luftwaffe, and not from the SS Corps."

"Good for you!" Replied in a jovial tone the sergeant, who wore Canadian patches and insignias. "You get a free pass today! Move along, chaps!"

"What did he say?" Asked nervously Max Grundig, making Rudolph point the road ahead.

"Go, and don't ask questions now!"

The Canadian sergeant then surprised the pilots further by unceremoniously pulling the body of the dead SS off the hood of the Kubbelwagen, then raising the barrier of the checkpoint and saluting them as they drove past him.

"Enjoy Paris while you can, chaps!"

Rudolph waited until they were out of view of the checkpoint before blowing air out in relief and telling his three comrades what the enemy soldier had said, leaving them both incredulous and thankful.

"Mein Gott! My wife won't believe me when I will tell her about this." Said Bruno Honnecker. "Why did that Brit spare us?"

"First, he was Canadian, not British." Answered Rudolph. "Second, I believe that he wanted to make the point that his unit's designated targets today were SS troops. Personally, I could think of quite a few reasons to single out SS troopers like this."

His companions all nodded their heads at that: the SS may be feared, but few in Germany liked them. Of a common accord, the four pilots decided not to mention the incident to any SS soldier or officer they may cross path with this evening and to wait until the next day to report it to their own unit intelligence officer, the reasoning being that the SS may find suspicious the fact that they had been spared by the enemy.

After stopping for supper at a good restaurant on the Right Bank of the Seine, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Arrondissement, the four pilots arrived at around seven in the evening at their prime intended destination: the 'Mille et Une Nuits' Cabaret. Being fairly regular patrons with a good reputation as well-behaving customers, they were promptly shown seats in the show lounge, which was uncharacteristically empty of visitors at this hour. Rudolph let out a deep sigh of relief when he sat down, making Marie Laurent smile down at him.

"Mon dieu, Herr Leutnant, was the road trip from your base that tiring?"

"Tiring? No! Scary? Yes! Do you still have some cognac available? I think I really need something strong to help my poor heart."

"I will have a cognac too, Madame Laurent." Said Max Grundig, imitated by the other two pilots of their group. Marie raised an eyebrow at that.

"Well, you will certainly need to tell me about your trip, gentlemen...and I do have still a good bottle of cognac in my cellar. In the meantime, Sung Li will take care of starting to relax you four."

The four pilots smiled at that: Sung Li was a 23 year-old, deliciously exotic Chinese beauty whom they had all tasted in the past. True to her word, Marie sent the Chinese girl in the lounge within a minute, where she started dancing and stripping at once to the music of the three regular Arabic musicians employed by the cabaret. To Rudolph's delight, it was young and beautiful Mélanie who came to bring their glasses of cognac to the pilots. After distributing the glasses around, she sat down next to Rudolph, while Marie Laurent sat between him and Max Grundig to talk with them while they watched Sung Li dance.

"So, what happened during your trip to shake you that much, gentlemen?" Asked Marie to no particular pilot. Rudolph took on him to tell the tale of their misadventure, making Marie's jaw drop.

"My God! This certainly qualifies as a close call."

"It indeed does, madam. By the way, your cabaret is strangely empty for a Saturday night."

"Well, it seems that those British commandos you encountered have made many of our regular customers leery about going around Paris at night. From the little I heard about those commandos, I would say that the caution of our usual customers is understandable."

"And those newly arrived SS units, did any of their officers started frequenting your cabaret?"

Marie Laurent suddenly became much more reserved at that question from Max Grundig.

"No, not yet! They are probably still too busy establishing their units around Paris. To be frank, I am not anxious to see them here as customers. Out of the few SS officers who came to our cabaret in the past year, two of them proved to be very rough with my girls and I had to ban them from my cabaret, getting the help of a friend at the Kommandatur to discipline them."

The youngest of the four pilots, Bruno Honnecker, hesitated a bit before asking a question to Marie.

"Excuse me if my question will sound naïve to you, Madame Laurent, but may I ask what you think about us Germans? Most French people openly hate us and shun us, but your cabaret is one of the rare places in Paris that truly made me feel welcomed."

Marie, instead of laughing at Bruno's question, nodded her head soberly.

"A very good question indeed...with a very complicated answer to it, Herr Honnecker. First off, let me tell you that I have been managing this cabaret cum luxury bordello for seventeen years now and I have seen all kinds of customers go through it, be they French, British, German, Italian or any other nationality under the Sun. Some were rich industrialists or businessmen, powerful politicians, diplomats, aristocrats or senior military officers, while others were less wealthy people who saved for a while in order to fulfill their dreams for one night in my cabaret. Most were thankfully decent and gentlemanly with my girls but a few others, mostly the richest ones, acted like selfish assholes. In fact, my worst customers were Frenchmen, not Germans, if you save the one Spanish diplomat that I had thrown out manu militari by my doorman a few years ago. On the other hand, our two countries are at war, with your country now occupying my country. Do I like that? Not one bit, and neither do Mélanie or my dancing girls. However, me and my girls depend on the revenues from this cabaret to make a living and survive in a world where women are still treated as an inferior class by men. Like

with past patrons before this war, we can't choose our customers and must accommodate them as reasonably as possible, if we want to stay in business. I certainly can't change the course of this war by myself, so I decided to go with the flow, as they say, and accept Germans as customers. As long as they don't try to push Nazi ideology on me and deal decently with my girls, my German customers will be welcomed here, like all my past customers who behaved, even though this has caused to me and my girls a lot of grief with our neighbors, who would gladly torch down my cabaret by now. To resume what I said, I judge my customers individually and not according to their nationality. For that reason, you gentlemen from the Luftwaffe will always be welcome here, along with your comrades from the Kriegsmarine, even though your submariners often still stink of diesel fumes when they show up."

The four pilots laughed heartily at that jab at German submariners. Rudolph then smiled to Marie.

"I must say that this is about the most honest answer to a question that I ever heard, Madame Laurent. Thank you for your comprehension and open-mindedness."

He then looked at Mélanie, still sitting beside him.

"And you, Mélanie, what do you think?"

"I fully agree with my mother, Rudolph. I will however add to that the fact that I genuinely love sex and that, as a girl with a strong character, I don't care what others may think about that. I don't intend to ever marry and I plan to always be my own master in life. So, sorry if that means that you have to abandon any dreams of marrying me after this war."

"Was I that obvious, Mélanie?" Said Rudolph, faking a hurt tone and making his three comrades laugh again.

"For a girl like me, yes! But you have proved to be a more than decent man, so I will give you guys a little extra."

Mélanie then got up and whispered to one ear of Marie, who then nodded her head. To the delight of the four German fighter pilots, Mélanie then joined Sung Li on the dance floor, gluing herself to the Chinese girl and starting to caress her in a most sensual way. Sung Li, smiling, then started doing some caressing of her own, while both girls stripped each other slowly. By the time that Mélanie and Sung Li were fully naked and kissing and fondling each other, the four pilots were as horny as steel bars. As both girls, still naked, went to sit on the laps of Rudolph and Bruno, Rudolph looked with some embarrassment at Marie.

"Uh, our little adventure a bit earlier has kind of convinced me that it may not be safe for us to return to our airbase at night. Would you mind if we could pass the night here, Madame Laurent?"

Marie made a sarcastic smile as she answered him.

"Oh, I'm sure that we could decide on a special all-night fare for you and your three comrades, Herr Leutnant, especially since we are having so few customers tonight. Which two of my other girls would you like to have tonight as companions, on top of Mélanie and Sung?"

After a minute of making hard choices, the Germans asked for Yasmina Hussein and Dinh Tieu to join them. Once the Lebanese girl and the petite and delicate Vietnamese showed up, the pilots went for broke and ordered bottles of champagne, starting a mini-orgy in the show lounge. After a half-hour of merry drinking and mutual fondling, the four pilots and four girls moved to the guest bedrooms upstairs to continue their party in more intimacy.

The four pilots, utterly broke but most happy, left the cabaret in mid-morning, once the Sun was well up, to return to their airfield northwest of Paris. Both Marie and Mélanie waved them goodbye as they drove away. Marie sighed as the kubbewagen went out of her sight.

"Damn war! Those four Germans are most decent men, even if they are fighting against the allies of France."

Mélanie nodded her head at that, also feeling ambiguous about the departing pilots.

"True! Hopefully, circumstances will not force me to kill them if I meet them again during one of my covert raids. Talking of raids, there is a train full of requisitioned supplies due to leave at noon from the Gare de l'Est. I better go to my cave to prepare for it."

"Will you be back early enough to start greeting with me German customers this afternoon, Mélanie?"

"Don't worry, Mother: I will be back by two o'clock at most."

Mélanie then threw a dark look at one of their neighbors, a fat woman in her fifties who played busybody from the balcony of her second floor apartment, in the building across the street from the cabaret.

"When I think that all those hypocrites and morons around us think that we are collaborating with the Germans. I am worried that they may attack us or put the

liberation authorities against us once the Germans are chased out of Paris. I may have to do something about that, but in a way that will not blow our cover to the Germans. However, I am still not sure how to do that.”

“Well, let’s live this war one day at a time, Mélanie. We are still a very small cog in the effort to rid France of its German invaders.”

“A small cog? Mother, I just caused the transfer of three divisions out of Paris!”

“Yes, but you in turn drew tens of thousands of brutish SS troopers to our city.” Replied Marie while looking a bit crossly at her adopted daughter. “I don’t think that we gained in that exchange. Those SS men have not yet showed up here at the cabaret, but I dread the day when they will start frequenting my establishment. I am particularly worried about how they will treat my girls. Their reputation is quite awful, as you must know already.”

“Well, I am sure that your good relations with General Stulpnagel and his staff will help keep these SS men in check, Mother. Be sure however that I won’t let anyone mistreat me, or mistreat one of our employees in front of me.”

“And what would you do then? Disintegrate that SS man?”

Mélanie smiled before touching her temple with one index.

“Oh, something more subtle than that: I will play head games with him.”

### **19:43 (Paris Time)**

**Thursday, October 9, 1941**

**‘Mille et Une Nuits’ cabaret**

**Paris**

Marie, alerted by her doorman, hurried into the show lounge to greet the high-ranking SS officer who had just stepped in with four huge SS bodyguards. Being quite proficient by now in identifying the various rank insignias and uniforms of the German forces, she saw that the officer was an Obersturmbannführer, or lieutenant colonel, of the SD, the security services of the SS Corps. That unsettled a bit Marie, as the SD controlled the dreaded German secret police, the Gestapo, of sinister reputation. Steeling herself and painting a welcoming smile on her face, Marie walked to the SD senior officer and bowed her head to him politely, then spoke in her now decent German.

"Welcome to the 'Mille et Une Nuits', sir. I am Marie Laurent, owner and manager of this cabaret."

The officer, a small and surprisingly thin, nearly frail man, smiled back to her while kissing her right hand. He then spoke in good French.

"And I am honored to meet you, madam. I am Obersturmbannführer Walter Schellenberg, Special Envoy and Assistant of Gruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich, Head of the Reich Main Security Office. But be reassured, madam: I am here for pleasure, not for business."

Marie didn't have to fake her surprise then on hearing how high her visitor was in the SS hierarchy. Doing her best to ignore the four big SS bodyguards, who towered over both her and Schellenberg, she showed to the latter an empty sofa on one side of the lounge.

"Please, make yourself comfortable, Herr Obersturmbannführer. Would you like something to drink? Wine or spirits?"

"Would you have champagne by chance, madam? I know that champagne is becoming quite rare by now in France but your establishment was highly recommended to me by General Von Stulpnagel himself."

That came as another surprise to Marie. However, Schellenberg had an intelligent, warm expression and seemed to be a well educated man, so she relaxed a bit.

"I do have a few bottles of champagne in my cellar, thanks to gifts brought to me by some of my customers, including General Von Stulpnagel. MARC, BRING UP A CHILLED BOTTLE OF DOM PÉRIGNON AND A CUP!"

"Dom Pérignon? You do indeed have good friends in the German Kommandantur, madam." Said the SD man, visibly impressed. "It is nice for me to see that we Germans are still welcome somewhere in Paris."

Marie stiffened a bit at those words, something that Schellenberg's alert eyes noted.

"Do not worry, madam: you and your establishment has a very good reputation with us. I was referring to the brazen series of attacks by British soldiers presently hiding in the Paris region."

"Oh, them!"

"Yes, them! They are the reason for my trip to Paris. But let's stay on more agreeable subjects, Madame Laurent. General Von Stulpnagel has praised to me the beauty of your daughter, who dances in your cabaret. Would she be here tonight, by chance?"



Marie understood at once how important this could become. If Mélanie could get intimate with Schellenberg, she would then be able to explore his mind and learn some very important Nazi secrets, thanks to her mental powers.

"My daughter Mélanie is effectively here tonight, Herr Schellenberg. However, she is presently busy washing and drying her hair upstairs: one neighbor who consider us as collaborators for welcoming German officers in this cabaret threw from atop a balcony the content of a chamber pot on Mélanie's head, supposedly by accident of course."

Schellenberg nodded his head at that and pointed at one of his big bodyguards.

"A too frequent attitude by too many French citizens, unfortunately. If you wish so, I could send Otto here to go teach a lesson to that neighbor of yours."

"Uh, thank you but I would rather not, Herr Schellenberg: nearly all my neighbors are hostile to me and my girls and having one beaten up would only reinforce their hatred towards me."

"As you wish, madam."

Marie made a forced smile at him then. In truth, Mélanie was indeed busy washing and drying her hair, but not because she got a chamber pot poured on top of her. She was in fact washing her hair nearly every day now, in order to take out the strong smell of gunpowder and explosives from the attacks she perpetrated while disguised as a British soldier. Such a smell, which was easy to detect, would render suspicious at once any German officer dating her in the cabaret. Then, how would a French girl explain how she got the smell of gunpowder on her without incriminating herself at once? The arrival of her maitre d', Marc Aubut, carrying a silver platter with an ice bucket and a cup on it then gave Marie a respite and some time to think more. The maitre d' then took out of the ice bucket a champagne bottle and, after presenting it to Schellenberg and getting a nod from him, opened it with a resounding 'POP'. Before Aubut could pour some champagne in his cup, Schellenberg stopped him with a gesture of the hand.

"First, bring a second cup for Madame Laurent."

"Right away, monsieur!"

Marie smiled to the SD man as Aubut was hurrying back to the kitchen.

"Why, thank you very much, Herr Schellenberg: you are indeed a gentleman."

"I pride myself in being a well educated and cultured man, madam." Replied the German, suave. "In truth, I wish that we could end this war right now. So much death and destruction!"

"I will certainly agree with you on that." Said Marie, sincere. "Aaah, here is my dear daughter Mélanie!"

Turning his head towards the main staircase leading upstairs, Schellenberg saw a tall, incredibly beautiful teenage girl come down the stairs, dressed like an Arabian princess. His eyes glistened as he contemplated her sexy curves, feline grace and generous and firm chest, along with her long silky black hair that fell down nearly to her waist. Even Schellenberg's bodyguards couldn't keep an impassive face as they stared lustily at Mélanie. Stopping in front of the SD officer and bowing politely to him, Mélanie then gave him her most sensual smile.

"Welcome to the 'Mille et Une Nuits', monsieur." She said in perfect German. "I am Mélanie Laurent and I am at your service tonight."

Nearly hypnotized by her impossible beauty, Schellenberg managed with difficulty to stop staring at her long enough to look at Marie.

"Decidedly, General Von Stulpnagel didn't exaggerate one bit about how beautiful your daughter was, Madame Laurent."

"Thank you, Herr Schellenberg! Now that my daughter is here to take care of you, I will go check on a few things, if you don't mind."

"Please go ahead, madam."

As Marie left the show lounge, the three other German officers that had already been in it for a while decided to go upstairs with their chosen girls, leaving Schellenberg alone with Mélanie and his bodyguards. The SD man waited for the maitre d' to have returned and served him and Mélanie champagne, then leave, before speaking to the teenager.

"So, how old are you, my child?"

"Seventeen, Herr Obersturmbannführer." Lied the fourteen year-old demon. Schellenberg, whose marriage was not a happy one, couldn't help imagine already what it was going to be to have such a fantastic-looking young girl in bed.

"My name is Walter Schellenberg, but please just call me Walter, Mélanie."

"Very well, Walter. So, what brought you to Paris? Girls?"

Schellenberg made a wry smile at that.

"I wish that trip could have been strictly for pleasure but no, I am here to take care of some local problems. But let's stay on nice subjects. Tell me how you ended up here in this cabaret, Mélanie."

"Oh, it is actually a rather short and straightforward story, Walter. I was abandoned by my mother at the age of eight in a back alley of Paris, because she couldn't care for me anymore. Then, I was found by Marie, who sheltered me and adopted me. It seems that I always have had an affinity for sex and watching Marie's girls dance convinced me that it was what I wanted to do. By working here in this cabaret, I preserve my future personal independence while accumulating enough savings to start a career of my own later on."

"And what would you like to do once an adult, Mélanie?"

"I am seriously thinking about becoming a professional model or an actress."

"And I am sure that you would have great success in such careers."

"Thank you, Walter! But enough about me! Let this evening be your evening. If you would like to, I can dance for you while you relax and drink your champagne."

"That is a fine idea, Mélanie."

Getting up from the sofa, Mélanie then positioned herself in the middle of the lounge, in front of Schellenberg, and struck a dancing pause before looking at the three Arab musicians.

"Harem music, please!"

She soon was dancing slowly, spinning around and swinging her hips while keeping her eyes fixed on the SD man and smiling at him. All but hypnotized by her, Schellenberg could only stare back in admiration as she progressively stripped out of her vaporous Persian dancer's outfit and as the rhythm of the music accelerated. The music finally reached a crescendo and abruptly died as a now naked Mélanie sat down in Schellenberg's lap, facing him and with her big, firm breasts near his face. The SD man had to take a deep breath then to come out of his near trance.

"Wow! Never have I seen such beauty and grace on display, Mélanie. You are truly fantastic."

"Why, thank you, Walter. Maybe we could continue this conversation upstairs, on a large and comfortable bed?"

"That is an excellent idea, my dear Mélanie." Replied Schellenberg before getting up with her from the sofa and walking to the main staircase at one end of the lounge while holding her left hand. The four SS bodyguards looked at each other as the couple was climbing the stairs.

"Should we follow them upstairs?"

"Me and Kurt will go up and stand guard outside their door." Replied Otto, the senior bodyguard. "Fritz and Klaus, you make sure that no one tampers with the staff car outside."

The four SS guards then split as ordered, with two of them going outside to watch their car.

About one hour later, Schellenberg came back down to the show lounge with Mélanie and his two SS bodyguards, more than satisfied. He bowed politely to Marie, who had been anxiously waiting in the lounge to see how things went, and gave her an impressive pile of French Francs, which she gratefully accepted.

"Your daughter Mélanie is a true angel, Madame Laurent. Your cabaret made honor to its reputation."

"And I was honored to receive and entertain such a distinguished guest as you, Obersturmbannführer Schellenberg." Replied Marie, smiling at the irony of someone calling a demon girl 'a true angel'. "Don't hesitate to visit us again as much as you like."

"Oh, if I came back as much as I would like to, then I am afraid that I would get no work done at all, madam. Have a good night, you and your sweet Mélanie."

Schellenberg then left after a last kiss on the lips of Mélanie. Marie couldn't help let out a breath in relief when Schellenberg's staff car rolled away from the cabaret.

"Phew! At first I was nearly expecting to be arrested on the spot. So, how was that Walter Schellenberg with you, Mélanie?"

"He stayed a gentleman all the while, Mother. While he was a bit selfish as a sex partner, his manners were gentle and I think that I truly had him under my spell. I suspect that his marriage is not a very solid one, as he was really hungry for sex and seemed to expect at first a completely passive bed partner. Overall, I would say that he is a well educated man with good manners and a sharp intelligence. He is no street brawler like his typical SS troopers and is an intellectual type with refined tastes, even though he is fully committed to the Nazi cause."

"And...about his visit to Paris?"

"As I suspected, he was sent here on orders from Hitler himself to get rid of my ghost British commandos, who are apparently making the Führer mad. I was able to read his mind in bed and saw that he is planning a massive, coordinated sweep of the various underground complexes of Paris by the newly arrived SS units. He apparently believes that this is where the British commandos are hiding."

"So, what are you going to do about that, Mélanie? Suspend your raids temporarily and stay here?"

That made Mélanie smile devilishly at her adoptive mother.

"Me, stop my raids? Hell, I will be waiting for those German search parties with great glee, Mother! I may be very busy in the next few days in order to prepare for those SS brutes."

## **CHAPTER 9 – SS DEBACLE**

**08:14 (Paris Time)**

**Tuesday, October 14, 1941**

**Denfert-Rochereau subway station**

**14<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement, Paris**

**Occupied France**

Sturmbannführer<sup>32</sup> Klaus Steinbeck was not a happy man as he got the men of his battalion from the SS Division Wiking ready to enter the tunnel that would lead them inside the famous Paris Catacombs. A veteran of both the Campaign of France and of the Russian Front, he was a competent tactician and intensely disliked having to use his men in a place where he could not deploy them properly and could only communicate by voice or by telephone, all this in a pitch dark environment which he and his men didn't know. However, orders were orders, so his battalion was now about to storm inside the Catacombs simultaneously from both of its known access tunnels. Other SS units from the Wiking, Totenkopf and Polizei Divisions were also about to enter many of the various underground complexes of caves, tunnels and crypts to be found around Paris, with the goal of finally finding and eradicating those damn British commandos that had been such a curse on the German occupying units in and around Paris.

At precisely 08:15 on his watch, he dropped down his raised left hand, giving the signal to his 370 troopers to enter the approximately 400 foot-long tunnel leading from the subway station to the Catacombs proper.

**"FORWARD, MEN!"**

Leading by example, Steinbeck followed right behind the two scouts forming the point of his unit's column and entered a long tunnel dug in the stone that was illuminated solely by the flashlights and kerosene lamps carried by his men. It was high enough to allow men to walk upright, but was barely wide enough to let two persons stand side-by-side. Advancing in that dark and claustrophobic environment, the SS officer glanced at the

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<sup>32</sup> Sturmbannführer : SS rank equivalent to Major.

black line painted overhead on the ceiling of the tunnel: that line was meant to guide visitors to the Catacombs who could otherwise risk getting lost in its maze of tunnels and underground chambers. Right now, the remaining infantry company of his battalion, totaling 142 men, was supposed to have entered the tunnel under the Rémy Dumoncel Street, which normally served as the exit for the visitors to the Catacombs. In all, 513 SS troopers were now underground, with another 184 men of Steinbeck's battalion staying on the surface and watching all the possible exits from the Catacombs. If those damned British commandos were hiding in or near the Catacombs, then his men were going to flush them out and kill them.

After about a hundred feet, the German column arrived at a Y-shaped intersection. Consulting his map, one of the few detailed maps of the Paris Underground that existed and had been produced by the Paris Office of Quarries Inspection, Steinbeck made his scouts take the right-side tunnel, which led directly to the Catacombs. After another 250 feet, they arrived at another intersection, this time an X-type.

"This must be the intersection with the consolidation tunnel under the d'Arcueil Aqueduct. First Platoon, you go into that tunnel to our front right and sweep the complex of tunnels under the Rochefoucauld Hospice! Second Platoon, you take the tunnel behind and to my left and check out the tunnels under the surface rail yard. Once you have cleared them, return to this intersection and secure it until we return. The rest, follow me!"

With Steinbeck and his two scouts still in the lead and with two sub-units totaling 71 men splitting up from the column, 300 troopers followed their officer down the dark, narrow tunnel. Apart from the noise of booted footsteps echoing down the tunnel and a few rare whispers between troopers, who were alert and tense, they could not hear anything for the moment. From being straight, the main tunnel then started to include a few curves and elbows. After another 150 feet, the Germans arrived at a more complex set of tunnel connections. Consulting again his map with the help of his flashlight, the SS officer pointed at the two tunnel entrances visible ahead and to his left.

"These are the tunnels leading to the Port-Mahon Quarry and its water well. Third Platoon, split up and sweep those tunnels, then come back and guard the intersections. A section will also go right and inspect the small underground workshop near the d'Arcueil Aqueduct."

The column split again, leaving about 260 men to follow Steinbeck down the main tunnel. With nothing having apparently happened up to now, he and his men were starting to relax a bit when they arrived at the entrance to the Catacombs' ossuary. There, masonry consolidations dating from the start of the century greeted them, along with a stone lintel bearing a chilling message engraved in French, which Steinbeck translated and read out loud.

"Stop! Here is the empire of death! Wow! Those Frenchmen really did everything to impress tourists."

Bending down a bit in order to pass under the low lintel, Steinbeck and his first troopers then entered a much starker environment: between stone pillars and rock faces, piles of human bones and skulls went up to the ceiling, making a few SS troopers more superstitious than others sign themselves. With only the limited light from flashlights and a few kerosene lamps, the SS officer slowly walked down the main tunnel of the ossuary, passing by a number of piles of bones and skulls, then stopped when he arrived at the first intersection inside the ossuary and gave more orders, to disperse his men inside the various tunnels and crypts around him. He was still giving orders when a distant but powerful explosion, accompanied by a long rumble and strong vibrations, made him snap his head towards the tunnel he had used to get to the ossuary.

"What the..."

Mere seconds later, another distant explosion, this time from the opposite direction, added to his alarm and confusion.

"That came from the direction of the exit tunnel! I..."

An explosion immediately followed by a burst of automatic fire, but from much nearer this time, then made Steinbeck snap his head around again.

"THAT CAME FROM INSIDE THE OSSUARY! THOSE BRITISH BASTARDS WERE INDEED HIDING INSIDE THE CATACOMBS AFTER ALL! SCHARFÜHRER<sup>33</sup> MENGELS, FOLLOW ME WITH YOUR SQUAD!"

The noise of an intense firefight using many different types of weapons continued as Steinbeck rushed with a squad of infantrymen towards the nearby crypt of the Sacellum, leaving behind a group of confused and uncertain soldiers who had only a handful of flashlights and one kerosene lamp to illuminate the space around them. Screams of pain and the sight of dead or wounded SS men greeted Steinbeck as he entered the

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<sup>33</sup> Scharführer : SS rank equivalent to Sergeant.



tunnel leading to the crypt of the Sacellum, which was one of the largest crypts of the ossuary and where a stone altar was located. The surviving SS men in that tunnel were busy firing towards the crypt, the muzzle flashes of their weapons creating a surreal visual effect of dancing lights in the darkness of the ossuary. Steinbeck saw in turn other muzzle flashes, this time from inside the crypt, just before a murderous burst of machine gun fire swept down the tunnel, cutting down more SS men. The SS officer barely had time to throw himself down on the ground to avoid the rain of bullets ricocheting on the stone walls or shattering dried human bones and skulls. Scharführer Mengels was less lucky and fell dead on the ground, a bullet through the neck.

“HIMMEL! LET’S FINISH THOSE DAMN BRITISHERS WITH GRENADES!”

The surviving troopers near him obeyed him and once and threw a volley of stick grenades deep inside the crypt. A few seconds later, seven grenades exploded nearly simultaneously, nearly deafening the Germans. A heavy silence followed, making Steinbeck hope that those pesky British commandos were finally dead. His hopes were however shattered when the first SS trooper to rush inside the crypt, his own submachine gun blazing, was cut down by a rifle shot. More shots came from around the altar at one end of the crypt, downing more Germans and forcing the SS men to withdraw a few paces deeper back in the access tunnel. Steinbeck clenched his teeth together when he understood that, at this rhythm, his battalion was going to incur heavy losses inside such unfavorable tactical grounds. The British probably had time over the past months to dig, enlarge or reopen a number of tunnels and exits, thus giving themselves ways to move around any German force chasing them. A remark from a trooper about ten paces behind him then made him look questioningly at that man.

“What did you just say, Schutze<sup>34</sup>?”

“That I am smelling gasoline, Herr Sturmbannführer.”

Steinbeck was about to reply to him that he must have smelled one of their kerosene lamps but suddenly held his tongue: he now could smell something...and it was not kerosene. The realization of what was possibly happening came slowly to him, with the noise and concussions from the firefight around him making it hard for him to concentrate. A much stronger whiff of gasoline then made him open his eyes in utter horror.

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<sup>34</sup> Schutze : SS rank equivalent to Private.

“Mein Gott! They are going to try to burn us alive inside the ossuary. EVERYBODY, RETREAT OUT OF THE OSSUARY, NOW! CARRY OUR WOUNDED OUT!”

Dragging their wounded away from the crypt and then picking them up before starting to walk out of the ossuary took some time, time that the SS men didn't have. As Steinbeck urged his men through the entrance of the ossuary, a rapidly approaching rumble made him look down the entrance tunnel. He then froze in abject terror when he saw the huge fireball rolling down that tunnel and coming directly at him. Snapping his head 180 degrees, he saw a similar fireball about to fill the inside of the ossuary, coming from the direction of the exit tunnel.

“Scheisse<sup>35</sup>!”

That was the last word from Steinbeck before he was enveloped by flames, dying in mere seconds from asphyxiation rather than from burning.

On the surface, on the balcony of a third floor apartment along the Rémy Dumoncel Street overlooking the exit hut of the Catacombs, an old Frenchman had been watching with curiosity as hundreds of SS troopers had filed through the hut and inside the exit tunnel of the Catacombs, leaving a good forty men to guard the hut and a few nearby sewer access points. He was about to go back inside his apartment when a powerful underground rumble and an earthquake-like tremor shook his building, making him stay on his balcony. The old man then saw some smoke come out from the exit hut for a few seconds, making him shout to his wife inside.

“HEY, MARTHE, YOU BETTER COME HERE ON THE BALCONY: SOMETHING IS HAPPENING WITH ALL THESE GERMAN SOLDIERS THAT WENT DOWN IN THE CATACOMBS.”

“I DON'T CARE! THEY COULD ALL DROP DEAD IN THERE AS FAR AS I AM CONCERNED!”

“WELL, THAT MAY JUST BE HAPPENING NOW, MARTHE!”

Those last words finally made his wife come out of their small kitchen and out on the balcony, where she looked down at the exit hut, where the German soldiers posted around it looked quite agitated.

“So, what is happening down there, Lucien?”

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<sup>35</sup> Scheisse : Shit in German.

"I am not sure yet, but I heard and felt what was possibly a strong underground explosion...and it was no simple grenade, that I can tell you."

Now intrigued, Marthe watched as the SS troopers down on the sidewalk facing their building from across the street started shouting and running around.

"These pigs sure look agitated now. I wonder..."

A strong underground rumble cut her off, followed a few seconds later by thick clouds of black smoke that started pouring out of the exit hut and from the nearby sewer grates. Lucien, a veteran of the First World War, quickly understood what had happened and shouted with joy.

"YEAH! THE GERMANS JUST GO ROASTED LIKE CHICKENS!"

"Lucien, are you mad? Those Germans will shoot you if you keep screaming and celebrating like this." Replied Marthe while trying to drag him back inside. Her words proved prophetic, as one SS trooper, looking pissed, aimed his rifle at Lucien. Luckily, Marthe succeeded in moving her husband enough to make the bullet miss him.

"GET INSIDE NOW, YOU IDIOT! YOU WILL HAVE BOTH OF US KILLED!"

As Lucien was finally understanding the good sense in his wife's words and was walking back inside his apartment, the noise of a burst of machine gun fire made him go flat on his belly, while also forcing Marthe down. However no further bullets shattered the walls or ceiling of their apartment. Instead, he saw through the guardrails of his balcony the SS man who had shot at him crumple to the ground, along with two other Germans. A second burst downed more Germans as the SS hurriedly sought some cover from the murderous machine gun fire. More shots and bursts followed, but from a variety of different directions, confusing the Germans about where their enemies were. The SS men tried to reply to that fire but seemingly couldn't locate exactly the shooters and fired wildly. The firefight turned into a one-way shooting gallery, with SS men falling one after another while being unable to shoot any of their dispersed opponents. Lucien, watching the firefight while still lying down on his belly on his balcony, heard the noise of approaching steel tracks after a minute or so and looked towards the nearby intersection of Rémy Dumoncel and d'Alembert Streets. He swore to himself when he saw a German armored half-track full of soldiers appear at the corner of the next building, followed closely by a tank.

"Merde<sup>36</sup>! This is going to become ugly!"

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<sup>36</sup> Merde : Shit, in French.

The newcomers didn't have time to intervene in the fight, however. As it was turning on Rémy Dumoncel, the half-track was suddenly engulfed in a big fireball that burst with a strangely subdued detonation. The SS men inside the open-top halftrack were instantly incinerated, while the fuel and ammunition aboard ignited, turning the vehicle into a flaming wreck. The crew of the tank following the halftrack then decided to go around the burning armored personnel carrier and started rounding it from its right side. Lucien, watching with dread the main gun of the tank traverse as it searched for targets, suddenly saw a khaki-clad soldier wearing the characteristic helmet of the British Army rise from a crouched position on the rear engine deck of the tank, then shoot the unsuspecting German tank commander from point blank range with a handgun as he stood inside his opened hatch. As the dead tank commander fell inside his turret, the British soldier then threw a primed grenade down the hatch before jumping off the tank. However, Lucien didn't see him again afterwards, as if he had simply vanished. His attention was returned to the tank when an internal explosion blew open all of its hatches. The tank ground slowly to a start, with no crewmember jumping out as flames started coming out of the hatches. The tank then blew up, projecting its turret high in the air before it crashed inverted on a sidewalk. Completely discouraged by now, the surviving SS troopers that were visible to Lucien decided to cut and run, withdrawing down Rémy Dumoncel towards the intersection with the Tombe-Issoire Street. Rifle fire however chased them relentlessly, downing four more Germans before they could disappear from sight. Slowly and cautiously getting up on his balcony, Lucien contemplated with glee the dead German soldiers and burning armored vehicles littering the street.

"British soldiers are really here in Paris, after all. And I thought that those German posters were hogwash."

### **09:27 (Paris Time)**

#### **Headquarters of the Gross Paris Kommandatur**

#### **Hotel Meurice, Rue de Rivoli**

#### **1<sup>st</sup> Arrondissement, Paris**

General Otto Von Stulpnagel was nearly as stunned and shocked as Walter Schellenberg as both men listened to the various reports coming from the SS units presently engaged in their sweep operation of the Paris underground. While the SS men

were actually suffering the casualties in this operation, the degree and ferocity of the British response to the sweep was also a severe indictment on Stulpnagel's control, or lack of it, on the Greater Paris Region. The Führer was liable to become furious, and quite justly, once he learned of what was no less than a bloody debacle.

One of the staff officers working the telephones of the operations center then came to the large table supporting a big map of Paris and its suburbs, handing a note to Walter Schellenberg while speaking to him in a subdued tone.

"Herr Obersturmbannführer, the Wiking Division command post just reported that multiple simultaneous underground explosions have caved in the old quarries under the Val-de-Grace Gardens, where two infantry companies were conducting a sweep. The surface of the gardens themselves have collapsed by a few meters. They are afraid that none of their men underground survived."

"How many men are we talking about, Hauptmann?" Asked with difficulty Schellenberg.

"About 260 men, Herr Obersturmbannführer."

Schellenberg had to sit down after hearing that, completely demoralized and also furious.

"Those damn British commandos! They must have prepared their underground hideouts for demolition for months now, placing in advance explosive charges and reserves of gasoline, ready to be ignited on command."

"You are right, I believe, Herr Schellenberg." Said Otto Von Stulpnagel. "If that was the case, then your men stood little chance under there. In view of this, I would counsel you to stop your underground sweeps, recall your troops to the surface and then seal all the access points to these caves and tunnels."

"I believe that you are right, Herr General. STANDARTENFÜHRER<sup>37</sup> SCHEMPKE, HAVE THE SWEEP OPERATIONS STOPPED AT ONCE AND RECALL ALL OUR TROOPS UNDERGROUND TO THE SURFACE! OUR MEN WILL THEN GUARD ALL THE ACCESS POINTS UNTIL THOSE COULD BE SEALED."

As the SS command staff that had come with him to the Hotel Meurice was passing out his orders, Schellenberg had a bitter look at the board tallying the known casualties for

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<sup>37</sup> Standartenführer : SS rank of Colonel.

this operation. While the enemy casualty count was still at 'zero', the SS casualties now totaled over 1,600 dead, wounded and missing: a stinging defeat indeed.

"How the Hell am I going to tell this to the Führer?"

**23:41 (Paris Time)**

**Balcony of luxury suite, Hotel Meurice**

**Rue de Rivoli, 1<sup>st</sup> Arrondissement, Paris**

Walter Schellenberg was deeply depressed and, unable to find sleep, had gone out on the balcony of his suite to look at Paris at night. As he had expected, the Führer had badly reacted to the news of the SS underground debacle and had screamed into his telephone receiver, red with rage. Schellenberg now fully expected to be demoted and sidelined once back in Berlin, something that he found profoundly unjust and unfair. If anything, General Von Stulpnagel should be bearing the brunt of the responsibility in this, as it was on his watch that those damn British commandos had established themselves around Paris. Now, his surviving SS troopers, tired, dirty and demoralized, had returned to their barracks for some badly needed sleep, while small groups of army soldiers had taken over the surveillance of the known access points to the Paris Underground. The emphasis here was on 'known' access points, as even the experts of the French Quarries Inspection Service themselves didn't know precisely the full extent of the vast underground complex of tunnels, caves, aqueducts, old quarries and crypts to be found under Paris. On top of over 187 miles of old quarries and tunnels known to the Quarries Inspection Service, one had to add the extensive and widely interconnecting complexes of dedicated tunnels used to lodge the various electrical wires, water pipes, steam pipes and pneumatic conduits of the capital, plus hundreds of partially mapped medieval caves and crypts and even smuggling tunnels used in the past by criminals. And this didn't even include the network of tunnels of the extensive Paris subway system. To search all these tunnels and caves would take more German troops than there was right now in Paris, while sealing the known access points was going to take months of work and tens of thousands of workers. Right now, Germany had higher priorities than to sink massive resources into securing the Paris underground.

Schellenberg was still contemplating the lights of Paris when a brief flash of light from the Southwest made his head snap towards the French École Militaire, about a mile

away on the Left Bank of the Seine. Seconds later, he both felt a strong vibration and heard a deep, powerful rumble. His blood froze at once as he understood what that announced: another powerful underground explosion in Paris. A second flash of light made his head snap around again, this time towards the East and the Forest of Vincennes. Three separate flashes came in quick succession from that direction, then followed by a fifth flash from the West. With dread in his mind, Schellenberg ran inside his suite as a sixth flash lit up the night sky, with rumbles and vibrations now being felt nearly continuously. Quickly dressing back in his uniform and buckling his pistol belt around his waist, he ran out of his suite three minutes later and went down to the large operations center of the Kommandantur, where he grabbed the duty officer, a major.

"What is going on around Paris? What are these big underground explosions that are shaking the city?"

"Uh, we were just starting to get reports about them, Herr Obersturmbannführer. The Totenkopf Division just reported that four wings of the French Military Academy used to lodge its troopers were blown up and collapsed by powerful explosions under them. Those wings are now reduced to piles of rubbles inside large craters and the division commander is afraid that the troopers that had been sleeping inside are all dead now. He is estimating his losses at a minimum of 1,400 men."

Schellenberg was left with his jaw open from shock by this and needed a few seconds before he could speak. A staff officer then shouted information from his duty desk.

"SIR, THE POLIZEI DIVISION REPORTS THAT FIVE OF ITS BARRACK BLOCKS AT THE FORT OF VINCENNES HAVE BEEN BLOWN UP FROM UNDER AND HAVE COLLAPSED."

"Mein Gott!" Exclaimed the major, stunned. He couldn't say more before another duty staff announced more bad news.

"HERR MAJOR, THE WIKING DIVISION SIGNALS THAT A TOTAL OF FOUR BARRACK BLOCKS IN THE FORTS OF IVRY AND BICÈTRE WERE JUST BLOWN UP!"

Schellenberg finally exploded, unable to take more of this.

"GOTT UND HIMMEL! WHERE COULD THE BRITISH HAVE FOUND ENOUGH EXPLOSIVES TO BLOW UP SO MANY BUILDINGS? WHO REPRESENTS THE FIELD ENGINEERS HERE?"

A captain in his late twenties got up from his duty desk and marched to Schellenberg, stopping in front of him and saluting him.

"I am, Obersturmbannführer! Hauptmann Erik Stoltz, at your service!"

Schellenberg eyed the junior officer for a moment and decided that he looked competent enough.

"Very well, Hauptmann Stoltz! You must be familiar with the various barrack blocks our troops use in and around Paris, so I suppose that you could give me an estimate of the amount of high explosives needed to blow up a typical barrack block from under and collapse it?"

"I would say that, if well placed deep in the basements of a typical caserne, one would need at least a half ton of TNT or dynamite to destroy most of it, or closer to a ton spread in multiple charges to completely collapse it. I would need first to see the degree of damage caused to each caserne before I could give a more exact estimate, Herr Obersturmbannführer."

"Your present estimate is already quite helpful, Hauptmann Stoltz." Said Schellenberg before looking at the senior duty officer.

"And how many caserne buildings have been blown up in the last few minutes, Major?"

"Uh, the count is now at fifteen barrack buildings, all housing SS troops, Herr Obersturmbannführer."

That last detail caught in Schellenberg's throat and he looked crossly at the major.

"Only SS barracks have been targeted to date?"

"Yes, Herr Obersturmbannführer!"

Schellenberg swore mentally to himself, then made a quick calculation in his head.

"So, to destroy all these buildings, those damn British would have needed a minimum of about eight tons of pure high explosives and possibly as much as fifteen tons. Where could they have found so much explosives? Not through parachute drops?! So, what does that leave us with as possible answers?"

Knowing that what he was going to say was probably not going to make him popular, the young field engineer officer facing Schellenberg cleared his throat and spoke as calmly as he could.

"Herr Obersturmbannführer, I see only two possible places where someone could find that much raw explosives around or near Paris: in the main supply depot of the field engineers of Army Group B, at the Fort de l'Est, north of Paris, and in the explosives depot managed by the Todt Organization near La Roche Guyon, west of Paris. As you probably know, the Todt Organization is presently busy building a



multitude of coastal defense fortifications and obstacles facing England, a job that requires a lot of explosives.”

“Finally, someone who can think clearly. Thank you, Hauptmann Stoltz! Major, I would strongly suggest to you that you have those two explosives depots checked at once, to find out if any sizeable quantity of explosives are missing from them. On second thought, belay that! I am going to check by myself, so I will be sure that someone won't be lying to me on the phone to cover his incompetent ass. Do you mind if I borrow the good Hauptmann Stoltz for a day?”

Realizing too well that Schellenberg's politely delivered request was in reality an order not open to discussion, the major nodded his head.

“I will be happy to loan you the services of Hauptmann Stoltz for as long as you will need him, Herr Obersturmbannführer.”

“Thank you! Hauptmann, grab your service cap and overcoat and come with me!”

“Yes, Obersturmbannführer!”

Less than ten minutes later, Schellenberg was leaving the courtyard of the Hotel Meurice in his big Mercedes Kfz 15 field staff car, the young field engineer officer sitting with him in the back and with two of his SS bodyguards in the front. On his orders, the driver went first to the French Military Academy, so that he could inspect the damage there and give a chance to Stoltz to evaluate more precisely how much explosives had been used there. What they saw after passing through the main gate of the École Militaire was even worse than what Walter Schellenberg had imagined. Past the Cour d'Honneur, they found the buildings flanking on both sides the central Cour Morland reduced to huge piles of stone debris. The ground on which they had stood had actually collapsed down by a good ten feet and the pavement of the central court was cracked and uneven. Making his driver stop and park near the entrance of the court, Schellenberg got out of his staff car with Stoltz and one of his SS bodyguards to go inspect on foot the destruction. The hundreds of SS soldiers frantically searching the rubble for survivors, using flashlight and portable projectors, came to attention at once at Schellenberg's approach, prompting a light chiding from him.

“Don't pay attention to me, men! Return to your rescue work!”

He then approached the lip of the nearest crater, which actually approximately espoused the shape of the building that had once stood there.

"Hauptmann Stoltz, take a few minutes to examine the damage around us, then tell me what you think of this demolition work."

"Yes, Herr Obersturmbannführer!"

The young field engineer officer went around for maybe fifteen minutes before reporting back to Schellenberg.

"Herr Obersturmbannführer, I must say that, as complete and effective as the destruction was here, it was a bit of an amateur job. While the charges were reasonably well placed and spaced inside the basement levels of those buildings, the amount of explosives used was quite excessive and uneconomical. Either the ones who did this were not qualified demolition experts, or they wanted to make sure that no one would come out alive. If the same waste proves similar at the other barracks that were blown up, then I must revise my estimate of explosives used upwards, up to a total of 25 tons of TNT or equivalent."

Schellenberg stared gravely at Stoltz for a few seconds, then nodded his head.

"That will actually help me a lot, Hauptmann. However, we won't visit another destroyed barrack, at least tonight. We are now going to go visit your army field engineer depot at the Fort de l'Est. Let's go back to my car!"

Returning to the big Mercedes staff car, the two officers and one bodyguard sat back in the vehicle, with Schellenberg then ordering his driver to go north towards the Fort de l'Est, near the suburb of St-Denis.

The trip through the dark streets of Paris and then along a nearly deserted road once out of the city was nerve-wracking for Walter Schellenberg, who was on the alert for any sign of those pesky British commandos. They however arrived without incident at the Fort de l'Est, a 19<sup>th</sup> Century stone fort that was part of the old fortifications of Paris built under Prime Minister Thiers. The fort itself formed a square with four corner bastions and with relatively low stone walls with firing embrasures set at intervals in them, with the fort being a bit over a thousand feet long per side. Three German Army soldiers stopped the staff car at the main gate of the fort, a high stone arch set in a thick bastion. The sentries however came to attention and saluted at once when they saw Schellenberg's rank insignias.

"What can we do for you, Herr Obersturmbannführer?"

"I need to speak urgently with the commandant of this fort and with his logistics officer. Wake them up if they are asleep. I will be waiting for them at the entrance to your explosives depot. Can one of you please guide me to that depot?"

"Certainly, Herr Obersturmbannführer!" Replied the senior sentry, who then pointed at one of his comrades. "Hans, go guide this officer to the entrance of our explosives depot while I call the Commandant!"

"Yes, Gefreiter!"

With one soldier climbing on the footrest on the driver's side of the staff car and holding on while giving indications to the SS driver, the Mercedes rolled inside the fort, then turned right to follow the perimeter road running along the inner walls of the fort's casemates. The sentry made the driver stop his car in front of the first of a series of large double garage doors and spoke to Schellenberg after stepping off the footrest.

"These doors are the access doors to our explosives magazines, Herr Obersturmbannführer. Those magazines were originally used as stables but, being set inside the casemates of the fort, are very resistant to aerial bombs and artillery shells."

"Thank you, Schutze! You may go! I will wait here for your Commandant."

The soldier gave Schellenberg a Nazi salute before leaving at a run to return to the main gate. Stoltz then noticed that Schellenberg seemed rather unhappy.

"Is something wrong, Herr Obersturmbannführer?"

"Quite a few things, actually, Hauptmann. First, those sentries at the main gate did not ask for our identity papers, taking our German uniforms at face value. Second, tell me how many armed guards you see in front of the doors of this explosives depot." Stoltz paled a bit when he understood what Schellenberg was alluding to.

"Uh, none, Herr Obersturmbannführer."

"Exactly! We have a German ammunition depot full of high explosives and with zero guards watching its magazines. If this is the normal standard of security of this place, then I would be less than surprised if someone managed to steal explosives from here. The commandant of this fort better have some damn good explanations for all this. Let's take a look at those magazines while waiting for him, shall we?"

Expecting some verbal fireworks soon, Stoltz followed Schellenberg and his bodyguard to the first set of double barn doors and took out his flashlight to illuminate its locks. What they saw was a simple steel chain of rather small gauge loosely keeping the two doors together and closed by a padlock. Schellenberg frowned on seeing that the doors could be partially opened despite the chain linking them. Being a small, thin man, he

pulled on one of the doors, then managed to slip inside through the opening with little difficulty. Now inside the first magazine and looking quite pissed, he extended his right hand out through the gap between the double doors.

"Pass me your flashlight, Hauptmann Stoltz: I am going to do some exploring inside this magazine. Stay near the door with my bodyguard and wait for the fort commandant."

"Here you are, Herr Obersturmbannführer."

Armed with Stoltz's flashlight, Walter Schellenberg pointed it around him in the obscure magazine and saw that it was nearly full of wooden crates piled high and deep on each side of a central circulation space left empty. Seeing a light switch on a wall near the doors, he went to it and threw it on, switching on a set of ceiling lamps and fully illuminating the magazine. Switching off his flashlight, Schellenberg approached one of the piles of crates and read the inscriptions on one of the small crates, which each measured about two feet per side.

"Hum, Hexogen high explosives, 32 one-kilo blocks. STOLTZ, WHAT IS HEXOGEN? IS IT ANOTHER NAME FOR TNT?"

"THEY HAVE HEXOGEN HERE? MEIN GOTT! HEXOGEN IS SIXTY PERCENT MORE POWERFUL PER WEIGHT THAN TNT AND IS QUITE INSENSITIVE TO SHOCK. IT IS USED COMMONLY AS A SHELL AND BOMB FILLER AND IS ALSO OFTEN MIXED WITH TNT TO MAKE A CHEAPER EXPLOSIVE COMPOUND."

"SIXTY PERCENT MORE POWERFUL THAN TNT, YOU SAY?" Asked Schellenberg, feeling alarm rising in him.

"YES, HERR OBERSTURMBANNFÜHRER!"

He then quickly counted the number of rows of stacked crates apparently contained inside the magazine and made a quick calculation, arriving at a total of a bit over 82 tons of hexogen, a scary number indeed: that represented an awful amount of destructive power if it would fall in the wrong hands. With doubts suddenly resurfacing in his mind, Schellenberg walked down the alley between the two giant piles of crates, going all the way to the stone wall at the end. He swore to himself when he saw that there was an old steel door in that back wall which was hidden by one of the piles. Furthermore, there was a gap between the end of the pile and the wall, a gap wide enough to easily let someone circulate around the pile. Walking behind the pile and going to the steel door, he swore again when he was able to open it with a noise of rusted metal: it was not

locked! Passing through the open door while switching on his flashlight, he walked down a dark tunnel for maybe ten feet before arriving at a T-shaped junction with a long, obscure corridor extending to his left and right. One look through a nearby firing slit made him understand that he was now in a tunnel of the fort's casemates used to link the various firing positions together. Returning inside the magazine, he went to check if he could walk all the way around the piles by following the side walls. He hesitated when he saw that the two rearmost stacks of crates at the back end were missing. Slowly walking through the gap between the rear-most stacks and the side wall, Schellenberg had to stop nearly at once, paralyzed by shock: a number of the stacks closest to the side wall were missing, with the gap in the piles hidden by the stacks facing the central alley. Just on this left-side pile, he could count that a total of 380 crates of hexogen were missing, representing over twelve tons of high explosives. Feeling anger rising in him, Schellenberg nearly ran to the right-side pile of crates and examined its back face. There was an even bigger hidden gap in the crates stacked there, to the tune of fourteen tons of missing hexogen. That the missing crates had been located nearest to the side walls, instead of on the side of the central alley, where a forklift or work party of soldiers would normally pick up first the number of crates needed, clearly meant to him that those who had carried away those crates were not German soldiers. Schellenberg then returned to the double doors and squeezed through between them before speaking to Stoltz.

"I may be wrong, but over 26 tons of hexogen appears to be missing from the piles, and this just in this one magazine."

Stoltz' eyes widened with horror on hearing that.

"Twenty-six tons of hexogen? But, that could mean that the British still could have about ten tons of hexogen in their hands, even after destroying all these barrack blocks!"

"Exactly! You can imagine what those British commandoes could further do with that quantity of explosives still in their hands, Stoltz?"

"Uh, I unfortunately could imagine that too well, Herr Obersturmbannführer"

"So, where is the fort commandant? Is he finally about to show up here or will he need a direct invitation from the Führer himself?"

As if someone else had heard him, the sound of running feet approaching came from the direction of the barracks of the fort. A hauptmann in his forties and wearing the insignias

of a reservist supply officer soon appeared in the night, stopping in front of Schellenberg and saluting him. He was a bit out of breath as he presented himself.

"Hauptmann Friedrich Borgart, Logistics Officer for the Fort de l'Est, Herr Obersturmbannführer. I am sorry for the wait, but I came as quickly as I could."

"At least you are here, Hauptmann Borgart, which is more than I can say about the commander of this fort. Who commands this fort, by the way?"

"Oberst-Leutnant Johan Müller, Herr Obersturmbannführer. May I ask what is happening?"

"You may, Hauptmann!" Replied Schellenberg, his tone frosty. "Tonight, British commandos blew up a dozen of our barracks around Paris, using tons of high explosives placed under those barracks. Thousands of our troops are now dead or missing and I came here to find if those British commandos could have got their explosives from this fort."

"From this fort, Herr Obersturmbannführer? But, nobody came here to load up explosives in the last two weeks, while our last delivery of explosives came in about a month ago. The only trucks that entered this fort during the last two weeks only carried foodstuff and German personnel."

"Then, how do you explain that there are big gaps in your piles of hexogen crates inside that first magazine behind me, Hauptmann Borgart? By my count, you may be missing about 26 tons of hexogen."

Borgart's eyes widened with horror on hearing those last words.

"But, how could that be? Nobody has entered that magazine for a month now, when the last delivery of hexogen was received."

"Wrong! I just entered it and I didn't even had to cut the chain on the doors. In truth, the security around these explosives is a farce, Hauptmann! Do you have more hexogen in your other magazines?"

"Actually, I do, Herr Obersturmbannführer: the second magazine contains large special demolition charges in the form of barrels, each one containing eighty kilos of pure hexogen. The rest of the magazines contain TNT in various forms."

It was the turn of Schellenberg to open his eyes wide with horror.

"Demolition charges with eighty kilos of hexogen? Go get your manifests of explosives stored in this fort, along with the keys to those magazines, and come back here as quickly as you can. And get that damn fort commander to hurry up and get here before I put him under arrest!"

"Uh, yes, Herr Obersturmbannführer!" Replied the supply officer before leaving at a run. Schellenberg then exchanged a worried look with Stoltz.

"Eighty kilo charges of hexogen! They would have been perfect for those damn British commandos. Somehow, I suspect that we will find that at least a few will be missing."

To Schellenberg's frustration and anger, the commandant of the fort was still a no show by the time the supply officer came back. Spending his rage on a pebble and kicking it away, he then faced his senior bodyguard.

"Karl, take the car and Wilhelm with you and go put the fort commandant under arrest, then bring him here."

"Yes, Herr Obersturmbannführer!" Nearly shouted the big SS trooper before running to the staff car. Schellenberg then looked severely at the supply officer.

"Now, let's open up and inspect your magazines, Hauptmann, starting with the first one behind me. You may find that someone has carried away quite a lot of your precious explosives."

Cold sweat appeared on Borgart's forehead as he prepared his keys and supplies manifests, then opened the lock on the first magazine. Schellenberg clenched his teeth with anger when Borgart confirmed that over 26 tons of hexogen blocks were missing from that magazine. His anger turned into rage when they found out that no less than 56 barrel demolition charges, each packing eighty kilos, or 176 pounds, of hexogen were missing. That was also when his two bodyguards came back with a rather unstable fort commandant whose breath strongly smelled of alcohol. Schellenberg stared at the lieutenant-colonel with a look that could have killed.

"YOU DAMN INCOMPETENT DRUNK! THOUSANDS OF MY MEN ARE DEAD TONIGHT BECAUSE YOU COULDN'T PROVIDE ADEQUATE SECURITY FOR THE EXPLOSIVES STORED IN YOUR FORT! IN THE NAME OF GRUPPENFÜHRER HEIDRICH, HEAD OF REICH SECURITY, I PUT YOU UNDER ARREST FOR DERELICTION OF DUTY AND DRUNKENNESS! KARL, PUT THAT PIECE OF SHIT IN MANACLES AND STUFF HIM INSIDE THE CAR!"

As his senior bodyguard was putting a pair of manacles on the wrists of the fort commandant, who was not fully understanding what was happening to him, Schellenberg turned to face the supply officer, pointing an index at him.

"Hauptmann Borgart, I want you to do a complete and thorough inspection of your stores of explosives. I want to know exactly how much of what is missing from these magazines. Once your inspection will be completed, send the results at the Kommandantur of the Gross Paris, for my attention. I am Obersturmbannführer Walter Schellenberg, Special Envoy of Reichführer Himmler and Assistant of Gruppenführer Reinhard Heidrich."

Borgart came to rigid attention and saluted, his blood freezing in his veins: Himmler and Heidrich were the two highest police and security leaders in the Reich, with the powers to arrest anyone except the Führer himself.

"It will be done, Herr Obersturmbannführer!"

"Good! Let's go back to Paris, Hauptmann Stoltz!"

Going back to his field staff car with the young field engineer officer and sitting on the back bench seat, Schellenberg looked around him for a second before asking a question to his senior bodyguard.

"Where is the fort commandant, Karl?"

"I stuffed him in the trunk, Herr Obersturmbannführer." Answered matter-of-factly the SS bodyguard, his face impassive. Schellenberg smiled and nodded at that.

"A perfect place for him!"

His smile then faded and he shook his head in discouragement.

"So, those damn British could still have over fourteen tons of hexogen explosives at their disposal, even after blowing up our barracks. I don't want to think about what they could do with that. Start the car, Wilhelm: we are going back to Paris and the Kommandantur."

The SS driver started his ninety horsepower Mercedes-Benz six cylinder engine and engaged gears, turning around the perimeter road of the fort and exiting through the main gate. The staff car was maybe a mile away from the Fort de l'Est, heading south towards Paris, when a cataclysmic explosion light up the night and made the ground shake like an earthquake. Snapping his head backward, Schellenberg saw that half of the Fort de l'Est had just been utterly destroyed by a series of huge explosions, projecting hundreds of tons of stones, earth and other debris high in the air.

"Mein Gott! The British had booby-trapped at least one of the explosives magazines. If we had stayed there for the inspection, we would be dead now."

As he finished saying that, debris started falling back down, forcing his driver into performing a slalom to avoid the stones falling on the road. Thankfully, the man was an



expert driver and managed to avoid the various obstacles while gunning his engine to maximum power, taking the staff car out of the danger zone. Stoltz blew air out in relief once it was evident that they were safe.

“Himmel! Those British commandos must be real demons!”

## **CHAPTER 10 – PARTNERS IN COMBAT**

**05:36 (Paris Time)**

**Friday, October 24, 1941**

**Apartment building, Rue Danton**

**Quartier Latin, 6<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement**

**Paris, Occupied France**

His mind still foggy and his eyelids heavy, Paul Romanov went to the bathroom of his family apartment, where he splashed some cold water on his face to fully wake up, then brushed his teeth. Still wearing his pajamas, the communist veteran and secret Résistance fighter made his way to the kitchen, careful not to wake up his wife and children. He was preparing a sandwich, to be brought later as his noon lunch to his place of work at the Austerlitz Train Station, when a light knock on the doorframe of the kitchen made him turn his head. Expecting to see his wife, Paul instinctively jumped back on seeing a young man he didn't know, standing in the doorframe and wearing a long brown coat. The newcomer made a reassuring gesture and spoke in French in what sounded like a British accent.

"Relax, Mister Romanov: I am a friend."

The man then opened his coat with both hands, uncovering a British battledress uniform.

"Let me present myself: Lieutenant Robert Jones, Royal Marines, of the First Special Commando Unit. You must have heard about the recent actions of me and my men around Paris."

"How could I not have heard about them?" Replied Paul, his tension dropping as fast as it had surged up on seeing first the newcomer. "The Germans around Paris are now completely paranoid and don't feel safe even in their casernes. Your unit is doing a fantastic job, I must say."

"Yes, but the Germans are about to respond in a most bloody way." Said Jones, his face now grave. Paul nodded his head, realizing what he was talking about. The response by the Germans to the murderous raids and bombing by the British commandos had been a public ultimatum: either the British commandos in Paris gave themselves up by tomorrow, Saturday, 25<sup>th</sup> of October, or thousands of French hostages

would start to be executed. What Romanov didn't know was that this ultimatum had come straight from Berlin, where Adolph Hitler was livid about the debacle of his SS troopers in Paris. To his credit, General Otto Von Stulpnagel, the Kommandant of the Gross Paris area, had refused to order his army troops to commit such mass executions of hostages. As a consequence, he had been quickly replaced and sent back to Germany, leaving Paris under the dominating authority of the SS and Gestapo.

"I know about the Germans' plan to execute thousands of French hostages if you and your commandos don't give yourselves up by tomorrow night, mister. However, I don't doubt for a minute that you will then be promptly executed by the Germans, unless they decide to interrogate you hard first, so I won't blame you if you decide to not surrender to the Germans tomorrow."

Jones/Mélanie gave a sober look at the communist militant and Résistance fighter.

"And what would you do in my place, Mister Romanov?"

"Me? I would keep killing Germans regardless, until they would leave France. Freedom is never cheap and it is worthy of paying a price for it. Uh, could I ask you why you came here, in my home, to see me, when all the Germans in Paris are looking for you and your men?"

"I came because I know that you are an active Résistance fighter and that you are a man I could count on to fight the Germans."

"And who told you that? I do hope that this is not commonly known in Paris."

Jones shook his head, seemingly amused by that.

"No, it is not, Mister Romanov, so you can relax. It happens that we have a common friend and ally, right here in the Quartier Latin: she provided you some weapons, ammunition and explosives a number of times already."

"She? Are you talking about Miss Lilie?"

"Her exactly! I suppose that you know who she is exactly, right?"

Jones/Mélanie waited with interest Romanov's answer to that question: Mélanie wanted to be sure about the actual degree of anonymity she enjoyed in Paris. She didn't like much the knowing smile that Romanov made then as he replied to 'Jones'.

"She never gave me her true name, but such a beautiful girl can't hide from men's looks for long. I actually saw a picture of her on an advertising poster beside the main entrance of a local cabaret where she dances and strip...for German officers. When I think that her idiotic neighbors think of her as a collaborator... With her

sensational body, she must be making those German officers blab out their secrets in bed like idiots.”

“That she does! However, I would encourage you not to share her true identity with the members of your Résistance cell. It would take only one of them to be captured and interrogated by the Gestapo to blow her cover.”

“That won’t happen, as I didn’t tell my men about her.” Lied Romanov. Mélanie’s telepathic powers told her otherwise, but she kept the face of her present human shape impassive.

“Good! Know that she is also helping us by providing us with one of our hiding places.”

“Decidedly, whenever the Germans leave Paris, I will then have to go defend her reputation publicly: she could very well be branded a collaborationist and suffer the consequences, along with the other girls of that cabaret. Well, let’s return to the subject of those hostages executions: what will you do about them?”

“You mean, what will WE do about them, Mister Romanov. I came to see you because, while me and my men are deadly in combat, we can’t just go around Paris without being instantly noticed. However, you and your men can. What I mean by this is that, while I am ready to save those hostages and break them out of their jails before they could be executed, I will then need French people like you to then help those hostages to hide from the Germans, at least for a few days, time for them to find their own individual refuges with friends or family members.”

“But, I would need vehicles for that, along with gasoline and the appropriate permits to pass German checkpoints. We are after all talking about hundreds, maybe thousands of people that are about to be executed.”

“You are correct about that, mister, and I have already started working on that problem. Does any of your men speak fluent German?”

“Three of them actually do, Lieutenant: they are German communists who had to flee to France when the Gestapo started hunting down known communists around Berlin. I am sure that I could find more German speakers quite quickly if need be. Why do you ask?”

“Because my men left an assortment of stolen German SS uniforms, weapons and field kit in the usual cache where Miss Lilie leaves weapons and ammunition for you. You will thus be able to dress your men as SS troopers, something that should facilitate greatly your movements. As for the vehicles, you will find three stolen German trucks

hidden in an decrepit, abandoned warehouse in the suburb of Ivry-sur-Seine. Here is the address of that warehouse, along with the keys to the padlocks I put on its doors.” Romanov, not believing his luck, took the folded piece of paper handed to him by Jones and looked at it briefly before looking back at the British.

“I know that area fairly well. When will you need us to be ready?”

“As soon as possible. I expect the first executions of hostages to start at dawn, on Sunday. So, we don’t have much time. The word I have is that the Germans will use the Fresne Prison to hold the hostages pending execution, with the main prison courtyard there used for the killings. Your job will be to wait in hiding some distance from the prison and then rush in at my signal to pick up the hostages that will be fleeing the prison. With luck, you won’t need to fire a single shot by yourself during the operation.”

“I must say that you seem to have things already well in hands, Lieutenant Jones. I promise you to make my men ready by no later than midnight, tomorrow night.”

“Good! Oh, one more thing: in the glove compartments of the cabs of the trucks my men hid, you will find sets of German military identity cards, along with one official German stamp and ink pad and a stapler. Have your men bring with them passport pictures of themselves, so that they could staple them to those identity cards.”

“My god, where did you find those things?”

The question brought a mean smile on the face of Jones/Mélanie.

“The identity cards? They belonged to the German drivers and passengers of those trucks, whom we killed. As for the official stamp, we picked it up in the old Gestapo offices on Avenue Foch...before we torched them.”

What Jones/Mélanie didn’t say was that she had stolen a lot more than just one official Nazi stamp at the Gestapo offices and at other places she had raided. In fact, she had in her secret cave under the cabaret enough authentic German materiel to start a forgery office of her own.

“Well, you will be a busy man today and tomorrow, so I will leave you now. I will communicate again with you later tomorrow, to give you the precise timings and place where I will need your men. Have a good day, Mister Romanov.”

Jones then closed back his long coat and raised its collar before leaving Paul’s apartment. The communist fighter looked again at the piece of paper given to him by Jones, then remembered that he had a job to go to. On second thoughts, he was

probably better off calling in sick for today: he would indeed have a lot to do in the next 48 hours.

**07:28 (Paris Time)**

**Sunday, October 26, 1941**

**Fresne Prison, Val-de-Marne**

**South of Paris**

“Come on, Jeanne, be strong. Show these bastards that we are no cowards.”

“But, I am scared, Sylvie!” Replied the younger woman to the mature woman closest to her in the first group of hostages being led to the execution grounds by SS soldiers. Sylvie, who had shared a cell with Jeanne and two other female hostages, one of them a mere teenager, passed a comforting arm around Jeanne’s shoulders, doing her best to calm her. Thousands of normal French citizens had been picked up at random in the streets of Paris and of its suburbs by roaming groups of SS soldiers during the last week, to be then brought to the old and sinister Fresne Prison, the largest prison in France. The prison, which had already been over capacity, was now overcrowded beyond description, with small individual cells having to accommodate four prisoners or more. Hygienic conditions, already poor, had become abysmal, while the food rations served to the prisoners were barely above starvation level. To add to the cruelty of all this, the SS had shown little discrimination in who they were picking up, freeing afterwards only those who officially worked for the German administration or for the Vichy government. Contrary to German Army practice, the SS had shown no compulsion to grab women and teenage girls along the usual pick of men and teenage boys as hostages. But what was burning Sylvie the most was the fact that the French policemen guarding the prisoners of the Fresne Prison had either turned a blind eye to the plight of the thousands of innocents gathered by the SS for execution, or had willingly helped the SS’ dirty work in order to gain favors with them. One such French policeman who was ‘helping’ the hostages to move along with liberal swings of his truncheon earned a stinging comment from Sylvie.

“You can be really proud of yourself, you piece of shit!”

Angered by her words, the policeman advanced on her with his truncheon high, but was stopped at the last second by another, more senior policeman who blocked his raised arm.

"Enough, Martin! These are hostages, not criminals. You've played enough with your truncheon this morning: go take a long break at the guardhouse."

The said Martin grudgingly obeyed, throwing a last glare at Sylvie before walking away. The senior policeman who had stopped him made a contrite smile to her.

"I am sorry if I can't do more for you and the other hostages, madam."

"You could do at least one more thing: quit your job and join the Résistance, mister!" Replied Sylvie, making the man lower his head in shame. Feeling a bit better after venting her anger, she then continued to follow the other hostages while supporting Jeanne, whom had been a perfect unknown to her a mere two days ago. Her group of forty hostages soon emerged in the open air of a courtyard, where SS soldiers waiting for them brutally pushed the hostages and lined them against one of the stone walls of the courtyard. Sylvie paled when she saw the four SS machine gun crews, backed by ten infantrymen with rifles, lined up on the opposite side of the courtyard, their weapons pointed at her and her companions of misfortune. Behind them were a row of empty, waiting trucks, their rear tailgates opened. Understanding that her end was near, she looked up for one last look at the sky, with the Sun now barely above the horizon. She closed her eyes on hearing the first harsh command in German from a SS officer to his gunners. The series of detonations that followed a second later shook her physically, being much louder than anything she had expected. However, to her surprise, she didn't feel any pain or actual physical impacts from bullets. Opening her eyes, she was just in time to see a burst of machine gun fire, apparently fired from an elevated position, rake down the line of SS machine gunners, mowing them as they lay on their stomach behind their weapons. Debris of all kinds were also falling all around, while big clouds of dust and smoke expanded from multiple points of the prison. She was both shocked and overjoyed to see one of the guards barracks suddenly jump into the air, propelled by some powerful underground explosion, before falling back down and collapsing in a giant heap of rubble. Looking to her left, she saw that there were now two large holes in the walls on this side of the prison, while the watch towers she could see had crumbled, blown up from the inside. More machine gun fire followed, downing most of the surviving SS soldiers, who were desperately trying to either return fire or find some cover. One of the hostages, a mature man in his fifties, then shouted at the top of his lungs.

"SOMEBODY HAS COME TO HELP US ESCAPE! RUN FOR THOSE HOLES IN THE WALL!"

Except for a handful of hostages who stayed paralyzed with fear, the others, including Sylvie and Jeanne, started running at once in a mad dash towards the openings in the perimeter wall and freedom. While running, she saw the hostage who had shouted out go instead towards the dead SS gunners, where he picked up one of the German machine guns. He had time to shoot down three SS soldiers near the trucks before he was killed by rifle fire from other SS soldiers. Promising herself to later make a prayer for the soul of that brave man, Sylvie helped Jeanne climb over the small mound of stone debris across one of the wall openings. She was however shocked to see German soldiers, clad in the black uniforms of SS troopers, on the other side of the wall. However, those SS troopers were wearing French berets and spoke in French!

“HURRY UP! WE HAVE TRUCKS FOR YOU TO YOUR LEFT, ON THE ROAD. GET IN THEM QUICKLY!”

Sylvie didn't have to be told twice and ran towards the first of three German trucks waiting nearby, still holding Jeanne's hand. As she helped Jeanne climb in the back of that truck, she saw that a few of the disguised Frenchmen were now going inside the prison grounds through the holes in the wall.

“May God bless these brave men.”

Inside the corridor used by the first group of hostages to go out in the courtyard, other groups of hostages assembled in advance by prison guards instinctively threw themselves down on the concrete floor as an intense firefight could be heard outside, intermixed with explosions. The French policemen guarding them, taken completely by surprise and having no directives for such a situation, apart from being armed only with truncheons, simply fled, retreating towards the main guardhouse, where the few weapons they had were stored. They however quickly found out that the said guardhouse was one of the prison buildings that had just been blown up and was now reduced to a pile of smoking rubble. Seeing that their nearby barracks, where the majority of the prison staff had still been at the start of the attack, had also been destroyed, the surviving policemen panicked and ran, jumping in the few cars and trucks parked near the main gate and driving out at top speed. Paul Romanov, leading five of his disguised men inside the prison walls, smiled on seeing that eight empty German medium trucks were parked, intact, inside the execution courtyard: they must have been meant to carry away the bodies of the dead hostages afterwards.



"LUCIEN, MARC AND PIERRE, GO SECURE THESE TRUCKS! WE WILL USE THEM TO CARRY OUT MORE HOSTAGES. RÉGIS, MICHEL, YOU COME WITH ME!"

Paul then led his two men at a run towards the door of the courtyard that gave access inside the nearest prison building. Jumping inside with his MP40 submachine gun at the ready, he grinned on seeing close to a hundred hostages, lying down on their bellies and nearly filling the corridor.

"FRENCH RÉSISTANCE! WE HAVE TRUCKS WAITING FOR YOU OUTSIDE! GET UP AND RUN OUT, NOW! RÉGIS, GO WITH THEM TO GUIDE THEM!"

Paul started running again, going deeper down the corridor with Michel Perrier and finding more hostages that had been lined up for execution. Shouting at them to run outside and board the trucks there, Paul soon realized that, even if they would have enough drivers for all the captured trucks they had, they would be able to transport away only a small portion of all those who had been scheduled to be shot today by the SS. Looking out through a window, he saw the nearest cell block, a long four storey building housing over 460 individual cells...and there were three such buildings in the prison! If his men and the British commandos left now, the Germans would still have over a thousand prisoners to pick from to execute as hostages, something that he was not ready to let happen. The only satisfactory solution for him to that dilemma would be to free all the prisoners in this prison, be they criminals, captured Résistance fighters or hostages. But how would he help so many people to then evade the Germans and disappear?

Paul Romanov was taken out of his thoughts by the ear-splitting detonations from a burst of submachine gun, in time to see a SS trooper collapse at the visible end of the corridor. Pointing his submachine gun, he got ready for more Germans, but had to stop himself at the last second, as Lieutenant Jones appeared past the corner of the corridor. Feeling better now, Paul ran towards him while urging the hostages he passed by to run outside, finally stopping in front of the British Royal Marines officer.

"Lieutenant Jones, I see you just in time. The hostages that had been lined up along this corridor, along with the others that were about to be shot outside, are now running for our trucks. However, this will still leave nearly 2,000 prisoners in this prison, prisoners that the Germans will be free to execute once we are gone. We just can't let all these men and women die by abandoning them now, no?"

Jones/Mélanie made a grimace at that: with so little time to prepare this operation, that point had not been properly planned and prepared for by her. However, the fight to gain control of the prison had gone much better than Mélanie had expected: there had been fewer SS troopers present than she had anticipated, while the mostly unarmed French policemen guarding the prison, at least the ones who had survived the blowing up of their barracks, had fled or were now fleeing as fast as they could.

"I agree with you that we can't abandon them, but the problem will be how to lead them away to safety after opening their cells? I already gave the order to retreat to my men and stayed only to see how your men were doing. Let me think for a moment!" Thinking furiously for a few seconds, Jones/Mélanie finally took out a map of the region out of his cargo pocket sewn on the left leg of his battledress trousers and pointed at a location on it.

"This is the prison we are in now. About 400 yards to the east of the prison is one of the surface access points of the old underground Médicis Aqueduct, which runs from the nearby village of Rungis all the way to the Paris Observatory, in the 14<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement. We could make the escapees flee underground along the aqueduct, but we will have to make it quick before the Germans could react and see where everyone is disappearing. I actually had kept that route as an emergency fallback plan but we have no better choice now. Your men did cut the local telephone wires when you heard the first explosions, right?"

"We did!" Said Romanov without hesitation, making Jones/Mélanie nod once.

"Good! That should keep the Germans confused for a few more precious minutes. Keep this map and go open with your men the cells doors in all the cell blocks and tell the prisoners to follow them to that surface access point. Someone I trust will be waiting there to guide you underground. I am sorry if I have to leave now but I really must run. Good luck! I will come and see you in Paris tomorrow evening."

On that, the British commando officer ran away, turning a corner at the end of the corridor and disappearing, leaving a Paul Romanov a bit overwhelmed by his new responsibilities. The communist cell leader however got back hold of himself quickly enough and pointed an index at Michel Perrier.

"You and I will start opening the cell doors in the eastern cell block. As soon as the first prisoners are out of their cells, tell them to help us by going to open the cell doors on the upper floors and in the two other cell blocks. The prisoners are to regroup on the ground floor of the eastern cell block, from where we will guide them out towards

that aqueduct surface access point. If you see weapons or flashlights on the bodies of dead Germans or policemen, grab them and distribute them to the prisoners you will deem most trustworthy. Now, let's go! The clock is ticking!"

Running down concrete and stone masonry corridors, the two Résistance fighters encountered a number of dead German soldiers or French policemen, giving them the opportunity to grab in passing quite a few weapons, spare magazines and flashlights. They soon arrived at the central hallway of the prison, which connected all three cell blocks, plus the common facilities. By then, many of the prisoners were shouting and banging on their cell doors, clamoring to ask what was happening. Paul sent Michel Perrier to open the ground level cells of the northern wing of the eastern cell block, then started running down one side of the southern wing, opening the steel cell doors as quickly as he could. He however took the time to grab the first men that came out of their cells, looking them in the eyes while speaking with as much authority as he could show.

"You, you, and you! I need you to climb to the upper levels of this wing and open the cell doors. You will tell the others to assemble down in the central hallway, on the ground level. I will then guide you all outside and towards freedom."

"Who blew up the barracks and watch towers? You?" Asked one of the prisoners, making Paul shake his head.

"Not me, but an ally of mine. Now, please, don't ask more questions and go quickly open the cells on the upper floors."

To Paul's relief, the three men didn't question him further and left at a run, climbing the steel staircases leading to the three levels of cells above. That allowed Paul to finish opening the cell doors on his level of this wing, by which time over 300 men were coming down from the upper levels. Leading them to the central hallway, which was already packing up with hundreds of prisoners, Paul took sixteen men with him and went to unlock the cells in the two other cell blocks, leaving Michel Perrier in charge of explaining to the freed prisoners what was going to follow.

They managed to free and assemble over 2,000 men and some 300 women in record time, with Paul Romanov quickly selecting the tougher-looking men in the lot and distributing the weapons taken on the dead Germans and the flashlights that had belonged to the French guards. He then led the crowd out of the cell blocks and towards

the holes blown in the eastern perimeter wall of the prison. He was happy to see that his men had already left with the captured trucks, transporting the hostages saved from the SS firing squad towards a predetermined refuge in the southern suburbs of Paris. His men had also had the sense to loot the dead SS troopers of their weapons and ammunition, something that certainly could not hurt. Using the map given by Lieutenant Jones once outside of the wall, Paul oriented himself quickly and pointed an arm eastward towards a small, distant stone hut visible through the sparse trees and open fields.

“THIS WAY! LET’S HURRY BEFORE GERMAN REINFORCEMENTS ARRIVE!”

Despite the fact that most of the prisoners had been underfed, some for long periods of time, everybody started jogging behind Paul Romanov, doing their best to stay with him. Paul himself, a tough man accustomed to hard physical work as a metal worker, covered the 400 yards to the stone hut in about two minutes despite being loaded with weapons and ammunition. He felt immense relief when he saw that someone was waving at him from the opened door of the hut, signaling him to hurry. His relief however turned into amazement when he arrived at the hut and could see clearly the person waiting for him and carrying a MP40 submachine gun and a spare magazines holder.

“Miss Lillie?!”

“That’s me!” Replied Mélanie, smiling, before becoming serious. “Let’s get all these people underground before the Germans could arrive and spot them in the open. We will organize them once they are all down. ALRIGHT PEOPLE, START GOING DOWN THE STAIRS. ONCE DOWN ON THE LEVEL OF THE AQUEDUCT, GO FORWARD IN THE TUNNEL FOR ABOUT A HUNDRED PACE, TO LEAVE ENOUGH SPACE FOR EVERYONE TO FIT IN UNDER.”

Grabbing flashlights from a pouch she wore across her chest, Mélanie then gave one of them at intervals of about fifty people. The tunnel of the aqueduct itself was not lit by lamps, being normally pitch black and forcing visitors to bring their own lights with them. Making all 2,300 freed prisoners go down the stairs felt like taking an eternity to her and Paul Romanov but she was able to close back and lock the steel door of the hut before she saw any German vehicle arrive at the prison. In that she probably could thank two big factors: firstly, the fact that the German occupation troops in and around Paris had suffered very heavily in the last few months, particularly the infantry units that were primarily tasked with security; secondly, the excessive degree of caution now exercised

by German troops around Paris, who had been subject by now to countless surprise ambushes and attacks by 'British commandos' along the roads and at checkpoints. Those Germans now heading towards the Fresne Prison were probably expecting to hit a mine or some kind of ambush along the way. To be frank, Mélanie couldn't blame them for that, as she had made life truly miserable for the Germans in the last few months, thanks to her 'British commandos' and their ghost-like tactics.

Going down the stairs herself, she put Michel Perrier, who had a flashlight, at the tail end of the long column, so that he could make sure that nobody fell behind and got lost in the dark. Then, she had the flashlights available redistributed more evenly, to ensure that everybody would have some light to help them advance. Arriving at the head of the thick column squeezed inside the narrow tunnel, she spoke as loudly as she could, so that everyone could hear her.

"LISTEN UP, PLEASE! YOU ARE NOW INSIDE THE TUNNEL OF THE OLD MÉDICIS AQUEDUCT, WHICH RUNS FROM RUNGIS ALL THE WAY TO THE 14<sup>TH</sup> ARRONDISSEMENT. THAT REPRESENTS ABOUT FIVE MILES OF WALKING IN A DARK, NARROW TUNNEL, SO WE WILL GO SLOWLY BUT STEADILY. ONCE INSIDE THE WALLS OF PARIS, I WILL ANNOUNCE TO YOU THE VARIOUS SURFACE ACCESS POINTS WE WILL CROSS, SO YOU CAN CHOOSE WHERE YOU WILL LEAVE US AND TRY YOUR INDIVIDUAL LUCKS. UNFORTUNATELY, THAT IS THE MOST WE CAN DO FOR YOU NOW. HOWEVER, WHATEVER HAPPENS, DON'T START TELLING OTHERS ABOUT YOUR ADVENTURE OF TODAY: ANYTHING YOU MAY SAY COULD JEOPARDISE THE SAFETY OF THE BRAVE MEN WHO RESCUED YOU. WE WILL NOW START MOVING DOWN THE AQUEDUCT. BE QUIET AND HELP EACH OTHER FROM NOW ON."

With Mélanie taking the lead and with Paul Romanov following some 200 yards down the column, they then started their long walk along the masonry tunnel of the aqueduct.

The freed prisoners soon earned the respect of Mélanie by walking quietly and steadily without complaining, despite the very rough time they had already gone through while imprisoned in the Fresne Prison. From what she had briefly seen of its inside, Mélanie would have classified the Fresne Prison as being worthy of some of the upper levels of the Abyss in terms of a place of punishment, if you took into account the brutal beatings and interrogations that the Germans performed there on prisoners. Mélanie

then thought that this fortitude shown by the ex-prisoners was due to the fact that most of the French people she had just helped escape had been part of the small portion of French men and women brave and resolute enough to have tried to oppose the German occupation of their country, either as Résistance members or by providing shelter to persons wanted by the Germans, thus risking their own lives for others. The sad truth was that, up to now, the vast majority of French people didn't actively oppose the German occupation, being instead preoccupied mostly with keeping their lives as normal as possible while finding enough food to eat.

Because of the physically weakened state of most of the ex-prisoners and the difficult conditions of the march, it took the group a good six hours before they arrived within the old walls of Paris and started advancing in the underground of the 14<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement. Forty minutes later, Mélanie stopped the group at the entrance of a small subterranean chamber.

"WE HAVE NOW ARRIVED AT THE SURFACE ACCESS POINT NUMBER 22, IN THE PARC MONTSOURIS. I WILL GO CHECK FIRST IF IT IS SAFE TO EXIT HERE, THEN THOSE WHO WILL WANT TO LEAVE US HERE WILL BE ABLE TO DO SO. PASS THE WORD DOWN THE LINE, PLEASE!"

Going up the stone stairs leading to the access hut, Mélanie cautiously looked through a small window giving her a view of the park in which the hut was built. To her satisfaction, she saw that it was raining outside, with an overcast sky full of gray clouds. Not surprisingly, especially on an October Sunday, the cold rain would have made the Parisians stay mostly at home, while German patrols would tend to be less vigilant. Going back down the stairs, she found dozens of people shuffling places in the column to get closer to the access point.

"IF YOU WILL LISTEN AGAIN, PLEASE! IT IS PRESENTLY RAINING OUTSIDE, SOMETHING THAT SHOULD HELP YOU GO AROUND MORE INCOGNITO. FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO WILL LEAVE US NOW, BE CAREFUL AND DON'T GO TO YOUR OLD HOMES, UNLESS IT IS A SHORT VISIT TO PICK UP THINGS, AS THE GERMANS MAY START LOOKING FOR YOU TOMORROW. IF YOU HAVE DEPENDABLE FRIENDS, GO SEE THEM FIRST. I WILL NOW LET YOU GO OUT IN SMALL GROUPS. FOLLOW ME UP, BE QUIET AND GIVE ME BACK YOUR FLASHLIGHTS BEFORE GOING OUT."

No less than 250 people chose to exit at the Parc Montsouris. Mélanie then led the rest of the column to the next exit point, near the Ste-Anne Hospital, where more people left the aqueduct. By the time that the group had arrived at the end of the aqueduct, situated four exit points further and next to the Paris Observatory, near Place Denfert-Rochereau, it was down to a more manageable 400 people.

“LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THIS IS THE END OF THE AQUEDUCT, NEXT TO THE PARIS OBSERVATORY. HERE AND NOW WOULD BE A GOOD PLACE TO EXIT, BUT IF YOU WANT TO GO A BIT FURTHER NORTH, I KNOW A WAY THROUGH OLD UNDERGROUND QUARRIES THAT WOULD LEAD US UP TO THE JARDIN DE LUXEMBOURG AND THE RUE DE VAUGIRARD, IN THE 6<sup>TH</sup> ARRONDISSEMENT. MAKE YOUR CHOICE NOW!”

Not surprisingly, quite a few people decided to stay with her until they could get to the 6<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement, it being much nearer to the Right Bank of the Seine, where the biggest portion of Paris was built. Also not surprisingly, Paul Romanov and Michel Perrier elected to stay with her, since they lived in the 6<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement. Finally, it was a group of 56 people who followed her back down in the tunnels, going through the Quarry of the Capucins and the Quarry of the Val-de-Grace and up to the Rue de Vaugirard. There, about everyone else exited, walking away towards places that they deemed safe enough for at least one night. That left three young women with Mélanie, Paul Romanov and Michel Perrier. All three bore the marks of brutal beatings and seemed unsure where they wanted to go next. Mélanie’s telepathic powers then told her something that made her frown as the women asked for a place to stay and hide.

“What do you mean, girls, when you say that you have nowhere to go?”

The oldest of the three, who could not be more than thirty, hesitated a bit before answering her.

“Uh, we have nowhere to go in Paris because we are not French: we are British S.O.E.<sup>38</sup> agents. To be more precise, we were radio operators until the Germans found and arrested us. That is why they beat us up.”

“Merde<sup>39</sup>! What do we do now?” Said Paul Romanov, taken by surprise by this revelation. “I can’t exactly hide them in my home: my neighbors would ask too many questions about them.”

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<sup>38</sup> S.O.E. : Special Operations Executive. A British government agency tasked with performing clandestine operations in Occupied Europe during WW2.

"The same here!" Added Michel Perrier. Both Communists and the three British female agents next looked in unison at Mélanie, who objected at once.

"What a minute! My mother would kill me if I brought three British agents to our cabaret: it would be way too dangerous for everybody."

"Why so, Miss Lilie?" Asked the youngest British agent, who looked to be about 22 years old. Mélanie made a wry smile in response.

"Because our cabaret is also a bordello and because we cater exclusively to German officers."

"A BORDELLO? GERMAN OFFICERS?!"

"Shhhh! Please keep your voice down: voices can range far in these tunnels and caves. Yes, me and other girls strip for German officers and bed them as well, which is a very effective way to get some precious information out of them without them realizing it. Remember: with men, their dicks often speak louder than their brains."

Those words made the three British women giggle briefly before they became most serious again, with the older one looking somberly at Mélanie.

"So, what are we to do now?"

Mélanie was thoughtful for a moment as she detailed the three women, then spoke up.

"First, the three of you will need some serious medical attention. My mother knows a doctor who does home visits and who can be depended on to be discreet. So, I will bring you to my mother's cabaret. However, let me be clear about this: if you stay at the cabaret, then you will follow my rules and those of my mother. With all the German officers visiting the cabaret, one faux pas would be enough to kill us all."

"Fair enough! Now, how do we get to your cabaret without being stopped?"

That question made Mélanie grin with amusement as she pointed at Romanov and Perrier.

"Easy! Those two SS gentlemen will escort us to the cabaret. If someone asks, we will say that you work at the cabaret and are being protected because of the hostility of our neighbors. By the way, my moronic neighbors really hate my guts because they think that I am a 'collabo' and would love nothing more than to torch the cabaret."

The youngest British girl, a very pretty redhead with green eyes, made a face at that.

"Wow! You go around with a submachine gun and fight the Germans, yet pass off as a collaborator. That's quite an interesting situation."

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<sup>39</sup> Merde : Shit, in French.



“Well, my life has been anything but dull...or saintly. Just give me a second and we will then go out on the street.”

First removing the magazine from her MP 41 submachine gun and folding its steel stock with practiced ease, Mélanie then hid her weapon and its magazines carrier under her long women’s trench coat. Next, she exited the access hut and stepped on the sidewalk of the Rue de Vaugirard, close to the Palais du Luxembourg. Once her five companions were also out on the sidewalk and into the rain, she led them up the Rue de Condé and towards the Boulevard Saint Germain. It was now close to supper time and, with most shops and establishments closed for Sunday and with the rain continuing to fall, albeit less heavily, they crossed path with very few other pedestrians. Those who did pass by them only needed one look at the two ‘SS soldiers’ escorting the girls to keep any comment to themselves and go on their own way.

The group split up one block away from the cabaret, with Paul Romanov and Michel Perrier leaving for their respective homes after a last exchange of goodbyes and good wishes with the British girls. Now alone with the three women under the temporary shelter of a shop’s entrance, Mélanie gave a sober look at her three new companions.

“At this hour on a Sunday, there will probably be German customers present in my mother’s cabaret, the ‘Mille et Une Nuits’, so we will have to be careful. We will use the service entrance at the back, but you will need to have your stories straight and ready, in case we bump into a German customer. Officially, I am bringing you at the cabaret as new employees I just found on the request of my mother.”

“My god!” Exclaimed in a small voice the redhead. “We are to pass off as strippers and prostitutes?”

“Only if you wish so.” Replied Mélanie, smiling. She then used one hand to weigh one of the ample, firm breasts of the brunette of the group, whose soaked dress outlined her chest. “On the other hand, you could make a nice topless waitress: you have quite an impressive pair here.”

Instead of getting offended, the brunette grinned with amusement.

“That’s funny: I worked as a waitress in a Montreal restaurant before the war.”

“Hum, a Québec girl... Interesting! Seriously, being a topless waitress at the cabaret would be the perfect cover for you. You should really consider that. What is your name, by the way?”

"Louise...Louise Thibault. I had a cover name, but it is now blown, so I will have to find another one soon."

"Just present yourself as 'Louise' for the time being: that will be good enough. What about you and you? What names should I use with you?"

"Call me Lisa!" Said the older woman, a beautiful blonde.

"And I am Mary!" Said the young redhead, making Mélanie nod once.

"Louise, Lisa and Mary...that will do just fine until I can get you new, forged papers. Do you have any special skills that could be used as a cover activity, apart from radio operator of course?"

"I am an experienced seamstress." Proposed Lisa.

"Uh, I was studying literature before the war, but I can cook and wash." Said Mary. Mélanie nodded her head again, quite satisfied by their answers.

"Very well! Lisa, you are the new seamstress for the cabaret, in charge of repairing and modifying the stage outfits of the dancing girls. Mary, you are our new assistant cook and maid. As for Louise..."

Mélanie then threw a 'Suggestion' spell at the brunette before continuing.

"Louise, I really think that you should play the topless waitress. It would make you able to listen to what our German customers will say and would also make them relax and drop their guard even more."

Lisa and Mary opened their mouths in shock, scandalized, when Louise nodded her head.

"Why not? The important thing is to be able to get secrets from those Germans."

"Good girl! By the way, my mother's name is Marie Laurent. Now, follow me closely to the cabaret."

Leading the women to the service entrance of the cabaret and using her key to unlock it, she opened it and let her new companions in before locking back the door behind them. The three S.O.E. agents looked around them with curiosity, noting the three closed doors nearby and the narrow staircase going up at the back of the mostly empty room they were in.

"Well, girls, here you are, inside the 'Mille et Une Nuits' cabaret. To your right, you will see the door of our general storage room, where we keep among other things our bicycles and our reserves of coal. You will also see the door to the staircase leading down into our basement, where our primary wine cellar is. To your left is the door to the

kitchen and to the rest of the ground floor of the cabaret. Behind you is a private staircase used by the employees of the cabaret to go to our rooms upstairs. That staircase is isolated from the sections of the upper floors opened to our customers, so I would urge you to use exclusively that staircase for the time being. I will now lead you up to a few spare rooms we have in the attic. If you will please follow me.”

Climbing the narrow, steep stairs up three levels, the women ended up in the attic space formed by the peaked roof of the cabaret. A dormer window near the staircase well gave a fair amount of natural illumination to the area. Mélanie pointed to the nearest door to the staircase.

“This is a small bathroom with a bath tub and a shower head, where you will be able to clean up once I find you some spare clothes. Thankfully, we have a couple of storage chests full of old clothes in the attic. You won’t be exactly fashionable, but you won’t be naked or wet either.”

Going down the long, straight and narrow corridor going down the length of the attic, Mélanie stopped in front of a door and opened it, revealing the inside of a tiny bedroom lit by a dormer window.

“Our attic bedrooms were meant to house visitors, family relatives and extra domestic aides. They have been empty for quite a while now but have been kept clean by our resident maid, Stéphanie. I guess that this job will now go to you, Mary, along with this room. Stay with me, though, so that I can get you new clothes first.”

Opening the doors of two similar bedrooms and assigning them to Lisa and Louise, Mélanie then went to a part of the attic used for storage purposes and opened a large wooden chest covered with dust, revealing an eclectic collection of female clothes.

“Those are some of the old clothes me, my mother and our other girls wore in the past. My mother believes in not wasting anything, so we kept whatever we didn’t give to needy people. Feel free to search in it and take what will fit you reasonably. If you don’t find anything suitable in this chest, then look in the other chest over there.”

As the three female agents started foraging inside the first chest, Mélanie had an idea and went to the second chest full of female clothes, searching in it for a moment before finding what she was looking for. With a malicious grin, she then showed her find to Louise Thibault, who was checking out a light beige dress to see if it would fit her.

“Look what I just found for you, Louise: my mother’s old topless corset and matching fishnet leggings, from her early days as a young topless waitress here, before

she bought the cabaret. I believe that my mother is about the same size as you, save for her chest but, since this is a topless outfit, your tits will hang out just fine.”

“Why, thank you, Miss Lilie!” Said Louise, smiling, while taking the outfit offered to her.

“By the way, girls, Miss Lilie is my ‘nom de Résistance’, so don’t use it here, especially in front of German customers. My name is actually Mélanie Laurent and I am the adopted daughter of Marie Laurent, who took me in at the age of five. So, just use ‘Mélanie’ with me.”

“Understood, Mélanie!” Said Louise, with Lisa and Mary also acknowledging that. The women then continued their search through the first chest, going next to the second chest to complete the assortment they had already found. Once they were reasonably well outfitted, Mélanie brought the three women back to their assigned bedrooms, where they dropped most of their findings on their beds, keeping only a set each of underwear to put on after their shower.

“There is already one large towel inside the attic’s bathroom, but I will go get more towels downstairs. I will also at the same time go warn my mother about your presence here. You may start washing yourselves in the meantime.”

“Thanks, Mélanie!”

Going downstairs to the laundry room of the cabaret, Mélanie picked up a few clean bath towels there, then intercepted her mother as she was coming out of the kitchen. Marie seemed relieved on seeing her.

“Aah, good! You made it in one piece. How did it go in Fresnes?”

“Better than expected. We suffered no casualties and were able to empty the prison. The Germans will be like chickens without heads for a few days. Uh, about the prison: I brought back with me three ex-prisoners.”

Marie, about to continue towards the show lounge, stopped on the spot and stared hard at her adopted daughter.

“You did what?”

“Mother, they are three female British agents who were being brutalized by the Germans in Fresnes. They had nowhere to go and no one else to help them, so I offered them the shelter of the cabaret. Before you ask: yes, they know that we cater to German customers and that we are also a bordello. However, they accepted to do work at the cabaret, under false identities, of course. They all speak good French, by the

way. They are now taking a shower in the attic's bathroom and I loaned them some of our old clothes. One last thing about them: they were beaten up pretty badly and will need a visit from Doctor Morin."

"I will arrange that later: I have customers to take care of now. By the way, you better take a shower yourself: you reek of gunpowder and explosives."

"Oh! Right!"

Going back to the attic, Mélanie entered the small bathroom to put her towels on a shelf and found Louise and Mary inside, both naked. Mary was under the shower head, nearly finished with her own shower, while Louise was waiting beside the bathtub. One quick glance was enough for Mélanie to tell her that Louise had a very sexy body and one fine pair of breasts that would make about any man mad with desire. As for Mary, she was well worth a look herself. Dropping her towels, Mélanie then left the bathroom and went down one level to her own bedroom, where she removed her stained and smelly clothes and grabbed a soap, a bottle of shampoo and a set of fresh clothes. She was about to go into the bathroom she, her mother and the other dancing girls used, but had an idea and went up to the attic again, in time to see Louise come out of the bathroom, clean and dry.

"It feels nice to be clean again after all those rough weeks in Fresnes."

"I can believe that. Tell Lisa that her turn has come."

"Will do!"

As Louise walked away, Mélanie entered the bathroom and put her soap and shampoo within hand's reach of the shower, then took off her bathrobe and stepped under the shower head. She had already started to apply shampoo to her long hair and was scrubbing it hard when Lisa entered the bathroom. She immediately stopped and was about to excuse herself and leave when Mélanie spoke up.

"No, stay, Lisa! I have a few questions for you."

"Uh, alright, Mélanie."

Lisa closed the door behind her and locked it, then stood beside the bathtub, looking at Mélanie through the semi-transparent shower curtain. Mélanie smiled to herself when her telepathic powers confirmed something about Lisa that she had suspected after her first mental introspection.

"Uh, while you are there, Lisa, would you mind stepping in the bathtub to soap up my back?"

"Sure, Mélanie!" Replied Lisa, sounding eager. The blonde quickly undressed and joined her in the bathtub, pulling back in place the curtain before grabbing the bar of soap and rubbing it gently against Mélanie's back. She became a bit more audacious when time came to rub the teenager's buttocks and, seeing that Mélanie didn't seem to mind at all, soaped as well her genitals. Mélanie then encouraged her by spreading open her legs further, something that Lisa took advantage of at once, first by fondling her clitoris, then by inserting one, then two fingers inside her vagina and starting to pump her hand up and down, accelerating her rhythm gradually. She soon had Mélanie moan with pleasure and, while continuing her fingering, raised her other hand to Mélanie's right breast to fondle it. Mélanie climaxed two minutes later with a contained groan, her body shaking and tensing up at the same time. Letting out a long, satisfied sigh, Mélanie then turned around and smiled to Lisa.

"Your turn under the shower."

Lisa soon found out that Mélanie was a true master at the art of sexual stimulation and pleasure giving and climaxed herself thanks to the teenager's hands and tongue within minutes.

"Oh my god! This was really good! How did you know that I am bisexual?"

"Simple: I felt it! Remember that I am in a line of work where one learns quickly about sex. Well, let's soap you up, so that you could say that you truly washed yourself."

"Right!"

Twelve minutes later, they both exited the bathroom and went to dress up for supper. The three S.O.E. agents were a bit nervous when they went down to the kitchen with Mélanie, but the tempting smell coming from the kitchen made their empty stomachs grumble.

"God, I'm hungry!" Said Mary in French as she was about to follow Mélanie inside the kitchen. Once in, she saw that the kitchen was quite a large room, with a dining table big enough for twelve people sitting in the middle of the kitchen. Mélanie made the three agents sit at the table, then went to Sylvie Renaudin, the cabaret's cook.

"What do we have tonight, Sylvie?"

"A chicken broth soup and bread, followed by roast pork with potatoes. Who are these three girls, Mélanie?"

"New employees of the cabaret, whom I found today. They are still a bit shy, so don't ask them questions for the moment."

Understanding the hidden meaning of Mélanie's words and being able to see how battered the faces of the new 'employees' were, Sylvie simply nodded her head once and started filling bowls with soup, with Mélanie helping her by bringing the bowls to the three agents, along with a big loaf of fresh bread. The three women, who had been starved by the Germans on top of being beaten and tortured, hungrily wolfed down their soups while dipping pieces of bread in the broth. The roast pork and potatoes, accompanied by a brown gravy and some butter, was devoured with equal gusto. In contrast, Mélanie ate little, attracting a question from Mary Gillies.

"You are not hungry, Mélanie?"

The cook then answered for the teenager, smiling at the newcomers.

"Mélanie always eats like a bird, yet she is a bomb of energy. I never could figure that out."

*"That's because you don't know about the physiology of demons, Sylvie!"*

Thought Mélanie to herself.

Doctor Jean Morin showed up at the cabaret at a bit after seven in the evening, having been called by Marie Laurent, and entered through the service entrance for more discretion. Led upstairs to the attic by Mélanie, he looked sadly at the bruised, swollen faces of the three female agents, who also had cigarette burn marks and welts from floggings with leather straps on their bodies.

"Damn Nazis! One fine day they will pay for all their crimes and cruelty."

"How long do you think it will be before those marks and bruises are not visible anymore, Doctor Morin?"

Morin looked at Mélanie, understanding why she was asking that specific question.

"Those young women should not go out in public or be seen by Germans for at least two to three weeks. But let me examine them first, to see if they have anything else that is not visible."

After maybe one hour of examination and treatment, Morin gave his final verdict to an anxious Mélanie.

"Thankfully, they don't seem to have any broken bones or other internal injuries. They are however weak and thin and will need to rest as much as possible for a few

days, on top of eating proper meals. My early verdict on the bruises and marks still stand. I unfortunately can't do more for them now, short of a visit to a fully equipped hospital, but I realize that hospitals would not be safe for these girls."

"Too true! Let me get something to pay you for your visit, Doctor. Don't protest and try to go without pay! You too need to survive this war and you are too precious to us right now. I won't be long."

Running down the stairs, Mélanie then came back less than four minutes later, a shopping bag in her left hand. The bag proved fairly heavy to Morin when he took it from Mélanie, along with a good sum in French Francs. He smiled with satisfaction when he looked inside the bag: it contained a large smoked ham, plus four large tins of canned fish and one bottle of red vintage wine, things that one had to pay a fortune for on the black market.

"I must say that you are quite generous, Mélanie, as always. Do you run a black market network or what?"

"Even better: I steal from the Germans, Doctor."

While that answer only mildly surprised Morin, it made the three S.O.E. agents open their eyes wide. They however held on to the multiple questions they had for Mélanie until Morin had left, with Lisa Van Houten being first to fire away at the teenager.

"Who are you really, Mélanie, and to what Résistance group do you belong? You seem to be awfully active for a teenage girl. By the way, how old are you?"

"Me? I am seventeen!" Lied Mélanie, who was now in reality fourteen. "As for what Résistance group I am a part of, I suppose that I can tell you that, since you are now part of my group."

"YOUR group?" Said a stunned Lisa, making Mélanie look at her soberly.

"Yes, MY group: the 'Groupe Paris Liberté'. My mother, while an important member of the group, has too much to do just running this cabaret, which acts as our information gathering center. Me and the other dancing girls seduce visiting German officers into careless talking, thus gathering quite a lot of secrets from them. However, I also do some direct action, like stealing supplies from the Germans and helping other friendly combatants, like the communist partisans who escorted you out of the Fresnes Prison. I know the network of underground tunnels, old quarries, crypts and caves under Paris like the back of my hand and uses it to go around without being noticed by the Germans."



“Incredible!” Said weakly Louise Thibault, stunned by all this. “And us, what are we going to do now in Paris? I didn’t join the S.O.E. to simply hide and do nothing in Paris.”

“Oh, the three of you will be kept plenty busy, once your bruises will have healed. That I promise you!” Said firmly Mélanie.

## **CHAPTER 11 – REACTIONS**

**11:02 (Paris Time)**

**Tuesday, October 28, 1941**

**Gross Paris Kommandatur, Hotel Meurice**

**Rue de Rivoli, 1<sup>st</sup> Arrondissement**

**Paris, Occupied France**

Brigadeführer<sup>40</sup> Paul Hausser, the new Commandant for the Paris area, was listening with growing frustration to the briefing he was being given about the events of the past weeks. He had just arrived from an interrupted period of medical convalescence in Germany, after the Führer himself had asked him to go replace General Von Stulpnagel, which Hitler had sacked. His wound to his right eye, which he had lost in combat on the Russian Front and was now covered by a black patch, was still quite sensitive, something not helping his mood. However, what he had heard up to now was stretching his sense of belief to the breaking point. He finally interrupted his briefer, the operations officer of the SS Corps occupying Paris.

“Excuse me for interrupting you, Obersturmbannführer, but how am I to believe that we lost nearly 7,000 SS soldiers in just over one month, while those British commandos apparently didn’t lose a single man? British soldiers are well trained, but they are no supermen!”

The operations officer became even more tense and nervous at that barely disguised criticism of his men’s combat performance and did his best to find acceptable excuses for Hausser, who had a high reputation as a top tactician and valorous combat officer.

“Uh, I didn’t say that the British suffered no losses, Herr Brigadeführer, just that we didn’t find any dead or wounded British soldiers. My guess is that those British commandos follow a strict policy of not leaving any of their own behind, be they alive or dead, possibly to pay mind tricks with us. In fact, their pattern of operations point to a strategy that plays heavily on psychological warfare.”

“Explain!”

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<sup>40</sup> Brigadeführer : SS rank equivalent to Major General.

“Well, there is first the fact that those commandos have limited their attacks strictly to SS troops since the arrival of our army corps in Paris. There was even one instance when our SS men manning a road checkpoint were attacked and killed, while members of the Luftwaffe who were passing through that checkpoint at that time were allowed to go unmolested. We think that the British are trying to build a rift between us SS men and with the members of the Heer, Luftwaffe and Kriegsmarine in Paris. Unfortunately, their tactic is apparently starting to work: while our SS men are confined to their barracks and fortified positions due to the security situation, members of the Luftwaffe and of the Kriegsmarine have now started to come back again to Paris for their leave periods. Our men are deeply resenting that and frictions are now quite high between our SS troopers and the men of other services.”

Hausser frowned on hearing that. He had seen plenty of instances of inter-service frictions on the Russian Front, where SS units were often at loggerhead with regular army units, and such frictions could only hurt the overall operational efficiency. On the other hand, those British commandos seemed to have understood how hurtful this could be for the German cause. In that, Hausser had to reluctantly give them their due.

“What else?”

“Second, these British use the element of surprise and obscurity to the maximum. They nearly always attack at night and from unexpected venues. In particular, their most recent tactic is to infiltrate via tunnels and underground caves the basements of our barracks, then blow them up with tons of high explosives while our men are asleep.”

“And where could they find such huge quantities of explosives?” Asked Hausser in a harsh tone. “Don’t tell me that they got them via parachute drops!”

“Uh, no, Herr Brigadeführer! They apparently stole huge quantities of explosives from the reserves of Army Group ‘B’ that were stored in the Fort de l’Est. Obersturmbannführer Schellenberg, of the SD, discovered that fact just before the fort blew up, probably because the British had booby-trapped one of the explosives magazines to hide their thefts. Herr Schellenberg left just before the explosion and reported that the security at the fort was extremely lax, while the commandant of the fort was found to be an incompetent drunk. That commandant is now in Berlin, awaiting a court martial for gross negligence and dereliction of duty.”

Hausser nodded his head at that, satisfied: such charges during a time of war usually drew the death penalty.

"So, do we have an idea of how much explosives those British could still possess?"

"Unfortunately, the Fort de l'Est blew up before a full inventory count could be made, but the British are estimated to have still over a dozen tons of hexogen high explosives, plus at least a few tons of TNT. There is however more, Herr Brigadeführer."

"More? This already sounded bad enough, Obersturmbannführer!"

"I realize that, Herr Brigadeführer, but I believe that it is about an important point. Basically, we have been digging for two weeks now through the rubble of our barracks that were blown up from under, in order to rescue possible survivors and retrieve our dead. We however found at the same time that some of the weapons of our dead troopers, basically the ones locked in the overnight weapons racks situated in each wing and floor levels, were missing. We unfortunately have only one plausible explanation for this: that the British commandos somehow managed to steal those weapons before they blew the barracks up. If that is the case, then they probably went away as well with the ready reserves of ammunition stored in steel lockers situated near the weapons racks."

Hausser, feeling the proverbial mustard coming up his nose, nearly barked his next question.

"HOW MANY WEAPONS ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?"

"Uh, since our digging is still ongoing, I can't give you more than a very approximate number, Herr Brigadeführer, but my best guess would be close to a thousand weapons, mostly Mauser 98K rifles."

"A THOUSAND WEAPONS, STOLEN FROM US?!! DO YOU REALIZE WHAT KIND OF INTERNAL SECURITY NIGHTMARE THIS COULD REPRESENT FOR US?"

The briefer, now truly in his small shoes, then had to give more bad news.

"Yes, Herr Brigadeführer, but I actually believe that either the British commandos or members of the French Résistance have even more weapons than that. Since August of last year, there has been a number of incidences of our supply trains, either going to Germany with foodstuff, coal and other goods, or arriving from Germany with weapons, ammunition and field equipment, having been looted by persons unknown. Part of the things looted were various light weapons, land mines, grenades and small arms ammunition. We now believe that the same British commandos who are attacking our men stole from these supply trains, both to sustain themselves and to build up their

arsenal. As things stands, I would say that these commandos stole enough weapons and equipment to arm well the equivalent of an infantry regiment.”

Hausser took a few seconds to digest all that, wondering if he should have refused that sudden posting to Paris on medical grounds after all.

“And where could they have hidden such a quantity of weapons, in your opinion?”

“Underground, Herr Brigadeführer! There is a very complex and extensive network of old tunnels, caves, quarries and crypts, some of them dating back to the Middle Ages, under Paris. That network in turn connects with the subway system, the gas, telephone and electricity distribution networks and the sewer system, making it nearly impossible to control movement underground, unless we would be ready to either sweep that network or block all of its access points to the surface. Unfortunately, that last option would take months to implement and would cost us a tremendous amount of resources we don't have right now. As for sweeping the tunnels, we tried that two weeks ago and it turned into a disaster. Basically, those British commandos seem to know in depth that underground network, possibly thanks to the few French who are experts in the subject, and they use that advantage to the maximum. The last example of such use of the underground was two days ago, when the guards barracks at the Fresnes Prison were blown up from under, with British commandos then killing our troops who were about to start executing hostages in retaliation for the blowing up of our SS barracks. The British and possibly some French Résistance members assisting them then emptied the whole prison of its prisoners. Searching for these escaped prisoners is presently keeping our men very busy, but we had little luck so far.”

Hausser finally had enough of all this.

“WHAT WE NEED IS NOT LUCK: IT IS GOOD PLANNING AND COMPETENT EXECUTION! UP TO NOW, I HAVE SEEN LITTLE OF BOTH! I WANT A SUMMARY OF THE MAIN EVENTS THAT HAPPENED IN PARIS SINCE JUNE OF LAST YEAR, ALONG WITH THE PERTINENT INTELLIGENCE REPORTS ON ATTACKS AGAINST OUR PERSONNEL, AND THIS BY THE END OF THE DAY!”

“Yes, Herr Brigadeführer!” Could only say the operations officer before gathering his notes and leaving the briefing room after saluting Hausser.

The latter barely had time to calm down somewhat before Obersturmbannführer Walter Schellenberg, of the SD security services, showed up, knocking on the open door

of the briefing room. Hausser, looking up from his notes, then saw that the SD man had two men dressed in civilian suits behind him.

“Yes, Obersturmbannführer Schellenberg! What may I do for you?”

Schellenberg walked up to the conference table, stopping at attention and then giving a Nazi salute to Hausser, who saluted back.

“Herr Brigadeführer, I have with me Mister Jean Strauss, the Swiss Consul in Paris, and Mister Raoul Clément, the Paris representative for the International committee of the Red Cross. They came to me to file official protests about our policies concerning the execution of French hostages. Those protests come with threats of diplomatic and economic retaliations against Germany if we continue executing hostages, so I thought that you would want to be informed of them.”

“You did well to come advise me, Herr Schellenberg.” Said Hausser before looking coldly at the two civilians standing to the left of the SD man. Hausser found all this business about the laws of war and the Geneva Conventions to be quite hypocritical and tiresome. However, it generally involved only words, contrary to today.

“Very well, gentlemen, please make your case.”

The smaller man, Raoul Clément, spoke up first.

“Thank you, Brigadeführer Hausser. As the local representative of the ICRC, I am here to inform you officially of a protest that my organization is presently registering in Berlin with your government. The ICRC is already on record about protesting the taking of innocent civilians as hostages and their execution when Frenchmen engage in acts of active, violent resistance. That, by itself, is already considered by the ICRC as a war crime, being nothing short of collective punishment. However, your government has gone one step further a month ago, by ordering the execution of civilian hostages in retaliation for attacks on your troops committed around Paris by uniformed British soldiers. Those British soldiers fought your soldiers while wearing openly British military uniforms, insignias and ranks, thus were obeying the customs of war. To equate their actions to terrorist attacks and then execute hostages in response contradicts all the laws of war and international conventions and would constitute clear war crimes on the part of Germany. Furthermore, the scope of your planned executions, which have been announced publicly by your government to account for a total of no less than 70,000 hostages just for the British attacks during this month, constitute no less than mass murder. That is not only the view of my organization, but also that of the Swiss government, which is supporting our protest. Know that, if your government persists in

this criminal policy of hostage executions, especially in response to legitimate military operations by an enemy fighting openly and in uniform, then there will be serious consequences for Germany.”

Hausser nearly laughed on hearing that: in his experience, both the ICRC and the Swiss government were all bark and no bite.

“And what ‘serious consequences’ are the ICRC and the Swiss government threatening against Germany, gentlemen?”

In response, Jean Strauss took out of his leather attaché case a sealed envelope and handed it to Hausser while speaking in a calm but firm voice.

“This is an official diplomatic note from my government, detailing the actions Switzerland will take if such mass murders of innocent civilians continue. Up to now, my government did not act in response to your execution of hostages following so-called ‘terrorist attacks’ by members of the French Résistance, but Germany has now gone too far, way too far. As a result, and if the execution of hostages continue, the Swiss government will freeze all the bank accounts in Switzerland that belong to either German individuals or to German companies or government agencies. Switzerland will also stop all gold and currencies exchanges with Germany, including those effected via other foreign-held accounts. My government has contacted the United States government concerning this matter and has received the full support of the American government, which will also freeze all German assets in the United States if the executions continue. Be also advised that the British government has informed us and the ICRC that further execution of hostages as revenge for legitimate military actions by British soldiers against German forces will result in retaliatory actions against the German military personnel held in British hands, as well as the German SS Corps being declared and then treated as a criminal organization whose members will not benefit from the protection of the Geneva Conventions. A copy of this diplomatic note is being served to your foreign minister in Berlin today.”

As Hausser took the envelope while glaring at Strauss with his one intact eye, Walter Schellenberg was left totally dismayed. He knew how vital to the Reich’s war effort the hard currencies obtained from Switzerland in exchange for gold were, as those hard currencies then allowed Germany to buy iron ore and other vital minerals from Sweden, another European country that was neutral in this war. If the Swiss instituted the financial freeze they were now threatening, then Germany’s war industries would quickly grind to a halt due to lack of basic materials. Clearly, this diplomatic ultimatum had to be

taken very seriously. Also clearly, the response to it was going to be decided in Berlin, at a level much higher than the Paris Kommandatur. Hopefully, Hausser, who overranked him by three levels, would understand the seriousness of the threat and would not dismiss it out of hand. Schellenberg then held his breath as Hausser read the Swiss diplomatic note. After about a minute of reading, Hausser finally looked up from the note, staring hard at Strauss and Clément.

"Gentlemen, I am taking note of this diplomatic letter, but the decision about it will be taken at a much higher level than me. I will thus contact Berlin to obtain further guidance on this subject. However, until I can get such guidance from above, I am ready to suspend all executions of French civilians. Will this be satisfactory to you, gentlemen?"

"It will, Brigadeführer Hausser!" Replied Jean Strauss, who secretly relaxed after expecting Hausser to lose his temper. "Please understand that, if your government decides to ignore the warning from my government, then sanctions will be applied at once."

"I do fully understand that, but also understand that I will apply diligently the policies and directives coming from my superiors in Berlin...whatever they may be. If Switzerland then decides to adopt policies hostile to Germany, we could in turn decide to become less civil with Switzerland."

*'Why the hell did he have to say that?!*' Thought to himself Schellenberg, watching both Strauss and Clément stiffen up with indignation on hearing Hausser's thinly veiled threat. Strauss, apparently a man of character despite his thin, unimpressive frame, stared back at Hausser.

"My government will take good note of the threat you just uttered against it, Brigadeführer Hausser. Good day!"

The two diplomats then turned around and left the briefing room, leaving Hausser alone with Schellenberg.

"We should have simply invaded Switzerland and be done with it!" Spat out Hausser, throwing the diplomatic note on the big conference table. Schellenberg gave him a grim look then: he already realized that the odds were not in favor of Germany in this war. To invade a neutral country as reputable as Switzerland could in turn sour relations with other important neutral countries, like Sweden, Spain and Turkey. That would be like nailing your own coffin in the long run.



“We still must consider very seriously their threat of a financial embargo, Herr Brigadeführer. It could hurt Germany a lot, especially now that we are fighting on two fronts.”

Despite his fanatical belief in the Nazi cause, Hausser was no imbecile and could see the wisdom in Schellenberg’s words. He thus nodded his head once and picked up the diplomatic note from the table, then got up from his chair.

“Very well! I will give at once the order to suspend all the executions of hostages until further notice and will also stop the picking up of hostages, then will contact Berlin for further guidance. However, those British commando bastards better not test my patience in the meantime.”

**16:06 (London Time)**

**Thursday, October 30, 1941**

**Prime Minister’s official residence**

**10, Downing Street, London**

**England**

Winston Churchill looked awestruck after finishing to read the intercepted German ‘ENIGMA’ messages, decoded thanks to the efforts of the crypto-analysts and wizards at Bletchley Park who worked as part of the top secret ‘ULTRA’ Program. Raising his nose from the last message he had just read, which had been sent from Berlin to Paris as an official response to Brigadeführer Hausser’s query about the hostages policy and the Swiss threat, he gave a frustrated look at his military secretary, Major General Hasting Ismay.

“These heroes definitely deserve our highest medals! BUT WHO THE HELL IS THE FIRST SPECIAL COMMANDO UNIT?”

## **CHAPTER 12 – THE AMERICANS ENTER THE WAR**

**13:14(Paris Time)**

**Thursday, December 11, 1941**

**'Mille et Une Nuits' cabaret, 34 Rue Saint-André-des-Arts**

**Quartier Latin, 6<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement**

**Paris, Occupied France**

"Shhh! They are going to repeat the news!"

The sixteen women and two men assembled around the radio receiver set tuned to the frequency of the French language network of the BBC all fell silent, listening to the voice of the British speaker.

"...Following the Japanese attack last Sunday on the American base of Pearl Harbor in Hawaii and the subsequent declaration of war by the United States against Japan, Germany has in turn declared war to the United States yesterday. Thus, the United States is now at war with Germany. The United States armed forces and industrial might will now stand with Great Britain and its allies against the forces of tyranny. Soon, millions more men will join our fight for freedom and will help throw back the German invaders. In other news..."

Marie Laurent lowered the volume of the radio as shouts of joy filled the kitchen of the cabaret. She had to wait for her employees to calm down before she could speak.

"People, remember that we are not supposed to own this radio, so don't go discussing this piece of news with our German customers this evening, unless your customer tells you about it. Then, if he does, feign surprise, as if it is the first time that you hear about it. However, take note of how our customers take that news: how they react to the entry of the United States into the war could be important to gauge their degree of optimism or pessimism about the chances of Germany to win the war, something that London will be eager to learn about."

"And how will we transmit that information to London, Marie?" Asked Lisa Van Houten. "I know that you already refused to tell us a number of times how you send your information to London, but this mystery is killing me."

"And it could kill many good people if I tell you and if the Germans then arrest and interrogate you, Lisa. This is the kind of information that is best kept as confidential as possible."

Lisa sighed in frustration, then looked at Mélanie, who had merely smiled on hearing the news about the United States entering the war.

"You didn't seem overly happy about this news, Mélanie. Why?"

"Why? Because the Americans have been avoiding to join the war as much as possible for over two years now and have now jumped into it only after being directly attacked. This tells me that the Americans are not really ready yet to fight effectively in this war and will need some time to build up their military power. Look at how they were caught by the Japanese with their pants down in Hawaii. Did that sound like someone ready and on alert? No! So, don't expect to see the effect of their entry into the war for many months still. However, in the long term, this may just nail shut the Nazis' coffin."

Lisa stared for a moment at Mélanie at this further demonstration of how incredibly mature for her age the teenager was. She also had proved many times how calculating and devious she was, acting like a much older senior military officer would. In fact, Mélanie would make many British officers at S.O.E. headquarters in London look like incompetent fools compared to her. In the two weeks Lisa had known her, Mélanie had proved to be one giant enigma and contradiction. On one hand, she could have fun and jump into an orgy like the most exuberant girl Lisa had known before. On the other hand, she could turn into a cold, calculating war chieftain, planning whatever she did outside the cabaret and coming back afterwards with all kinds of supplies, even weapons, that one could not normally find or get in Paris. Another significant thing about her is how her adoptive mother, Marie, let her complete freedom of action in her activities outside the cabaret.

"So, what should we do now, Mélanie?" Asked Lisa, making the others all look at the teenager, who didn't appear to be phased out by that attention.

"What we do now is to continue gathering intelligence the way we already do. With the Germans having renounced their intentions to reply to commando attacks by mass executions of hostages, the citizens of Paris are now safer, but they are still being occupied and oppressed. When the day will come to fight to liberate our city, we will then need weapons, lots of them! We will also need lots of people that are properly trained in the handling of weapons. As you all know already, I have a small stash of weapons which I was able to acquire through persons best left unnamed. I have in turn

provided many of those weapons and ammunition to communist Résistance fighters that I know and that Lisa, Mary and Louise saw in action at the Fresnes Prison. I however still have enough weapons hidden here to arm all of us when the time comes to fight. First, I need to know who here is ready and willing to fight the Germans to liberate Paris. Those who are ready, please raise your hand.”

She was pleased to see everyone present raise one hand up at once. Marc Aubut, their maitre d', however spoke up then.

“Mélanie, I want to fight, but I am now 63 years old and I am not in the best of health. I won't be much of a street fighter, to be frank, even though I am ready to fight and die for France.”

Mélanie gave a benevolent smile to the small and frail maitre d' of the cabaret.

“You can still do your part from a fixed defensive position here, in the cabaret. In fact, you would be just perfect to act as a loader for a machine gun: you won't need to move much or run but you will still be filling a vital role in our defensive plan.”

“Ahem!” Said Marie Laurent, clearing her throat. “And may my dear daughter tell me what OUR defensive plan is for MY cabaret?”

“Of course I can, Mother!” Replied Mélanie, grinning. Her grin however changed quickly to a sober expression.

“Mother, since you and most other Résistance members have had zero training in military tactics and street fighting techniques, then we will have to concentrate on holding and defending many dispersed but mutually supporting fixed defensive points, like this cabaret, when the fight for Paris will start. I already spoke with some communist fighters who live in the Quartier Latin and they agreed that the best tactic will be to deny any mobility to the Germans once the fight starts. Our cabaret is well situated to sweep down with fire from its attic both Rue Saint-André-des-Arts and Rue Séguier. This way, we will be protecting the western approaches to the Place Saint-Michel, which my communist friends plan to interdict by fire in order to cut all access to the bridge linking the Left Bank with the l'Île de la Cité<sup>41</sup>.”

“And what will we do if the Germans show up with tanks?” Asked Paul Dujardin, the cabaret's doorman and handyman. “You don't happen to have any anti-tank weapons, do you, Mélanie?”

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<sup>41</sup> Île de la Cité : Name of the main island in the middle of the Seine River which contains the famous Notre-Dame Cathedral and which was the core of the old city of Paris in the Middle Ages.

"Actually, we can easily improvise a few things, like Molotov Cocktails, essentially glass bottles filled with gasoline and fitted with a burning wick that you can then throw on top of a vehicle. The communists who fought in the Spanish Civil War used them a lot then, according to my friends. I also happen to have a few anti-tank mines, stolen from the Germans."

"You have anti-tank mines?" Nearly shouted a stunned Mary Gillies, making Mélanie grin again.

"Yep! When Paris will rise up in revolt, I will go place a few of them across our street, under the stone pavements. With luck, that should keep German armored vehicles away from the cabaret. Marc, from now on, save all the empty bottles of wine and liquor consumed by our customers, so that we could make plenty of Molotov cocktails for a future fight. On my part, I will make sure that we have plenty of gasoline available to fill them."

"By Allah!" Exclaimed Fatimah Kasseem, one of the strippers of the cabaret. "You sound like a chieftain on the war path, Mélanie!"

"Let's say that I like playing with fire. Sylvie, I will ask you to save and put aside all the empty tin cans we eat through, and this after washing them: I can use them to make improvised bombs. I happen to have plenty of explosives in my stocks. Finally, starting tomorrow, I will start giving to all of you classes in the handling, dismantling and care of various types of weapons I have in stock presently, which include pistols, submachine guns, rifles, machine guns and grenades. We will do it gradually and will take our time, so that neither the Germans nor our more moronic neighbors get suspicious."

"Talking of our neighbors, Mélanie, how will we convince them that we are not collaborators?" Asked the young, beautiful and graceful Hien Min Wa. "They could attack us as such or accuse us after Paris is liberated."

"Oh, I expect most of them to try just that, Hien. However, my communist Résistance friends have a lot of contacts and influence around the Quartier Latin and they know that we are actually part of the Résistance. They will both vouch for us and protect us from mobs when the time will come. Well, now that all this is said, I suggest that we hide back our radio and prepare for our evening customers: we want to be ready to screw them royally, girls."

The group laughed collectively at that joke before dispersing to their various chores. Mélanie did catch Lisa Van Houten before she left the kitchen and spoke to her.

"Lisa, if I provide you with small embroidered French flags and with canvas tissue, could you then make distinctive armbands for us to wear when the fight will start?"

"Of course! That will be easy enough, as long as I have the proper materiel for them."

"Then, I will put that on my list of priority acquisitions." Promised Mélanie before letting Lisa go.

## **CHAPTER 13 – NEW OCCUPIERS**

**10:45(Paris Time)**

**Saturday, February 21, 1942**

**Avenue des Champs Élysées, 8<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement**

**Paris, Occupied France**

Mélanie was furiously tempted to give the royal finger to the SS soldiers now rolling down the Avenue des Champs Élysées in long columns of vehicles, on their way to the various train stations of the capital and then Germany. However, she restrained herself, knowing that the reactions to that from the SS could be unpredictable. After five months of continuous attacks and ambushes by 'British commandos', the three SS divisions that had arrived in Paris last September were now decimated and demoralized, having lost over a quarter of their men, along with many weapons that had simply vanished. A Luftwaffe senior officer who was a good customer of the cabaret had told Mélanie in nearly gleeful terms that those three SS divisions, now thoroughly discredited on top of being despised by many regular German officers, were returning to Germany, where they were to be refitted and then sent to the Russian Front. In return, three regular Heer divisions, equally decimated but by the Soviets, would take their place in Paris, where they were supposed to rest and recuperate. As well, the widely hated Brigadeführer Paul Hausser just had been relieved as the Kommandant of the Greater Paris region, with General-Leutnant Blaskowitz replacing him. Johannes Albrecht Blaskowitz had a reputation as a honorable man who respected the laws and customs of war and who, in fact, had been relegated up to now to a relatively minor command by Adolph Hitler, for protesting SS atrocities in Poland earlier in the war. Mélanie was ready to give a bit of a break at first to these new German occupiers, as long as they behaved in a decent manner. If not, then more casernes could blow up at night. In the meantime, she would use this transition period to continue building up her hidden arsenal of stolen weapons, which now counted over 2,000 portable weapons of all kinds, and to continue training the employees of the cabaret in their handling. Just that, plus her occasional looting expeditions made in order to provide extra food and supplies to the cabaret, would be enough to keep her plenty busy in the days and months to come.

Turning her back to the departing SS troops, Mélanie got back on her bicycle and started pedaling back to the cabaret. As she pedaled, her mind started thinking about the possible opportunities that such a massive exchange of units could bring to her. For one, the departing SS units were not likely to have destroyed their local stocks of weapons, ammunition and fuel, nor would they carry all those stocks with them to Germany, something that would have necessitated a lot more transportation capacity, of which they already had a shortage of. More likely, they would have left them in place, to be available to the units taking their place in Paris. However, Mélanie knew from having watched a similar switchover in the past that it would take days to move a full unit out, plus more days for a fresh unit to move in. Any stocks left behind were thus liable to be lightly guarded at best during those few days. This was definitely a good time for her to pay discreet nocturnal visits to the various casernes and garrisons being vacated by SS units, to see if anything useful for her could be open to looting.

**01:56 (Paris Time)**

**Sunday, February 22, 1942**

**Basement levels of the French École Militaire**

**7<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement, Paris**

Mélanie was on her guards and ready for anything as she materialized in the basement of one of the southeast corner buildings of the French École Militaire, near the Eiffel Tower. She had visited those same basement levels many times before, months ago, when she had extensively looted the stocks of old French Army weapons and ammunition kept there, with apparently the Germans unaware of her looting. The previous SS occupiers could however have transferred the remaining weapons and ammunition in the meantime, in which case she would find only empty basement rooms. Her hearth jumped in her chest when her night vision ability showed her long lines of piles of crates and boxes half filling the dark room, exactly as they had been during her last visit. Those departing SS troops had simply ignored or forgotten those old French weapons, leaving them behind without any guards to watch over them. Many of these weapons would be considered obsolete today, but they were still deadly and effective, especially if used by combatants firing from fixed defensive positions. Not believing her luck, she started walking down the piles of crates, choosing what would be of highest



value to her, then started to transfer those chosen items to her secret cave via teleportation jumps.

Mélanie ended up actually emptying completely the rooms containing the French Army weapons in the process of two nights, transporting her loot to a cave adjacent to and interconnected to her original secret cave, which she called 'Ali Baba's Cave'. Luck then smiled to her on the third night, when she found out that the departing SS unit had left behind sizeable stocks of German small arms ammunition and fuel, meant for the incoming replacement unit and kept under light guard. Three more nights of work were sufficient for Mélanie to move out those stocks of munitions and fuel, nearly filling up her second cave.

Tired and dirty from her last night of carrying weapons and ammunition to her two caves and of piling them in separate, well identified piles, Mélanie contemplated the fruits of months of looting and stealing. She now had enough to arm a small army and sustain it with ammunition for weeks of intensive combat. She also had enough explosives stashed in her caves to blow up sky high half of the Quartier Latin if someone ever made a mistake while handling them. Mélanie then thought about when and to whom she would eventually distribute her stocks of weapons and explosives. Obviously, the whom would have to be French members of the Résistance. As for the when, the bulk should ideally be distributed just before the fight to liberate Paris. If done too soon, there would be the very real risks that some traitor or double agent infiltrated into the Résistance would hear about her stocks of weapons and alert the Germans about it. Such traitors and double agents were unfortunately too common around Paris. Already, a few Résistance groups, notably the Groupe du Musée de l'Homme, had been dismantled by the Germans and its members jailed or executed, thanks to either denunciations, lax security protocols, double agents or traitors, or a combination of those factors.

"What I need is a well organized, well trained group that takes security measures seriously." Said Mélanie to herself. To her knowledge, only one such group came to her mind at once: the communist-organized and run Francs-Tireurs et Partisans<sup>42</sup>, or FTP. She had already helped one cell of the FTP, the one run by Paul Romanov, a

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<sup>42</sup> Francs-Tireurs et Partisans : Approximate translation is 'Skirmishers and Partisans'.

number of times, providing it with weapons, explosives and even operational assistance, like when she had raided the Fresnes Prison in conjunction with FTP fighters. Maybe she could approach Romanov again, to pass to him the word that more weapons were available for the needs of the FTP and that she needed someone highly placed in the FTP to devise a sensible distribution plan for her weapons.

Liking that idea, Mélanie walked slowly to the big piles of crates full of either TNT or RDX in one-kilo blocks, pondering how best to use all these high explosives. Just with those one-kilo blocks, she had a total of over thirteen tons of molded explosives in her caves and just couldn't see how she could use all of that, short of blowing up every remaining German barrack building in Paris. Something that she had read years ago, as she was studying chemistry under a private tutor, among other basic sciences and mathematics, then came back to her mind, bringing a devilish grin on her face.

"Yes! Let's be imaginative with those explosives."

### **05:17 (Paris Time)**

**Thursday, March 5, 1942**

#### **Kitchen of the 'Mille et Une Nuits' cabaret**

Marie Laurent, alerted by her cook, Sylvie Renaudin, about noises in her kitchen, took a deep breath before taking one step to stand in the doorway of the kitchen, an old French Army revolver in one hand and pointed. She was about to shout a warning as well but was left speechless on seeing that Mélanie was the 'night intruder'. Her adopted daughter was actually busy around the stove of the kitchen, on which water was boiling in a large steel kitchen pot. What looked like a large, empty tin can floated in the boiling water. Marie's eyes then fell on the collection of old tin cans, blocks of some kind of whitish substance, strings of steel wires, electrical tape and German stick hand grenades spread on the big dining table. On the kitchen counter next to the stove stood five tin cans from which protruded the wooden handles of German stick grenades. The kitchen was also fairly cold, as all the windows had been opened, apparently to ventilate the room. Marie lowered her revolver and approached Mélanie, who was now smiling to her.

"Mélanie, what in the World are you doing this early in the kitchen? And what is all this for?"

"I am making a few improvised bombs and mines in preparation for the future fight to liberate Paris, Mother. By the way, be careful with those blocks: they are one-kilo blocks of Hexogene high explosives."

"You are making bombs in my kitchen? Do you want to blow us all up?"

"Don't worry, Mother, I know what I am doing, believe me."

"Oh! And does this have anything to do with your latest fad of searching the garbage cans of our neighbors for empty tin cans and of collecting old nails, screws and steel nuts?"

"Yes, it does! I need empty tin cans, preferably with their top still attached to them, to contain the explosives I want to melt into shape, and I will use those old nails screws and nuts as shrapnel for my bombs."

"And those German stick grenades? I suppose that you are not coating them with sugar to turn them into candies?"

"Of course not, Mother!" Said Mélanie with a grin. "Those grenades, half dipped into tin cans filled with melted hexogene explosives, will serve as delayed fuses and detonators for what will be very powerful hand anti-tank and demolition charges. Just watch as I make one of them."

Now truly intrigued, Marie watched Mélanie take two blocks of explosives and put them inside the big empty tin can floating in boiling water. She instinctively stepped back on seeing that, half expecting the explosives to blow up or ignite because of the heat. Instead, the blocks soon started to melt into a kind of thick syrup.

"Hexogene, apart from being insensitive to shocks, melts at a fairly low temperature, Mother. Once those blocks will be completely melted, I will then stick at the vertical a German stick grenade in the can, with its wooden handle upward. Note that I taped a small string of steel wire bent into a corkscrew to the head of the grenade's explosive canister. That is to allow the grenade to stand in the can with a space at the bottom that will allow hexogene explosives to flow under the grenade and solidify there. That way, that German stick grenade will be completely surrounded by two kilos of hexogene explosives. I then take the tin can filled with explosive and grenade out of the boiling water and let it cool down, so that the hexogene can fully solidify. Once they are cold, I then fit the old tin cover of the can in place, with a hole cut in the center to let the wooden handle of the grenade stick out of the can. The last step is to tape the cover to the can, to hermetically seal its top and to keep the whole thing together. At the end, we have a hand-thrown charge that is easy to operate and has its own, five-second delay

fuse to ignite the standard explosive charge of the grenade, which then in turn ignites the two kilos of hexogene, enough to rip to pieces a tank track or kill everyone in a large room.”

Marie was left overwhelmed for a moment as she eyed the hand charges presently cooling on the kitchen counter.

“Mélanie, you are truly devilish!”

Her daughter grinned at that compliment.

“I know, Mother: it’s in my nature. I also plan to produce remote-controlled shrapnel bombs and heavy canister shells that could be hidden to cover the approaches to fixed defensive positions. Give me enough time to prepare and I swear to you that the Germans will hurt when the fight for Paris will start.”

## **CHAPTER 14 – AN UNEXPECTED TRIP TO GERMANY**

**10:19 (Paris Time)**

**Friday, July 17, 1942**

**Butcher shop, Boulevard Saint-Germain**

**6<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement, Paris**

**Occupied France**

Mélanie had just been served by one of the employees of the butcher shop she was visiting, having exchanged rationing coupons against the meager allotment of meat allowed to the girls at the cabaret and was on her way out, muttering to herself.

“Twelve ounces of meat per person, per week. What a joke! It is a good thing that I am able to loot German food supplies. If not, we would be bordering on starvation.”

As she walked out of the butcher shop, she passed by one of her neighbors who was waiting in line for her own ration of meat. The graying woman gave her a poisonous look and spoke loud enough to be heard by the other people in the lineup.

“Well well! Isn’t this the young bitch from the ‘Mille et Une nuits’ cabaret who sleeps with German officers?”

“Fuck you, you old hag! You don’t know what you are talking about.”

Leaving it at that before other people in the lineup started harassing her, Mélanie started walking back towards the cabaret, situated three blocks from the butcher shop. As she was waiting to cross an intersection, two German Army trucks came in suddenly and stopped with screeching brake noises in front of a bookstore. Now fully on alert, Mélanie watched a full squad of SS troopers jump out of the first truck and then brutally enter the bookstore. While the Waffen SS divisions that had briefly occupied Paris were gone, soldiers of the Allgemeine SS, or General Service of the SS Corps, were still responsible for fighting Résistance members and other ‘enemies of the Reich’ through Occupied France. She then noticed the anti-Semitic graffiti painted on the front window of the boutique and understood what was happening: this was another instance of anti-Jewish repression by the Germans. To her deep displeasure, a woman waiting near her on the sidewalk smiled with glee at the spectacle.

“Good! A few less dirty Jews in Paris!”

Mélanie gave the woman a hateful glare but didn't speak then: unfortunately, anti-Semitic sentiments were quite widespread through Paris and the rest of France, with many French citizens blaming Jews for the defeat and fall of France. Mélanie didn't have any special feelings about Jews and in fact mocked their blind faith in a God that had never helped them in difficult times before. However, she was rational enough to understand why Jews were so despised by many in France: simple jealousy, jealousy at how the Jews' hard work had brought them prosperity. As a being from outside France and the Material Plane, Mélanie despised xenophobia and racism in general, something that tended to set her against this whole anti-Jewish backlash. After less than a minute, the SS soldiers started coming out of the bookstore, dragging out with them a terrified family of six: two adults, three teenagers and one preteen. The family was brutally loaded up in the back of the second truck, which already had a number of despondent-looking men, women and children inside, guarded by two stern-faced SS troopers, then the trucks left. Taking a quick decision, Mélanie nearly ran across the street and into the bookstore, whose door had been smashed in. Once inside and out of view from the people on the street and sidewalks, she turned invisible, then ran back out. Seeing the second German truck about to turn a corner in the distance, she made a teleporting jump, landing on the roof of the truck's cab, where she then lay down to distribute her weight while still invisible. As her truck rode through the streets of the 6<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement, Mélanie sent a telepathic message to her mother, doing so before she became too far from the cabaret to communicate.

*‘Mother, this is Mélanie. I just saw something happen and need to investigate it. I don't know when I will return, so say that I went to visit a relative outside Paris for a few days. I will keep you posted as things go.’*

She then braced herself, in order not to be thrown off when the truck she was on braked suddenly or turned quickly.

The two German trucks made three more stops around the 6<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement, brutally collecting more Jews from their homes and shops and loading them in Mélanie's truck. On two of those occasions, she saw French policemen actively participate in the arrests, helping the SS troopers and being barely less brutal than the Germans. That didn't surprise Mélanie, although it still infuriated her to no little degree: up to now the French police, under the orders of the Vichy government, had mostly sold its soul to the

Germans and had actively collaborated with them, helping by guarding jailed Résistance members and harassing groups, like the Jews, who were in the sights of the Germans. Finally, the two trucks arrived at the Paris Winter Cyclodrome, or Vélodrome d'Hiver, better known by the Parisians as the 'Vel d'Hiv', situated near the École Militaire in the 15<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement. A mix of German soldiers and French policemen guarded the entrance to the Vélodrome, where the Jews inside Mélanie's truck were led after jumping out of the back. Still under cover of invisibility, she climbed down from the cab of the truck and followed the group inside the big domed building, where bicycle races were held on a long oval wooden track. What she saw inside made her stop for a moment, shocked: thousands of people, men, women and children guarded by French policemen packed the bleachers surrounding the race track,. The air stank of urine and feces and the heat was near intolerable, at least for normal human beings. Seeing a senior French police officer speaking with a German officer near the entrance, Mélanie cautiously approached them in order to be able to listen to their conversation, while being careful not to bump into anyone.

"...and when will all these Jews be transported out of the Vélodrome?" Asked the French police officer, making the German officer answer him in good French.

"In four days. A collection of buses will bring them to the internment camp in Drancy, where they will await their shipment by train to Germany."

"But, I already have over 7,000 people packed in here and I haven't received any food for them. The sanitary situation is also near catastrophic."

"Let those Jews starve in their shit!" Replied coldly the German officer with a dismissing wave of the hand. "They don't deserve better! Just make sure that no one escapes until they can be picked up and brought to Drancy."

The French police officer, clearly feeling ill at ease with this, swallowed his objections, knowing that they would only bring trouble to himself.

"Very well! You can count on my men."

"Good! Then, I will see you again in four days."

As the German turned around and walked out of the Vélodrome, Mélanie closely followed him, having heard enough. Once outside, she teleported to her bedroom in the upper floor of the cabaret, where she became visible again before going down to the kitchen. There, she handed over her small package of meat to Sylvie Renaudin while making a face.

"Here, Sylvie: our meat for all of us for a week."

The 45 year-old widow looked at the package with disdain while taking it from Mélanie.

"It is a good thing that you are so good at stealing German rations, Mélanie. If not, we would all be nearly down to bones and skin."

"I know, but we still have to play the rationing game, unless those Vichy functionaries could become suspicious and put the Germans on our trail. Where is Mother, by the way?"

"In the show lounge, speaking with a photographer."

"A photographer? What for?"

"You will have to ask her about that: I don't have a clue."

"Alright, I will go speak with her then."

Walking out of the kitchen, Mélanie went to the big show lounge, where she saw her mother sitting on a sofa and speaking with a thin man in his forties. Marie smiled on seeing her and presented Mélanie to her visitor as she approached them.

"Aaah, here is my daughter Mélanie, Monsieur Lepage. As you can see, she will make a perfect subject for our posters project."

"Posters, Mother? What are we talking about here?"

"A small idea that could bring us quite a lot of extra money, while also helping Monsieur Lepage's business. I remembered a concept that is very popular in the United States, that of the 'Pinup Girl', and think that it could be very popular with our customers. Basically, Monsieur Lepage would take good quality pictures of you and of the other girls in various stages of undress, then produce large copies of them as posters or portraits for sale to our customers. The more undressed, the higher the price. What do you think?"

Mélanie smiled at that, amused at once by the concept.

"I think that those posters would sell like hot cakes, Mother. I'm for it!"

"Good! Monsieur Lepage is going to return here early this afternoon with his camera equipment, after we get an agreement on the price of the posters. Could you be ready then to pose for him in various dresses and in the nude?"

"I will, Mother. Uh, can I see you afterwards concerning another business?"

"Of course, my dear Mélanie! I should be done here shortly."

As promised, Marie Laurent came to see Mélanie about fifteen minutes later, meeting with her in the manager's office of the cabaret.

"So, what did you see, Mélanie?"



“The Germans, helped by the French police, are conducting a massive roundup of Jews around Paris, collecting men, women and children. Over 7,000 Jews are already packed inside the Vel d’Hiv, with more coming by the hour. They are to be transported to an internment camp in Drancy, where they are to await transport by train to Germany.”

“But, why round up children as well? They can’t be used as forced labor.”

Mélanie then gave a somber look at her adoptive mother.

“Mother, from the way I saw those Jews treated inside the Vel d’Hiv, I don’t think that the Germans collected them only as slave labor. I don’t know yet what they will do with the children and old men and women, but I suspect something more sinister than slave labor.”

“Like what?”

“Again, I don’t know. I will need to visit that camp in Drancy in four days, when those Jews in the Vel d’Hiv will be bused there. Then, I should be able to find more about this. Just be prepared to lose me for a few days then.”

Marie sighed in resignation at those last words: Mélanie was still the undisputed star of the cabaret and attracted a lot of German officers to it.

“Very well, Mélanie! I will tell that you went to a relative’s farm in Normandy to pick up fresh vegetables and butter there. Please be careful during your trip, Mélanie. I would hate to lose you now.”

“Don’t worry about me, Mother: you know how hard I am to catch...or to kill. Nobody in Drancy will be able to see me, let alone capture or hurt me. Well, with this said, I better go start selecting a few titillating outfits for my photo session this afternoon.”

“Your best titillating outfit is still yourself in the buff, Mélanie.”

“I know!” Replied Mélanie, grinning with mischief. “I like being in the buff!”

## **20:36 (Paris Time)**

**Tuesday, July 21, 1942**

### **Drancy internment camp, northeast suburbs of Paris**

When the French gendarmes ordered out the occupants of the long convoy of buses that had just arrived from the Vélodrome, they paid little attention to a tall teenage girl that exited last her bus. Like the other Jews, she had a yellow star sewn on her

jacket and, apart from being very beautiful, did not stand out with the rest of the crowd, in which quite a few other beautiful women and girls were. The gendarmes, watched over by a few German SS officers, made the newcomers line up ten deep in the wide open ground surrounded by the big, U-shaped building that made up the camp. Ten French gendarmes sitting at small folding tables set in the courtyard then started the long, tedious process of registering individually the new inmates, with German officers in attendance and watching closely. It took a good three hours before Mélanie was pushed in front of one of the tables, where the gendarme sitting behind it couldn't help admire her beauty for a second before starting asking questions in a rough manner.

"Papers!"

"I don't have identity papers: I lost them when I was arrested."

"That's if you had any legal papers to start with, young girl: you are probably some illegal immigrant, like most of the rest here. What is your name?"

"Lilie Lorenz!"

"That doesn't sound French to me! Where are you from?"

"I was born in the Alsace, but moved to Paris years ago."

"And your parents are here with you?"

"No! I was alone when I was arrested and I don't know what happened to the rest of my family."

"Well, that's not really important. Date and place of birth?"

"June thirteenth, 1924, in Strasbourg."

"Last fixed address?"

"34 Rue Suger, 6<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement."

"Occupation?"

"Student!"

The gendarme then consulted a list of rooms in the camp's main building and wrote her name down alongside a number, then wrote down the room number on a small piece of paper that he gave to Mélanie.

"You are now to go to that room, on the third floor of the wing behind you. Stay there!"

"When will we get something to eat, sir?"

That was when the SS officer standing behind the gendarme spoke up, his voice harsh.

"You Jews don't need to eat! Shut up and go to your room!"

Feigning meekness, Mélanie obeyed and went around the crowd of people still waiting to be processed, entering the four-storey building through one of its doors and climbing stairs to the third floor. There, she found that the room assigned to her, a bare concrete one containing only a number of old steel double bunk beds with straw mattresses and no blankets or pillows, already lodged nine other women and girls. Those women and girls all looked understandably despondent but still greeted her warmly, exchanging their names with her. Apparently exhausted by their five day ordeal at the Vélodrome, where they had been kept with no food and little water, the women quickly enough went to sleep on their old straw mattresses, leaving Mélanie alone to watch outside the remaining prisoners still being processed. She had deliberately chosen to infiltrate this camp as an inmate in order to see what this was all about, but she already could sense that, as bad as things were already for those unfortunate people, worst was probably to come.

**07:22 (Paris Time)**

**Wednesday, August 5, 1942**

**Le Bourget train station, near Drancy**

Like the other inmates, Mélanie was stuffed into dirty, overcrowded cattle cars, with only one sanitary bucket per car and no water or food provided. The food provided in Drancy having been near starvation level, all the inmates were already quite weak, except of course for Mélanie, who needed little food to sustain herself and who had been able to discreetly teleport back and forth to the cabaret to give quick reports to Marie. The train then started moving, slowly at first, then took up a bit more speed as it switched lines a couple of times, all the time heading east.

The trip, going on for three days, was an ordeal for the occupants of the train, with insufficient water and no food being provided only once a day at various stops along the way. Those stops however allowed Mélanie to roughly follow the itinerary of the train, which crossed the whole of Germany before entering the southern part of Poland. When the inmates were finally allowed to come out of their stinking, overheated rail cars, it was to find themselves in the train station of a place called Auschwitz. With SS soldiers opening the sliding doors of the cattle cars, Mélanie was finally able to leave the hot and stinky car where she had been stuffed with over 160 other prisoners. Still, she

was in much better shape than her companions, who were weak from lack of food and exhausted by the stifling heat inside the rail car. The few thousands Jews from the train were then brutally made to line up two deep along the quay, with a few SS officers then starting to go down the ranks, quickly inspecting the newcomers. Mélanie carefully but also discretely listened and watched that process from her place in the rear rank, noting how the SS officers would point in turn at each prisoner they had just inspected and simply said 'recht!' or 'links!' A soldier following the officer closely would then grab the prisoner in question and turn him or her towards either the right or the left. Mélanie was quickly able to discern a pattern in that process, a pattern that raised bad feelings in her. Most of the Jews, including all of the young children, elderly people and women with small children, ended going 'left', while those looking relatively fit physically were sent 'right'. Things became even clearer when some of the Jews selected to go 'left' and who were too weak or too old to walk away were then brutally grabbed by a SS officer, pulled aside and then shot dead with a bullet in the head, causing the other Jews to exclaim and whimper in fear and horror. Inmates already present in the train station and waiting with wheelbarrows then came forward to load the bodies and carry them away. Mélanie was then able to see that those inmates, looking frightfully emaciated, wore only black and white stripped, two-piece prison fatigues and ill-fitting wooden shoes without socks. They also had either color triangles or yellow stars sewn on their shirts.

Mélanie was still watching all this when a SS officer briefly stopped in front of her and gave her a quick head to toe look. She was then able to note the human skull insignia that was part of the man's SS collar tabs. While the SS stayed apparently impassive, Mélanie was able to feel the lust the man felt as he eyed her fit, sexy body. He then spoke one word: 'recht!', before stepping in front of the next woman, who was sent 'links!'. Pushed in the correct direction by a soldier, Mélanie walked to join the group selected with her, with women and girls segregated from the men. A female German SS auxiliary guarding the hundred or so Jewish women of her group forced her into the ranks with liberal use of her truncheon and insults in German. While waiting for the culling to be completed, Mélanie was able to survey in more detail her surroundings. The place was a bleak one, with two separate camps visible from the train station, both surrounded by barbed wire fences and watchtowers. The furthest, and also largest camp, towards which the children, women and old people selected to go 'left' were now walking, had rows and rows of long, single-storey barracks, plus a few brick buildings.

The nearest camp, with fewer barracks, also had what appeared to be a number of warehouses or workshops and was only a few hundred yards from the train station. Mélanie's group of women was soon ordered to start walking towards the nearest camp. The women who dared ask questions or were crying as they saw their husbands or sons splitting from them got beaten up by the guards and female auxiliaries, the latter apparently taking great pleasure in doing so. As a demon, Mélanie/Delicia was a proud being who knew how much more powerful she was than those German guards, but she contained herself, promising under her breath while walking in silence to get back at those sadists one fine day.

Her group soon entered through the main gate of the nearest camp, passing under a forged steel sign saying 'Arbeit macht frei', or 'Work brings freedom' in German. Stopping in front of a brown brick building near the main gate, the group was then made to go inside it in single file under heavy guard. In the building, Mélanie's turn eventually came in front of a German woman sitting at a desk and registering the prisoners in, asking questions in fair French.

"Name!"

"Lilie Lorenz!"

"Date and place of birth!"

"June thirteenth, 1924, in Strasbourg, France."

"Last address?"

"36 Rue Suger, Paris."

While the woman asked her questions and wrote down the answers in a large registry book, a SS officer standing behind the auxiliary eyed Mélanie with barely hidden interest.

"You seem quite strong and healthy, Jew. What kind of work were you doing in Paris?"

"I was a student." Replied Mélanie. A SS female auxiliary standing behind her immediately hit her back with a wooden rod she held in her right hand.

"YOU WILL ADDRESS THE OFFICER AS 'SIR', JEWISH BITCH!"

Fighting the urge to simply turn around and break the jaw of the matron, Mélanie repeated her answer in a flat tone.

"I was a student, sir!"

"That's better! Never forget from now on that you will live only as long as we wish so, girl. Now, you will have to work to earn your food. If you don't work hard

enough, you will be punished. If you lack respect to a German, you will be also punished. If you try to escape, you will be executed. Do you understand, girl?"

"Yes sir!"

"Good! You will be assigned to the rock quarry detail and will start work tomorrow morning, after you will have been processed in."

The officer then spoke in German to the auxiliary at the desk, who registered Mélanie's designated assignment and gave her a little piece of paper with a number on it.

"Go to the next room to your right and present this number to the attendant there. NEXT!"

Walking to the opened door to her right, Mélanie stepped inside a fairly large room where inmates were made to sit into chairs, with their denuded left forearm put on a table and with women wielding tattooing drills then marking a number on the inmates' forearm. The process was done quickly and crudely while ignoring the moans of pain from the prisoners being tattooed. Mélanie was made to sit at one of the tattooing stations and told to give her paper with a number on it to the tattooing 'artist'. The latter 'artist' however frowned when her drill barely managed to scratch the surface of Mélanie's skin. When she saw that the process was taking an inordinate amount of time in Mélanie's case, a SS female matron came to her, barking at the artist.

"Why are you taking so long with that girl?"

"Her skin: it is incredibly tough, like hard leather, Frau Wolsingen. My drill has a hard time scratching it."

"Let me see that!"

The matron then pushed away the tattoo artist, taking her place and grabbing the drill. She soon found out that the artist had not been exaggerating and gave a puzzled look at Mélanie.

"What did you do with your skin?"

"Nothing, Frau!"

Shaking her head, the matron tried again, this time pressing the drill hard into Mélanie's forearm and finally managing to etch her assigned number on her forearm. Sweating from the effort, the matron gave her a mean look and pointed to the door of an adjacent room.

"Go in there!"

That room proved to be a sort of changing room, where the inmates were told to undress completely and leave behind any possessions they still had with them, before being given a single set of two-piece stripped camp fatigues and a pair of wooden shoes, plus a tin canteen and a spoon. The SS officer watching the Jewish women strip was left staring at Mélanie when she stripped naked, her tall, perfect sexy body and angelic beauty setting her apart from the other inmates like a light in a dark room. The officer then approached her while she was still naked and waiting for her camp fatigues and slowly turned around her while admiring her body.

“What is your name, girl?”

“Lilie Lorenz, sir!”

“You are quite beautiful...for a Jew. Are you sure that you are not of Aryan blood?”

“Quite sure, sir!”

“Too bad: you truly stand apart in this crowd. Maybe I will be able to arrange something special for you. Which work were you assigned to?”

“The rock quarry, sir!”

“Very well! Get in the line!”

*‘The bastard is probably hoping to use me as his personal sex slave.’* Thought to herself Mélanie while joining the line of inmates waiting for their camp uniforms. While waiting, she noticed that veteran inmates were collecting the clothes and possessions of the newcomers and doing a triage of the lot, throwing the various categories of objects or clothes in specific bins on wheels, to be carried away later.

Now wearing no underwear under her rough stripped camp fatigues and with no socks in her ill-fitting wooden shoes, Mélanie and the other women of her group were lined up again outside of the brick building and formed into a large marching group by SS matrons and soldiers before being walked away towards a row of long, low wooden barracks. However, before getting to the barracks proper, the group was made to stop on one side of a courtyard and face a waiting SS officer. Many of the female inmates sucked in horrified comments when they saw the four prisoners, all women, suspended by ropes to thick wooden vertical posts: the women’s arms had been tied in their backs, then had been forced up, making their feet rise from the ground while the ligaments of their arms were painfully stretched and slowly thorn under the weight of their own bodies in a torture known to the old Spanish Inquisition as ‘Strapado’. The four tortured women

were crying and moaning with pain as the SS officer addressed the horrified newcomers in French.

“You see those four women behind me? They are being punished for a number of infractions they committed yesterday and will stay up until I decide that they will have been properly punished enough. If you don’t obey our orders, if you don’t work hard enough or if you show disrespect to one of your guards, then you will be similarly punished. If you try to escape, you will be shot, period! If you become too lazy to work, we will then get rid of you, as the Jewish vermin you are properly deserve to be! However, if you work hard and respect and obey your guards, then you will be allowed to live...for the moment. With this said, you will now go into your assigned barrack and wait there for further instructions. GUARDS, GET THEM INSIDE!”

The Jewish women, many already traumatized by the horrors and cruelty they had been witnessed to, were then pushed inside one of the barracks, finding there long rows of rickety wooden double bunks. There were no mattresses or blankets in sight, only rough wooden platforms and not a single table or chair in the barrack, which stood empty at the time. The SS matron then assigned bunks to the newcomers, with six women per double bunk, before leaving. Now alone, the new inmates looked at each other with fear and despair in their eyes.

“My God, what are we to become here?” Cried out a young woman. “What will happen to my family?”

“Do not cry!” Replied a mature woman. “Let us pray instead.”

Most of the other women then started praying quietly as a group...but not Mélanie. Seeing her silent and impassive, one of the women sharing her bunk bed looked at her questioningly.

“You are not praying, friend?”

Mélanie gave her a no-nonsense look in response.

“I don’t pray: I act instead.”

“Act? And do what?”

“You will see soon enough.”

The Jewish woman then gave up on the conversation and continued with her prayers.

Mélanie’s group didn’t have much time to pray or rest, as the same SS officer who had lectured them soon returned briefly to call them out.

“EVERYBODY OUTSIDE! BRING YOUR CANTEENS WITH YOU!”



Seeing the prospect of finally getting their first thing to eat in over three days, the women walked out quickly enough, lining five deep in the courtyard under the orders of a SS matron. A small hand cart pushed by two prisoners and carrying large pots of hot soup then came in and served each woman with a cup's worth of thin, meatless cabbage soup, but nothing else. The women were however so hungry that they eagerly took and ate their meager lunch as soon as it had been served to them. The SS officer then made the women quickly rinse their canteens in a bucket of water before lining them up again for another address.

"JEWS, AS YOU MAY HAVE UNDERSTOOD ALREADY, YOU ARE HERE TO WORK, NOT TO REST. SO, EVEN THOUGH THE MORNING WORK DETAILS HAVE ALREADY GONE TO WORK HOURS AGO, YOU WILL GO JOIN THEM NOW TO DO YOUR PART FOR TODAY. YOU WILL NOW SPLIT ACCORDING TO THE WORK DETAILS YOU WERE ASSIGNED TO ON ARRIVAL. FRAU MÜLLER, TAKE CHARGE!"

"YES SIR! COME ON JEWS! MOVE!"

With liberal use of their truncheons and wooden rods, the SS matrons split the hundred or so women into eight separate groups, each led by a German matron. The groups were then led to their various places of work inside and outside the camp. In Mélanie's case, her group made a prior stop at a warehouse near the main gate, where the women were given an assortment of picks, shovels, sledgehammers and wheelbarrows before walking out of the gate, with four SS soldiers as armed escorts to supplement the SS female auxiliary.

The walk from the camp to the rock quarry was maybe one mile long, but walking in ill-fitting wooden shoes and on a muddy dirt road quickly caused blisters to the feet of many of the women. The SS matron didn't take pity on them however and kept liberally distributing both insults and blows to the Jewish women all along the way. Mélanie, carrying a big sledgehammer over one shoulder, got a few blows herself that had been given at random but kept her mouth shut. Instead, she recorded the face of that matron in her mind, promising herself to return the favor to that German soon enough. When they finally arrived at a small rock quarry dug on the side of a hill, the women found another forty or so other female prisoners already hard at work there. Those women had to have been in the camp for a while already, as they were clearly emaciated and weak and worked at a snail's pace. That gave excuses to their guards to constantly beat

on them in order to 'motivate' them. Seeing that, plus what she had seen since her arrival in the morning, Mélanie then understood too well the purpose of all this cruelty: it was not really to force Jewish prisoners to make truly productive work, but rather to decimate them through starvation, overwork and maltreatment. She then wondered about what had happened to all the other Jews from her train who had gone 'links' at the morning selection at the train station. She already had a few hypothesis about that but, even for a demon like her, the most plausible ones were truly cringe worthy.

*'Bel, Lord of the First Layer, would show more pity to his inmates than these German bastards do to these Jews! At least, the souls being punished for eternity in the Abyss were there because they committed crimes during their physical lives.'* thought Mélanie as she took position over a piece of rock she was to pound with her sledgehammer and reduce to gravel. She was soon swinging her sledgehammer vigorously, cracking her rock into ever smaller bits. Even while restraining her strength, which was equivalent to that of the strongest men ever known on Earth, her vigor and stamina quickly attracted stares from the German guards and from the SS matron, on top of getting glances from the Jewish women around her. In contrast, the woman that was supposed to shovel the gravel Mélanie produced into a waiting wheelbarrow barely had the strength to handle her shovel. The woman, who was in her forties, was frighteningly skinny and her back was bent from the merciless labor. The SS matron then approached and started raining blows of her stick on the poor woman.

"WORK HARDER AND FASTER, YOU WORTHLESS PIECE OF JEWISH SHIT! YOU WANT TO END UP ON THE PUNISHMENT LIST THIS EVENING?"

"No, please! Not the punishment list!" Replied fearfully the thin woman, who then put as much strength as she could in her work. That was however not enough to satisfy the matron, who kept harassing her at frequent intervals.

Maybe two hours later, as the wheelbarrow near Mélanie was full of gravel again, a false move by the woman driving it made it tip over. One of the Jewish woman present was unfortunate in being right beside when that happened, with the heavy wheelbarrow and its load tipping against her and trapping her right leg, sending the woman down with a cry of pain. Two other women then did their best to pry her leg loose but were too weak to manage to right the wheelbarrow up. As more women tried to help, and with the SS matron throwing invectives and blows around to make the work resume, Mélanie quickly stepped up to the upset wheelbarrow and, with one hand, grabbed it and put it

back on its wheel with little apparent effort, worried that the trapped woman could have suffered a broken leg. For her, that feat was insignificant, as she could easily lift up to a half ton, but for both the inmates and the guards, that was simply herculean. As Mélanie was sweeping away the gravel to uncover the inmate's leg, the SS matron approached her and tapped her on the shoulder with her stick.

"You, get up! What is your name?"

"Lilie Lorenz, Frau<sup>43</sup>!"

"Lorenz, hey? How come you are so strong?"

"My father was a very strong man, Frau."

"I see! Alright, get back to work!"

Reluctantly leaving the wounded woman, Mélanie returned to the block of rock she had been pounding to pieces. When two other inmates pulled the wounded woman free, it was to find that the latter had a broken ankle, as Mélanie had suspected. Despite that wound, the SS matron then forced the woman to return to work, but the unfortunate inmate just couldn't walk anymore despite heroic efforts. To Mélanie's fury and disgust, one of the SS soldiers then came up and coldly shot the wounded woman dead with a bullet in the head, then ordered two other inmates to drag the body out of the way. With growing anger and hatred in her, Mélanie forced herself to hide her emotions and continued working until the end of the afternoon, when work was stopped and the women were formed up five abreast to walk back to the camp, bringing their tools back with them. Two more women, veteran inmates with barely skin and bones left of them, fell behind during the march, too weak and exhausted to continue on with the group. Again, a SS soldier shot them dead, then ordered other prisoners to load the bodies into wheelbarrows in order to bring them back to the camp.

The group returned from the quarry only to be in time for the start of the evening roll call. First, the inmates, both male and female, were lined up five-deep along two sides of the central courtyard, with the men and women well segregated. Then, while everybody waited for the SS officers to show up, the guards forced the prisoners to take a number of stress positions, including squats with both hands clasped over the head. Those prisoners who could not hold their position were then beaten with rifle butts and truncheons. After maybe two hours of that regime, the SS officers finally deigned to

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<sup>43</sup> Frau : Madam in German. Miss would be Fraulein.

show up, at which time an agonizingly slow count of the prisoners was made, then repeated. Those who had died during the day were also present in the ranks, held up by living inmates. Mélanie ended up supporting upright the poor woman who had her ankle crushed at the quarry and who had then been shot dead, something that further increased her furious wish for revenge. A Succubus was normally not a fighter, preferring to use subterfuges, deceptions, lies and seduction to attain her goals. However, half of Mélanie/Delicia's blood came from an archangel who had previously fought demons before falling from grace. That part of her blood was now screaming for justice and revenge as she held up the pitiful body of the dead woman while the Germans took a sadistic pleasure in making the prisoners' suffering linger, their stomachs empty and their bodies close to total exhaustion. After three long hours standing in the open, the inmates were finally allowed to go to their barracks, where they were each given a small portion of moldy bread and a cup of water as their supper. More than a few of the women in Mélanie's barrack, which was packed with over 700 inmates, went to sleep crying from either hunger, despair or both.

At around eleven at night, with the other inmates sleeping in a near comatose state around her, Mélanie quietly left her bunk as if to go use the nearby latrines. Instead, after checking that nobody could observe her, she became invisible, then teleported out of her barrack, intent on exploring the camp in detail. Bypassing the barracks full of inmates, Mélanie first concentrated her attention on the buildings used by the German staff and guards, noting in her mind where the guards were accommodated and where their armory was. Next were the various administrative buildings of the camp, including a big warehouse which contained all the clothes and personal effects confiscated from the prisoners on arrival. She recoiled with horror and disgust when she found in one office of that warehouse thousands of gold teeth that had been pulled out of the mouths of prisoners. Where those prisoners had ended became too evident when she jumped to the other, bigger camp, named Birkenau. Situated about two miles away from the first camp, Birkenau had a much larger prisoner capacity and also had what appeared to be two large, separate heating plants with multiple smokestacks. Intrigued by those plants, Mélanie teleported to the nearest one, still under an invisibility cloak. What she found were a row of steel oven doors, like the ones you would find in a coal-burning plant, next to a red brick cottage with its windows bricked shut. Checking first that no German guards were nearby, she went to one of the oven doors and opened it

as quietly as she could. One look inside the oven made her recoil at once: the oven was half full with partially cremated human bones and skulls! Feeling for the first time in her life like she could throw up, Mélanie took a minute to regain her composure, then opened in turn the other ovens, finding them equally full of burned human remains. With horror and disgust quickly being replaced by hatred towards the monsters who could do such things, Mélanie then went to the nearby brick cottage. There, in an adjacent wooden building near the ovens, she found something that brought tears of sorrow and anger to her eyes: piled high in trolleys on wheels parked overnight, were the bodies of thousands of men, women and children, all naked and with their dead faces expressing suffocating deaths. She even recognized some of the victims as having been with her on her train this morning. Entering the brick cottage, she found the inside gutted empty, with the empty space equipped with long rows of shower head-like sprinklers connected to a network of lead pipes. There was however a stinking odor permeating the inside of the cottage and Mélanie was too happy to leave the building while trying to trace where the pipes originated. She found their source in a locked wooden hut just outside of the cottage, a hut that she easily entered by temporarily adopting an ethereal form. Inside, she found that the pipes were connected with receptacles in which some kind of chemical product could be introduced. Along one of the walls, she saw a pile of cardboard boxes bearing markings in German, along with the universal sign for a toxic product. Approaching the pile of boxes, she read one of the stickers.

“Zyklon B pesticide. Do not inhale the vapors or ingest. Highly toxic.”

Reading the ingredients and formula of that pesticide, Mélanie saw from her old classes in chemistry that it was a highly lethal cyanide-based chemical compound. She now knew how all those poor French Jews had died today. It took all of her will not to unleash her demonic powers right now and go make the human monsters who had committed such crimes pay at once. Opening a box that was already half empty, Mélanie saw that it contained small plastic bags, each of them containing dozens of pills. Without thinking further, she grabbed one of the small bags and stuffed it in one pocket of her camp fatigues before leaving the hut and continuing her exploration of the Birkenau camp. Three hours later, not long before the scheduled waking up time of the prisoners, she was back in her crowded double bunk and pretended to go to sleep. In reality, the nightmarish images of what she had seen during her exploration of the camps stayed inside her mind, preventing her from finding true rest.

**04:30 (Berlin Time)**

**Sunday, August 9, 1942**

**Women's barrack block, Auschwitz concentration camp**

**Occupied Poland**

"WAKE UP, JEWS! TIME FOR THE MORNING ROLL CALL! COME ON, SCHNELL!"

Brutally awakened by a horde of SS matrons and by female 'blockowas'<sup>44</sup>, the prisoners ran outside as quickly as they could to avoid the truncheon and stick blows, lining up in the courtyard for the morning roll call. Again, some inmates had to help support a few dead ones who had died during the night. Again, Mélanie volunteered to help hold up one of the unfortunate souls. By now, she had taken a decision and had a plan of action in mind. From what older inmates had said to her yesterday, she knew that on Sundays the inmates spent the day cleaning their barracks instead of going to work. She would thus have plenty of time to put her plan into work.

To her surprise, she found her fictitious name of 'Lilie Lorenz' being called up at the end of the head counting. Leaving the ranks, she was taken in charge by a SS matron and an armed soldier, then led towards the infirmary of the camp, situated in Block 10. She stopped briefly in front of the entrance to the infirmary building, looking at the red cross symbol on it.

"I don't understand: I am not sick today, Frau."

"Doctor Schumann asked to examine you, Jew: that is enough reason to be here." Replied the SS matron. "Now get in!"

Still escorted by the matron and the SS soldier, Mélanie was brought into what looked like a private medical examination room, where a man in his late thirties and who was wearing a lab coat over his SS uniform was waiting, along with a female nurse. A mean smile appeared on the face of the German doctor as he eyed Mélanie.

"Aah, so this is the famous Lilie Lorenz I have been hearing about since yesterday? How old are you, girl?"

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<sup>44</sup> Blockowas : Polish nickname given to the selected female inmates who served as auxiliaries to the SS inside the barracks of a concentration camp. Many of those blockowas were originally petty criminals who often proved quite sadistic in their behavior towards the other inmates.

"I am eighteen, Doctor."

Schumann nodded once, then looked at the SS matron and soldier.

"You may leave: the hospital staff will take care of this prisoner from now on."

"Javoll, Herr Sturmbannführer!" Replied the soldier while giving the Nazi salute. He and the matron then turned around and left, leaving Mélanie alone with the doctor and the nurse. Schumann had the nurse close the door of the examination room first, then spoke to Mélanie in a neutral tone.

"I will need to examine you, girl. Remove your clothes!"

Mélanie obeyed him at once, ending fully naked as she stood in front of the doctor, who couldn't help eye with lust her perfect body.

"You are indeed a fine-looking human specimen, Miss Lorenz. Where were you born?"

"In Strasbourg, France."

"In Alsace, hey? Then, you could well have some Aryan blood in your veins."

"Not a chance!" Replied Mélanie at once in a defiant tone, both surprising and angering Schumann.

"Careful, girl! Stay polite or you will get punished. Now, the guards who saw you work yesterday reported that you possessed incredible strength and stamina. You do look very healthy and fit, but you are not that muscular. How would you explain your strength?"

"Easy: I am not human." Said Mélanie, a smirk on her lips. Her eyes were however as cold as ice as she stared hard at the SS doctor, who suddenly felt uncomfortable.

"Not human? What do you mean by that, girl?"

Before answering that, Mélanie raised her left hand, pointing it at the German nurse and saying two words in Abyssal.

"Magic Missile!"

A salvo of two speedy red dots of light shot out of her extended fingers and struck the nurse, who let out a short cry of pain under the impact before crumbling to the floor like a broken puppet, dead. Before Schumann could get over his stunned surprise, Mélanie took three quick steps and grabbed him by the throat, crushing his larynx with her right hand while lifting him clear off the floor without any apparent effort. As the SS doctor desperately tried to gulp some air while attempting to break free from her herculean hold, Mélanie changed into her natural demonic form of Delicia the Succubus. The

terrified Schumann now looked down at a six foot-tall naked woman with shiny reddish-brown skin, a pair of huge feathery black wings in her back, a pair of small horns on her forehead, claws on her fingers and toes and red eyes that shone like pieces of hot coal. Delicia then spoke with contained hatred and disgust in her voice.

“Just what I said, asshole! I am from Hell and to Hell you are going!”

Gradually increasing the strength of her grip on his throat, she made Schumann's strangling a slow, painful one, with the SS doctor dying after nearly one minute of agony. Slowly putting down the doctor's body, so that it wouldn't make noise by falling on the floor, Delicia, keeping her demonic form, then looked around for some possible weapons that could supplement the sharp claws on her fingertips and toes. Finding a collection of razor-sharp scalpels in one drawer, she grabbed the biggest one and held it in her left hand.

“Well, time to start administering their just punishment to all these German bastards.”

She was about to walk out of the examination room when she remembered the small bag of Zyklon B pills in the pocket of her fatigues' trousers. After a short hesitation, she recuperated her trousers and put them back on, but stayed topless.

“Hell, a Jewish demon will probably scare even more the Germans than just a simple demon. Besides, somebody else needs to learn about this gas chambers monstrosity.”

Going first under a cloak of invisibility, Delicia walked out of the examination room and closed the door behind her, so that the bodies inside would not be discovered at once by passing Germans: she wanted to preserve the element of surprise for as long as possible, in order to kill as many Germans as she could. Clearing the infirmary block of its Germans was obviously her first task before going to other buildings in the camp. Going to the next door in the hallway she was in, she found a long room where a number of medical beds were set, with lockers of medical supplies and trolleys supporting instruments around the beds. One male SS doctor and three nurses were busy in that room, examining or watching five men and two women lying in bed. Approaching silently the doctor, Delicia felt mounting revulsion and anger when she saw what he was doing and heard what he was saying to the nurse assisting him: the poor inmate being treated was not a victim of some accidental injury or disease, but rather the subject of some sick experiment about genetics and reproduction. The doctor was in fact in the process of



cutting off the man's testicles, which appeared horribly burned, like most of the man's groin area. Delicia's bet on seeing that was that those burns had been intentionally inflicted by the German medical staff. A mighty urge to administer justice, similar to the urges her father Gideon had told her about when she was still a toddler, filled Delicia as she got really close behind the SS doctor. Raising her scalpel, she put her arm in front of the doctor's throat, then pressed the blade against his left jugular before slashing his throat wide open. The SS man tried to scream in pain but only managed a gurgling sound as blood filled his mouth and sprayed out from his opened throat. Extending one arm across the bed, Delicia then grabbed the front of the nurse's jacket and pulled her towards her before stabbing her in the heart with her scalpel, driving the blade deeply in her chest. Letting go the dying woman, Delicia then turned towards the two remaining nurses in the room, who were now staring at the dying doctor and nurse with horror and incomprehension. Walking quickly to the nearest of the two, Delicia stabbed her in the left eye, driving the scalpel deep inside her brain and killing her nearly instantly. The remaining nurse then started screaming hysterically, but her scream quickly ended in a gurgle when Delicia slashed her throat open. Knowing that armed guards were now bound to rush in soon after hearing the nurse's ultimate scream, Delicia posted herself in ambush near the door of the room, still invisible. Two SS soldiers effectively rushed in less than a minute later, alerted by the German nurse posted at the reception area of the infirmary. Letting both soldiers run inside first, Delicia went to the second soldier to enter and stabbed him in the back, pushing her scalpel deep and puncturing his heart. The other soldier turned around on hearing his comrade's grunt of pain but froze with incomprehension when he saw him crumble to the floor without apparent reason. That reason however became most apparent when Delicia appeared right in front of him and ripped his rifle out of his hands before grabbing the front of his vest and staring hard in his eyes with her blazing eyes.

"Let me show you how I do sexual experiments on you fucking SS bastards!" Her clawed right hand then solidly grabbed the soldiers testicles and pressed, then pulled with inhuman strength, ripping them off along with parts of the uniform's trousers. The soldier tried to scream but the sudden, excruciating pain left him unable to utter a sound and he passed out, his eyes and mouth wide open. Letting that soldier die from the massive bleeding from his wound, Delicia pulled out the long bayonet sheathed and hooked to his belt and tested its sharpness, smiling with satisfaction when she found the long blade to be quite sharp indeed.

"Aaah, that should work even better than that scalpel. A fine time indeed to practice my blade work."

Before leaving the room, she took the time to recuperate the Mauser 98K rifle that had belonged to the second soldier, along with his belt, with its ammunition clips holders. Donning the belt around her waist, she slung the rifle across her chest, keeping the long bayonet in her right hand, then became invisible again before walking out in the hallway. She found a nurse and a SS matron, partly hiding behind a corner while looking anxiously down the hallway. Those two were the next to die, stabbed in quick succession by Delicia. It took her only six minutes to complete her tour of the infirmary block, killing in the process a grand total of four doctors, nine nurses, three soldiers and one matron. With her hatred and rage still strong, she looked out through a window to decide where she would strike next, smiling devilishly as she eyed the administrative reception building near the main gate of the camp.

"Time to register those SS bastards...for entrance to Hell! Lucifer would be so proud of me right now if he could see me."

To her utter surprise, a deep, powerful voice then struck her mind.

"GO AHEAD AND SEND THOSE GERMANS WHERE THEY JUSTLY BELONG, DELICIA! I WILL BE READY FOR THEM!"

"Thank you, Great Master of the Abyss! I will do my best to honor you today." Replied Delicia, feeling immense pride, before walking out of the infirmary building and stepping resolutely towards the reception building, her bayonet firmly held in one hand.

## **10:56 (Berlin Time)**

### **Auschwitz train station**

The engineer and assistant-engineer of the locomotive pulling the long line of rail cars full of Soviet prisoners of war were left puzzled when they stopped their train along the quay of the Auschwitz train station: there was not a single person in sight. Normally, at least fifty SS soldiers and officers would be on hand to receive and select the prisoners for either work or extermination. Since their train had arrived on schedule, it was also not as if nobody knew it was coming. Just after the train screeched to a halt, a quick series of internal explosions blew out the windows of the passenger car in which the SS soldiers escorting the Soviet P.O.W.s rode, with a few bodies also being blown out through the windows. The two locomotive men, close to panic, didn't have time to

decide what to do before they got stabbed to death inside their locomotive by an invisible attacker. Calmly stepping down from the locomotive, Mélanie, back in human form but still wearing only her stripped camp trousers, plus her ammo belt, rifle and bayonet, went to the escort's car to make sure that no guards had survived. She had to finish off two wounded SS soldiers before she could concentrate her attention on the prisoners brought on the train. Going to the first car full of prisoners, she unlocked the doors and slid them open, then backed off by a few feet to let the men inside come out. There were quite a few surprised exclamations in Russian when the prisoners inside the car saw an extremely beautiful topless girl with a rifle waiting alone on the quay. That made Mélanie smile before she shouted out in Russian.

"YOU MAY ALL COME OUT: THE GERMANS AT THE TRAIN STATION ARE ALL DEAD!"

As the first Soviet prisoners climbed out of the first cattle car, Mélanie went to the other cars, opening their doors and inviting the men inside to come out. A total of over 3,000 men, many of them weak from lack of food and water, disembarked from the cars, looking around them in confusion. Mélanie then shouted again in Russian.

"ARE THERE OFFICERS AMONG YOU? I NEED TO SPEAK WITH THEM! IF THERE ARE, COME TO ME AT ONCE!"

After some hesitation, a total of 23 men came to Mélanie, looking at her with a mix of admiration and confusion. One of them, a tough-looking man in his thirties, finally spoke to her.

"Could you tell us what is going on here, girl? And who are you exactly?"

"My name is not really important. Know that I arrived here yesterday from Paris, as part of a contingent of French Jews destined to be slowly exterminated in this camp. However, the Germans didn't count on my true nature and I massacred this morning the Germans in the main camp of Auschwitz, just south of this train station. I then collected their weapons and ammunition, which are now stored inside the station's terminal building. Those weapons are now yours for the taking."

"Your true nature? I don't understand, girl."

Mélanie smiled benevolently to the man before starting to shape shift in front of the Soviets. Her shape shifting powers as a succubus basically allowed her to change into pretty much any medium-sized humanoid form that she wished to become, including that of a man or boy. This time, in order not to scare or repulse the Soviet prisoners, she

mostly stayed in her form as Mélanie, but added her pair of black feathered wings in her back, drawing a concert of exclamations.

“Consider me as an avenging angel, sent to make these SS Germans pay for their abominable crimes. While all the Germans in the Auschwitz camp are now dead, killed by me, I have not had time yet to exterminate the Germans in the bigger camp of Birkenau, to the west of the train station. That camp contains tens of thousands of suffering prisoners, many of them Soviet. What I propose is that you arm the men you can right now with the weapons I collected in Auschwitz and go free the prisoners in Birkenau. I will help you do this by taking out in advance the guard towers and machine gun positions in the bigger camp. You will also be able to use the trucks parked outside the guarded perimeter of the Auschwitz camp to transport your men. However, you better act quickly, before the Germans understand that something is wrong and call in reinforcements from other places in Poland and Germany.”

“And then what?” Asked another, younger Soviet officer. “What are we to do after that, so far behind enemy lines?”

Mélanie gave that man a sober look.

“Then what? If you do nothing, the Germans will disarm you, then will exterminate you like vermin. If you fight on, you will have a chance to kill hundreds of Germans and save tens of thousands of your compatriots and other poor souls suffering here. Then you will be able to fight your way back towards the Soviet Union. Isn't that better than simply playing the lamb to be slaughtered?”

“Fighting is indeed better than letting ourselves being slaughtered.” Said resolutely the first officer to have spoken. “You said that you have stashed weapons in the train terminal?”

“Yes, along with as much bread as I could find in the kitchens of the camp. You can also loot the weapons from the dead guards who were escorting your train: I blew them up with grenades just as your train was stopping.”

The Soviet officer nodded his head, then presented his right hand.

“I am Major Mickail Baranov, of the Third Guards Infantry Division. I would still be honored to know your name, if you would tell it to me.”

“I am Mélanie!” Answered Mélanie while shaking the man's hand. “I have enough weapons to arm over 200 men inside the terminal, including a few machine guns and plenty of ammunition. You will find fourteen trucks parked outside the main gate of the nearest camp. Be aware also that many prisoners are presently away from the

camp, working under guard at various work sites. Those work parties normally return to camp under escort late in the afternoon, but they may come back sooner when they start hearing gunfire. By the way, I cut the telephone lines coming out of both camps: that should give you a few precious extra hours to do what needs to be done. I would suggest that you now select the men you have who are still the most fit and arm them in priority: you will have to make every captured weapon and bullet count.”

“All good, judicious counsels, Mélanie. Thank you for your divine help. I will now organize my men for the incoming fight.”

“Excellent! In the meantime, I will start to thin out the guards at the Birkenau camp. I will see you there.”

Mélanie then flew off with the help of her wings, followed by the incredulous eyes of the Soviets, going towards Birkenau. She then disappeared from sight, becoming invisible. Major Baranov made the sign of the cross on seeing that.

“God is truly on our side today. Let’s make the most of this providential help, men.”

## **21:28 (Paris Time)**

### **Mélanie’s bedroom, ‘Mille et Une Nuits’ cabaret**

#### **Paris, Occupied France**

When Mélanie jumped back to her bedroom in her mother’s cabaret, she was half-covered with blood and still wore only her stripped camp trousers. She however no longer had her captured German rifle and web gear, as she had given them to a Soviet man before leaving Poland. Morally and psychologically exhausted by all that she had seen and felt during the nearly five days she had spent outside of France, she slowly sat down on the edge of her bed and closed her eyes as they filled with tears. So many innocent people had died around her during those days, while many more were going to die in the next few days as well. Major Baranov and his men were probably also going to die in the days and weeks to come, hunted down by the German forces that were sure to respond soon to the destruction of the Auschwitz and Birkenau camps. At least, they would then die fighting, rather than being simply slaughtered like cattle by the Germans. With luck, they would be able to evade the Germans long enough to go hide in the thick forests of Southern Poland, where they would be able to fight a partisan war with the help of the local Polish population.

Mélanie was still tearful when her mother found her fifteen minutes later, having heard sobbing from inside the room. Marie's first look at Mélanie was enough to alarm her and make her hurry to her.

"Mélanie? My God! What happened to you? Where have you been all that time?"

Looking up at Marie, Mélanie wiped her tears with the back of her left hand before answering her.

"I went to Hell...a Hell made and run by the Germans."

She then spent a few minutes to tell a horrified Marie about what she had seen in Auschwitz. Her story left Marie speechless for a moment but it didn't prevent her from hugging gently her adoptive daughter. She finally was able to speak to her in a soft voice.

"My poor Mélanie! What you did was very courageous and selfless indeed. You did the right thing over there."

"It is true that over 700 SS men and women have now paid for their abominable crimes, Mother. However, still too many of them live on. This I make as a solemn vow: I will hunt down and kill every SS, SD and Gestapo man or woman that I will find from now on in Paris. The same will go for the dirty French traitors who will collaborate with them."

From the contained hatred in Mélanie's voice, Marie understood that her daughter fully meant her words. She however felt that she had to return her to the reality of their particular situation in Paris.

"What if some SS officer visits our cabaret as a customer? You are not going to kill him here, do you?"

"Not here, no! However, that will be the last night of that SS officer, as I will then go kill him away from the cabaret."

"I...I can understand your point of view, Mélanie. You do look terrible. Why don't you go have a nice long shower, then have some sleep. We will talk further about this tomorrow morning."

"I think that I will do just that, Mother. Right now, I am in no mood to entertain any German, even if he is a most decent man at heart."

Getting up from her bed, Mélanie took one small plastic bag out of a pocket of her blood-spattered trousers and put it on her dresser, then shed her trousers before heading out

to the upper floor bathroom. After a short hesitation, Marie went to the dresser to go examine the small bag, reading for herself the inscriptions in German on it.

“Zyklon B pesticide. Do not inhale the vapors or ingest. Highly toxic...”

## **CHAPTER 15 – GUNS’R US**

**12:01 (Paris Time)**

**Saturday, November 28, 1942**

**Kitchen of the ‘Mille et Une Nuits’ cabaret**

**Quartier Latin, 6<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement**

**Paris, France**

Paul Dujardin, assembled with the other employees of the cabaret around the radio receiver kept hidden in the kitchen, looked with shock at Marie Laurent, who had also been listening to the news from Radio Paris.

“The Germans have invaded the Free Zone? Why didn’t Marshal Pétain’s army resist the Germans?”

“Because that so-called army had no guts, while that old Pétain is too senile to understand that he is only a mere puppet for Hitler.” Replied Mélanie in a caustic tone. “Hopefully, this will finally wake up a few of those idiots in the South who were hoping in vain to hide from the Germans while doing nothing to help free France.”

“I hope that you are right about that, Mélanie, but don’t count too much on that.” Replied Marie in a disillusioned tone. “Even after all the abuses and atrocities committed around Paris by the Germans, there are still plenty of Parisians and other Frenchmen who are ready to collaborate with the Germans for money, food or favors, when they don’t do it out of fascist ideology.”

“Well, you will have noticed that very few of those still brag about collaborating with the Germans, Mother. Those who did have mostly died by now.”

Quite a few of the young women around the table exchanged knowing looks at those words. None knew to what extent Mélanie had been involved in the unmasking and killings of those who had been collaborating with the Germans around Paris, but they all believed that she had played at least an instrumental role in their demise. They also understood by now that Mélanie was a lot more than just talk when it came to fighting the Germans. Unfortunately, save for a very few exceptions, their neighbors around the cabaret still treated her like a collaborator and a despicable prostitute frequenting German officers. The injustice of it all made them sick and also often tempted the girls



of the cabaret to shout the truth in the face of their more obnoxious and hypocritical neighbors. However, that would have only brought in short order the Gestapo to the cabaret, as some of those sanctimonious neighbors would have been the first to denounce Mélanie in exchange for favors and privileges.

The group had just dispersed out of the kitchen, with the cook having hidden again the radio, when someone knocked on the side service door, situated near the kitchen. Going to that door and looking out through its small window, Sylvie Renaudin saw that two men wearing civilian clothes were waiting outside the door. Them not looking at all like Gestapo agents, Sylvie decided to unlock the service door and cracked it open, its safety chain still on.

“What may we do for you, gentlemen?”

One of the men, sporting a short, trimmed beard, politely raised his worker’s hat in salute while answering her.

“Could you please tell Lilie that Paul came to see her with a friend?”

“Uh, of course!” Said Sylvie, who knew that ‘Lilie’ was Mélanie’s nom de Résistance. Undoing the safety chain, she let the two men in, then locked back the door in their backs before leading the visitors to the kitchen, where she made them sit at the large dining table and put two wine glasses and a small carafe of red table wine in front of them.

“Please feel free to drink a bit of wine while I go get Lilie.”

The second visitor, a tall man in his thirties, didn’t waste time tasting the wine, making an appreciative face.

“Hmm, not bad at all, this wine. Just this would justify our visit.”

“Well, Lilie would be worth the visit by herself just for the pleasure of looking at her, Henri.” Replied Paul Romanov before taking a sip of his own glass. “She is easily the most gorgeous girl I saw in my life. She is also a very brave one, apart from being very bright.”

“Decidedly, I am getting more and more impatient to meet such a gem, Paul. We really need her help right now, if what you said about her ability to provide weapons is true.”

“Oh, she never disappointed me in that respect, Henri. She is very resourceful and also has contacts with that legendary British commando unit hiding around Paris. They are probably the ones providing her the weapons she gave to my cell.”

Their conversation was then cut by the arrival of an impossibly beautiful teenager who stood a good five foot nine inch tall. Henri could not help stare at her as she sat at the table, facing him and Romanov, to whom she smiled to first.

“Hello Paul! What may I do for you and your friend today?”

“I came for extra supplies, for both me and my friend Henri here.”

“I see! And how much supplies are we talking about exactly?”

That was when Henry decided to jump in.

“Lot’s of them, Lillie! Let me present myself: Colonel Henri Rol, operational commander of the FTP units in the Paris area. While I have a lot of men willing to fight, I unfortunately have few weapons to arm them presently. However, you have been able to provide in the past many precious weapons to Paul’s cell, which is by far the best armed FTP cell in Paris. I came to see you in the hope that you could help me with more weapons, Lillie.”

Mélanie stared at Henri for a moment, in order to make a judgment of him. What she saw and felt seemed right to her, so she smiled to him.

“Before answering your request, I must caution you that the day when we could realistically fight for the true liberation of Paris is still quite far, Henri. For that, we would need Allied forces to land in strength in France...for good, before we unmask our own forces. What happened in Dieppe last August was not encouraging at all. Now that the south of France has also been occupied, our position is more precarious than ever.”

“What you said was quite true and I must praise the clarity of your military views, Lillie. However, I would need at a minimum enough weapons to start training a cadre of men large enough to be able to mobilize and train quickly a few thousand fighters when the time comes to free Paris. Would you be able to provide at least enough weapons for, say, one to two hundred men, along with good quantities of ammunition?”

It took only a few seconds to Mélanie to take a decision then. Nodding her head, she got up from her chair and pointed at the rear door of the kitchen.

“I believe that I can help you, gentlemen. If you will please follow me.”

Leading her visitors out of the kitchen, Mélanie made them climb down the stairs to the basement, where the wine cellar of the cabaret was. Once there, she led the two men to a large wooden locker set against one of the masonry walls of the cellar. Grabbing a flashlight hidden inside a nearby box and switching it on, she gave a sober look at the men.

"No one but me and those who provided me with my weapons has seen before what I am about to show you. I will urge you to never describe to others what you are about to see. What I have here is possibly the key to the future liberation of Paris."

"We understand that, Lillie." Said Henri. "We will not say a word about this place to anyone else."

"Thank you!"

Mélanie then pushed to one side the wooden locker, unmasking a hole in the wall large enough to let a man step through with his head bent.

"This is the entrance to what I call my 'Ali Baba Cave'. Watch your steps!"

Now devoured with curiosity, the two communist fighters followed Mélanie down what appeared to be a very old stone staircase that steeply went down for about forty steps before ending in a pitch black cave. There, Mélanie activated a light switch, illuminating a vast cave with the help of three overhead electrical lamps. Shutting off her flashlight, she then waved her arms around her, showing to the two stunned men the thick piles of crates and the long lines of weapons piled three to four deep all around the cave.

"My own treasure cave, gentlemen. What do you think?"

"But, but, that would be enough to arm a whole brigade!" Exclaimed Henri, stunned by the amount of weapons and ammunition he could see around him. "Do you have a written inventory of all this, so that I could choose what I would like to get?"

"I don't have such a written inventory, Henri, but I do have an excellent memory. My question now would be: would you prefer old French Army weapons, like those I gave to Paul, or captured and stolen German weapons. It would probably be easier for you to find men familiar with French-made weapons than with German-made weapons."

"True, and I would tend to agree with you on that, but I would still like some German-made weapons, so that my cadres could become familiar with them. After all, captured German weapons will probably become more and more the staple of our armory, in view of how difficult it is to obtain weapons from England."

"That is also true. I will thus provide you with both types of weapons. However, in view of the difficulties in transporting weapons around Paris, what with all those German checkpoints, I will bring your weapons by small batches to a number of separate caves and crypts of your choosing around Paris. I happen to know in detail the complex of tunnels, caves, quarries and crypts running under Paris and will use them to deliver your weapons. I will now make you tour my little secret domain, so that you could see exactly what I have and thus decide on what you want."

“Well, if it would be only me, I would say that I would like all of it, Lillie.” Replied Henri, grinning. Mélanie smiled at that, both fists on her hips.

“Typical man! He wants it all! You will take what I will give you, mister, plus a few good licks on my nipples.”

“Deal!”

The trio laughed in unison at that, then started going around the piles of crates and weapons, with Mélanie describing the weapons and ammunition as they went. Both the variety and quantity of the weapons, ammunition and explosives stunned but also overjoyed the two communist fighters. At the end of it, Henri brushed his hair with one hand, truly undecided.

“Hell, all of your weapons are tempting, I must say, but I agree to concentrate mostly on old French Army weapons and ammunition, plus a few German weapons destined for training.”

Taking a decision herself, Mélanie gave an encouraging smile to Henri Rol.

“Well, no need to restrain yourself too much, Henri. I am ready to give your FTP all of my old French Army rifles, most of my French submachine guns and light machine guns and over half of my French pistols. That would work out to a total of 440 rifles and carbines, thirty submachine guns, twenty light machine guns and 120 pistols. Along with corresponding stocks of ammunition, I am ready to pile on top of that a thousand F-1 fragmentation grenades and a mix of 250 various German-made weapons with their ammunition. How’s that?”

That announcement left both Henri and Paul grinning like idiots, them not having to hope for so much.

“That...that would be fantastic, Lillie!” Said Henri. “The Franc-Tireurs et Partisans will never be able to thank you enough for that.”

“It can thank me by shooting up and blowing up Germans around Paris. I will have only one request about the use you will make of these weapons: that you target in priority members of the SS, SD and Gestapo: I truly hate those bastards’ guts! I also believe that the members of the Luftwaffe and of the Kriegsmarine are by and large a much more decent lot than those SS monsters. In fact, Luftwaffe pilots are our preferred kind of German customers here at the cabaret. By specially targeting SS and Gestapo members, we would also rid Paris of the most dangerous opponents to our Résistance members. If we could run those SS and Gestapo bastards out of town and with their tails between their legs, then the better!”

"Hum, I can see the logic in your thinking. In fact, this could even create resentment between the SS and the other Germans in Paris. I like that idea!"

"Good! Before we discuss together where I will drop those weapons for you, I have one last request: that you test for me something that I cooked up with stolen explosives and grenades."

Going to a wooden crate and opening it, she took out what looked like a large tin can from which a wooden handle stuck out, with the lot liberally taped together. Henri and Paul looked at the contraption with curiosity as Mélanie showed it to them.

"This is what I call a 'Lilie Special'. It is a standard German stick grenade, half plunged in an old tin can and around which I melted about three to four pounds of RDX high explosives. To use it, you just unscrew the end cap of the handle and pull on the chord inside to initiate its five-second fuse, then throw it. The grenade's original charge then explodes, initiating in turn the RDX explosives surrounding it. This should be powerful enough to blow up an armored halftrack if thrown under its belly, or to blow off a tank track. Thrown inside a room via a window, its charge, equivalent to about five to seven pounds of TNT, should be enough to kill everybody inside that room. I never had a chance to test one of those up to now. Would you mind doing that for me and then tell me how effective it is? I could give you twenty of those right now for field trials. If they prove useful, I will then make more of them."

Henri gently took the hand demolition device from Mélanie and weighed it while examining it closely.

"Well, it is much heavier than a normal hand grenade and won't be able to be thrown very far, but it should make a good antitank device in any street fighting. I will be happy to test it myself, Lilie."

"Excellent! Now, let's discuss the delivery points for those weapons..."

About forty minutes later, both men left the cabaret, very satisfied with their visit and also packing two new pistols as gifts from Mélanie. On her part, the latter now was going to have soon some free space in her cave to stockpile more German weapons and ammunition, something that suited her just fine.

**13:18 (Paris Time)**

**Thursday, December 10, 1942**

**Apartment building, 181 Rue de la Pompe, 16<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement**

“Get ready, men: here comes Pierre!”

The four Frenchmen armed with rifles and hiding inside an empty third floor apartment made sure that the safeties were off their weapons, then pointed them out as discreetly as possible through the two windows of the apartment. Right across the street from their building was the infamous 180 Rue de la Pompe, one of the centers of the Gestapo in Paris. Two uniformed SS soldiers guarded the main entrance of the six-floor apartment building converted into an interrogation and detention center by the Germans and their French collaborators but, due to the narrowness of the street, pedestrians using the street passed very close to those soldiers. Henri Rol was determined to use that factor to get one of his men to come as close to the building and its large ground level windows as possible. He anxiously watched as a solidly-built and muscular man wearing well-worn working clothes and carrying a canvas bag over his left shoulder calmly walked down the sidewalk towards the two German sentries. When the man got close to a German staff car parked in front of the Gestapo offices, less than twenty feet from the sentries, Henri snapped a single word.

“NOW!”

The four riflemen fired nearly simultaneously, aiming at the two sentries. Shot from a distance of less than forty yards, the two SS soldiers fell to the ground, dead or dying. As soon as the sentries were down, the man with the canvas bag quickly took out a ‘Lilie Special’ from his bag, pulled the arming chord and, grabbing the wooden handle with both hands, quickly pivoted on his heels the way an Olympic weight thrower would, then let go his demolition charge. The charge flew in the air for less than six yards before crashing through one of the windows of the Gestapo building, where a number of alarmed Gestapo members alerted by the rifle shots were looking outside. The thrower then ran to take cover behind the parked staff car as soon as he had thrown his device and crouched behind the vehicle while covering his ears and opening his mouth wide. That was well advised of him to do so, as a tremendous explosion blew out all the ground floor windows of the Gestapo building and even projected in the street the bodies of six Gestapo members. The internal explosion, equivalent to that of seven pounds of TNT, was powerful enough to blow up the ceiling of the ground level, destroying as well the first floor and killing its occupants and having enough residual force to seriously damage the second floor. Pierre, with his ears ringing like crazy but being otherwise intact thanks to the cover given by the staff car, then ran away as the other pedestrians

nearby fled in panic. Henri Rol had a last, satisfied look at the now ruined Gestapo building before patting the shoulder of the nearest rifleman.

“That ‘Lilie Special’ did the job splendidly. Time to go, men!”

Rolling quickly their rifles in an old carpet, the Résistance fighters then hurried out of the building through its back door. By the time the first Germans to react were on the scene, the communists were long gone.

## **CHAPTER 16 – FREEDOM IN SIGHT**

**14:13 (Paris Time)**

**Friday, March 3, 1944**

**Sewing room, attic of the ‘Mille et Une Nuits’ cabaret**

**34 Rue Saint-André-des-Arts, Quartier Latin**

**6<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement, Paris**

**France**

“So, do you like it?” Asked Lisa Van Houten as Mélanie and Marie Laurent examined the armband she had just finished sewing and embroidering. Marie was smiling with satisfaction when she answered her while still looking at the armband. It was made from a white canvas tissue on which a French flag adorned with the Lorraine Cross of the French Résistance was sewn. Above the flag, the letters ‘F.F.I.’, for ‘Forces Françaises de l’Intérieur’ (French Interior Forces) had been embroidered with blue string. Under the flag, a separate rectangle of embroidered tissue bore the words ‘Groupe Paris Liberté’, the name of the Résistance cell founded by Mélanie.

“It is perfect, Lisa! With this, we will be able to fight the Germans openly when the time comes to liberate Paris from their yoke. How long before you can produce enough armbands for all of us?”

“Two days at the most. I already made enough basic armbands with French flags and ‘G.P.L.’ tag for all of us and only need to add the words ‘F.F.I.’ on them.”

“Excellent! Now, we only need to wait for the Americans and British to land in France in force, which should be sometimes this year, probably in the Summer. Germans have taken a real clobbering in the Soviet Union and they lost their Italian allies. Just from the mood and small talk from our German customers, it is evident that they are getting quite nervous and apprehensive about the final outcome of this war.”

“Yes, but Hitler and his minions don’t seem to want to look at reality in the face yet, Mother.” Objected Mélanie in a soft tone. “Hitler has become justly famous for issuing orders to fight to the death and never retreat. If the Germans decide to contest the possession of Paris to an eventual Allied land force, then that could easily turn our city into a field of rubble. That is why we have to be ready to attack the Germans from



within Paris to prevent them from systematically blowing up the city. Remember how the Germans blew up a whole district in the old port of Marseille a year ago as a preventative measure against armed resistance.”

Marie could only nod her head bitterly at those words: in February of 1943, the Germans had systematically blown up 1,500 buildings in the old ‘Quartier du Panier’, in the old port area of Marseille, and this after chasing away the 30,000 inhabitants, of which over 9,000 had then been arrested and deported. Also, more and more Frenchmen were being forced to go work in Germany under the hated Vichy ‘S.T.O.’ program, or ‘Service du Travail Obligatoire’ (Obligatory Work Service). While the Germans were now feeling the Allied vise grip tightening around them, that also had made them generally more strict and severe towards the French population, with food rations being cut constantly, while more and more French goods and products were taken and sent to Germany by the occupiers. As a result, the majority of Parisians ended up constantly hungry, while food black marketers were making great profits. As for the girls and employees of the cabaret, the only reason they were not hungry was the occasional pilfering of food from German reserves done by Mélanie.

“I remember that too well, Mélanie. We will have to be vigilant and be ready to fight the Germans the moment they will start placing demolition charges around Paris. You girls are still willing to fight?”

A chorus of ‘Yes!’ from the dancers and from the other employees of the cabaret, male and female, answered her at once, warming Marie’s heart. While her young dancing girls were no commandos, Mélanie had been teaching all of the employees how to maintain, strip and operate a variety of weapons. Since they would mostly fight from fixed positions inside the cabaret, they would not need courses in tactics or in other military skills, apart from basic shooting. Mélanie had taken care of that particular need by using the deepest tunnels and caves under the cabaret, where some practice firing could be done with relative discretion, unheard from the surface. With a number of medium machine guns available to defend the cabaret, along with shrapnel charges prepared by Mélanie, they were going to be able to turn their establishment into a quite lethal strongpoint when the time came to fight.

**19:09 (Paris Time)**

**Saturday, March 4, 1944**

**‘Mille et Une Nuits’ cabaret**

Mélanie was in the process of dancing and stripping for a trio of Kriegsmarine officers when she saw Rudolph Zimmermann, a Luftwaffe fighter pilot and a most decent man who had been a steady customer of the cabaret since 1941, enter the cabaret. She gave him a radiant smile and a wave of the hand, to which he replied by a weak smile, something that alarmed her at once. Now resolved to go talk with him afterwards, Mélanie continued her stripping, ending naked and sitting in the lap of one of the Kriegsmarine officers, a submarine commander who looked like he was now in seventh heaven. That submariner ended up asking to go upstairs with her, to which she agreed as a matter of professional routine. She however quickly stopped by Zimmermann before going upstairs.

“I will make it quick, Rudolph. Then, we will talk.”

“Thanks, Mélanie!” Replied the pilot in a tired tone that only made her more worried about his psychological state. She then noticed that he now wore the rank insignias of a major, but did not comment on that right away, and went up with the submariner.

Fifty minutes later, after having taken a quick shower following her sex session with the submariner, Mélanie went back down to the show lounge, to find Rudolph Zimmermann sipping quietly on a cup of wine while watching young and delicate Hien Min Wa dance and strip. In that, he stood in sharp contrast to the nine other German customers present in the show lounge, who were hollering, whistling and laughing while drinking, watching the dancing girls and occasionally fondling the big, firm breasts of Louise Thibault, dressed in her topless maid outfit and serving the drinks around the lounge. Going to the fighter pilot, Mélanie sat next to him on his sofa and snuggled close to him, speaking softly in his ear.

“What is troubling you, my dear Rudolph?”

“I came to say my goodbyes to you, Mélanie: my unit is being transferred to the Russian Front and I am not sure that I will ever be able to return to France.”

“I am sorry to hear that, Rudolph. You know, you could have brought your comrade pilots with you tonight: we would have gladly arranged a special package for them.”

To her surprise, his reaction to that was to lower his head sadly.

"Max and Bruno are dead, Mélanie: they were shot down in air combat in the last two months. In fact, my unit, which I command now, is down to less than half of its initial strength in pilots. I am due to receive a batch of new pilots once we get to Poland."

"Oh! I am truly sorry about your comrades: they were good, decent young men. Would you like to continue this conversation in private?"

"I...I would really appreciate that, Mélanie. I have much to unload off my mind."

"Then, come upstairs to my private bedroom, Rudolph."

"Thanks, Mélanie: you are a truly good girl." Said the pilot before getting up from his sofa with her. As she accompanied him up the stairs, Mélanie felt ambivalent about the situation: this was obviously going to be an excellent opportunity for her to get some classified information through soft talking from the pilot, but she also could feel the real psychological distress of the tall, handsome young man. To profit now from that distress felt somewhat wrong to her. She however told herself that this was war and that she would have to put her personal feelings for Zimmermann aside tonight. Once in her private bedroom, she gently and slowly undressed him while exchanging kisses with him, letting his hands roam all over her body, then undressed herself before laying down on top of him in bed. With her large, firm breasts resting on his chest, she caressed his face with both hands while speaking softly.

"Now, feel free to speak your mind as you wish, my dear Rudolph."

"Thank you, Mélanie. In truth, I am tired of this war, dead tired, and I wish that I wouldn't need to fight and kill anymore and have to watch my pilots disappear one by one."

"I can understand that quite easily, Rudolph: too many young men have died in this war, on both sides. I sincerely hope that you will be able to survive it yourself."

"What if I do, Mélanie? Would you accept to see me again after the war, even if Germany loses it?"

"Rudolph, I personally wouldn't mind that at all. However, my situation and that of the other dancing girls of this cabaret may become quite touchy once Paris is liberated: we could then suffer consequences from having entertained German officers."

"I know, but that would be deeply unjust, in my opinion, as I know that you are no pro-Nazi collaborator. Maybe we could keep in touch via letters. You would only need to bring your letters to the Luftwaffe office of personnel at the Ritz Hotel. In turn, I would send you letters the same way."

Mélanie felt some guilt, a rare thing indeed for a Succubus, as she understood that Rudolph was desperately in love with her. He was also a man who clearly expected to die in the coming months. Tears came to her eyes as she looked into his eyes.

"Rudolph, I am afraid that this won't work. Any letter from you to me that would be intercepted by Frenchmen would only condemn me in the eyes of my compatriots. Also, in the case that Germany loses the war, you probably will not be allowed back in France, at least for a few months or even years. Surviving this war will be difficult for both of us. Maybe we better say our goodbyes tonight and then go on our respective ways. However, if you ever are able to come safely back to France after the war, once all the nastiness and witch-hunting are over, then I would be most happy to see you again. But I must warn you: I have no plans to marry anyone in the years to come. I am too-independent minded for that."

What she didn't tell him was that her main reason not to marry was that she was basically immortal. Unless violently killed by supernatural means or weapons, she would still be able to look like a young woman in a thousand years or more. In a way, this condemned her to long-term loneliness as long as she lived here, on the Material Plane, rather than in the Abyss or, Lucifer forbid, on the Celestial Plane. Thankfully, Rudolph seemed to accept her arguments, even though they clearly hurt him.

"Maybe you are right, Mélanie. Then, let me give you my goodbye now."

He then kissed her longingly, while his hands started caressing her gently all over her body. By the time he finally penetrated her, Mélanie was thoroughly aroused and enjoying the moment. Both climaxed nearly simultaneously in an explosion of mutual pleasure that left both panting and satisfied. Mélanie hugged Rudolph tightly while kissing him with passion, staying on top of him.

"Rudolph, you are one of the nicest, most decent men I ever met. There should be more men like you in this world, a lot more."

"And you are without equal, my beautiful Mélanie. I truly hope that we will one day be able to meet again after this war."

Rudolph then regretfully got up from bed and went with her to her bathroom, where they quickly cleaned up their respective groin areas. Mélanie used that occasion to perform fellatio on him, making Rudolph perform in turn cunnilingus on her.

They went back downstairs together, holding hands and smiling. Once back in the show lounge, Rudolph gathered his coat, glove and service cap before giving her a last kiss. At the same time he discretely handed her a thick roll of French Francs.

"I won't need these where I am going next, Mélanie. Make good use of that money."

"You are too kind, Rudolph. Please be careful and stay safe."

That made him laugh briefly.

"Me, a German fighter pilot, stay safe? These days, German fighter pilots are either fighting men or they are dead men."

"Still, be careful."

"I will! Take care of yourself as well, Mélanie."

She accompanied him outside, where a kubelwagen staff car was waiting, with a young Luftwaffe serviceman waiting beside it while smoking a cigarette. The driver immediately threw away his half-finished cigarette and saluted Rudolph while opening the right side door of the staff car for him. Once Rudolph was sitting inside, the driver closed his door and hurried to his own seat, starting his engine at once. Mélanie felt a pinch in her heart as she watched the kubelwagen roll away.

"Damn war!" She muttered to herself before walking back inside the cabaret.

## **CHAPTER 17 – PARIS UPRISING**

**19:47 (Paris Time)**

**Saturday, August 19, 1944**

**Underground command bunker of the F.F.I.**

**Deep under the Place Denfert-Rochereau**

**14<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement, Paris, France**

“Colonel, the leaders of the Résistance cells of the 6<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement have arrived and wish to see you.”

“Aaah, good! Bring them here!” Replied Colonel Henri Rol, Commander of the Paris Region Headquarters of the F.F.I., or French Internal Forces, to Captain Réa, one of his staff officers. Réa nodded his head and turned around, leaving Rol near the table on which a large map of Paris had been pinned. The representative of General Charles de Gaulle in Paris, Jacques Chaban-Delmas, who was standing beside Rol, gave him a frustrated look.

“I must insist again, Colonel: starting an uprising now will only result in massive civilian casualties and extensive damage to the city. The approaching Allied ground forces are planning to bypass Paris, in order to avoid unnecessary street fighting, and won’t be able to help you, at least for a few more days.”

“And we would give a free hand to the Germans to fortify their positions in and around Paris and to prepare the city’s main infrastructures for systematic demolition, like they did in Marseille? No thank you! Now is the time to take back our city, while the Germans are still confused and disorganized. Tomorrow, we will start occupying the various government buildings and newspapers’ offices, plus will put up barricades around Paris. We can do it either with you or without you, Monsieur Chaban-Delmas. Time for you to decide which side you are on.”

De Gaulle’s representative reddened briefly with anger but finally relented, seeing that he would never be able to convince Rol to change his mind.

“Very well, Colonel. I will advise General de Gaulle of this by radio, but you will be responsible for the consequences of this decision.”

As the politician was about to leave the operations center of the command post, he nearly bumped into two men and one teenage girl, all armed. He gave a disbelieving look at the girl before looking at Rol.

"What is this young girl doing here, armed?"

"She came here to get directives from me, Monsieur Chaban-Delmas. Miss Laurent is my main weapons supplier and also leads a very effective Résistance cell in the 6<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement. She has in fact been fighting the Germans for nearly four years now, longer than most of us here."

The Gaullist politician shook his head in disbelief at that but left without speaking further. That allowed Mélanie, Paul Romanov and another communist FTP cell leader to approach the map table. Rol smiled on seeing the armband worn by Mélanie around her left arm.

"I am happy to welcome the leader of the Groupe Paris Liberté cell in my command bunker, Miss Laurent. Are your people ready to fight?"

"They all are eager to fight to free Paris, Colonel. Just tell us what you need to be done."

"Excellent! Gather around this map with Paul Romanov and André Boivin, please."

With all four soon gathered around the map table, Henri Rol pointed at the Place Saint-Michel, next to one of the bridges linking the Left Bank and the 6<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement to the Île de la Cité, the main island in the middle of the Seine River that had been the primitive core of Paris in the Middle Ages.

"Paul, your main task will be to block to the Germans the access to the bridges linking the 6<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement and the l'Île de la Cité, meaning the Pont Neuf, the Pont Saint-Michel, the Petit Pont and the Pont au Double. The goal will be to prevent the Germans from using those bridges to move reinforcements around Paris. Lillie's cell will support you in that task, on top of being your main ammunition replenishment point. Can you confirm to me what you have available right now in terms of fighters and weapons?"

"Yes, Colonel! I presently have 219 fighters, all armed with either a rifle or submachine gun, plus another 52 men individually armed with either a pistol or a submachine gun and manning twelve medium machine guns. We also have plenty of grenades and 'Lillie's Specials' and a few antitank mines. My force will be able to solidly hold the approaches to the Pont Neuf, the Petit Pont and the Pont au Double. I will also

provide some riflemen to support Lillie's people, who will defend the approaches to the Pont Saint-Michel."

Those last words made Henri Rol look at Mélanie.

"And what is the Groupe Paris Liberté bringing into this fight, Lillie, apart from tons of ammunition and explosives?"

"Colonel, the GPL will provide a total of six medium machine gun teams, manned by sixteen women and five men. Five of these medium machine gun teams will be in fixed positions, either in the Mille et Une Nuits Cabaret or in this building overlooking Place Saint-Michel and its bridge. I will personally lead a sixth medium machine gun team that will act as a roaming fire team and will reinforce various points as needed. By the way, I still have a sizeable quantity of captured German weapons hidden under the cabaret, along with our reserves of ammunition. Feel free to send us any willing man that still needs a weapon, and this preferably before next morning."

Henri Rol immediately snapped his head towards his chief of staff, who had been listening from the side.

"Lieutenant-Colonel Avia, assemble the men that we have that are trained but have no weapons yet and send them by small packets to the Mille et Une Nuits Cabaret, where they will get weapons and ammunition."

"Uh, how many weapons would still be available there, if I may ask?"

"I still have enough German weapons to arm over 1,300 men." Answered calmly Mélanie, making Avia's jaw drop wide open.

"My god! Those weapons will be truly providential to our cause. I will start marshalling our volunteers at once to send them to your cabaret."

"We will be ready for them, mister. Colonel Rol, what time did you choose as H-Hour for the start of our uprising?"

"We will start fighting tomorrow at six in the morning. If all goes well, we will be able to greet the Allies at the gates of a free Paris. VIVE LA FRANCE!"

"VIVE LA FRANCE!" Repeated in unison all the persons in the operations center.

Due to the German-imposed nightly curfew, Résistance fighters looking for weapons were slow at first to come to the cabaret, having to avoid the various patrols and check points run by the Germans and by the widely hated French Vichy 'Milice', a paramilitary organization of pro-fascist Frenchmen who had no compunction in hunting



down Résistance members on behalf of the Germans. Once darkness fell, the flow increased noticeably, with men showing up in groups of four to six at a time. Once in the cabaret, the visitors were able to choose from the piles of weapons, ammunition, web gear and haversacks that had been brought up to the show lounge. The bulk of the weapons were actually Mauser 98K bolt-action rifles, weapons that were simple to operate and were both accurate and powerful. Showing the basics of its handling and care to each group of visitors took only a couple minutes at a time to Mélanie. Supplementing those rifles were a few dozen pistols, 23 light and medium machine guns and hundreds of hand grenades, the latter item proving very popular with the would-be fighters. Once past midnight, Mélanie led a large group of now armed Résistance members down to the underground complex of tunnels, caves and crypts that connected with her secret weapons storage caves, so that she could guide them back to their districts on the Right Bank of the Seine. That avoided them the need to try to cross the Seine's bridges, which were watched by the Germans, while carrying weapons. By the time that the hour for action approached in the early morning, she had made three such trips down in the underground, safely leading a total of more than 400 armed fighters to the districts of the Right Bank.

**04:03 (Paris Time)**

**Sunday, August 20, 1944**

**Show lounge of the 'Mille et Une Nuits' cabaret**

**Quartier Latin, 6<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement, Paris**

When Mélanie returned from her third underground trip to the Right Bank districts, she was surprised to see that a large group of about sixty armed men were sitting and milling around the show lounge, apparently not intent on moving out. Intrigued by this, she went to her adoptive mother and got her to come to the kitchen with her, where they spoke in hushed voices.

"What are all these men still doing here, Mother? They all got weapons and ammunition, so why are they not joining back their respective cells?"

Marie Laurent rolled her eyes, apparently also frustrated by this.

"Those men were sent here to get weapons, but were not told where to go or what to do once armed. I guess that some of the FTP cell leaders are not too efficient at briefing correctly their men. There are also quite a few of those men who don't actually

belong to a cell and are late-minute volunteers. They are thus basically leaderless right now. I was hoping that you could suggest to me what to do with them, Mélanie.” Instead of getting angry and ranting about that, Mélanie felt joy as she saw what those extra fighters could bring to her cell.

“Well, they now have leaders, Mother: me and you! While we have organized our cell into a total of six medium machine gun teams, we didn’t have any members left after that to act as riflemen and snipers. Now, we have enough riflemen to properly support our machine gun crews and to help hold our cabaret and the building we are going to occupy adjacent to Place Saint-Michel. Hell, I can even train a few of these men so that they could operate the four old Hotchkiss Modèle 1914 machine guns we still have down in my cave. Those Hotchkiss machine guns were deemed too heavy and too difficult to transport around by Colonel Rol, but they are still perfectly serviceable and could now be used to reinforce our fixed defensive positions. Let me go speak to those men.”

Going back to the show lounge, Mélanie eyed for a short moment the group of riflemen huddled in the back section of the lounge. Some of them had grabbed either a French FM 24/29 light machine gun or a German MG 34 or MG 42 medium machine gun as their choice of personal weapon. That actually pleased her, as they were going to need as much firepower as possible in the hours and days to come.

“PLEASE LISTEN TO ME, MEN! I AM MÉLANIE LAURENT, THE LEADER OF THE GROUPE PARIS LIBERTÉ CELL. I WAS THE ONE WHO STOLE AND COLLECTED ALL THOSE WEAPONS AND AMMUNITION YOU SEE HERE. YOU MAY NOW CONSIDER YOURSELVES UNDER MY COMMAND DURING THIS COMING FIGHT TO FREE PARIS. NOW, HOW MANY OF YOU HAVE PREVIOUSLY SERVED IN THE FRENCH ARMY OR, EVEN BETTER, FOUGHT IN THE GREAT WAR OF 1914-18? THOSE WHO DID, PLEASE RAISE ONE HAND.”

She felt satisfaction on seeing more than half of the men raise one hand at once.

“EXCELLENT! NOW, HAVE ANY OF YOU EVER OPERATED AND SHOT A HOTCHKISS MODÈLE 1914 MACHINE GUN?”

Her satisfaction then turned into jubilation when no less than seven men raised their hand again.

“PERFECT! YOU SEVEN, I HAVE FOUR HOTCHKISS MACHINE GUNS STILL IN STOCK THAT YOU WILL BE ABLE TO OPERATE. I WILL ONLY NEED ANOTHER

FOURTEEN MEN TO ACT AS AMMUNITION CARRIERS FOR THOSE FOUR NEW MACHINE GUN CREWS. WHO WANTS TO JOIN IN?"

This time, she had more volunteers than she needed, so she selected in priority those with French Army experience. Next, she led her four new machine gun crews down to her now mostly empty secret cave, where she showed them the four heavy 8mm caliber, tripod-mounted machine guns still stashed into a corner, along with a large pile of boxes of 8mm ammunition strips meant for the Hotchkiss guns.

"These are now yours, men. Let's take them up to the lounge, along with their ammunition boxes and cleaning kits."

As the men loaded up with the machine guns and ammunition, Mélanie thought for a moment about where she could best use those extra machine guns. By the time they were all back in the show lounge, she had a pretty good idea about that. Looking at her watch, she saw that it was now fifteen before five in the morning.

"Alright men: take fifteen minutes to review with the veteran gunners how those machine guns operate and give them as well a quick mechanical check to ensure that they are fully functional. In the meantime, I will go out discretely and do a reconnaissance around Place Saint-Michel, to see if there are any Germans or militiamen around it."

Before walking out by the front entrance, she went to see her mother again.

"Mother, I will leave with you at the cabaret two of those Hotchkiss machine gun crews, plus twenty riflemen. Use them to reinforce the defenses of the cabaret. I will lead the rest to the fountain building on Place Saint-Michel at six. Have your riflemen post themselves equally in the attic and in this lounge and provide them with plenty of grenades and Lillie's Specials. I will now go out and do a quick reconnaissance. Don't worry about me: you know what kind of special powers I have."

"I do! Still, be careful, Mélanie."

"I will, Mother."

Mélanie then ran out by the front door, armed with a MP40 German submachine gun, a FN GP35 pistol and a large knife. Contained in a haversack slung across her shoulders were a few hand grenades and two of her 'Lillie's Special'.

It was still dark outside, with the first rays of twilight still being a good hour and a half away. The fact that electricity had been cut across Paris during the last few weeks and had been on only sporadically only added to the obscurity along the streets,

something that suited Mélanie, who could see just fine in the dark, thanks to her demonic nature and powers. Still, she proceeded cautiously and silently, not wanting to alert in advance some German soldiers or Vichy militiamen who could be standing guard around the Quartier Latin. Going eastward along the Rue Saint-André-des-Arts, Mélanie walked for about 400 feet before arriving at the Place Saint-André-des-Arts, a small plaza with a few trees situated at the intersection of the Rue Danton, Rue Suger and Rue Saint-André-des-Arts. Sticking her head past the corner of a building situated alongside the plaza, she looked around for any hostile presence nearby. Directly north, about 250 feet away, was the Saint-Michel Bridge, while the monumental Saint-Michel wall fountain stood eighty feet east of her, forming the blind northern façade of a large, roughly triangular-shaped, six-storey building adjacent to the vast open space of Place Saint-Michel. That building, which contained a mix of shops, stores and apartments, had already been selected in her mind as her main strongpoint around Place Saint-Michel. Across the bridge over the Seine River, on l'Île de la Cité, stood the big complexes housing the Paris Police Prefecture and the High Court of Justice. While looking towards the bridge, she saw her first potential threat: in the middle of the bridge stood a German Army checkpoint formed by two barriers made of old steel drums full of gravel and forming a chicane that forced any vehicle crossing the bridge to slow down and make a zigzag between the barriers. Two sandbagged positions, one per bridge extremity, each protected two soldiers manning a medium machine gun. Looking around carefully, Mélanie didn't see anybody else, something that didn't surprise her: very few Parisians dared violate the German-imposed night curfew, especially the way the Germans were now made tense and nervous by the advance of the Allied forces coming from Normandy. Gluing herself to the façades of the boutiques lining her side of the plaza and using also the cover of the few trees planted around, she covertly approached the northwest corner of the Place Saint-Michel, at the junction of the Rue Danton and of the Quai des Grands Augustins. As was only natural for humans at such an early hour before twilight, the Germans guarding the checkpoint appeared tired and amorphous and they didn't see her as she watched them from less than 200 feet away. Taking a decision after a last look around her, Mélanie then turned invisible and left her hiding place, walking quietly across the wide street running alongside the Seine River and approaching the German checkpoint while taking her large hunting knife out of its scabbard. Effecting a short teleportation jump, she rematerialized between the two lines of steel drums, just behind the machine gun position at the southwestern corner of the

checkpoint. A 'Sleep' spell then made the already sleepy Germans manning the checkpoint crumple to the ground like broken puppets. It was then child's play for Mélanie to calmly slit their throats before dumping the bodies of the six Germans in the Seine, this after relieving them of their weapons and web gear. Those weapons and web gears were then left by her out of sight inside the sandbagged machine gun positions. Seeing no other hostile presence in the area of the Saint-Michel Plaza, Mélanie decided that now was a good time to go get her group of fighters and start placing them in various defensive locations, and this while it was still dark.

Returning at a run to the cabaret, she entered the show lounge and started giving orders.

"ALRIGHT, MEN: PLACE SAINT-MICHEL AND THE BRIDGE ARE NOW FREE OF GERMAN SOLDIERS. GET READY TO MOVE OUT AND FOLLOW ME TO THE PLAZA, WHERE I WILL ASSIGN FIGHTING POSITIONS TO YOU. MOTHER, ARE OUR WHEELBARROWS ALL LOADED UP AND READY TO GO?"

"YES, MÉLANIE! WE WERE ONLY WAITING FOR YOU TO RETURN."

"THEN, LET'S GO!"

Recuperating first her MG 42 medium machine gun and draping two bandoleers of ammunition across her chest, she then led a group of over fifty men and women, including three male and ten female employees of the cabaret, out by the front door and led them towards Place Saint-Michel. While her group included no less than fourteen machine guns, many of the men armed with rifles were also pushing a collection of wheelbarrows loaded down with either ammunition, explosives, mines, digging tools, canned food or water. It had been an idea from Paul Dujardin, the doorman and handyman of the cabaret, to acquire discreetly old wheelbarrows, an item that was not controlled by rationing and that now would prove invaluable in carrying lots of heavy supplies over short distances. With one wheelbarrow, a man of medium strength could easily transport a load that would have broken his back, especially since they would roll over paved roads and sidewalks. In one second-storey apartment across the street from the cabaret, the noise of the group moving out woke up a woman in her forties, making her look out and down through her window. What she saw then prompted her into going to shake her husband, still asleep in their bed.

"Léon! Léon! Wake up! A large group of people armed to the teeth just left the Mille et Une Nuits Cabaret."

Her husband, made nervous over the last few days due to the suspense of when the Allies would come to Paris, woke up nearly at once.

"What? Armed people coming out of the cabaret? That doesn't make sense! Are they Germans?"

"No, they are French! Some of them even wear armbands with a French flag sewn on them. That little whore, Mélanie Laurent, is leading the group."

"WHAT?!" Nearly shouted Léon before jumping out of bed and running to the window. He looked down with incomprehension at the heavily armed men and women and their convoy of loaded wheelbarrows.

"What the hell is this circus? And I see a few of the stripper whores from the cabaret in that group, carrying weapons."

"How could that be possible?" Asked his wife, equally mystified. "Those whores were sleeping with German officers every night, entertaining them during the last four years."

Léon then understood at last how badly wrong he and his wife had been about the cabaret and its stripper girls. He lowered his head in shame while following with his eyes the group of armed people.

"I...I think that we have made a dreadful mistake about those girls, Jeanne: I think that they slept with those Germans in order to get secrets from them, not because they were pro-Nazi. They were in fact part of the Résistance: that's the only explanation that makes sense to me now."

"Those whores...Résistance fighters? And what are they going to do with all those weapons?"

"Fight the Germans, what else? Damn, I will need to go apologize to these people when I get a chance."

"What are we going to do now, Léon? Is there going to be street fighting in Paris today?"

"Probably so, Jeanne. We better not venture outside today: the streets won't be safe."

Léon then surprised his wife by going to his wardrobe closet and starting to get dressed.

"Why are you getting dressed, Léon? Where are you going?"

Léon then gave a somber look at his wife.

"To the Mille et Une Nuits Cabaret, to present my excuses to Madame Laurent. I will see at the same time if she has still a weapon that I could borrow from her. If her

stripper girls have enough guts to go fight the Germans, then I can't in all conscience hide here at home and do nothing. If I can get a rifle, I will then use our balcony to snipe at any German or Vichy militiaman who will show up along this street. You better start putting away from the windows our family pictures and other souvenirs. Then, I will want you to go with our children into the kitchen and to stay there until I say otherwise."

Léon was soon on his way down, leaving behind his mortally worried wife alone with their three young children.

After making her large group of fighters cross Place Saint-André-des-Arts and the Rue Danton, Mélanie made her men and women crouch around her against the western façade of the fountain building, near the entrance to the Saint-Michel subway station.

"Alright, people, here is what we will do: we will split in a number of separate groups that will each be assigned a building to defend and specific arcs of fire to cover. The goal is to create mutually-supporting defensive strongpoints that will sweep the approaches to the Pont Saint-Michel with multiple machine guns supported by riflemen. First off, did any of you hold a rank as an officer or senior NCO while in the French Army? Those who did, please raise one hand and state your past rank."

No less than eleven men raised one hand then, with three of them claiming to have been officers. Mélanie, quite pleased by that, pointed an index at the oldest of the three ex-officers, a solidly-built and still fit man in his early fifties who had stated that he had been an infantry major.

"Commandant Drouet, you are the most experienced combat leader in this group. I thus make you my deputy for this fight and am putting you in charge of occupying this building and of preparing it for defense. I am allotting you seven of our machine gun crews, including the two Hotchkiss guns we have with us, along with twelve riflemen. Disperse them inside this building at various levels, so that they cover with their fire the Rue Danton, the entrances to the Rue Saint-André-des-Arts, Suger, Saint-Séverin and De la Huchette, the Boulevard Saint-Michel, the bridge and the corners with the Quai des Grands Augustins and the Quai de Montebello. Once you will have positioned your fighters, we will start placing anti-tank mines and directional shrapnel charges to block any German column approaching down the Rue Danton and the Boulevard Saint-Michel."

"What about the rest of our group, Miss Lillie?" Asked one of the other ex-officers, who had been a captain of the artillery branch.

"They will take position in various buildings around Place Saint-Michel, so that they can provide machine gun crossfire in support of Commandant Drouet's men inside the fountain building. You, Captain Boivin, will take three machine gun crews and six riflemen and will take position in the building housing the Hotel Royal Saint-Michel. Your job will be to cover the Boulevard Saint-Michel southward, the entrance to the bridge and the Place Saint-Michel. Captain Mitiviers, you will also take three machine gun crews and six riflemen and will establish yourself in the block at the northwest corner of the Place Saint-Michel. Your task will be to cover the approaches to the bridge down the quays. As for me, I will start laying our anti-tank mines and directional charges. Once the biggest part of the job of preparing our defenses will be done, we will go get more reserves of ammunition and food at the cabaret. My own defensive position will be on the bridge itself, where there are two German machine guns available and waiting to be used by us."

"The Germans abandoned their checkpoint and left their machine guns behind?" Asked Commandant Drouet, incredulous. Mélanie grinned maliciously at that question.

"They didn't abandon them: I killed those Germans, Commandant. The British First Special Commando Unit, whom I worked with extensively, taught me a few useful tricks in the last three years."

That earned her quite a few astonished looks around her.

"Okay, let's start positioning ourselves. We will try as much as possible to occupy empty rooms, but don't sacrifice a good firing position just because some coward doesn't wish to get involved in the coming fight. On the other hand, if you encounter people who will tell you that they want to help fight the Germans, then tell them to go get a rifle at the cabaret. Any questions? Then, let's split now! We will hold a command meeting in three hours in the fountain building, unless of course the Germans attack at that time."

The next couple of hours proved to be very busy ones for Mélanie, who had to direct the emplacement and burying of her anti-tank mines, the positioning of her directional shrapnel charges and the passing of command detonation wires between the charges and the firing positions which would control them. Placing her stolen German Tellermine 35 anti-tank mines involved removing first a few cobblestones from the street



pavement, then digging a hole for the mine and placing it before arming it and covering it back with the cobblestones. Since it took a minimum pressure of 200 pounds to set off a German Teller mine, that job was less risky than one would think at first, unless of course you were mad enough to start jumping up and down on top of it. Her fighters were in the process of stringing field telephone wires between her various buildings, in order to connect together the few German Army field telephones she had stolen in the past couple of years, when Louise Thibault, manning the MG 42 machine gun on the bridge that covered its northern approach, shouted a warning to Mélanie.

“MÉLANIE, THREE FRENCH POLICEMEN ARE APPROACHING THE BRIDGE FROM THE PREFECTURE. THEY ARE WAVING A WHITE FLAG.”

Mélanie, who was busy putting in place an anti-tank mine at the southern extremity of the bridge, got up at once and grabbed her MP 40 submachine gun before starting to run towards the northern end of the bridge. She slowed down to a walk once past the chicane and stopped thirty feet in front of it, waiting for the policemen. She had little good feelings towards the French police, which had too often collaborated closely with the Germans during the occupation, including when they were helping them to hunt down and collect Jews, which had then been deported and sent to their deaths in camps like Auschwitz, a place that had left a very bitter taste in Mélanie's mouth. She thus was barely polite to the policemen when they stopped in front of her, eyeing with dismay her weapons.

“What do you want?”

The senior policeman was taken somewhat aback by her tone but managed to stay impassive and answer back in a calm voice.

“We are here to inform your group of Résistance fighters that the Police of Paris has gone on strike a few days ago and that we have occupied yesterday the Prefecture and intend to resist any effort by the Germans to retake control of it. However, we are armed only with a limited collection of handguns and with a few rifles. We saw from the Prefecture building that your group appears very well armed and my commander sent us to see if you could provide us with some weapons. Anything will be useful, as we have word that Germans are approaching in force from the Prince Eugene Barracks, with tanks spearheading their column.”

While she relaxed a bit on hearing the man's reply, Mélanie couldn't help being still suspicious of him. She however decided that it was in her interest to believe him.

"Yes, we can provide you with some weapons, mister. However, we have no anti-tank weapons and our stocks of anti-tank mines are very limited. Go get more policemen, so that they can carry what I will give them, and bring them here. As a gesture of goodwill, I will actually let you go back with one of my machine guns, along with its ammunition and three Mauser rifles. LOUISE, YOU WILL HAND OVER TO THESE POLICE OFFICERS YOUR MACHINE GUN, ITS AMMO, THE THREE RIFLES AND THE SETS OF WEB GEAR WE CAPTURED."

The senior policeman, not believing his luck, bowed his head in salute to her.

"Thank you for your help and comprehension, miss. May I ask for your name?"

"You may, mister: I am Mélanie Laurent and I work as a stripper at the Mille et Une Nuits Cabaret. Me and the girls there actually are a Résistance cell that has been active in intelligence gathering since 1940."

The policemen exchanged incredulous looks at those words, taken completely aback. The senior policeman then broke out in laughter.

"The Mille et Une Nuits Cabaret, the home of a Résistance cell? Who would have thought so? All your neighbors were swearing at you and cursing you for being collaborators and German-lovers."

"Well, all those morons were wrong. Now, you better hurry and get some more of your officers here, so that they could go collect some weapons at the cabaret: the Germans may show up at any time now."

"True! Pierre, Félix, grab the machine gun and its ammunition! I will take the rifles."

The three policemen, heavily loaded with weapons and ammunition, were soon walking back towards the Prefecture, a huge four-storey building sitting just across the Seine from the Place Saint-Michel. They were back less than ten minutes later with forty more policemen, all armed with nothing more than a dozen handguns. Leaving her own MG 42 with Louise Thibault while keeping her MP40 submachine gun and GP 35 pistol, Mélanie then led the contingent of policemen across the Place Saint-Michel, then down the Rue Saint-André-des-Arts. Marie Laurent gave a suspicious look at the policemen when Mélanie led them inside the show lounge via the front entrance door.

"I suppose that they have joined our side, for you to lead them here like this."

"You are right, Mother. They say that the police is now on strike and has occupied the Prefecture in force. They, like most people around Paris who now wish to

fight the Germans, are however critically short on weapons, so they asked me if I would provide some to them and I said yes.”

“Very well, my dear daughter! Let them have what they want in our pile. By the way, more and more of our neighbors are streaming to our cabaret to ask for a weapon. That has given us up to now over thirty extra shooters who will fight from as many locations around the cabaret, with more coming in at intervals.”

“Excellent! If the Germans or the Militia ever tries to roll down this street, they will be warmly welcomed indeed.”

“Well, that’s not the best part, Mélanie. The best part is that the word is now spreading around the neighborhood that we are not collaborators and German-lovers after all. That is relieving a big concern I had about the safety of our girls once Paris is liberated.”

Mélanie herself let out a breath of relief on hearing that.

“Thank Lucifer for that! I was also very worried about that. Well, I better go explain to those policemen that our Lillie’s Specials are not some kind of pastry rolling pins.”

## **08:32 (Paris Time)**

### **Saint-Michel Bridge**

With exchanges of fire having started to be heard north of the police prefecture building and in other locations around the city about half a hour ago, Mélanie and her three S.O.E. female agents were fully alert and manning their two MG 42 medium machine guns. Standing inside the two sandbagged positions built between the two rows of barrels forming a chicane in the middle of the Saint-Michel Bridge, they had both good protection and excellent fields of fire for their machine guns. Mélanie, with her supernatural senses, was the first to see something coming down the Quai des Grands Augustins towards the bridge she was guarding. Raising to her eyes the pair of binoculars she had taken from the German sergeant who had commanded the bridge guard detachment, she made a mean smile after a few seconds.

“Heads up, girls! I see a column of German Army trucks coming our way, probably coming from the Palais Bourbon, one of the main German strongpoints on the Left Bank. Thankfully, I don’t see tanks or armored vehicles as part of that column.”

"Thank God for that!" Said Mary Gillies, who served as loader for Mélanie's machine gun. "Without any proper anti-tank weapons save for our few mines, stopping German tanks could prove to be a bloody proposition."

"True, but we won't have another choice but to try if they do show up." Replied Mélanie before picking up one of the three field telephones set inside her sandbagged position, then turning quickly its small cranking handle.

"Hello, Captain Mitivier? This is Mélanie! Do you have in your sights the convoy of nine German Army trucks approaching down the Quai des Grands Augustins?... Good! I will fire the first burst once I judge them to be where I want them to be. You will then wait for their infantry to jump out and start walking down along the façades before opening fire with your machine gun. Whatever happens, don't let them get near our anti-tank minefield blocking your street."

Putting down that field telephone, she then called in succession her two other officers to give them a brief warning about the incoming truck column. Once that was done, she shouldered the butt of her MG 42, whose bipod rested on top of the western stone parapet of the bridge, and carefully aimed her weapon. Once the first truck reached the corner with the Rue des Grands Augustins, about 600 feet away from the bridge, she fired one short burst at it, aiming for the driver's cab. Even though her burst went on for less than a second, the stupendous rate of fire of up to 1,200 rounds per minute of the German MG 42 machine gun meant that fifteen 7.92mm bullets hit the leading truck, disabling the engine, killing the driver and the officer riding in the cab and killing or wounding a number of the German infantrymen riding in the back of the truck. Suddenly out of control, the truck veered left and crashed into the low stone parapet of the quay overlooking the Seine River. As the surviving infantrymen from that truck hurriedly jumped out to find some cover, the second truck of the column brutally braked to a halt, forcing the remaining seven trucks behind it to do the same. As close to 150 German soldiers were jumping out of their vehicles, Mélanie's second burst, a longer one than the first, swept down the column of trucks, causing more casualties. Knowing that this was the perfect occasion for her, with the German soldiers still bunched up and confused, she emptied her first 250-round belt in a series of aimed short bursts, while Louise Thibault added the fire of her own MG 42 machine gun. With running German soldiers being bowled over by the dozen while trying to find any kind of cover from the murderous fire, the two young women loaded a second belt of ammunition in their machine guns and fired it away, then proceeded to change their now hot barrels with

fresh ones, a procedure made easy and quick by the design of the MG 42. The hundred or so German soldiers who were still intact then used that half a minute of respite to grimly run forward, staying close to the façades of the buildings lining the south side of the street while taking occasional pot shots towards the bridge. The first German soldiers were nearly at the corner with the Rue Séguier when Captain Mitivier had his machine gunner facing west open fire. The MG 34 fire, walking down the column of German infantrymen and taking them in enfilade, dug big holes in the enemy ranks and also killed the officer leading them. As German machine gunners were finally responding to his fire, Mélanie and Louise opened fire again. Caught in concentrated enfilade fire by three machine guns firing from a distance of 400 feet, the Germans suffered heavily, with their numbers dwindling by the second. They were however pouring themselves a sizeable volume of fire, especially from their own machine guns. Bullets whizzed by or ricocheted against the stone parapet of the bridge, forcing Mélanie and her three S.O.E. agents in ducking down a number of times. Captain Mitivier then delivered the coup de grace to the advancing Germans, firing up the directional shrapnel charge set up earlier by Mélanie at the corner of Rue Séguier and the Quai des Grands Augustins. Oriented so that its shrapnel would sweep down the sidewalk along the buildings' façade, the half pound of RDX explosives molded into the bottom of a large, used can of tinned ham exploded, projecting forward in a tight cone over five pounds of old nails, screws, steel nuts and other small metallic objects. Every German within a hundred feet of the directional charge and within the cone of shrapnel was swept off, killed or gravely wounded by the deluge of steel and iron, while more soldiers were killed or wounded up to 200 feet away. Having had enough by now, and with machine gun fire still raking down their ranks, the surviving Germans started a hasty retreat on foot back the way they had come. Some of the Germans tried to help and recover a few of their wounded comrades but neither Mélanie nor Captain Mitivier's men were in the mood to show mercy to them: the Germans had committed too many atrocities and abuses during their four-year occupation to deserve mercy. Less than twenty Germans survived to flee back to the Palais Bourbon via side streets. That victory fired up Mélanie but she still retained her tactical sense and called Mitivier at once.

"Captain Mitivier, this is Mélanie! Can you spare a few of your riflemen so that you could send them to recuperate the machine guns left behind those retreating Germans? Anything that would augment further our firepower would be welcomed...

Thanks! Bring those machine guns and their ammunition to Commandant Drouet: I suspect that he will be the next one to face a German push.”

The man sent by Captain Mitivier to lead the weapons looting party, a grizzled old warrant officer who had fought in the Great War of 1914-18, found a rich picking indeed among the dead and dying Germans strewn down the Quai des Grands Augustins.

“Well, well! Look at all those nice weapons, boys! Start looting, guys: in the meantime I will go inspect those abandoned trucks.”

Skipping the first truck, which was now burning thanks to its fuel tank having been turned into a sieve, the old warrant officer went to the second truck, looking first inside its front cab. He found the driver dead behind his wheel, along with an equally dead German NCO. Picking up their MP40 submachine guns, spare magazine carriers and grenades and putting them down on the pavement near the cab, he then went to check the back of the truck, his pistol at the ready in case that a living German would still be inside. What he found in the back was two dead Germans and a third one severely wounded and moaning. He debated for a moment what to do with the wounded German but, remembering all the innocent Parisians who had been executed as hostages by the Germans, finished off the wounded with the bayonet of one of the two dead Germans. As he was moving one German corpse to take off him his web gear and ammunition pouch, he uncovered two strange objects lying next to a few piled ammunition boxes. While he recognized the ammunition boxes as containing 7.92mm bullets and belts, plus a few boxes of 9mm parabelum bullets and of hand grenades, he could not identify at first the two steel tubes tipped with large conical heads. Seeing that he would need more manpower to take away all this, he called to one of his men outside and told him to go get more men to help carry away all the weapons and ammunition to be found in and near the trucks. With a whole city to liberate, they would need all the weapons and ammunition they could lay their hands on to arm those willing to fight the Germans. The warrant officer however grabbed the two unidentified tubes and got out of the truck with them before going to the next truck. There, he found more reserves of ammunition, along with four more of the strange tubes. The inspection of the six remaining trucks turned out even more ammunition and tubes. The ecstatic old senior NCO also saw that his men had been able to recuperate no less than nine medium machine guns, along with dozens of rifles, submachine guns and pistols, plus plenty of ammunition and

grenades, a true treasure trove for the weapons-starved FFI. Nearly twenty men sent by Commandant Drouet soon arrived to help carry away all that. The old warrant officer however made sure that all the strange tubes found stayed together and, using six men to carry them, led them towards the bridge. That young Mélanie Laurent apparently knew a lot about German weapons and plans, thanks to her intelligence work at her cabaret, so he was hoping that she would be able to tell him what those tubes were exactly. The reaction of the teenager when he approached her sandbagged position while carrying two of the tubes then confirmed to him that his idea had been a good one.

“YOU FOUND PANZERFAUSTS?”

“Uh, what is that...panzer thing?”

“The Panzerfaust is a short-range anti-tank weapon that you throw away after firing its rocket. A German infantry officer who was visiting our cabaret bragged in bed about how effective it was against Allied tanks and even described briefly to me how it was used. He in fact said that it was so simple to use that a boy could fire it. How many of them did you find?”

“Thirteen!”

“Hell, this is like a Christmas gift to us! Let’s go see Commandant Drouet with these Panzerfausts, so that I could show his men how to use them. Uh, on second thought, leave two of them with my girls here: we may have to face German tanks coming down from the Right Bank.”

“You’re the boss, miss! By the way, where did you learn to fight like this? Your knowledge of tactics is quite impressive, I must say.”

“I learned from the British commando unit that has been hiding and operating around Paris during the last years.”

“Oh, I see!”

Making one of his men drop two of the Panzerfausts inside one of the sandbagged machine gun positions and letting Mélanie take a minute to explain to her three companions how to use them, the warrant officer then followed her to the fountain building with his men carrying the other Panzerfausts. They found Commandant Drouet nearly drooling over the mass of weapons and extra ammunition pilfered from the defeated German truck column. He smiled to Mélanie when she showed up with the warrant officer and his group of men.

“Hell, Mélanie, I am wondering how I am going to use all these extra weapons! I don’t have enough men to use all of them, or even all these extra machine guns.”

"How many could you realistically use then, Commandant Drouet?"

"Four of them, actually. I will however have to quickly train some of my riflemen on how to use them."

"Then, I propose that we send the remaining five MG 42 we just grabbed to the policemen holding the Prefecture, along with plenty of ammunition and a few of those captured rifles and submachine guns."

"That sounds fair. After all, they are our main buffer between us and any German counter-attack force coming down from the Prince Eugene Barracks or from the Tuileries Gardens. I will send a party to bring those extra weapons to the Prefecture."

"Excellent! I do have another gift for you, thanks to that German truck convoy: our first true portable anti-tank weapons."

Mélanie then took one of the Panzerfausts carried by the warrant officer's men and showed it to Drouet.

"This is a Panzerfaust 60, a one-shot, throwaway anti-tank rocket launcher with a range of 200 feet. To aim it, you hold it under your right armpit and flip up that front sight, then point it by lining the sight with the rocket's conical nose and the targeted tank. Then, you press the trigger, igniting the propellant charge and firing off the warhead, which is supposedly powerful enough to destroy any known tank. Its drawback is its short range and its back blast, but we sure could use these Panzerfausts in our fight." Drouet took the weapon from Mélanie's hands and looked at it as if it was a gift from God.

"This could actually prove invaluable in defending our positions against German armored vehicles. With a German mechanized unit known to be at the Palais du Luxembourg, less than half a mile from here, we may need these Panzerfausts sooner than later."

"I agree! Could you designate a few of your men, so that I could explain to them how to use these anti-tank weapons while you send a work party to carry our excess weapons and ammunition to the Prefecture?"

"No problem, Mélanie!" Replied the graying ex-infantry officer before giving a few orders to his NCOs. Mélanie was soon teaching ten men how to use a Panzerfaust, as another 26 men left for the Prefecture with six wheelbarrows heavily loaded with weapons and ammunitions.



That work party barely had time to return to the fountain building before a German mechanized column was signaled approaching from the southwest along Rue Danton, while a truck column approached from the southeast along Boulevard Saint-Michel. With no German force seen approaching along the Seine and with Mélanie's concurrence, Drouet then decided to temporarily shift the position of his machine guns covering the Quai des Grands Augustins and the Quai de Montebello, while Captain Boivin did the same with his own machine guns. This ended placing a total of fourteen medium machine guns in positions that covered the Rue Danton and the Boulevard Saint-Michel with crossfire, a staggering amount of firepower to face for any enemy infantry or soft-skinned vehicles approaching from the South. That did not even include Mélanie's two machine guns, still positioned on the bridge. The FFI were thus quite confident as the Germans rolled cautiously towards them.

When she got word by field telephone of the new threat, Mélanie took only a second to take a decision. Grabbing her haversack containing two 'Lilie's Special' and a few grenades and passing its carrying strap across her chest, she then took the Panzerfaust laid near her while talking to her three S.O.E. agents.

"We have word of German tanks coming up Rue Danton and of trucks coming up the Boulevard Saint-Michel. You girls stay here and hold this bridge, while I go tank-hunting."

"Can't we go with you, Mélanie?" Asked Lisa Van Houten with commendable eagerness. Mélanie shook her head soberly at that.

"Sorry but no, Lisa! I don't want to insult you, but you would only slow me down. Right now, speed is of the essence."

She deftly vaulted over the sandbags and steel barrels full of gravel despite all her weapons and ammunition, then started running at a sprinter's speed down Place Saint-Michel, heading towards Rue Danton. The three S.O.E. agents could only watch her run away with disbelief.

"Do you see how fast she is?" Said Mary Gillies, incredulous. "She must be carrying at least forty pounds of weapons and ammunition, yet she runs as if she is carrying nothing."

In the fountain building, Commandant Drouet and half of his men were able to see Mélanie as she ran past their building in a flash, holding her MP40 and a Panzerfaust and with her haversack flapping against her side.

"My God! Her ass must be on fire!" Exclaimed one FFI, making Drouet smile.

"Actually, I believe that she intends to put some German asses on fire, although I would agree that her ass is very hot indeed. Pass the word to our gunners: we have a friendly going forward towards the enemy tanks. Be careful on who you are shooting at."

Drouet then muttered to himself.

"Hell, I didn't expect to fight in the company of some kind of Joan of Arc!"

### **10:56 (Paris Time)**

#### **German column advancing north along Rue Danton**

Major Anton von Battenberg's heart was not in this mission as he directed part of his battalion north along Rue Danton, heading towards the Saint-Michel Bridge with the goal of taking it in order to cross the Seine to go crush the French resistance at the Police Prefecture. He was no diehard Nazi and was actually a distant cousin of British Admiral Mountbatten, whose original family name had been Battenberg, and fully realized by now that Germany was in the process of losing this war. However, he had received orders and a good German officer obeyed his orders. He knew little about the enemy he was to face, apart from the fact that the French had a number of machine guns and were positioned around the Saint-Michel Bridge. To help him in his mission, a truck-borne unit of French Vichy militiamen was presently advancing on a parallel course to him, following the Boulevard Saint-Michel, while a battery of medium mortars deployed on the grounds of the gardens of the Palace of Luxembourg stood ready to support him on call. Spearheading his column were four Panzer IV medium tanks accompanied by dismounted infantrymen from Anton's unit. With luck, his supporting tanks would be enough by themselves to disperse the enemy ahead and send them running.

His column was still advancing slowly and cautiously, leery of sniper fire and ambushes, and was getting to the intersection with the Rue Serpente, some 600 feet from the Saint-Michel Bridge, when a sudden puff of white smoke and a short detonation

from the corner of the intersection on the right side of the column made Anton's head snap around as he stood in the back of his SdKfz 251/6 armored command half-track. Less than two seconds later, as his infantrymen were starting to react, a violent explosion against the right side of the lead Panzer IV shook the 27-ton medium tank. The hot plasma jet from the shaped charge of the Panzerfaust, as it had to be a Panzerfaust according to its launch signature, then burned through the armor of the tank and touched off the 75mm shells stored inside. A terrifying explosion and fireball ensued, projecting high in the air the tank's turret, which then crashed down on the pavement amidst the infantrymen frantically scrambling to get out of the way. Two of them were out of luck and got smashed to a red pulp by the falling turret. As a dozen enraged infantrymen opened fire, spreading bullets around the building corner from where the Panzerfaust had been fired, the second tank in the column started going around the flaming wreck of the first tank, its turret slewing to the right to point its 75mm gun down the Rue Serpente. As it was passing ahead of the destroyed tank, a huge blast right under the belly of the second tank made it literally jump up in the air by a few inches. Its relatively thin steel belly ripped open by the blast, the shockwave from the explosion penetrated inside the tank, killing instantly its five-man crew and setting off by sympathetic detonation its stored shells. The turret of the second tank also flew up atop a big fireball, while the shockwave from the explosion under the tank hit the legs of the German infantrymen who had been closely following the armored beast, ripping off or mangling the legs of the soldiers nearest the tank and bowling over the soldiers further away. That scene made Anton smash furiously his fist on top of the armored side of his half-track.

"GOTT UND HIMMEL! THESE BASTARDS LAID ANTI-TANK MINES ALONG THIS STREET!"

He was actually wrong about that, as Mélanie, turning temporarily invisible, had rolled one of her 'Lilie's Special' under the tank after priming the charge, then had teleported out of the danger zone of the blast. With only a narrow lane just wide enough for a tank still unblocked along Rue Danton, Anton shouted orders to his men.

"INFANTRY, TAKE THE LEAD! WATCH FOR ANTI-TANK MINES!"

Then, inexplicably, the third tank of the column also shook from a belly explosion a few seconds later, even though it was not moving and could not have initiated an anti-tank mine. Now utterly confused, Anton grabbed his radio microphone and shouted in it.

“REMAINING TANK, BACK OFF! LET THE INFANTRY CLEAR THE WAY FORWARD!”

To his dying moment, Anton never understood what happened next. As the sole remaining tank of his unit was reversing gears and backing away, its commander sticking his head out through his open hatch so that he could guide his driver, Anton saw the tank commander jerk and then fall inside his turret as a pistol detonation could be heard. A sheet of flames coming seemingly from nowhere then shot down through the opened hatch. The inside of the armored vehicle next turned into an inferno, with the four surviving crewmembers screaming horribly as they burned alive while trying to get out of their doomed combat vehicle. Only the driver managed to get out, but he was by then a human torch and he died screaming while rolling around on the pavement. Seeing no targets for their bullets, Anton's shaken infantrymen reacted out of long combat experience and took firing positions under what cover they could find, in order to secure the head of the column, now minus its four tanks. They then pushed forward in short tactical sprints, allowing the bulk of the battalion to resume its advance, albeit very slowly and deliberately.

On the Boulevard Saint-Michel, the Vichy Militia unit rolling towards the bridge stopped on hearing the explosions and gunfire along Rue Danton, two street blocks to its west. The commander of that Militia unit, a brutal thug with little real military training or experience and who was more accustomed in hunting down Jews and arresting people in their homes than in real fighting, hesitated for a moment about what to do next. He finally decided that, since the Résistance fighters seemed to concentrate their efforts against the German column in Rue Danton, he could use that diversion to get to the Saint-Michel Bridge unimpeded. He however had enough sense to realize that his men would be sitting ducks to snipers if they stayed inside their trucks, so he ordered his 300 militiamen out and formed them in two long parallel columns, one along each sidewalk, then had them advance on foot. The commander himself however stayed in his own light truck, which rolled behind the men on foot, while the trucks of the unit fell behind the command vehicle. At first, nothing happened as the militiamen, encouraged by the lack of enemy reaction against them, quickened their pace while a loud fight continued on Rue Danton. The first militiamen were less than a hundred feet from the intersection with the Rue Séverin and had the bridge in sight when the boulevard seemingly exploded in dense machine gun crossfire. With six medium machine guns firing a total

rate of 95 rounds per second down the boulevard and with seventeen riflemen adding their aimed fire, the militiamen started falling down like bowling pins on both sides of the street, while the trucks following them also received multiple hits. With their numbers quickly going down, the Vichy militiamen simply broke and ran in utter panic without firing a shot, many of them throwing down their weapons in order to flee more quickly. However, the FFI showed no mercy to those hated militiamen, who were rightly considered traitors to France and who had been too happy to commit countless atrocities and abuses in support of the Germans. Rifle and machine gun fire pursued the fleeing militiamen, downing them one after the other, until the few survivors disappeared into side streets. Those who raised their hands in an attempt to surrender were coldly shot down where they stood.

On Rue Danton, the Germans were not having an easy time of it, having to contend with heavy long range sniper fire from the innumerable windows of the buildings ahead of them. Normally, their commander would have ordered his infantrymen to systematically check and clean up of opposition every building along Rue Danton, but that would have taken lots of time and a lot more men than he had now. His orders were also specific: to get to the Saint-Michel Bridge quickly and secure it in order to attack the Police Prefecture. However, as he kept steadily losing men, Major Anton von Battenberg was starting to seriously question the wisdom of his orders. Of his initial force of over 400 infantrymen and nine armored vehicles, he now had left with him only about 350 infantrymen, five half-tracks and zero tanks.

Just as von Battenberg thought that things could not become much worse, they did, with at least six medium machine guns suddenly opening fire in concert, sweeping down the Rue Danton with a hail of bullets. The armored protection of the five half-tracks of Battenberg's unit saved many German infantrymen walking behind them but, being open-topped, those inside the half-tracks proved highly vulnerable and started crumbling down inside their vehicles. Anton von Battenberg was shot at that moment, first with a bullet to his right shoulder, then with a bullet through the chest. He slumped down, dying, in the back of his command half-track as his men did their best to respond to the enemy fire. Then, one directional shrapnel charge placed along Rue Danton was command detonated as the advancing Germans were about to pass it. The concentrated hail of shrapnel dug bloody holes in the German ranks and stunned the

survivors into seeking cover at once. Then another directional charge was detonated, but this time on the opposite side of the street, sweeping with shrapnel the sidewalk not affected by the first charge. Over sixty German infantrymen fell to these two charges alone, a rate of loss that proved unacceptable to the hauptmann who was now the sole surviving officer in the column. With incredibly dense machine gun fire still decimating his surviving soldiers, the hauptmann ordered an orderly retreat, with the half-tracks backing away on reverse to continue to offer protection to the men on foot. The hauptmann also called in for mortar support fire, asking his mortar men to lay a smoke screen across Rue Danton in order to cover his retreat. Only 245 infantrymen out of an initial force of 420 men returned safely to the Palais du Luxembourg, with their five half-tracks full of dead and wounded men.

In the fountain building, Commandant Drouet knew better than to celebrate too quickly that significant victory. The Germans had a number of artillery pieces around Paris and were probably going to indiscriminately shell this whole area soon. He thus shouted a series of urgent orders, passing them as well by telephone to the other buildings occupied by his fighters.

"I WANT ALL THE THREE TOP FLOOR VACATED AT ONCE! MOVE DOWN OUR MACHINE GUNS AND SNIPERS TO THE FIRST AND SECOND FLOORS! EXPECT ARTILLERY FIRE SOON!"

Looking at one of his NCOs, he asked him a question while putting down the receiver of the field telephone he had just used.

"Has young Mélanie Laurent returned from her foray down Rue Danton?"

"Uh, I don't know, Commandant."

"Then check on that and give me a firm answer!"

"Yes, Commandant!" Said the man before running away. That left Drouet alone, hoping that the teenager had made it safely.

Mélanie actually stopped by the cabaret on her way back, wanting to both check on it and to grab more Lilie's Specials at the same time. To her immense relief, she found the cabaret intact, with no sign of combat around it. Marie Laurent gave an emotional hug to Mélanie when she walked in via the front door.

"Thank God, you are okay!"

"Don't thank that uncaring one, Mother: he prefers to judge rather than to help people. Well, it seems that we gave a couple of really stinging lessons to the Germans today. I was able to destroy four German tanks down Rue Danton and they never got close to the Place Saint-Michel and the bridge. How did it go here?"

"Things thankfully stayed quiet around the cabaret. We did not have to shoot once. However, this is only the first day in this fight, and that day is not over yet."

"You are too right, Mother. Since things are quiet over here, how about temporarily freeing Sylvie and Stéphanie from their machine gun servant duties, so that they could cook some food and bake some bread for our fighters? I suspect that our men and women will be quite hungry by noon. I still have quite a large reserve of canned food and flour down in my cave. Feel free to use what you need to feed our fighters."

"An excellent idea, Mélanie. On your part, tell our fighters to send two men teams with wheelbarrows, so that they could collect the food we will prepare."

"Will do! See you soon, Mother!"

"And be careful, my dear daughter!"

On that, Mélanie walked out after grabbing two demolition charges and a few extra 9mm bullets for her submachine gun. Marie couldn't help make a silent prayer then, asking for the safety of her adopted daughter.

Less than ten minutes later, German artillery shells and mortar bombs started falling at a slow rate around the district, with their fire centered on the Place Saint-Michel and the Police Prefecture. To that, the FFI could only take cover and hope for the best. The shelling continued sporadically until the evening, when it stopped, to the relief of everybody in the district. Anticipating a surprise night attack on foot by the Germans, Mélanie and Commandant Drouet made sure that the posted sentries and watchers stayed vigilant, something helped by the welcomed distribution of hot coffee from the cabaret. Thankfully, that night attack never came, but the night still reverberated with the sound of shots and explosions around Paris, keeping everyone nervous and apprehensive, everyone that is except Mélanie, who truly thrived on emotions.

## **CHAPTER 18 – THE ALLIES PUSH FORWARD**

**03:36 (Paris Time)**

**Wednesday, August 23, 1944**

**Forward command post of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Armored Division (Free French)**

**Near Chartres, 35 miles southwest of Paris, France**

“You wanted to see me, General?”

“Yes! I have a mission of crucial importance for you and your unit, Captain Dronne. Generals Eisenhower and Bradley have finally authorized a push all the way into Paris, to be done by our division and by the American 4<sup>th</sup> Armored Division. Our mission will be to liberate the city, which has risen three days ago in open armed revolt against the Germans occupying it. Our division will start rolling towards Paris this morning, but I want to send your reinforced mechanized company forward as an advanced reconnaissance element. You are to go as fast as possible, avoiding points of resistance on your way, and get into Paris. There, you will liaise with the local Résistance forces and ascertain the situation in the city, then report by radio.”

The young officer straightened up and his eyes glistened on hearing those words from Major General Leclerc: to be the first French soldiers to enter Paris would be a great honor indeed for him and for his men.

“You can count on me, General. Do we know if the Résistance is holding any part of Paris yet?”

“We do! We are receiving regular radio messages from General de Gaulle’s representative in Paris, Mister Chaban-Delmas, who is at the Police Prefecture on the Île de la Cité. The FFI are presently holding the Prefecture, the city hall, the Montparnasse train station and a few minor locations. According to Chaban-Delmas, there has been some fierce street fighting around the city but the Germans are now said to be staying mostly in and around their barracks and have stopped venturing out in force. So, when can you move out, Captain Dronne?”

“Give me one hour, time to refuel, rearm and resupply and we will be on our way, General.”

“Excellent! Then, I can only wish you good luck in your mission, Captain.”



“Thank you, General!”

The two men then exchanged a handshake, followed by a salute, before Dronne pivoted on his heels and walked out of Leclerc's command tent. A 300 foot walk led him to his unit's bivouac area, around which his three Sherman tanks and eleven M3 armored half-tracks were dispersed and camouflaged. Once there, he called up his subalterns for a quick orders group, passing to them Leclerc's mission order, then sent them to complete their resupply. As promised to his general, Dronne's lead tank started rolling out of their bivouac less than fifty minutes later and got on the main road leading northeast towards Paris, followed by the thirteen other armored vehicles of the unit.

### **19:42 (Paris Time)**

#### **Porte d'Orléans, southern outskirts of Paris**

The Sun was still up when Captain Dronne's half-track stopped just short of the Porte d'Orléans, one of the old fortified city gates of Paris that led into the 14<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement. Emotion nearly overwhelmed him when he looked at the Eiffel Tower in the distance.

“Paris, at last! It is so good to see it again.”

From the happy shouts from his men, he could say that they were as overjoyed as him. Their trip, while quite dangerous, had been mostly combat-free, thanks to his deliberate avoidance of the potential enemy positions along his way. Now, he stood at the gates of Paris with all his vehicles still intact and his men in high spirits. However, the toughest part, navigating through Paris while avoiding German barrages and strongpoints, was still left to do, but he had an idea about that. Bending forward, he gently rapped the steel helmet of his halftrack's driver, making the man look up at him.

“Manurin, you are from Paris, so I assume that you know its topography well, right?”

“Know Paris well? Hell, Captain, I could take a job in Paris as a taxi driver without a sweat!”

“I am glad to hear that. The FFI are said to be holding the Montparnasse train station. We are going to head there first, to liaise with the FFI and get some info on the present German deployments in and around Paris. Then, from there, we will take the safest way to the city hall, in the 4<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement.”

"Consider yourself there, sir!" Replied the driver, grinning, before engaging gears and accelerating his half-track towards the city gate. The sight of a dozen men in civilian clothes, some armed, waiving French flags from atop the gate, made Dronne smile with pride: that the Parisians had risen to help free their city would go a long way to erase the stain of four years of collaboration by too many French citizens. It also was going to make his advance in the city that much easier.

Thirty minutes later, Dronne's column arrived at Place Denfert-Rochereau, near the Montparnasse train station, where a group of armed civilians were waiting for him. One man approached his half-track as soon as it stopped on one side of the plaza and addressed Dronne.

"Welcome to Paris, Captain! I am Colonel Henri Rol, Commander of the FFI forces in Paris."

"And I am Captain Jacques Dronne, of the Free French 2<sup>nd</sup> Armored Division. General Leclerc sent me ahead as a forward element, with mission to get to the city hall and liaise with the leaders of the Résistance there. I am also to send him a report on the present situation in Paris. How are things in the city?"

"Tense but relatively calm at the moment. The Germans tried at first to crush our uprising but got their nose bloody in a few places. They then withdrew to their barracks and main centers, where they took defensive positions. Right now, the main German centers are the Palais du Luxembourg, the École Militaire, the Invalides, the Palais Bourbon, the Prince Eugene Barracks and the area around the Tuileries and the Majestic Hotel. On our side, we hold firmly this area around Montparnasse, the city hall, the Prefecture and most of the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Arrondissements. We also have established numerous barricades across the main streets, in order to hamper German movements."

"Then, could you provide us with a guide who would know where those barricades are and who could show us the best way to the city hall, Colonel?"

"With pleasure!" Replied Henri Rol before looking at one of his aides beside him. "François, you will lead Captain Dronne's unit to the city hall. Take the safest route possible."

"Yes, Colonel!" Said the man, who then climbed in the back of the half-track, where he shook hands with Dronne.

"François Marigny, at your service, Captain. Are you ready to roll?"

"I sure am, Mister Marigny! You may sit beside my driver in the front cab."

"Thank you!" Said the FFI before swinging one leg over the edge of the steel partition between the front cab and the rear of the half-track, then swinging his other leg over before sitting in the front cab beside the driver. Once there, he spoke briefly with the latter, explaining to him which way to go.

From the Place Denfert-Rochereau, the Free French column rolled northward along the Avenue Denfert-Rochereau, then continued along the Rue Saint-Jacques, thus avoiding the nearby Palais du Luxembourg. They soon crossed the wide Boulevard Saint-Germain, continuing along Rue Saint-Jacques until they arrived at the intersection with the Quai de Montebello, running along the Left Bank of the scene. Before making the driver turn right on the Quai de Montebello, Marigny looked up at Dronne while pointing towards the Saint-Michel Bridge, some 500 feet away to the west.

"A word of caution if you have to go later to the Police Prefecture: the area around the Saint-Michel Bridge is heavily defended by one of our cells, which has planted anti-tank mines across the streets on the Left Bank leading to the bridge. These guys and girls performed heroically and destroyed many German vehicles, including four tanks, on top of killing hundreds of Germans. The leader of that cell also provided us the majority of our weapons, which she stole from the Germans."

"She? A woman is leading that Résistance cell?"

Dronne's incredulous response made Marigny grin with malice.

"Not a woman: a teenage girl. Her name is Mélanie Laurent and her nom de guerre is 'Lilie'. She truly should get the Légion d'Honneur for her exploits. She also happens to be about the most beautiful girl I ever saw."

"Wow! I will definitely have to meet that girl later...when I get the time for that. So, which way now?"

"We go east along the Quai de Montebello, then will cross the Seine on the Pont au Double, pass in front of the Notre-Dame Cathedral and cross to the Right Bank on the Pont d'Arcole. You will then be at the city hall."

"Then, let's go!"

Dronne finally arrived at the city hall at around nine in the evening, after sunset, where he met with the head of the National Council of Resistance, Georges Bidault, and the commander of the Paris Committee of Liberation, André Tolle. There, Dronne passed

on the news that the 2<sup>nd</sup> French Armored Division and the 4<sup>th</sup> American Armored Division were on their way to Paris, something that greatly raised the spirits around the city hall. After collecting as much information as he could from the two Résistance leaders, Dronne sent by radio a report back to General Leclerc, including in it the main points he had learned about the situation in and around Paris. Once his message had been acknowledged by his divisional headquarters, Dronne got back in his half-track and, still guided by Marigny, headed for the Police Prefecture. Cheered along the way by ecstatic Parisians and FFI fighters, his column rolled west along the Right Bank and turned left at the Place du Chatelet, crossing the Seine on the Pont au Change. Their passage there attracted some isolated rifle fire that wounded one man, proof that they were now quite close to German lines. Return fire by the heavy machine guns of the halftracks however silence quickly enough those German snipers and the column rolled to a stop along the Boulevard du Palais, with the Police Prefecture to its left and the Justice Palace to the right. Coming out of his half-track again, Dronne went inside the Prefecture, where he was able to see that it was solidly defended by hundreds of French policemen armed with an assortment of machine guns, rifles and submachine guns. He was still looking around him when the representative of General de Gaulle in Paris, Jacques Chaban-Delmas, came to him, shaking his hand profusely.

“Captain, you can’t know how happy we all are to see you and your men here in Paris. So, when could we expect the Allies to enter Paris in force?”

“Both the French 2<sup>nd</sup> Armored Division and the American 4<sup>th</sup> Armored Division should be at the gates of Paris by the end of tomorrow, sir. General Leclerc sent me ahead to assess the situation in advance and get details about the German deployments around Paris.”

“And you shall get plenty of such information from us, Captain. But please, let’s go to our command center, where we have detailed maps of Paris: I will be better equipped to brief you there.”

Dronne followed Chaban-Delmas with good grace, but took the time to tell one of his NCOs to have his armored vehicles refueled and maintained while he spoke with de Gaulle’s representative.

That NCO, a warrant officer, went out of the Prefecture and passed on the orders from Dronne to his men, then went to a senior police officer standing nearby, saluting him.

"Excuse me, sir, but would you know by chance if we could find some extra fuel for our vehicles in this prefecture?"

"You are in luck, mister: Miss Lilie, who provided us with most of our weapons and ammunition, also provided us some gasoline as well for our own trucks and patrol cars."

"Miss Lilie? Who's that?" Said the warrant officer, raising an eyebrow. His question seemed to amuse the police commander.

"Well, about everyone in Paris now knows about Miss Lilie, but since you are new here, I can understand your ignorance. Miss Lilie is the nom de guerre of a teenage girl named Mélanie Laurent. She worked as a stripper at a nearby cabaret and luxury bordello but also formed and led a Résistance cell of her own, the Groupe Paris Liberté, which specialized in intelligence gathering and in the systematic theft of German supplies and weapons. She is rumored to have worked closely with that mysterious British commando unit that made life hell for the Germans around Paris during the last three years."

"A teenage stripper... Is she pretty?"

The police commander grinned from ear to ear at that question.

"Is young Mélanie Laurent pretty? Hell, you could sell your soul to the Devil just to have a chance to be intimate with her! She is in fact by far the most beautiful girl I ever saw. She however proved to be as well a very brave and skillful fighter. If the rumors about her are true, she managed to destroy by herself four German medium tanks, using demolition charges she improvised with grenades and high explosives. She in fact could still have some reserves of gasoline that you could use. Our own reserves don't amount to much right now but you are welcome to them."

"And where could I find that famous 'Miss Lilie', sir?"

In response, the police commander pointed an index towards the nearby Saint-Michel Bridge, on which a chicane-type barrage stood.

"You may find her at that barrage. If not, the girls manning it should be able to tell you where to find her. In the meantime, I will get my men to bring out to your vehicles what we have available in terms of fuel."

"Thank you, sir! That is much appreciated."

Saluting again the police commander, the French warrant officer then walked down to the bridge, where a pretty redhead standing behind a German MG 42 medium machine gun greeted him with a warm smile.

"Good day, sir! What may we do for you?"

"I am looking for Miss Lillie, miss. I am hoping that she could provide my unit with some spare gasoline. Is she around?"

"She is presently in the fountain building, discussing with her deputy, Commandant Drouet. I can call for her right now: we have functioning field telephones. One moment, please!"

Turning around inside her sandbagged position, the redhead grabbed the handset of a field telephone lying atop the parapet and cranked the telephone's small dynamo handle.

"Yes, this is Mary Gillies, on the bridge. I need to speak with Mélanie... Mélanie? I have here at the barrage a Free French soldier who wanted to ask you if you would have some gasoline for his unit's armored vehicles, which just arrived at the Prefecture... I will pass the word to him... Yes, we can guide him to the cabaret. Bye!"

The redhead then put down her handset and turned around to smile again to the warrant officer.

"Mélanie says that she still have some gasoline stashed inside her secret cave and that she will be happy to give it to you. I will now guide you to our cabaret, where Mélanie will join you soon. We have people at the cabaret who will be able to carry that gasoline to your vehicles."

"We could roll up to your cabaret, if that could make things easier, miss."

"Uh, I wouldn't counsel that, mister: we have a double row of anti-tank mines buried just past the south extremity of this bridge. Digging them out and disarming them could take hours."

"Oh, I see! Then, show me the way to your cabaret."

The redhead nodded her head once, then looked at one of the two other women manning the barrage, a very pretty blonde close to thirty.

"Hey, Lisa! Could you take my place at this machine gun? I have to guide this gentleman to the cabaret."

"Sure, Mary! You may go now." Replied the blonde as she walked out of the other machine gun position, where another young woman was smoking a cigarette while standing behind a second machine gun. As the warrant officer followed the redhead, he was barely able to make out a number of spots on the pavement of the adjacent street where a number of cobblestones appeared to be sticking up slightly.

"Nice work on camouflaging those mines, miss: they are barely noticeable."

"Thanks! We planted more anti-tank mines across the Quai des Grands Augustins and the Quai de Montebello, about 200 feet down on each side of this bridge. You better warn your drivers about them."

"I will!"

Going down Place Saint-Michel, the duo then went down the Rue Saint-André-des-Arts and arrived after 300 feet at the façade of a four-storey building with racy posters displayed in its ground level windows. The warrant officer however didn't miss the muzzles of at least two machine guns sticking out from windows on the upper floors. The redhead then pointed the main entrance of the building.

"The Mille et Une Nuits Cabaret, the sexiest little establishment in Paris. We will now go see its manager, Madame Marie Laurent, who also happens to be the adoptive mother of Mélanie."

The warrant officer took a moment to admire the poster of a ravishing teenage girl in a vaporous Persian outfit before entering the cabaret behind the redhead. Entering a large lounge, he couldn't help notice the sandbags, piled bricks and thick wood panels protecting the inside of the windows. Two men with rifles stood behind windows, while a very pretty young Asian girl stood behind a MG 34 medium machine gun mounted on an anti-aircraft tripod and pointing out through a window near the entrance door. A mature woman in her forties came at once to greet the duo, shaking hands with the warrant officer.

"Welcome to Paris, mister. I am Marie Laurent, manager and owner of this cabaret. You are truly a nice sight for us. Have the Allies entered Paris in force yet?"

"Not yet, Madame Laurent! Our mechanized company was sent ahead by General Leclerc, who should arrive in Paris late tomorrow with his armored division. I was told that you may have some reserves of fuel in your basement that could help refuel our tanks and half-tracks."

"You were told right, mister. We in fact still have a few hundred gallons of gasoline stashed in a cave under our basement."

"A few hundred gallons?" Exclaimed the NCO, not having expected that much. "That would be more than enough to completely refill our fuel tanks."

"And we will be most happy to give you that fuel, mister. Let me call down some help to carry that fuel. Where are they parked, by the way?"

"In front of the police prefecture."

“Right! HEY, GUYS, COME DOWN TO THE LOUNGE: I NEED LOTS OF MANPOWER TO MOVE FUEL OUT.”

Within a minute, some fourteen men came down the stairs, gathering around Marie Laurent, who then gave them a few orders.

“I need you guys to go down to our secret cave and bring up the jerrycans of gasoline that we still have in storage there. We will then use our wheelbarrows to transport that fuel to the police prefecture, where some French Army vehicles are parked. Follow me!”

Following right behind Marie Laurent, the NCO went through a large kitchen, then went down a set stairs leading to a basement containing a few old boxes and pieces of furniture, where Marie pushed aside a large wooden locker with the help of a man, revealing a hole in the masonry wall behind the cabinet.

“The secret entrance to what Mélanie calls her Ali Baba cave.” Explained Marie with a smile before going down a set of apparently very old stone stairs. Following her closely, the NCO ended up in a large cavern containing dispersed piles of crates and containers of various sizes. He was then led to a corner where an impressive number of jerrycans were piled away from the other objects in the cave.

“Our reserve of fuel. Take whatever you need, mister. ALRIGHT GUYS, LET’S START MOVING UP THOSE JERRYCANS TO THE LOUNGE!”

Not ready to stand idly by, the NCO grabbed himself two of the jerrycans and started up the stairs with them. Even for a fit man like him, those two full jerrycans represented quite a heavy load and his arms were quite fatigued by the time that he put the jerrycans down in the middle of the show lounge.

“Pheww! It will take quite of lot of efforts to carry all that fuel to the prefecture.”

“Well, we have half a dozen wheelbarrows that will greatly help that effort, mister.” Replied Marie. On an order from her, six men went to the back of the cabaret, returning within minutes with six wheelbarrows. Those were then rolled out into the street before being each loaded with three full jerrycans. The remaining men of the group then grabbed more jerrycans, with two men assisting each other to carry a jerrycan. With a total of 22 jerrycans of fuel with him, the jubilant NCO led the group up the street, then across the bridge, to finally drop their loads beside the parked tanks and half-tracks. They next returned to the cabaret for a second load of jerrycans. The men were tired but satisfied when they dropped their second load near the armored vehicles, where Captain Dronne thanked them and shook hands with them.



"Thank you for your help, men. That gasoline will be of great help to us. And thank Miss Lilie on my part for that."

"Well, you will be able to tell her that directly, sir: here she comes!"

All eyes then went to a tall teenage girl approaching in the dark. She was armed with a submachine gun and a pistol and wore an armband around her left arm. The soldiers of the mechanized company, like Dronne himself, were all instantly mesmerized by her great beauty and sexiness as she stopped in front of the captain to shake hands with him.

"Welcome to Paris, Captain! I am Mélanie Laurent, in command of the Groupe Paris Liberté Résistance cell. I see that you already have the fuel you asked for."

"I indeed do, miss. By the way, I heard a lot of nice things about you. How did you manage to find so much fuel, weapons and ammunition, if I may ask?"

"You may! Actually, this is the product of four years of cautious but systematic pilfering of German reserves and supply trains. I was also helped greatly in that by the British First Special Commando Unit, which operated until recently around Paris."

"Operated? Where are they now?"

"They left Paris after the landings in Normandy. It was actually an ad hoc unit formed out of British stragglers and of men cut off from their units during the 1940 debacle. They did a great job while in Paris and caused massive casualties to the Germans. They also taught me a lot about fighting and military tactics."

"I see! Still, what you did with your cell was astounding. Be assured that General Leclerc will get words about your exploits."

"Exploits... Let's just say that I did what was needed to be done to help free Paris from the Germans' yoke. So, what is your next planned move, Captain?"

"Uh, I haven't really had time to think about that yet. With my report sent by radio to my division, I only need now to wait for the rest of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Armored Division to arrive here, which should happen sometimes late tomorrow."

"Then, I would advise you to avoid the area around the Palace of the Louvres and the Tuileries: a German tank unit equipped with Panther medium tanks is deployed there and they are keeping the Rue de Rivoli and the portion of the Left Bank facing the Quai des Tuileries in the sights of their guns."

"Hum, a useful information indeed, miss. Now that we are here, would you mind if we disarm and remove the anti-tank mines you planted across the southern extremity

of the Saint-Michel Bridge? That would then permit us to roll on the Left Bank if need be.”

“By all means, Captain! In fact, I will help you with that task: I didn’t arm the anti-handling devices on these Tellermine 35 mines when I planted them, so that they would be easier to remove or relocate them if needed.”

Dronne nearly protested then, having difficulty in accepting that a teenage girl would do such a dangerous work. However, he managed to hold his tongue...barely, not wanting to insult her.

“Very well! I will get a few of my men to help you with that job.”

“Thank you! I will start uncovering these mines right now, to make the job easier.”

Mélanie then turned around and walked back across the bridge, followed by Dronne’s eyes.

“What a girl!” Said softly the French captain to himself.

As expected, the lead elements of the French 2<sup>nd</sup> Armored Division and the American 4<sup>th</sup> Armored Division started entering Paris from the West and the South in the afternoon of the next day, with the main parts of the two divisions following in the morning of the 25<sup>th</sup> of August. Even though they now had no hopes of winning, the Germans entrenched around the École Militaire and the Invalides fiercely resisted, causing some casualties to the Allies. However, that resistance crumbled by the end of the morning and a large French flag was then hoisted atop the Eiffel Tower, to the cheers of the Parisians. In the afternoon that day, the German commander of the Paris region, General von Choltitz, went to the Montparnasse train station, where General Leclerc had set up his headquarters, and signed an official act of surrender at about three in the afternoon. The German occupation of Paris was now officially over! Two hours later, General Charles de Gaulle, leader of the Free French Forces, arrived in Paris and met both Leclerc and the main leaders of the Résistance in Paris. That evening, General de Gaulle gave a rousing speech from the steps of the city hall to a huge crowd of cheering Parisians. The following day, a Saturday, de Gaulle led on foot a triumphal march down the Champs-Élysées from the Arc de Triomphe to the Place de la Concorde, towering over the other marchers, then went to the Notre-Dame Cathedral, where he took part in a Te Deum. Mélanie, her mother and the girls of the cabaret participated in that triumphal march, invited thanks to the warm recommendations of

Captain Dronne to General Leclerc. That proved by far to be the best day of the war for them, with more than one war correspondent or photographer eagerly taking multiple pictures of the girls, who still wore their FFI armbands and had their weapons with them.

## **CHAPTER 19 – A TRAGIC LOSS**

**09:40 (Paris Time)**

**Sunday, August 27, 1944**

**Mille et Une Nuits Cabaret**

**34 Rue Saint-André-des-Arts**

**Quartier Latin, 6<sup>th</sup> Arrondissement**

**Paris, France**

Mélanie, returning from a meeting with other local FFI cell leaders, was in a good mood as she walked back in the cabaret via its front door. With thousands of Free French soldiers now inside Paris, the security situation was much less tense than just two days ago, so she had gone to the meeting armed only with her FN GP35 pistol. On her way and back, she had the opportunity to see the damage caused by last night's random aerial bombing of Paris done by the German Luftwaffe, probably done as an act of revenge ordered by Hitler following the liberation of the city. Up to a thousand people had been either killed or wounded in that bombing raid, which had caused substantial damage all over Paris. However, the city was now firmly in the hands of the Allies and any German offensive to retake it was now most unlikely.

Looking for her mother, Mélanie went to the kitchen, finding the cabaret's cook there.

"Hello Sylvie! Do you know where my mother is?"

The mature woman kept working the bread dough she was shaping while answering her.

"Marie got a phone call about one hour ago. She left you a note by the telephone in her office before walking out."

"Thank you!"

Mélanie then nearly ran up the stairs with her usual energetic pace and went to her mother's private office. There, as told by the cook, a small piece of paper had been left beside the telephone. Grabbing it and reading it quickly, Mélanie's eyes suddenly opened wide with alarm: the note said that Marie had received a call from someone who wanted to give her some information about a Frenchman who had collaborated with the

Germans and had given her a rendezvous at the crypt under the church of Saint-Sulpice. The name of the caller was however familiar to Mélanie, who had seen it previously in a captured Gestapo document.

"MAURICE BAUDOUIN? THAT BASTARD IS A GESTAPO COLLABORATOR!" Throwing away the piece of paper, Mélanie ran back down the stairs at once and shot out of the cabaret at a full run, surprising the passersby walking along the Rue Saint-André-des-Arts. Turning left on Rue de l'Éperon while keeping the speed of an Olympic sprinter, she then crossed the Boulevard Saint-Germain, arriving within sight of the Church of Saint-Sulpice a minute later. As she ran towards a side entrance of the church that led down to the vast crypt under the church, she made a desperate telepathic call to her adoptive mother.

"Mother, this is Mélanie! Where are you?"

She did not get an answer, although she should have been well within telepathic range of Marie by now, with Marie having received and answered such calls in the past. Now deeply worried, Mélanie slowed down only once at the side door, taking out her pistol before opening the old wooden door. All her senses now on alert, she turned invisible once inside and started going quietly down the old stone stairs leading to the crypt. The thoughts of two hostile minds nearby alerted her as she was about to step inside the crypt proper, in the part containing an old well: two men were waiting in ambush inside. Not being sure still about where her mother really was, Mélanie decided to make it as discreetly as possible and holstered back her pistol, then unsheathed her hunting knife before walking quietly into the cave containing the old well. There, she located quickly enough the two men waiting in ambush: they were each hidden behind one side of the stone column enclosing the medieval well. Doing a slow, cautious detour around the man to the right of the well, Mélanie ended up just one pace in behind him, hidden from the other man by the stone column. The man was armed with a German MP40 submachine gun, which he kept pointed at the opened access door of the staircase she had just used. Taking one step forward, she quickly ripped the submachine gun out of the man's hands while putting the cutting edge of her knife firmly across his throat, whispering in his ear.

"One shout and you are dead! Where is Marie Laurent?"

The man, suddenly sweating with terror, answered in a weak voice.

"She...she is at the other end of the crypt, in the old choir section."

"How many men are there with her?"

"One!"

"Only one?"

"Yes! I swear!"

"Thanks!" Replied Mélanie before burying her blade in the man's throat and pulling it across, nearly severing the head from the body. The involuntary gurgle from the dying man then attracted the attention of the other gunman, who called up from his position on the opposite side of the well.

"Régis, did you say something?"

Mélanie quickly walked to the second gunman, still invisible, and violently stabbed him in the stomach while deflecting his submachine gun.

"Yes! He said 'I am fucked!' It's your turn now."

Next, she viciously twisted her blade before pulling it up, ripping wide open the man's belly while slapping one hand over his mouth, so that he could not scream. The gunman died with his eyes opened wide with horror and pain, sliding down to a sitting position against the encased well while trying to hold his intestines in. Quickly wiping her blade clean against his shirt, Mélanie then walked towards the door giving access to the rest of the crypt. Turning briefly into ethereal form, she floated through that door, emerging in the vast space that had been the old Church of Saint-Sulpice. Her heart accelerated at once on seeing that a naked woman tied to a chair was visible near the opposite end of the crypt, next to a man holding a pistol. The woman seemed to be unconscious and was not moving. Her general shape and head profile was however very familiar to Mélanie: it was Marie alright! Nearly transported with fury, Mélanie floated to the armed man, still invisible and immaterial, going behind him before rematerializing into solid form. She then grabbed the man's wrist with one hand and pressed with all her strength while wrapping her left arm around his throat and kneeling him in the small of his back, preventing him from turning around. The man screamed with pain as Mélanie's inhuman strength crushed the bones in his right wrist. To Mélanie's despair, that loud scream did not cause her mother to flinch or move. That was when she saw the blood that had come out of a wound in Marie's chest, where her heart was. Anger and rage filled her instantly and she nearly screamed into the ear of the man.

"WHY? WHY DID YOU KILL MY MOTHER?"

"It...it was you I wanted to kill... You cost me a lucrative business deal with the Gestapo and killed most of my associates. I attracted your mother here so that she could be used as a bait for you. Please, don't kill me!"

"You wanted to kill me, then killed my adoptive mother and now you want me to spare your life? Like Hell I am!"

Grabbing the man's throat with her left hand, she then turned him around while tightening progressively her grip, asphyxiating him slowly while she stared into the eyes of the suffocating man.

"You are now going to go where your crimes richly deserved to be paid, you bastard! SEE YOU IN HELL!"

The man finally died in her grip after a long minute of agony. She then threw his body away and hurried to her mother. A check of her pulse confirmed to her the worst and she knelt beside her body while breaking in uncontrollable sobs.

"Nooo! NOOO! YOU CAN'T BE GONE, MOTHER!"

She stayed kneeling in front of her dead mother for a long moment while crying her loss. Finally, with a big lump in her throat and her eyes still red and full of tears, she untied as gently as she could Marie's body, then laid her down on the dusty floor of the crypt. She contemplated her for long minutes, trying to decide what to do next. Marie had been her adoptive mother for twelve years, but she was also the owner and manager of their cabaret. With her now gone, the fate of the cabaret and of its employees was now up in the air. Mélanie also realized as well that some of her latest actions would attract a lot of questions, many of which she could not answer without making a few eyebrows rise. Taking a deep breath, she then took a fateful decision and went to her mother's clothes, which lay a few paces away in one corner of the crypt. Returning near Marie's body, she next undressed herself, then put her clothes on her dead mother's body, buckling as well her gun belt around her. Next, Mélanie concentrated and started shifting shape, taking the form of Marie before putting on her mother's dress and shoes. Impersonating her mother was not going to be difficult to Mélanie, who knew Marie intimately and had been closely helping her manage the cabaret. Grabbing her FN GP35 pistol, she then walked back a good thirty paces from the two corpses. Facing them again, she gave a last, tearful look at her dead mother before raising her right hand, pointing her index at the dead Marie.

"Goodbye, Mother! I will always love you. FIREBALL!"

A speedy red dot then shot out of her extended index finger, flying to the two corpses before bursting into a huge, searing fireball that enveloped them. The intense heat blackened and scorched the stones around the blast, while the two corpses were

instantly incinerated to near cinders. Those who were going to come here to investigate would now find two bodies burned beyond recognition by a supposed incendiary grenade thrown by Mélanie as her last act before dying. The pistol still in her hand, Delicia, still in the shape of Marie Laurent, slowly walked out of the crypt, going up to the level of the modern church. She then walked out in the open like a zombie and sat on the outer steps of the church's main entrance, where she started crying again. A few passersby saw her, with some of them hurrying to her side to see what was wrong. A young man was first at her side and gently put one hand on her shoulder.

"Madam... Madam, are you okay?"

"N...no! A bastard just killed my daughter down in the old crypt under the church. I then killed that bastard, but I was too late for my daughter."

The young man then hesitated, seeing the pistol in her right hand, and looked around him for someone to help him. That was when Lisa Van Houten and Louise Thibault, armed with MP40 submachine guns, arrived at a run, nearly out of breath. Lisa knelt at once beside Marie/Delicia and spoke urgently to her.

"Are you alright, Marie? Where is Mélanie? Sylvie told us about the note near the telephone and we came as fast as we could."

"I am okay: I was just roughed up a bit. However, Mélanie is dead: she was killed while delivering me from a group of collaborators seeking revenge against us. She had time to throw an incendiary grenade before dying, killing the head of these collaborators. She...she is in the old crypt in the choir section."

Marie/Delicia then started crying again. She however didn't need to fake her tears then: her grief was too real and painful for that. Lisa, herself bordering on tears at the news of Mélanie's death, looked up at Louise Thibault.

"Stay with her while I go investigate the crypt, Louise."

Lisa then disappeared inside the church, leaving a distraught Louise to sit down beside Marie/Delicia. Lisa returned to the steps of the main entrance fifteen minutes later, as Paul Dujardin, limping, was arriving with Aïsha Rahal, both of them armed with submachine guns.

"Thank God you are safe, Marie!" Said Dujardin on approaching his employer. "Where is Mélanie?"

"Dead!" Answered Lisa, her expression gloomy. "She was killed by a collaborator while freeing Marie. Her body and that of her attacker are in the old crypt, burned beyond recognition by an incendiary grenade she threw before dying. That is



what Marie told me anyway. I also found the bodies of two armed men at one entrance to the crypt: they were probably killed by Mélanie before she encountered the last collaborator.”

The group was left nearly prostrated by this sad news, standing or sitting around Marie/Delicia. Aïsha Rahal, the thirty year old Lebanese dancer, finally looked at the others as her tears dried up.

“What...what do we do now?”

Marie/Delicia then surprised them by coming out of her grief long enough to speak in a trembling voice.

“First, we recuperate Mélanie’s body, so that she can be properly honored and buried. Then, we will go on, all of us. We still have a cabaret to run and a war to win.”

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