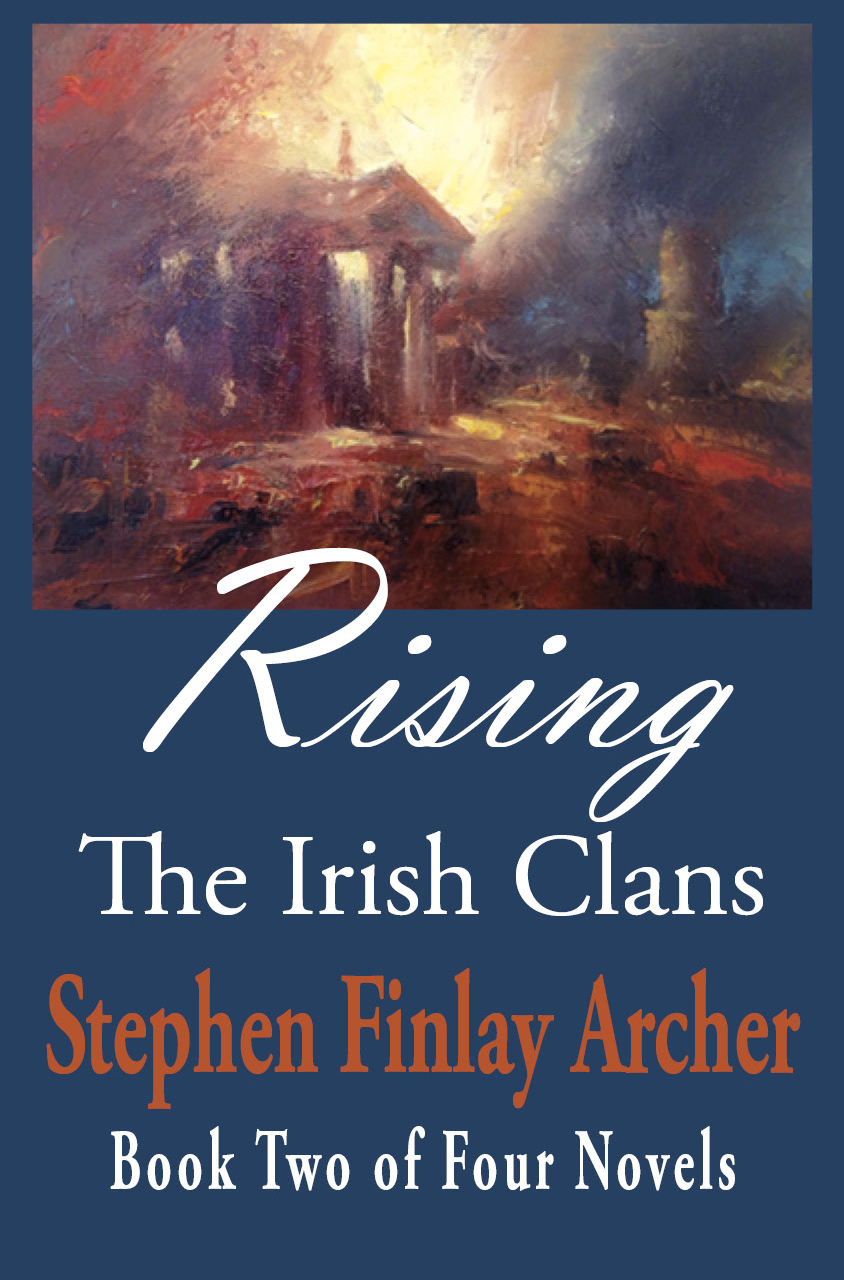
**ENTENTE - THE IRISH CLANS BOOK TWO**

**Picture of the Western Front December 1915 not the Rising**



**The second in a saga of romantic historical fiction novels set in the period of the Twentieth Century Irish Revolution involved in solving the riddles of an ancient Clan Pact.**

**Stephen Finlay Archer  
 was brought up in Toronto  
 Canada. His mother is Dot  
 in the novels and his   
 grandfather was Samuel  
 Finlay, an artist of some   
 repute.**

**Following acquisition of a Masters of Science degree at the University of Toronto, Stephen spent thirty five years as an aerospace engineering manager working initially in Canada and mostly in the United States. He directed satellite systems design, implementation , launch and mission programs with the U.S. Navy and with NASA/NOAA among others.**

**Upon retirement Stephen completed courses in short story and novel writing with the Long Ridge Writers Group. He is a member of the Writers Unlimited and Creative Non-Fiction Writers Groups in California Gold Country.**

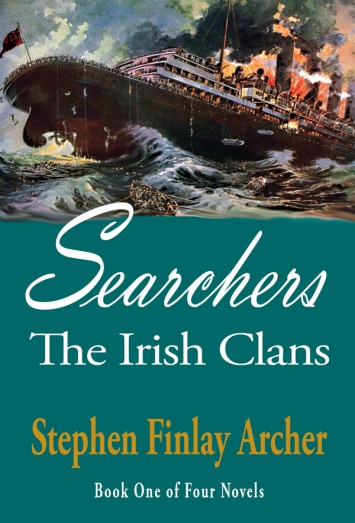
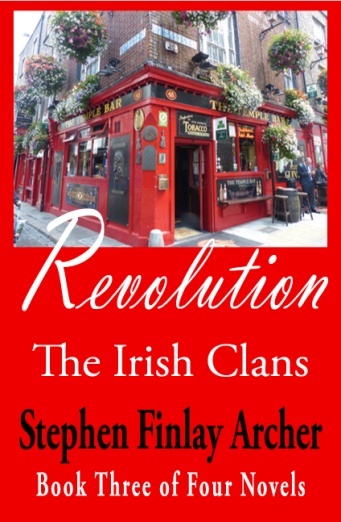
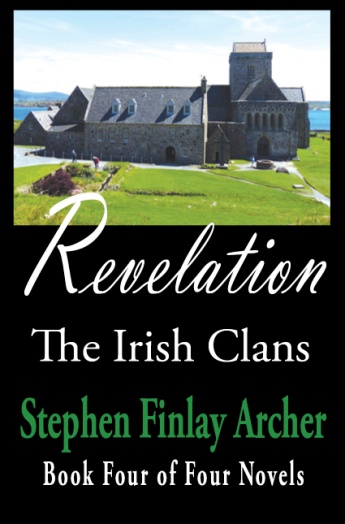
**Look for SEARCHERS to be published on Amazon in the Fall 2015 and RISING in the Winter 2016 in advance of the Centennial of the Easter Rising next March.**

**stephensonfinlay@earthlink.net**



**Any resemblance of my fictional characters to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental. The depiction of the historical persons in these novels is not coincidental, and to the best of my knowledge, is accurate to events and their character in life.**

**The Irish Clans** is an epic saga of four novels immersed in the tumultuous Irish revolutionary period of 1915 through 1923 while the world is embroiled in the Great War to end all wars, and its aftermath. The McCarthy and O'Donnell Clans, once mighty, were overthrown, but are not extinct. They are linked on two continents by a crafty medieval pact, entwined in religious and military history and mythology and using Clan relics, and waiting for Divine intervention to be revealed when the Gaelic heritage is ripe for its second coming. This is an intriguing story of patriotism and passion.

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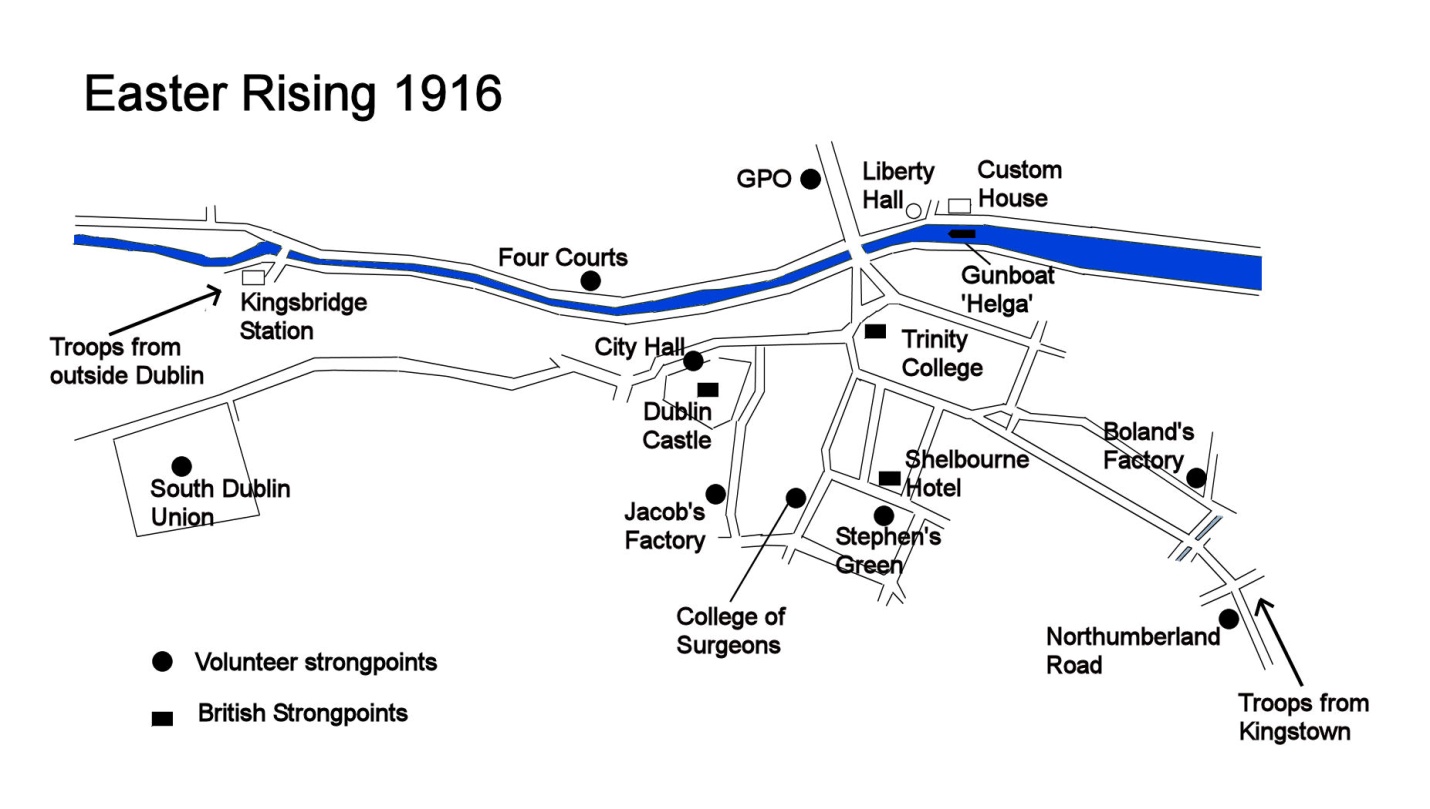
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Map of the Western Front December 1915

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7 Ha'penny Bridge

8 Merrion Square Park

9 Howth Harbour

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**ENTENTE**

**THE IRISH CLANS**

**BOOK TWO**

**Stephen Finlay Archer**

*"Where blazed the sacred fire, rung out the vesper bell   
 Where the fugitive found shelter, became the hermit's cell.  
 And hope hung out its symbol to the innocent and good,   
 For the cross o'er the moss of the pointed summit stood."*

*- The Pillar Towers of Ireland*

DENIS McCARTHY

**DEDICATION:**

**To Be Determined**

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:**

Without the tutelage of the Long Ridge Writer's Group and particularly Ms. Lynne Smith there would be no novels of the Irish Clans, at least no intelligible ones. The author is also indebted to the Manzanita Press for their tireless support in editing and production of these novels. Of particular note are its manager and editor Ms. Monika Rose, Ms. Sally Kaplan, Ms. Connie Strawbridge, and Ms. Jennifer Hoffman who took me under their wing to teach me the ropes and to rope my manuscripts into shape.

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Thank you all for your support and encouragement.

Yet most of all I wish to express my undying love and appreciation to the woman who has for thirty years been the wind beneath my wings, my darling wife Kathy. She has wholeheartedly supported this new journey in our lives, even though it wasn't in our plans when we retired from the aerospace business a decade ago.

It is therefore my pleasure to dedicate this second book of the Irish Clans Saga to my beloved Kathy. I hope that you will continue to allow me to be the wind beneath your wings my love. Grandly and forever.

**CHAPTER ONE - CAPTURED (WC 2636) ©**

**October 19, 1915, Five Months and Twelve Days after the Lusitania Sank**

**Site of the Lusitania Sinking, Eight Miles off Old Head Kinsale**

**M**

ORGAN WAS MORTIFIED. Her new life had just been split asunder. Tadgh,   
 her normally virile and in-command Irish rebel lover, was trapped under their overturned Galway hooker. What was left of it after the freighter had exploded. They never should have tried to save the crew men after it was torpedoed by this German U-boat. And here she was, right on top of the Lusitania that these same Germans had sunk with her on it just five months earlier.

She remembered now. The veil of her amnesia resulting from the horrific ocean liner sinking had partially parted. The explosion of the freighter must have jarred her memory. So similar. She remembered the lighthouse off in the distance to the north. She could see in her racing mind the devastation on the deck of her ocean liner as the port lifeboats crashed onto the deck spilling and killing their inhabitants. She could smell the fire engulfing the decking where the funnel had collapsed. She could feel the tearing of the ship's bowels as bulkhead after bulkhead gave way. And she could remember vividly her anguish that her man, what was his name? was overdue with the babies from down in the nursery. *My babies?* Her spine shook with the fear of it all. *Why can't I remember their names or anything earlier.* She wracked her brains but the answers wouldn't come. And that crewman that insisted she jump into the last lifeboat that was dangling over the side. The plunge into the icy sea. *God preserve me*.

That thought of being pushed toward the lifeboat brought her back. "God Tadgh. Save him," she screamed, remembering how he had flung her overboard moments before. Or was it moments. How long has he been trapped under *The Republican.* Morgan heard the German seamen cursing in their native language beside and behind her. One was holding her fast in the rubber dingy that was close to capsizing in the choppy ocean swells. She remembered a German officer diving off the dingy just as she hit the water. *He must have been the one to pull me out* . *Saved my life.* Her mind was vacillating rapidly between the two terrible realities. Confusing her. It was Tadgh that saved her. *That's what he said*. *That was last time*, she decided.

Morgan spun around. That officer was nowhere in sight in the dingy. The men started pointing behind her, pointing and shouting. She spun back around just in time to see one who was dressed like the missing officer dive overboard. Her heart leapt. She spied Tadgh's head which had surfaced in the ten feet between the dingy and the sinking hull of the hooker, just outside a pool of burning wreckage. The head lolled violently, side to side, eyes staring vacantly. There was a gash on the forehead, a deep one by the look of it. Her mind snapped to attention.

Morgan squirmed her lithe five foot seven frame in an effort to break free of her captor. "I've got to go save him!"

But the seaman held fast and her legs buckled.

Then the swimming officer had reached Tadgh and was dragging him back away from the burning wreckage and towards the dingy. Morgan broke free just as his inert form was hoisted out of the water and onto the floor of the raft. She rushed to his side, noting the blood flowing freely out of his left calf where the wooden deck skewer was firmly imbedded. It looked to her from the ragged edges of the wound that he had struggled mightily to break off the piece piercing his leg.

Morgan went to work on the body. She had to flip her bedraggled shoulder length black ringlets out of her eyes. *God. No pulse at the neck*. The seamen were still focused on the sea, shouting and urging their swimming comrade to do something. They seemed frantic. Morgan paid them no mind as she rolled Tadgh onto his back checking his airway for obstructions. None. She started pumping his chest, stopping every five seconds with mouth to mouth contact to blow air into his lungs.

The men behind her shouted and lunged forward. The dingy almost floundered. Moments later the two officers were pulled up out of the water, flopping down opposite Tadgh. The one who saved her was holding his face and groaning. Morgan could see he had been badly burned. *God save us all.*

One of the seamen knelt beside his leader while another took over the chest pumping from Morgan who was near fainting. She continued mouth to mouth. It had now been almost two minutes since she had seen Tadgh's head break the surface. No telling how long he was under water. *God no*.

Suddenly Tadgh belched just as Morgan blew once more into his lungs. Vile liquid spewed up into Morgan's mouth. But she didn't care. "Keep pumping," she yelled. "Now, turn him over." She motioned as she commanded and the seaman got the message. Once on his back with his head to one side, the seaman resumed his pumping, this time at the shoulder blades. Water was streaming out of Tadgh's mouth and he coughed weakly. Morgan checked and there was a pulse in his neck, weak but stable. *Thank God!*

Morgan turned her attention to the leg, ignoring the plight of the officer. There was blood pooling in the bottom of the dingy. Plenty of it. Tadgh's blood. Morgan ripped Tadgh's pant leg off and used it to apply a tourniquet above the knee. She left the wood skewer in place. That stopped the bleeding for the moment. Then she checked his head injury. *Superficial. Doesn't look like the cranium is cracked.* She checked his pulse again. Still stable. But he had slipped back, unconscious. Memories of the frightening night three months earlier. He had almost died when the Republican was attacked during the arms transfer. The agony of it flooded over her. Just like then she wasn't going to lose her man. Unlike that earlier occasion where she was alone, she had help now. But these were German seamen. Were they the ones that sank her ocean liner and killed all those innocent people? How could Tadgh have said that they are our allies. It didn't make sense to her. But here they were attempting to save them.

The dingy banged up against the hull of the submarine as the paddling seamen reached their craft. Morgan was frightened by the sinister black killing machine which was, itself wallowing in the sea chop. It looked like a giant sea snake looking for its prey. Seamen from the U-boat jumped down into the rubber dingy with two stretchers and lifted Tadgh and the injured officer onto them. They were strapped down tight, chest and legs.

"Take it easy with him," Morgan cried but they paid her no mind. She noted that one of the seamen gave the officer a needle and soon he stopped crying out.

The second officer was looking at the horizon and pointing. Morgan peered and could see what looked like a war ship heading their way out of northeast. Queenstown. Their destination before this nightmare happened.

"Schnell. Schnell," the officer screamed and a seaman grabbed Morgan bodily. She started to protest but was in no condition to argue. *Any port in a storm* she thought, in desperation.

It seemed like they were in a dream. Being lifted out and up and then down through a tiny hatch into the belly of the snake. They had to wait their turn to go down. The stretchers were lowered first. A claustrophobic panicky feeling gripped her as she waited. *Deja vu.* Then it came to her. The throng of passengers clawing their way up from the bowels of the Lusitania towards the light of the open deck above. She had almost died right there on the stairs. Like so many others. And the babies? Her Babies? She couldn't shake the foreboding feeling. The dark dread of death.

When it came her turn to descend she balked. The rasping siren was sounding and seamen behind her were pushing her. Just like the Lusitania but in the opposite direction. Down below the surface of the sea. It sucked the air out of her lungs. Morgan couldn't breathe. She stumbled half way down and fell the remaining short flight of vertical stairs, landing on the seaman below her.

The smell was overpowering. There was an oily mist in the air choking her lungs. She could see it in the dim lights barely illuminating the cramped stomach of the snake. There was more than ten feet from the middle where she was kneeling at the foot of the ladder to each side wall with so much complex equipment in between that the men were barely shoulder to shoulder. But it was the stale odor of these sweaty men and the stench of the foul latrine in the corner that left her gagging.

Morgan's smoky green eyes darted around the cramped hell hole. It looked like a small control room of some sort with pipes, wheels, gauges,

In an odd sense, it was like the panic she had felt when she had awoken with amnesia in Tadgh's bed. Totally out of control. Totally defenseless. There were at least twenty seamen working to close the hatch above her, spinning wheels, calling out gauge readings and pulling levers. Suddenly she felt the sinking sensation of falling as the beast nosed down. The beast with the warm, wet vibrating floor . But there was no loud engine noise. Just the drumming of an electric motor as the propellers bit into the sea.

*God, let me out,* her brain screamed, and she started to reach up to climb the ladder. That's when her character stepped in.

"Where is my man?" she demanded as she spun to face the men. She couldn't leave him behind.

"Kommen mit me, fraulein," the second officer addressed her gruffly, grabbing her arm and ripping her off the ladder. Was that perfume she smelled on him? It didn't overpower his odor but it helped. There was a bulkhead on either end of the control room with a circular hatch you had to step up and through.

He yelled orders to his crew that she couldn't understand as he dragged her forward.

Morgan smashed her right elbow's funny bone on the cold edge when the officer tried to pull her through the opening. Her arm went numb and it hurt like hell but it didn't bleed. This wasn't damn funny.

"Kommen sie hier, bitte," the officer yanked her forward past more electrical gear with seamen wearing headsets, past what looked like sleeping bunks and a makeshift kitchen until they were opposite two portside bunks one above the other. *God this is cramped. How can men live like this, like rats in a hole.* At least there weren't so many men crammed together here.

"Tadgh," Morgan cried, seeing her lover, face up strapped into the upper bunk with a rubber sheet covering him. It was hot and moisture was condensing on the cold ceiling and walls of the ship above and beside him. The stinking water was dripping down onto him. At least his wound was covered. Yet the floor was hot. *This really is hell.*

Tadgh looked white and his face felt clammy. There was a pulse in his neck. Steady but still weak.

"Do you have a doctor on board," Morgan asked naively of the officer.

"Nein."

"You speak English?"

"Yawohl, fraulein." Bist du English."

Morgan had no idea what her nationality was. Maybe American since she had been on the Lusitania which she had been told had come from New York. But not German. She thought it wise to say no. "Irish," Captain.

"I am not the Kapitanleutnant. He is here on the bed. He saved your life and that of your Herren. I am the Watch Officier. This is my bunk."

"What's your name," Morgan asked, her senses clearing now that she saw her man in dire straits.

"Meine namen ist Fritz. I must return to my men now."

"My name is Morgan and my Herren is Tadgh. I am a nurse. Do you have medicine?" She started to lift the sheet off of Tadgh's leg after loosening the lower strap. She flinched as she did so, afraid of what she would find there.

Before she could uncover the wound the officer spoke. "We have a kit in the galley and we are all trained to use it."  
 "Get it then and be quick about it."  
 "You will look after the Kapitanleutnant first."

Morgan glanced down to where the officer was lying face down on the lower bunk. He seemed to have passed out. The back of his head and neck, his shoulders and what was exposed of the top of his back were burned. At least second degree if not worse Morgan thought.

"He ran out of air saving your Herren and had to surface at the edge of the burning debris. It was that or drown. We had to pull him out."

Morgan noted that the standing officer had minor burns on the back of his hands.

"You mean that you had to pull him out, Fritz," Morgan said taking the palm of his hand and turning it over gently.

"It's nothing. You will address me as sir. Well?"

"Bring me your kit and we'll see what we can do. Can you boil water and do you have any clean cloths? How about alcohol?" She knew damn well that she was going to minister to Tadgh first. God he looked terrible.

"We have small electric burner, when it works. We ration water."

"Well, I need your ration hot. The kit and alcohol. Bring it schnell." *That's the word he'd used to get them all back in the U-boat.*

"I will send help. Tend to the Kapitanleutnant."

Morgan ignored the order and lifted Tadgh's sheet. At least they had put a sheet under him as well. Morgan was relieved that the amount of blood that had pooled under his calf was minor. Her tourniquet had survived the descent into the snake. On the other hand she had no knowledge of how much blood he had lost before he was brought into the dingy. The skewer was about three quarters of an inch in diameter and was sticking jaggedly out of Tadgh's calf sideways by about six inches. The wound was badly ripped presumably when Tadgh tried to free himself.

Better not to try and remove the obstruction until she saw what first aid materials were available. She would definitely need to stitch him up as soon as the wood was removed. No telling whether it would come out cleanly. Morgan noted that several of Tadgh's fingernails had been ripped off leaving a bleeding quick..

The drumming of the electric engines which vibrated the decking suddenly stopped. The U-boat nosed deeper. Above the creaking of the ship's joints Morgan thought she could hear another churning noise in the sea above. Very close above. Two minutes later the U-boat leveled off and seemed to hover there in the blackness of the sea. No one spoke.

Morgan looked aft through the bulkhead opening toward the control room. The men stood motionless as if anticipating something. *What?*

"Whomp." The snake shook and lurched left. Morgan lost her footing and crashed into the corner of the bunk, collapsing on the ground. Her ears were deafened as the snake's skin squealed in protest.

A seaman rushed through the bulkhead opening and lifted Morgan up. "Be quiet. Depth charge," he whispered. "Deadly new invention of the English." So he did know English when he chose to speak it." He looked frightened.

**CHAPTER TWO - COMMAND DECISION (WC 2378) ©**

**October 19, 1915**

**One Hundred Feet Down and Two Hundred Above the Lusitania**

**W**

"

HOMP." CLOSER THIS TIME. The pressure wave rattled the pipes and salt water started spewing out of a joint above Morgan's head. The seaman held her fast then guided her to hold on to the bunk. Tadgh's leg had rolled precariously out over the edge. Morgan moved it back and noted some blood coming out of the wound. The tourniquet had loosened. She quickly cinched it up.

"Meine namen ist Johan." The seaman brusquely pushed her back against bed.

Then, using a wrench on the leaking joint he soon had the leak reduced to a trickle. Morgan could see the officer shaking his fist at Johan from aft in the control room. The tool had made scraping noises.

They all waited what seemed like an eternity for the next attack. It never came. Finally Morgan grabbed the seaman's shoulder. "Can we get the medicine kit and hot water so I can fix these men?" She motioned to the injured and made a hand motion like sewing.

Johan disappeared through the bulkhead opening. She could see him consulting with the officer who shouted some orders, pointing back towards the small galley.

Morgan examined Tadgh while she waited. At least he didn't seem to have any broken bones. She had noted that he groaned when she moved his leg back. A good sign. "Mavorneen, it will be all right, my love," she cooed as she stroked his cheek. It had to be.

*First I'll fix him up and then I'll get them to put us ashore down near Baltimore,* she decided. But were they prisoners trapped in the belly of this snake?

Johan came back with a badly banged up tin box. Morgan noted with satisfaction that it had a worn red cross on the outside. At least they acknowledged that symbol. On opening it she saw it contained bottles with a liquid solution labeled antiseptikum, a jar of ointment of some kind, gauze, tape, a sewing kit and stout surgical thread. But needles and vials labeled das Morphium piqued her curiosity the most. That must have been what they gave the Captain. Morgan opened one of the bottles and sniffed. Bitter. It smelled like Dakin solution which she somehow knew was a diluted mixture of boric acid and sodium hypochlorite, a wound antiseptic. She was getting used to somehow remembering her nursing skills although her general amnesia was still annoyingly persistent. Morgan decided that she could work with these tools.

She had to stabilize Tadgh before the officer came back. She needed to extract the skewer first. The seaman had come back with a pail of hot water and a bar of foul smelling soap, but no alcohol. Must be drinking water. It looked clean. All the cloths he brought were soiled. Morgan removed her tunic. It would have to do. She poured some water on her dirty hands and lathered the soap. It left a scummy film. She decided to dab some of the dakin solution, or whatever it was, on her fingers just in case.

Johan went forward through the next bulkhead opening and returned with a shirt. It wasn't clean but it didn't reek either. Again the perfume smell. Morgan thanked him and he helped her put it on.

Morgan was impressed that this military man under battle stress who would not have seen a woman for many days if not weeks would be so decent and thoughtful as to give her his own shirt to cover her exposure. Instinctively she kissed his cheek and smiled. Maybe this wasn't a hell hole after all.

He recoiled seeming almost shy at her expression of thanks.

Morgan ripped her tunic in strips while the seaman watched her closely. She motioned for him to hold Tadgh's leg still. He pointed at the Captain, but Morgan insisted he follow her non-verbal directions. He held down Tadgh's leg above and below the injury.

Morgan opened the bottle of antiseptic and laid it on the bunk nearby. Then in a slow but forceful tug on the skewer she pulled it out of the wound. Immediately blood gushed out. Dipping one of her tunic strips in the still hot water she applied pressure over the wound. Seeing the rough edges of the skewer she realized that there were probably splinters still in the wound. There would have to be.

The first strip of tunic became sodden with blood. It must have pooled in the wound before the tourniquet had been applied. Gingerly Morgan removed the cloth and examined the gaping wound. It was trying to close up. As she spread the edges to check for wood inside, Tadgh groaned and involuntarily tried to move his leg. Johan held him fast.

Morgan could see two large splinters below the surface. There were no forceps to use. Using her fore and middle fingers as tweezers she reached in and extracted the splinter closest to the surface. It looked like it came out cleanly leaving no splinter in the wound. She could just barely second one in deeper.

The seaman had been watching Morgan carefully. He produced a knife from his scabbard. It didn't look very clean. Morgan took some gauze and, dipping it in the antiseptic solution, she wiped the blade. She had no idea what germs it would transmit.

It took five minutes of probing for Morgan to finally hook a jagged edge of the remaining splinter. Slowly she withdrew the knife and the splinter popped up closer to the surface of the wound. Then it snagged on the soft tissue.

She used her finger tweezers to grip the splinter. The blood made it quite slippery. She finally jiggled the splinter out but noted some smaller wooden pieces had broken free in the wound. Ten more minutes and she had all of the wood out of her lover's leg. At least as far as she could tell. Poor lighting made it a difficult task.

Fortunately the bleeding had stopped. Morgan carefully washed the wound with the now warm water, using another strip of her tunic. Then she poured in some of the antiseptic. Tadgh involuntarily flinched but didn't waken. The solution foamed in contact with his flesh and blood.

Morgan threaded the needle and looped a knot at the end. "Hold him still," she commanded, and Johan tightened his grip.

The sutures looked ragged but they did the trick, closing the wound. Morgan noted bruising propagating down to Tadgh's ankle. To be expected. Not necessarily dangerous. She wrapped the calf in gauze and taped it in place. These Germans at least had reasonable materials and medicine for injuries, the inevitable result of their occupation. Morgan shuttered to think of the outcome if one of those two depth charges had found their mark. That metal tin wouldn't have done any of them any good.

She removed the tourniquet and noted that the gauze didn't immediately turn red. Checking Tadgh's forehead she applied the antiseptic and covered the wound, noting an elevated temperature. She checked her own forehead for comparison. Definitely elevated. Then she ministered to the fingers on his right hand binding them tightly with the gauze. Finally she checked his pulse again. Still weak. He probably needed a transfusion. Not possible here.

Johan looked approvingly as he covered Tadgh's legs with the rubber sheet and strapped him down once more. Then he pointed to his Kapitanleutnant.

Morgan checked the Captain's pulse. Regular. But the burns were extensive. Why would a German officer risk his own life to save someone he didn't know? Look at all the men on board the freighter that they didn't try to save. They probably had already been blown up she supposed. He must have seen the English warship bearing down on them. That made her wonder if they tried to save anybody on the Lusitania. She guessed not. She felt the electric engines start again, whirring and vibrating the deck beneath them.

The second officer jumped through the bulkhead opening striding into the temporary sick bay. "What's the meaning of this?"

Morgan addressed his concern. "I'm just looking at him now. The good news is that the burns are second and not third degree sir. No black skin which means that the subsurface fat layers have not likely been affected. I am worried about the large area of his burns however. He could lose body heat and blood flow. "

"Well, fix him up. We need him zurück in der befehlszeile."

Morgan looked up at him and shrugged her shoulders.  
 "Back in command, fraulein. Schnell."

Morgan parroted back the officer's German phrase. "This man is not going to be in der beflehlszeile for quite a long time. I am concerned with his life sir." She took a third strip having dipped in the pail of now cooled water and started to dab the back of the officer's neck. Raw red blisters were forming but they were small. Perhaps they could be contained without popping. That would be preferable.

"How long?"

"You'll have to see how he responds. At least three weeks."

"Drei wochen? Inakzeptabel."

"Did you just say unacceptable?"

"Yawohl. Inakzeptabel."

"He will be in great pain and can't be moved," Morgan said, ignoring the officer, remoistening her cloth and dabbing the top of his back. She examined the top part of his burnt- away tunic which had left a remaining rough material edge imbedded in blisters. "We'll need to cut the cloth. Scissors?"

The seaman disappeared back into the galley and reappeared with scissors that looked to Morgan that they had seen better days. Having cleaned them with the disinfectant she set to work cutting the cloth below the burn area, leaving only a narrow strip still attached to the burn area.

"Right then, you can remove his shirt later without disturbing the wounds." She turned to the still fuming officer and asked, "Are you the second officer?"

"Yawohl."

"Not anymore. You are the Captain, Fritz, at least for now. I suggest you start acting like it sir."

The officer scowled. "Don't you dare give me orders."

Morgan continued defiantly. "I'm going to fix up your Captain here until my Tadgh awakes. Then you are going to put us ashore in that dingy you have strapped and netted to your submarine."

"Fraulein, you are my prisoners. I will do no such thing. When my Kapitanleutnant wakes he will decide what is to happen."

Feeling the injured officer's head, she said, "Your captain may die tonight. He's burning up. If he lives he will be in no condition to decide for some time since you will have to keep him on morphine for the pain until his wounds heal."

Morgan cringed at the thought of being trapped inside this foul snake with all these men for even another few hours. But she couldn't leave Tadgh even for a moment. She felt his brow. He felt as hot as the officer below him. And she didn't feel all that well herself. *I can't show any weakness.*

"Tend to mein Kapitanleutnant fraulein. I will be back." The officer turned on his heal and disappeared aft back into the control room. She could see him in agitated conversation with his seamen.

Morgan applied cool water to the Captain's neck, shoulders and upper back in a dabbing motion until the whole area was moistened. The burn area had swollen with splotchy red and white skin. Oddly, even through the dabbing cloth the area seemed cool, not hot. That's when she noted that his teeth were involuntarily chattering. At least his breathing seemed regular.

"We've got to get him out of his wet clothes," Morgan commanded. "Don't touch his burns." She wondered how big a dose of morphine Fritz had given him.

The seaman assigned to her disappeared aft and brought back the Captain's second set of clothes and underclothes. He brought with him another seaman and together they carefully lifted, peeled and redressed their Kapitanleutnant, returning him face down on his wiped off and blanketed bunk.

Working as quickly as she could, Morgan dabbed some watered down disinfectant on the burn areas and covered them loosely with gauze strips from the medicine kit. The seaman brought another blanket at her request and she laid it gently over her patient's head, shoulders and upper back. In a few minutes the chattering stopped.

The U-boat broke the surface and lurched forward, rotating down. Fortunately the injured were lashed down, even though the cinch on the Captain's upper torso had been removed. A minute later Morgan thought she could smell a whiff of sea air. What a relief. *Maybe they are going to take us ashore,* Morgan prayed.

Captain Fritz came forward to the sick bay. "Well? His status?"

"Stable with his burns cleaned as best I can and covered."

"When can he resume his duties?"

Why wasn't he listening. "Three weeks at best. The next few days..."

"We are heading home, fraulein. We take the short route through the English Channel even though it is dangerous."

"Put us out in the dingy first, sir."

"Nein. You must tend to mein Kapitanleutnant."  
 *Damn.* Morgan wished she hadn't painted such a dismal picture of the Captain's condition.

Morgan raced passed him and, before he could stop her, she had leapt through the bulkhead and bounded up the vertical stairs. She brushed past the new watch seaman and stuck her head and shoulders up through the hatch. She could feel the seaman holding her feet down.

What a relief. The stars twinkled in the cool night sky high above the calm sea. Off to the northwest she could barely make out lights on the horizon. Queenstown harbor she guessed, her intended destination earlier in the day. Oh Ireland, where they had been safely in Tadgh's home having breakfast early that morning. If only she hadn't suggested that they take a sail in the hooker to selfishly convince Tadgh to go to the Cunard offices in search for her identity.

Far below Fritz bellowed at his men and Morgan felt a pull on her legs. She started to slip down, too tired to fight them, down into the belly of the snake.

"Oh God preserve us," she cried and then she passed out.

**CHAPTER THREE - AWAKE (WC 4175) ©**

**October 20, 1915**

**South of the Scilly Isles, Entering the English Channel**

**T**

ADGH BEGAN TO WAKE UP FROM A NIGHTMARE. He imagined being

pinned down on a slab in a lumber mill, a whirring sound ringing in his ears. He couldn't move and his leg hurt like hell. In his foggy mind the advancing saw blade started to cut his left leg to shreds. "Yeouw!"

His cry wakened Morgan who had finally managed to fall asleep in the Captain's bunk between the galley and the control room. The same instinct a mother has to pick out her baby's cry from the confusing background noises roused her back into her own nightmare. She bolted upright hitting her head on the overhead piping. Mucus clogged her nose which smelled of oil.

When Officer Fritz had seen how she had tended to his Kapitanleutnant Weisbach, and sensing that some of his men were leering at this attractive prisoner, he had decided to give her the only bunk on board that had a modicum of privacy. At least it had a curtain to close it off from the rest of the U-boat. Raimund Weisbach wouldn't be needing it for some time anyway.

"Tadgh," she cried and launched herself out towards the improvised sick bay twenty feet forward. Once exposed in the corridor she suddenly remembered that she had removed her trousers to dry and had draped them over the only piece of furniture in the small cubicle, a clothes cabinet. Seamen in the control room stopped what they were doing and stared.

"Damn," she muttered as she dove back behind the curtain to don her still-damp apparel.

"I'm coming mavorneen."

Morgan reached Tadgh's side within a minute of his scream, and began checking his pulse and brow. Stronger but hot. She used the last of her cloth strips, dipped in the cool water pail to cool his face and neck, carefully avoiding the gauze on his forehead..

"Tadgh, it's me. Morgan. I'm here. You've been hurt and we are on the submarine.

Tadgh was unresponsive, although she could see his biceps involuntarily straining against the cinch that tied him to the bunk.

Morgan tried to open his right eyelid. The normally calm amber eye that she loved so much flitted left and right He was in severe distress. Sweat started dripping off his furrowed forehead as he vainly tried to raise his noggin.

"It's all right my love," Morgan cooed, wiping his brow again with the cool cloth. She wondered if this is how he had tended to her when she was so ill after the Lusitania sank. In that bedroom of his home at Creagh, that bedroom where they had so magically made love. Their home now. Or at least it had been as late as yesterday morning. They had survived the attack by the RIC goons at the Beamish and Crawford Brewery loading yard in Cork and the chase from that villain Boyle in Dublin, and she wasn't going to let this encounter with a German U-boat be the end of her hero and herself. "Damned if I won't."

"What's that you say *Fraulein*?" Captain Fritz hailed her as he strode forward from the control room. "*Haben sie gut geschlafen*?"

Morgan shrugged her shoulders.

"Slept good?"

She thought it best to humor him. "Yes, *danke*, is that right?"

"*Yawhol. Danke*." How is your patient.

"He cried out. I am checking him now." She started to check on Tadgh's leg.

"*Nein. Kapitanleutnant*." He forced her head down toward the burned officer.

Morgan felt Weisbach's brow. Cooler. "How much morphine did you give him?"

"He should wake up *an diesen morgen*," Fritz responded.

"Morgan is my name."

"*Morgen.* Morning."

"Oh, I see. What time is it."

"6 am *Fraulein*. We are submerged again. Well?"

"Morgan gently lifted the blanket and carefully peeled back the cloth covering Captain Weisbach's neck. It stuck in a couple of places due to the pressure of the blanket. When it was removed she saw that the blisters were intact except where the cloth had stuck. Those small areas ran with a clear liquid. She dabbed them carefully with the Dakin solution and replaced the gauze. After checking each of the gauzed areas tenderly she announced. "I don't see any signs of serious infection. We'll have to see when he wakes up." She certainly didn't want to paint an overly negative picture."

Fritz seemed unconvinced. "It doesn't look good to me."

"He survived the night didn't he?" Morgan resumed her inspection of Tadgh's leg. She worried that the cleanliness of her operation the night before, although the best that could be accomplished was certainly far below what she would have liked. And she had sewn up the wound, potentially trapping infection inside. At least it wasn't a result of a bullet or shrapnel with lead and other contaminating metals inside his leg. That monster gangrene lurked in her mind.

"Where are we and what are you going to do with us?"

"You appear to be more skilled than any of us on board. So you will nurse my *Kapitanleutnant* until we reach our port of Wilhelmshaven. For your sake he had *besser nicht sterben."*

*"Sterben?*"

"Die, *Fraulein* Morgan."

Morgan dared not show him outwardly that she was inwardly appalled at that threat. She loosened the upper leg cinch and started to peel back the blanket covering Tadgh's left calf.

"Where are we?"

"We are just entering the English Channel south of Cornwall. We ran on the surface overnight to charge our batteries and clear the air in our Untersee Boot. Now we are submerged to avoid the English ships and airships."

Morgan noted that the air did seem a little less foul. She scrunched her nose while she pinched it.

"Yes, foul. But more important. We must surface to charge batteries and vent the hydrogen gas that builds up when we use them underwater. Dangerous." And if water gets to the many batteries under this floor, chlorine gas. Deadly." Fritz stomped on the floor for effect.

Morgan realized that this really was hell on earth, or rather under it, but still not anywhere near the agony of being in the sinking Lusitania. At least these men had a chance for survival from this miserable war. "How long?"

"Three days if we are not attacked. We travel 95 miles under water from 6am to 8pm during daylight before we have to surface. Then we can travel on the surface much faster under the cover of night but only for 10 hours or 180 miles."

"I repeat. What are you going to do with us?"

"You will find that out once my Kapitanleutnant is awake and well. But, in any event you are going to the Fatherland as our guests." That last word came out like a sneer.

Inwardly Morgan screamed with the agony that she and Tadgh would be held captive in this underwater tomb.

# # # #

The pain in Tadgh's leg throbbed, excruciatingly. His forehead hurt like hell. He realized that he was tied down, horizontal. The last he remembered he was skewered on what was left of his beloved *Republica*n He opened his eyes. In the dim light, he was amazed to be onboard a U-boat. He could hear the whir of electric motors. Submerged. It smelled like a stable.

God. Did Morgan survive? "Morgan."

Morgan was eating a lunch of what Fritz called 'diesel food' in the tiny galley just aft of Tadgh's bunk. They had long since consumed the fresh fruit, vegetables, bread and meat that had been stored up on departure from port. Now it was just canned goods supplemented by a soy based filler that Fritz called Bratlingspulver. Diesel food.

She jumped up, knocking over the makeshift table and spilling her precious ration of water. "Tadgh. I'm coming!"

*God be thanked.* *She survived*, Tadgh sighed in relief. Looking right, he saw her rushing towards him a vision of loveliness in a German tunic. *German tunic*?

"Oh Tadgh. You're awake." She raised up on her tip toes and leaned over kissing him squarely on the lips.  
 "Yes my love. Are you all right *aroon?"*

"Yes, yes. I'm fine." She soothed his head with the cool water cloth. "You have a bad leg wound but I cleaned and sewed it up. You will be all right soon I hope."

"How, in the name of God?"

"The Captain saved us both Tadgh. First me from the water when I was sinking and then you somehow from the wreckage of *The* *Republican.*"

"Where is he? I want to thank him, sure I do."

"He's on the bunk below you, badly burned and hasn't regained consciousness."

"Burned?"

"He surfaced into a patch of burning debris after he freed you and pushed you up and out of harms way. He desperately needed air I think. I saw him . . . very brave."

"Where are we headed Morgan?"

"To Germany mavorneen. We are their prisoners. I tried to get them to put us ashore but they are heading home to get their Captain medical attention. We're in the English Channel I think. We almost got blown up."

"Blown up?"

"Depth charges from an English warship that saw the U-boat as they were saving us."

"I guess I missed all the fun. I like your tunic by the way."

"I had to use mine for clean cloths. This place is filthy."

"So you like *The* *Republican* better than this submarine then."  
 "This water snake you mean. It terrifies me Tadgh."  
 "I have no doubt, lass after what you must have endured on the Lusitania."

"I remembered, Tadgh!"

"Remembered what?" Tadgh himself remembered how Morgan had appeared disoriented just after the freighter blew up, calling for her loved one and her babies. Could he have survived? Was he the one who put the ad in the *Southern Star* newspaper, calling her Claire and asking anyone who knew her to contact Jack Jordan at Cunard in Queenstown? The pieces of the puzzle now seemed to make sense. Morgan was married with babies on the Lusitania and her husband was now looking for her. And Jack Jordan, the bosun's mate on the Lusitania was the conduit between them. It pained him to realize that these devastating facts were the truth of the matter.

"We were just at the spot where the Lusitania sank you know. The lighthouse. I remembered seeing the lighthouse. Then the explosion. It was like I was back on the deck of the Lusitania Tadgh."

"With your husband and your babies?"

"I don't know. That part is still fuzzy. There was a lover I think. And he had babies. I had one too. Oh, Tadgh. The panic and misery of all those people struggling to get up on deck and then crashing in the lifeboats. I remember."

"What else do you remember, aroon?"

"I remember a kind ship's officer helping me to the last lifeboat and then it plunging into the sea with me holding on for dear life. That came to me when you threw me off *The Republican.* Why did you do that Tadgh."

"You would have died when the boat capsized, don't ya know. What else do you remember?"

"Nothing, damn it. Everything else before that is a blank."

"Your real name?"

" I have no idea. It's Morgan now."

Then he remembered. "Do you have my locket lass? I tucked it inside your tunic."

"Oh, no. I took my tunic off right here by your bunk." Morgan looked frantically around on the grated floor by the bottom of the bunk. Nothing.

"I've lost it love. I didn't know it was there. I was preoccupied."

"You'll find it." Changing the subject, "Did you say the English Channel?"

"Yes. Fritz said something about taking the fastest route home."

"Fritz?"  
 "He's the acting captain now. He's all right."  
 "First name basis is it?"

"He thinks I'm a doctor I think. He needs me to tend to the Captain."  
 "I need you to tend to me."

"That I will my love. That I will."

"The English channel is a much faster route than going north around Scotland, but it is highly risky I've heard."

"Risky? This whole contraption is more than risky. It's a death trap."

"I'm sure it seems that way, especially after the Lusitania."  
 "I'm very claustrophobic Tadgh. Impending doom."

"We're going to be all right *aroon.*" He had no idea how yet, seriously wounded and strapped down. But he believed in Morgan and their love. They had survived so far and they would survive together again. "Can you bring Fritz to me *aroon?*"

"I'll get him." She kissed Tadgh's forehead.

Just then they heard the Captain moan below them. Morgan checked and he was definitely waking up.

"Lie still Captain Weisbach. I will be right back with *Herr* Fritz."

"Weisbach?"

"Yes Tadgh. I'll be right back my love."

"*Gott in himmell*!"

Tadgh heard the captain cry out. He remembered his name from their first encounter just after they sank the Lusitania.

*Kapitanleutnant Weisbach?* *Wasn't he the second in command*? "Don't move sir. You've been burned."

"Who are you? My back and shoulders are burning up."

"I am the Irishman you saved along with my partner Morgan. We are forever in your debt sir."

"Small retribution. I fired the torpedo that sank the Lusitania."

"Well you saved one of the passengers twice now."

"*Zweimal*?"

"Morgan, my partner. You directed me to look for survivors when we met at sea on the day of the sinking and you apparently pulled her out of the sea yesterday."

"*Yawohl*. Did they get that skewer out of your leg."

"Yes. Morgan. She's the one that has dressed your burns."

Fritz strode down the companionway with Morgan in tow. " *Kapitanleutnant. Sie sind wach."*

"Ya, Fritz. I'm awake. What is our status?"

"Your shoulders and upper back are badly burned. You can not roll over. We are heading home via the English Channel to get you proper treatment."

"It seems that our young lady, Morgan is it, is taking care of me. The nets and the Dover patrol?"

"*Ya, mein Kapitanleutnant*. I couldn't take the chance with your life of going around Scotland."

Morgan stepped in and felt Weisbach's forehead. You are very sick, sir. High fever. Your body is likely in shock because of the burns. We don't have the medicines on board that you need. You need to rest."

"We have a hospital in Wilhelmsholm that specializes in burns from the front." Fritz sounded authoritarian. "New invention. Bloody English. Flame throwers."

"Can you move me by stretcher to the control room?"

"I don't advise it Captain." Morgan raised the blanket and then the gauze covering his neck. She didn't like the white liquid in the blisters that had broken. "I need to examine all your burns. Lie still." She carefully removed the gauze strips, one by one, studying the condition intently. "I'm going to use the Dakin solution again."

"Dakin?"

"Disinfectant in this bottle." She raised the bottle so he could see it. "Do you want some more morphine. This is going to sting."

"No. It can't be any more painful than it is right now. When I move a little it feels like the skin is splitting open."

"Not so far. That's why I need you to stay still and rest. Here goes." Morgan dabbed the Dakin on the worst of the open sores where the gauze had stuck. Weisbach flinched but didn't let out a peep. "You were very brave in risking your life to save us sir. We are forever in your debt."

"I caused the freighter to sink in the first place and I pushed the button that sank the Lusitania." His voice was laced with remorse. "It's my job but I don't like it, not one little bit."

When she had finished dabbing she carefully laid a new set of gauze strips over the burns. There was no tape to tape them down. She didn't like the condition of the affected skin.

Fritz returned with a needle. Before Weisbach could resist more morphine coursed into

his system. "Damn Fritz. . ." Then he was asleep again.

Morgan had started checking Tadgh's leg. She didn't like the look of it either.

"What do you see Morgan?"

"There is the start of infection along the line of stitches Tadgh. It's hard to tell if it is local at the surface or not. How does it feel?"

"Like it's on fire. There's no burn is there."

"No. Captain Weisbach pushed you clear of it before he came up for air I think. I'm going to dab it with Dakin now."

The disinfectant foamed on the surface as it sank into the ragged suture line.

Tadgh wanted to distract from the pain by talking to her about what he had found out in the newspaper article. Especially after her memory jog. But now wasn't the time or place. "We will get out of this together my love. I promise you."

"If we all make it through the gauntlet," Fritz stated, removing his cap and rubbing his wrinkled forehead.

"What do you mean?" They both asked in unison.

"Locking little fingers Tadgh asked, "What goes up the chimney?"  
 "Smoke." Morgan looked worried.

"What crazy superstition is this?"

"Irish. What do you mean?"

"We normally don't go through the English Channel. Our admiral has banned it unless absolutely necessary. The English have light steel indicator nets with mines at various heights across from Dover to Calais which have ensnarled our U-boats giving the enemy warships of the Dover Patrol time to depth charge our trapped submarines."

"Like sitting ducks in a barrel," Morgan offered, covering Tadgh's leg with the gauze and then the blanket.

"I'm afraid so. But we have maps and at night we can usually miss the higher nets. It is just difficult to get precise bearings in the dark."

"What kind of ships in the Dover Patrol?" Tadgh asked, squirming a little from the residual stinging of the disinfectant.

"Anything from tribal-class destroyers to armed yachts and trawlers, most equipped with powerful search lights. There are also seaplanes and observation blimps during the day."

"How many U-boats have been sunk there?"

"At last count before they stopped us from running the gauntlet, five in the English Channel. with two entangled in the nets."

"I think it wise to take the swiftest route," Morgan said checking Weisbach's temperature once again.

Tadgh could tell from the tremor in her voice that at least the Captain's condition must be severe. He hoped that it wasn't because of his own wound. "When will we be at the nets?"

"Tonight we surface off the coast opposite Dartmouth. Tomorrow morning we submerge before dawn south of Brighton. Tomorrow at about 4pm we will be at the nets. Would you like some morphine?"

"No, I want to be awake during this critical time."

"Fritz. Have you seen a silver locket. I've lost it," Morgan asked searching the floorboards around the sick bay once more.

"Nein, *Fraulein*. I will ask my men to look for it."

Morgan realized that it could have been lost in the sea before they pulled her out.

"I must return to the control room. We are in dangerous waters."

"I will stay with my patients.You can count on me."

"*Yawohl Fraulein*. I am counting on you if you remember what I said."

"What did you tell her?"

"I said that she had better not let my *Kapitan* die for both your sakes. I would not have dived in to save you." He turned on his heel and disappeared back into the control room.

# # # #

Time passed agonizingly slowly for all on board, but particularly for Morgan. During the night the temperatures of both her patients rose and she constantly mopped their brows with the cool water. She learned a lot more about this U-boat. The 35 sailors onboard were very tense even though they were carrying out their orders. They worked and slept in 8 hour shifts, so they needed only enough bunks or hammocks for a third of them. They slept in the torpedo room forward of the temporary sick bay now that 2 of its 4 torpedoes had been launched. She had no idea where they would have slept before that. She likened their condition to sardines in a can, stacked, trapped and wet to the bone.

Morgan hadn't been allowed back into the control room or beyond it. Fritz had told her that the aft end of the U-boat contained the engines and an aft torpedo room where more sailors slept. The two toilets, each as vile as the other, flushed out into the sea. When they left port on a mission they filled one with fresh food as were all the other nooks and crannies of the ship. Now, at least, that had all been consumed in the month that they had been at sea.

There was one torpedo left in each fore and aft tube and both of the fired missles had found their mark, Fritz had bragged. All in all, a productive mission, so necessary if the submarine command was going to sink enough tonnage to upset England's food and munitions supply.

Last night, when one of the crew tried to make advances to Morgan, Fritz had censured the rogue, confining him to the aft torpedo room. He let Morgan go topside with the new watch officer to get some fresh air. What a relief. At least the submarine wasn't sinking under her. The salt air pierced her oil laden lungs and she felt almost human again. She imagined this was what a mole or a miner felt like when he surfaced after digging tunnels all day.

Standing on the bridge Morgan could see moonlight glistening off the forward deck. The sea was calm with only the occasional wave whipping over the bow and splashing them. The first water that had touched her face since she was pulled out of the sea. The men were only allowed skimpy rations of fresh water, with none allowed for bathing. No wonder they smelled so bad. They tried to mask it with perfume that each man splashed on. Number 4911 cologne Fritz told her. He tried to give her some and she refused it. Then she decided. That smell would nauseate her for the rest of her life.

Off to the left she saw lights twinkling on the shore.

"Towns along the shore of the Isle of Wight. We're right on track," the watch officer announced, pointing to his left.

Suddenly the sailor swiveled around to the south. Morgan turned to follow his gaze.

"Dive, dive, aircraft overhead," he shouted into the IMC intercom.

Morgan could now hear it but couldn't see anything. The watch officer shoved her back down through the hatch opening and jumped down after her, turning in the conning tower to secure the hatch. The boat was already diving.

When they were finally down in the control room, Fritz questioned his underling.

"Felixstowe F.2 flying boat sir." They had been briefed on this new peril for their submarines.

"Are you sure? At night?"

"There's a full moon and clear skies. At about 5,000 feet I guess, half a mile out heading north from Cherbourg I should think towards Southhampton. I don't think he saw us."

The first bomb landed 500 yards ahead of the U-Boat. They heard the whomp but there was no concussion.

"Didn't see us eh? Depth?" Fritz questioned, turning to his pilot who was madly working the ballast levers.

"30 feet sir." They could all feel the bottom falling out of the boat.

"Right full rudder."

Morgan could feel the boat starting to turn as it dove.

"Woman get forward to your patients. Make sure they are strapped in."

Morgan was just stepping through the bulkhead when the next bomb went off. It felt like it was right above them. It knocked her sideways right into the latrine. Sirens were blaring until Fritz yelled and they were silenced. "Damage control!"

Morgan heard several men sound off. No one sounded panicked. The lights flickered and then came back on. Wrenches were heard presumably tightening leaks, Morgan thought.

By the time Morgan had picked herself up, noting a definite pain in her left shin, things had appeared to return to normal. The U-boat leveled off and Fritz ordered the engines to all stop. Morgan reached her patients who thankfully were still strapped in.

"What's going on lass?" Tadgh asked clutching on to Morgan's sleeve.

"Aircraft bombing."

"Is it night?

Yes mavorneen."

How can that be?"   
 "Full moon love."

They all waited there for half an hour, Morgan holding Tadgh's hand, wondering when the next bomb might drop. But none came.

"I'll go and check with Fritz," Morgan finally said, first giving Tadgh's hand a comforting squeeze.

Finally Fritz ordered the U-boat to come up slowly to periscope depth. Then from up in the conning tower, Morgan heard, "Up periscope."

A minute later Fritz announced. "The damn flying boat is up there, not 400 yards astern, bobbing on the sea like a giant seagull."

"Shall we torpedo it," someone asked. "They may have dropped a line trying to hear our underwater signal."

"Do they have ship to shore communications?"

No one knew. Unlikely.

"Come about to firing depth. left full rudder. Prepare forward tube "  
 "Aye sir."

Two minutes later. "Rudder amidships. All stop."

They waited for the order.

"Damn, the plane is taking off," a sailor behind Morgan with a headset on announced."

"I can see that," Fritz yelled down from the conning tower. "Secure the torpedo tube."

They couldn't tell if the float plane was going to search for them further in the darkness or not. But they had been exposed and the English might be waiting for them at the nets.

"Maybe they won't be sure that we were down here," one seaman offered.

"Wishful thinking."

No further attack came and Fritz ordered them back on course. An hour later they surfaced to a tranquil world devoid of aircraft. The moon had set.

**CHAPTER FOUR - RUNNING THE GAUNTLET (WC 2409) ©**

**October 21, 1915**

**South East of Brighton in the English Channel**

**T**

HE MOOD ONBOARD U-19 WAS TENSE AND TESTY. They had been submerged

since 6 am and now, twelve hours later, the air was rancid. They stood a mile away from the nets at periscope depth. All afternoon they had watched as armed ships of the Dover Patrol had plied back and forth between Dover and Calais. On two occasions they had dived for cover when the periscope picked up a Felixstowe F.2 coming at them from the horizon. There was every indication that their presence in the channel the night before had been reported.

Fritz was consulting the rough net and minefield chart they'd been given by the admiralty when Morgan poked her head up into the conning tower. "How long until we get through the nets?"

"There are two hours until darkness but I want to wait until the moon at 2 am."

"I don't think you should waste any time sir." She thought the use of sir would keep him communicative with his prisoner.

"Because?"

"Your captain's condition is deteriorating without proper equipment and medicines."

"It's your job to keep him alive and well."

"In this hell hole with dirty water dripping off the ceiling and no clean bandages?"

"It's not my problem. Get back to sick bay and stop bothering me."

"How long until we reach your port at Wilhelmshaven?"

"About thirty hours after we clear the nets."

"Captain Weisbach may die from infection in his burns well before that."

Fritz jumped down from the conning tower dragging Morgan with her. A minute later they were in sick bay. "Show me."

Morgan carefully lifted the dripping rubber blanket and pulled off the neck gauze. White pus oozed from the sores and the area had taken on a purple tinge. Weisbach was on his third dose of morphine. We will run out of the disinfectant well before we reach your port. I'm not sure it's doing any good anyway."

Fritz felt his Kapitan's forehead. "Hot."

Morgan hadn't even mentioned her real concern. Her lover and Fritz's second prisoner was not faring any better. The leg was now swollen and it looked like the infection was more than skin deep. Tagh was conscious, having refused morphine, but somewhat delirious.

"There is an option." Fritz took a second look now under the shoulder bandages. "There is a U-boat base at Ostend in Belgium. It is much closer and barely behind our lines. But our hospital facilities there are limited."

"Better to treat a live person than a dead one. Can they deal with major burns there?"

"I don't know. I've never been to their medical facility."

"How long until we could get there, sir."

"About four hours after we clear the nets."

"Go there."

"Transport from there to Germany will be difficult."

"If you don't go there you may be using a hearse for transport."

"Let's get through the nets first. Then I will decide."

"You do that and do it quickly." It surprised Morgan that Fritz seemed to take her direction positively. Most men wouldn't.

# # # #

By 9 pm the sky was black. Looking through his periscope Fritz could see a slow trawler coming out of Dover, it's lights shining along the line of the sea above the nets. With the full moon directly overhead, it may as well have been daylight.

His rough map showed a small gap in the wire nets about ten miles off Dover so he had positioned his U-Boat opposite that spot and a quarter mile from the net line. German intelligence stated that these light wire nets, sometimes as much as three hundred feet wide, were anchored at various depths from the sea bed, with floats to hold them upright. If a submarine became entangled, a marker buoy would pop to the surface providing a target for bombers and surface ship depth charges. And if that wasn't dangerous enough, the English had laid minefields in the area.

Fitz realized that Morgan was right. He had chosen this treacherous route to save his Kapitan and it looked like time was of the essence. Morgan had said so and he believed her. So it was now or never.

"We will stay at periscope depth, but be ready to surface or dive on my command," Fritz called down from the conning tower. He had decided that it was too risky to surface. "All ahead one third."

The crew collectively held its breath. "Screws approaching to port," the sound man announced.

"I see the trawler," Fritz announced, spinning his periscope ninety degrees to port. "Two miles off," he muttered, returning the periscope forward looking. He couldn't see any sign of nets breaking the surface of the water ahead. So far so good.

Morgan was holding fast to Tadgh's hand in the sick bay. He was either asleep or had slipped unconscious. She prayed for salvation.

Suddenly there was a scraping sound along the hull on the port side. Was it a net or a mine cable? They would know in moments if there were still there.

"All stop." Fritz yelled down. The submarine's forward progress slowed, too rapidly for gliding in the water Fritz realized. When the sound had propagated to the aft torpedo room there was a sudden jerk and the forward progress of the vessel stopped dead.

*Damn. We almost missed it. Well at least it isn't a mine*, Fritz concluded since they were all still in one piece. It sounded that something was snagging the rear port stabilizer fin.

"Depth?"

"Thirty feet."

"All back one third," Fritz commanded.

The engines spooled up and the boat slowly inched aft. After fifty feet or so it jerked to a stop.

"All stop."

*Something is trapped in the rear stabilizer.* "Fritz tried up and down planes commands and the stabilizer appeared to be stuck in the neutral position.

"Screws are still approaching," the sound man announced.

Fritz spun the periscope left and noted that the trawler was now approximately a mile and half out.

"Down periscope."

They were sitting ducks. The hatch was five feet under water and about sixty feet forward of the stabilizer. Blowing the ballast to raise the U-boat eight feet would expose the bridge. In the moonlight they would be picked up in no time. If they sat quietly the trawler running the net line might miss them, but it might slice them in two instead. And had a marker buoy been deployed?

Fritz couldn't take the chance. The trawler didn't likely have depth charges but other warships that they could summon did. Even if the trawler missed them, aircraft would pick them out to bomb at first light.

"Wire cutters," Fritz yelled down, stripping off his all weather coat and hat.

Morgan was knocked sidewise by the engineer rushing aft from the forward torpedo room, cutters in hand.

Thirty seconds later Fritz, large wire cutters in hand was giving instructions to the engineer.

"Help me open the hatch, just enough to let me squeeze out."

The engineer was shaking his head. "Too much water pressure, sir."

"Nonsense. I can do it. It's only five feet man. I will knock when I return. You push and I will pull to get back in."

The engineer was still shaking his head. Fritz was estimating the time the round trip would take if he could snip the netting in a few seconds. *Three minutes.* They had all been trained to hold their breath as long as possible. Not that it would help if their submerged hull was ruptured. His best had been two minutes and forty-five seconds.

Fritz was taking very deep breaths. After about a minute at just the right time he motioned to the engineer who had spun the hatch wheel in anticipation of his signal. Water was leaking around the seal and tumbling down the stairs. The men below were helpless to support their new Kapitan.

Fritz and the engineer put their backs into hinging the hatch upward. Water was surging through the opening. Fritz pushed off from an upper rung of the ladder against the flow and squeezed out the forty-five degree opening into the black water. The engineer released the hatch which slammed shut. Moment later he was spinning the wheel and he crossed himself in prayer.

Fritz was disoriented. He had shot out forward onto the bridge and hit his head on the wind block. The water was damn cold maybe fifty degrees. He turned and scrambled down the stairs onto the deck and started swimming aft. He could hear the trawler's engines drumming through the water. There were few or no handholds to help propel him towards his target. One cutter arm was jammed inside his belt and down his right leg, restricting his kicking motions.

How long had it been? A minute at least. There right ahead of his nose, looming out of the dark, was the aft vent tube. The front edge of the stabilizer would be about fifteen feet aft and down about ten feet over the port side.

Ten seconds later he felt the problem in the gloom. The edge of a steel net was protruding up the side of the U-boat. It's top looked like it was about five feet above the deck and it stretched perpendicular to the hull and disappeared instantaneously into the blackness.

Fritz pulled the cutters out of his pants and kicked off the deck, pulling himself down the wire edge until he reached the stabilizer. Feeling with his free hand he determined that this wire edge was lodged between the stabilizer and the hull.

He gave it a yank with his free hand and it wouldn't budge. He was starting to feel light headed. He almost dropped the cutter. *Damn. At least if I can free it they can get away. Stop thinking. Act.*

Fritz felt the wire. About a quarter inch thick. Planting his feet through the netting below the stabilizer he gripped the wire in the jaws of the cutter and squeezed. Nothing. He felt the cut edge. He had cut about half way through. Carefully aligning the jaws he squeezed again and the wire snapped.

He wasn't prepared for what happened next. The U-boat was no longer held fast by the taut wire. Now freed , it sagged downwards almost trapping Fritz's legs in the wire net below.

Inside the conning tower the engineer sensed the motion. Grabbing one of the 24 levers he made an adjustment that lifted the stern of the boat slightly. That action saved Fritz from dying at that instant.

How long now, Fritz wondered. It must be almost two minutes. The wire was still firmly lodged. He had to free it below the stabilizer. Down he went another five feet. Twenty seconds and two squeezes later than section of wire snapped. The sub bobbed up leaving Fritz himself entangled in the net below the boat. He kicked fiercely and broke free.

The sound of the trawler's screws was now pounding in his head. There was no time to swim up and then forward. Fritz dropped the cutters and vectored diagonally to where he thought the bridge would be. He was running out of air. Out into the blackness. That feeling of helplessness that accompanied the certainty of having to gasp for air when there was just water to intake was numbing his thinking. *A least the boat is free.*

The vision of his wife and two children filled his mind. He had never really expected to survive the war in these tin cans. The odds were against them all. Especially now that the enemy had the bombs to kill them. *At least I have saved my men.*

Twenty seconds later his head hit the ladder leading to the bridge. Up, he willed himself. There miraculously was the closed hatch. He felt for the handle and tapped. He had no strength to pull.

A smash, a bright light and he blacked out.

The engineer had heard the tap. Could it be. It had been three and a half minutes. The wheel was already spun open and he heaved with his back. Water flooded into the U-Boat and with it the body of his new Kapitan. The hatch slammed shut and a seaman who was in the conning tower spun the wheel shut.

"Dive, dive. All ahead one third," the engineer shouted and the seaman worked the levers. The submarine dove forward and down.

"The trawler's right on top of us," the sound man yelled.

# # # #

The hull of the trawler snapped the exposed portion of the periscope and snorkel, missing the top of the conning tower by five feet. When it's screws went by the cavitations threw the submarine out of control. Fortunately the engineer was cradling Fritz's body in the conning tower or he would have plunged down into the control room. Morgan held on to Tadgh's bunk and torso as the U-boat rocked back and forth.

On the bridge of the trawler, the captain yelled, "Did we slice him?"

At that instant the trawler's propellers snagged the wire net. The sound man heard the screeching as the wire netting spooled up snarling both propeller shafts. They all heard it.

The trawler was snagged. Its captain started blowing his air horns, searching the sea surface with his search light for any sign of the submarine. Ships on the Dover shore ten miles away started hooting in reply.

Fritz sputtered awake. "*Mein Gott. Ich bin lebendig*."

"That you are sir. Still alive. After almost 4 minutes out there. You saved us." The engineer was slapping him on the back and the men below were cheering him even as they fought to get the U-boat stabilized.

"The trawler's engines have been cycling but they are now stopped," the sound man announced.

The helmsman said. "The rear port stabilizer is still stuck but I can work around it."

It took Fritz five minutes to catch his breath and resume command. That harrowing experience had convinced him. "We are going to Ostend. All ahead full, level at fifty feet. We'll be there before morning, God willing. And he was thinking, *I need to be with my wife and children as soon as possible*. The admiralty could go fly a kite.

Morgan heard his command all the way forward in sick bay. "Thank you God," she prayed just as Tadgh came to.

"What's been happening aroon," he croaked. "Where are we, do ya know?"

**CHAPTER FIVE - SEPARATION (WC 2649) ©**

**October 22, 1915**

**Ostend Harbor, Belgium**

**Morgan**

organ was furious. They had been tied up side by side to other U-boats in the pens for half an hour and they still hadn't come for her patients. She had also been put under armed guard, Johan who had given her his tunic on their first day in the submarine. The rest of the crew had already gone ashore. When Fritz returned from reporting to his superiors he explained that the snafu was due to the fact that they had not returned to their home port.

"Damnation sir. Both these men are in critical condition."

"I'm doing all I can. We're only ten miles east of the front. The Battle of Loos is raging only forty miles southwest. There are hundreds of my seriously wounded countrymen being brought here every day. The field hospital is in the La Plage Hotel which was vacated by the retreating Belgians. I am told that beds are overflowing with too little medical staff."

"So you're going to let your Captain die?"

"*Nein*. Of course not. The ambulances should be here in a few minutes. You will remain at my side. Do you understand? You and your man Tadgh are my prisoners."

"I gathered that. Anything to get out of this hell hole."

"You don't like my U-Boat? My cozy home under the sea?"

Morgan could see him trying not to smile. "I must admit. It grows on you." She couldn't believe that she had just said that.

"Like the white fuzz we call rabbits on our potatoes?" Now he was chuckling.

Two days ago she had been revolted and frightened almost out of her wits to be trapped in the vile snake. But now, Morgan had respect for this crew's courage and fortitude. Yes, they were all like sardines sealed in a can. But she felt a kind of camaraderie with these men. Had they not saved Tadgh's life, at least so far, not to mention her own? Fritz himself had shown great bravery and selflessness in the face of an impossible task.

She couldn't help herself, stepping forward and giving Fritz a big bear hug. "You are a fine new Kapitan. Thank you for saving us all."

The officer was startled by Morgan's advances and stepped back as if he were on a parade ground. "Well F*raulein*, you did your best and my Kapitan is still alive."  
 "Barely, sir."

Morgan heard it then. Boots on the ladder coming down into the control room.

"*Hier kommen*," Fritz yelled and orderlies with stretchers appeared in the bulkhead opening.

It took fifteen minutes to get Captain Weisbach and Tadgh strapped onto gurneys and then lifted up and out of U-19. The captain was still out like a light. Twice Tadgh cried out in his delirium when the orderlies stumbled on the ladder.

Fritz led the way after the gurneys, with Morgan and then armed Johan being the last people to leave the snake. From the ladder looking back down into the control room she stopped to have one last look around. "Good girl," she said, patting the wall of the conning tower above her. "You got us home."

Then it hit her. She was a long, long way from home and she had no idea what would become of her and Tadgh, if he survived.

# # # #

Morgan went in the ambulance with Tadgh and Johan to the German hospital. Fritz followed in the second vehicle with Kapitan Weisbach. During the short ride from the harbor in the dark Morgan focused on Tadgh's condition. His swollen leg and high fever frightened her. Once or twice he briefly woke up when the ambulance lurched around a corner, but then he would lapse back asleep. Earlier last evening, despite his protest, she had given him a small morphine shot.

The ambulance screeched to a halt and the orderlies quickly removed Tadgh's gurney. Even in the darkness Morgan could see that the Hotel La Plage on the ocean front Albert I Promenade was a grand old lady, a tabernacle of costly splendor. Morgan could feel the salt air blowing off the North Sea and hear the rollers sweeping onto the adjacent beach. It must have been a wonderful seaside town before the war.

"*Schnell*." Fritz jumped out of the other ambulance urging the orderlies to get his Kapitan into the hospital.

They hurried up the front steps and into the entrance hall with its splendid mosaic dome roof. A nurse directed them to the dining hall which had been set up as a ward for the wounded. The chandeliers dripping from the ceiling and ornate wall mirrors stood in stark contrast to the battered humanity on the myriad of mattresses before them. Amputees and shell shocked men in various stages of dying. The scene was chaotic. The few nurses and doctors were overwhelmed with the injured. Morgan could see through a partially open revolving door that they were using a portion of the kitchen as an operating room. A doctor in there was busy sawing through a leg.

"God help Tadgh." Morgan prayed that her lover wouldn't be the next casualty on that chopping block.

Morgan corralled one nurse to get Tadgh settled but she didn't speak English. Finally Fritz came over and got that sorted. Twenty minutes later the doctor who had been amputating in the kitchen came to see Tadgh's condition. He spoke perfect English.

"*Fraulein*, are you this man's wife?"

"*Nein.* I am his partner and nurse."  
 "A nurse you say. As you can see we need help."

"I will gladly help you if you can save my Tadgh."

"She will help you anyway." Fritz spoke up, putting his hand on the butt of his luger in his holster.

Morgan understood. *Don't make waves.*

The doctor carefully removed the gauze on Tadgh's leg. "There were foreign objects in this wound?"

"A wooden skewer that I removed in three pieces. I believe that I got it all."

"No metal?"

"*Nein*."

"You did a fine job of suturing under the circumstances. Did you have disinfectant?"

"Dakin solution. But the environment was very dirty."

"Yes, I know. Submarines. He is sedated?"

"Yes. Twenty cc of morphine seven hours ago."

"I don't see gangrene at the surface of the wound yet. But it is septic. No telling what is inside given the swelling. You did a fine job young lady. Your name?"  
 "Morgan. What can you do for him?"

"There is a new medicine that the English bacteriologist Twort just discovered. Even though it hasn't been fully tested they are starting to use it in their field hospitals. We captured some and one of their scientists when we lay siege to Ypres a few months ago. So now we are making it ourselves. It's called bacteriophages and it sometimes can offset wound infections."

"Yes, please give it to him, Doctor . . ."

"Doctor Heinrich. He means more to you than just being a partner then."

"Yes, yes. He is literally everything to me. His leg?"

"Well then, we'll just have to take extra special care of him, won't we. I'll try to save that leg. Did you also treat Kapitan Weisbach?"

"*Yawohl*." Morgan had heard Fritz use the term several times.

"We'll be giving him the phages also. There's serious infection there but I think we can get it under control. You clearly saved this Kapitan's life by cleaning the burns as best you could. Now give me a hand in the operating room. We have three more amputations to perform before sunrise."

# # # #

Dr. Heinrich arranged for Morgan to be billeted with the nurses and Fritz posted a guard when she was away from the hospital ward. Three days later she finally got to see the beach outside the hotel in the sunshine. Out there it didn't seem like the middle of a war zone. But indoors, the wounded kept arriving day after day and night after night. None of them got any rest.

At first Morgan was upset at the sight of limbs being amputated, to the point of nausea. The smell of rot and decay in the wounds was revolting. By the third day, however, the process became routine, and she realized that they were saving lives, German lives. Ones who would learn to hobble or work with one arm. Or ones who would learn to live sightless, or otherwise disfigured. What was it proving, all this killing and maiming? Morgan had heard that the front lines had not moved much one way or another in over a year. And now the men were arriving with chemical poisoning from lethal gas attacks at the front.

Tadgh was awake now and taking sustenance but still bed ridden. Morgan made sure of that. It appeared that the phages was working. His leg was tender but not as swollen. Morgan tended to him whenever she was not at her other duties. They didn't talk further about her past. There would be time enough when they were free.

"Morgan, when we were in Dublin at the An Stad hotel, I heard from Tom Clarke that one of our main Irish Republican Brotherhood leaders, Joseph Plunkett came to Germany several months ago to gain support from their military. He accompanied of one of our own, Sir Roger Casement, who has been in Germany since October of last year with that goal. Apparently Sir Roger and John Devoy of the Clan na Gael in America convinced the Germans to provide arms and to allow him to recruit an Irish Brigade from the Irish prisoners being held in captivity here in Germany."

"Irish prisoners? Why were they fighting with the English against the Germans?" Morgan was confused.

"Not all Irishmen hate the English as we do. The treacherous British pretended to offer us Home Rule if we would help them defeat the Germans. Our gullible Mr Redmond fell for their lies and convinced the vast majority of our Irish Volunteers to side with the English in this world war."

"How do you know that they are lying?"

"They have encouraged the Protestant Ulster northerners to arm themselves to fight against Home Rule while they clamp down on us Southerners to prohibit guns of any kind, the bastards."

"I see. But we aren't in Germany."  
 "Yes aroon, but Belgium was invaded and is now occupied and controlled by Germany. Somehow we need to get in touch with Mr. Casement. Maybe he can help us."

"How?"

"I have no idea, especially since I am a wounded captive."

"I too am captive, Tadgh. They have me under armed guard."

"We're a fine pair then lass. At least we're together."

"I'll make sure it stays that way." Morgan had no idea how she could make that happen but at least Dr. Heinrich and Fritz seemed pleased with her work. "I'm going to check in with the Captain."

"Is he better? I want to thank him personally for saving our lives."

"He is responding to the same medicine that you have been getting. They also have a topical ointment that is healing the sores on his back and neck. He will survive to fight again."

"Did he say why he risked his life for us?"

"No, but he said he pushed the button to fire the torpedo at the Lusitania. That must be a terrible burden to carry."

"You forgive him then aroon?"

"How can I not when he saved your life my love."

"Just doing his job don't ya know. Pushing that button I mean."  
 "The job of killing more than a thousand defenseless human beings?"

"He was not the captain then. He was following orders. Military men have to do that you know."

"But what about moral obligations?"

"You'd have to ask the captain of the U-boat about that."

"That's where I think you are wrong. We all, surely, have moral obligations to our fellow men and women. Do you know what atrocities I'm seeing here at the hospital from the war? Terrible things. Millions of men have been killed. Using chemical weapons on human beings! For what? National pride? What about all the wives and children left widowed and fatherless?"

"Let's not argue aroon. We have to find a way out of here together."

"Yes. I've got to go back to the operating room. I will check with you later."

As she walked away through the maze of the wounded Morgan was mad and didn't exactly know why. Sure she did. Men killing men was bad and wrong. And Tadgh was one of them. Why did she love him so?

# # # #

The next two days were overwhelming. There had been a major Allied offensive at Loos and the broken German lads were piling up in the corridors awaiting amputations or death. Morgan had worked thirty-six hours straight without sleep. Her brain was frazzled and her heart was broken for them. She could barely move when she finally plopped down and dropped off to sleep in her nurses cot.

Fritz asked for a meeting with Dr. Heinrich who was almost as exhausted from the onslaught of casualties.

"I'm impressed with the nurse you brought me off your U-Boat. I want her to stay with me here."

"She's a prisoner, Doctor. Likely Irish but we're not sure."

"But there is no evidence that she has fought against the Fatherland. Quite the contrary. She is fighting for us, helping save so many of our brave soldiers."

"My superiors have ordered me to have her partner sent to the detention camp at Limburg immediately. Is he fit to travel?"

"*Nein*. He will recover and his fever is down, but there is still infection in his leg and it would be hard for him to walk any distance."

"Will he survive if you give me enough of his medicine and if we transport him without walking/"

"Yes. I suppose so, but . . ."

"That's all I need to know. Transport will be here within the hour. Have him ready."

# # # #

Morgan reported for duty at 6:00am the following morning. Her mind was clear but her body was not co-operating. Entering the ward she noted that the wounded were still stacking up like cordwood. As had become her routine, she went to check on Tadgh first.

"*Wo ist mein* Tadgh," she questioned one of the male orderlies using the few German words she had picked up.

"I have no idea. I just came on duty. He was here yesterday."

Morgan hunted throughout the ward and couldn't find him. Until now she had felt safe knowing that he was near and recovering. Now panic set in. *Could he have taken a turn for the worse? My God.*

Morgan rushed to the operating center, her heart beating wildly.

"Dr. Heinrich!"

She had interrupted a leg amputation just as the disassociated limb was being discarded in the bin. The doctor ignored her while he worked to close the wound.

"This man has died," a nurse announced feeling the lack of pulse in his carotid artery. Morgan imagined that this was Tadgh whose leg had gone septic again. Like so many others who didn't survive the operation . . .

The doctor checked the patient's condition and slowly pulled a sheet up over the body. This one had so many internal complications. Turning away from the all too familiar outcome of his operations, he sadly pulled Morgan out of the operating room and through a side door facing the beach.

Before she could open her mouth, he said, "I'm sorry dear girl. They have taken him to Limburg. I couldn't stop them. But he will be treated fairly and he will recover."

Morgan's heart stopped. "Why? Why? He is not your enemy. He is an ally if anything."

"This is war and the military have control of these things."

"But Captain Weisbach risked his life to save him. Doesn't that mean something?"

"I just follow orders I'm afraid."

"You too? Damn silly men." Morgan could not hold back the tears. She was all alone now. Behind enemy lines. Whose enemy anyway? It all seemed so grotesque and pointless.

"Come now Morgan. It will be all right in the end. You'll see."

"How will it be?"

"You have friends here. Me for instance. You're doing a fine job and I need you to help me. We're saving lives."

Morgan had to give him that. But Tadgh was gone to Limburg, whatever and wherever that was, and she might never see him again.

**CHAPTER SIX - BRIGADE (WC 3862) ©**

**October 31, 1915**

**Hotel La Plage, Ostend Belgium**

**Morgan**

organ couldn't stop thinking about the last time she saw Tadgh. Why did they have to argue. It wasn't his fault that he had military discipline. None of these men were at fault. It was the kings and politicians. Or maybe it was the devils that owned the companies that made the machines of war. What a travesty. All she knew was that she was separated from Tadgh and she didn't know if he was recovering from his wound.

Three days after their separation Fritz came by the ward.

"*Fraulein*, I am going away to sea again tomorrow. My U-Boat has been repaired."

"But Captain Weisbach is not well enough to take command yet."

"*Ja*. My superiors have put me in charge until Raimund is well enough."

"What and where is Limburg and why did you allow them to send Tadgh there?" This was the first opportunity Morgan had to ask these critical questions. Dr. Heinrich didn't know.

"Limburg is a prisoner of war camp where the Irish prisoners are kept. Your friend is Irish no?"

"Yes of course he is Irish. He is your ally not your enemy."

"My superiors have ordered me."

Morgan could see that she would get nowhere with Fritz. "And where is Limburg?"

"Limburg an der Lahn is south east of us about half way to Germany's southern border. About four hundred miles from here."

"How did he get there?"

"By truck."

Morgan could imagine what that bumpy ride would have done to Tadgh's leg. "He wasn't well yet."

"Well enough to travel. The doctor gave me his medicine. They have some medical facilities at the camp."

"How many men do they have at that camp?"

"I have no idea but I was told that there are about 2,200 Irish prisoners there."

"How can I reach him there?"

"You could try writing but it may not get through."

"What's to become of me?" Morgan had been thinking of trying to escape to find Tadgh. But four hundred miles? And what would she do when she got to Limburg camp. Surrender? It's only for men. She was stuck.

"That's what I came to tell you. I brought *meine Frau Gerda* and two boys here to Ostend since it will be my new base. They are staying in a small house near the beach. Gertrude has convinced me to let you stay with her while I am gone. Heinrich has stood up for you. Apparently you are indispensible. Will you promise to be a good girl?"

"I will support Dr. Heinrich if that's what you mean."

"I mean that you won't try to escape. If you do then I can make things very difficult for your friend."

"Don't you dare hurt him."

"I won't if you don't."

Later that day Fritz brought Morgan to a small tutor style row house in Old Ostend five blocks from the beach. Morgan was relieved to be away from the horrors of the ward and finally out in the world, even though it seemed such a foreign, dangerous and lonely place with Tadgh gone who knows where.

"Gerda, this is Morgan," Fritz announced when a matronly woman of thirty odd years opened the door. Two small towheaded boys, probably two or three years old, peered from behind their mother's legs.

"Very glad to meet you." Morgan reached out to shake Gerda's hand, then realized how silly it was to expect her to understand English.

"You likewise," Gerda replied in English tinged with a Bavarian accent. "I studied at Cambridge before I met Fritz. Before the war," she added seeing Morgan taken aback.

Morgan breathed a sigh of relief. "Who do we have here?"

"This is Hans and this is Fritz," Gerda answered, grabbing each of them by the hand, bringing them around her legs to meet their new tenant. They appeared quite shy.

"Come now boys. She won't bite you." Fritz brought them up to attention.

"Well young fellows, " Morgan said, kneeling down to be at their eye level. She produced two chocolates wrapped in foil paper from her worn wool coat and offered them to the boys. She was given them at the ward, one of the few local treats still available to the medical staff for sparse distribution to the wounded men.

"Is it okay?" She looked up at their mother.

Gerda was smiling. "*Ja. Danke."*

She was testing whether Morgan spoke any German. The boys looked up as their mother nodded and then eagerly took the candy. Fritz asked. "What do you boys say?"

"*Danke*," they both cried in unison.

"*Bitte,"* Morgan answered, showing Gerda that she had picked up a few words in her language.

"I think that we will all get along fine, "Gerda announced, offering her hand to pull Morgan to her feet. "Come in and let's have some tea. There's not much to eat but what I have is yours my dear."

For the first time in days Morgan didn't feel so lonely.

"I've got to get back to my U-Boat," Fritz announced. "We are provisioning for my mission. I leave *morgen*."

"So soon?" Gerda looked crestfallen. "I thought . . ."

"When I return*, meine liebeschone*." He kissed the top of her head, just a peck.

Turning to Morgan, "You remember what we discussed?"

"Yes sir."

With that, Fritz was gone.

Gerda turned away and headed into the small kitchenette with its tiny icebox and old wood stove. Morgan could see the worry in her slouched shoulders and shuffling gait. Gerda was three inches shorter than herself, about five foot four inches, and a few years older, maybe almost thirty. And unlike her own black ringlet hair, Gerda's was blond like her boys and straight. Under different circumstances she would have been a handsome woman. But not now, in the midst of this terrible war.

While the ladies had tea, the boys played on the tiny parlor floor with blocks. Morgan could see them very neatly piling them in straight rows to make some building. *Typical German attention to detail and efficiency.* Just like she had seen with the medical staff and with the seamen on the U-Boat for that matter.

"My name stands for 'protected' in German," Gerda offered. I think it apropos for your situation. I will do what I can to protect you my dear. You must have been through such a fright. Tell me about your ordeal on my husband's U-Boat."

Morgan could see that she was pumping her for information. It must be such a worry. "What did Fritz tell you?"

"Just that his Kapitan and your man were injured and that you had to take the southern route home as quickly as possible."

"I see, and what has he told you about conditions on a U-Boat?"

"Nothing really. He says that it's secret. And I don't normally see him when he returns from a mission since our real home is in Frankfurt, a long way from here."

"So why are you and your boys here now in a foreign country so close to the Western Front?"

"That's what really worries me, Morgan. Something really dangerous must have happened for him to have pulled some strings to bring us here. Fritz isn't usually afraid."

Morgan didn't want to upset the woman further. "U-Boats are very confining with someone like me who has claustrophobia. There was a dangerous incident where we were caught in an English net and your husband cleared it and saved all our lives. He is a hero you know."

"He's my hero and I can't stand the thought of him dying, especially like that." She looked ashen. "Underwater I mean."

"War is a terrible thing. I am seeing it day and night at the hospital where the young men are brought. We have to have faith in God to see them through."

"I do pray, all the time and my boys keep me busy." Gerda turned away using the knuckles of her index fingers to wipe her eyes.

Morgan wanted to change the subject. "My name stands for 'from the sea' in Welsh, so I'm told."

"Now that's apropos," Gerda exclaimed, turning back and leaning forward to pour more tea. "I'm sorry that we have no sugar. Are you Welsh?"

"No. At least I don't think so." Morgan proceeded to inform her new friend about the Lusitania, being saved by Tadgh and about her amnesia."

"*Mein Gott*, you must be a strong woman. No wonder you had claustrophobia."

"It was a bit overwhelming at first. But I had the Captain and my Tadgh to look after."

"Is he Irish, your Tadgh?"

"Yes, Gerda. Through and through and not your enemy. They've taken him from me to some prisoner of war camp."

"So, my dear. We both are left alone and afraid for our men."

Morgan couldn't help herself as she stood up to embrace Gerda with a hug. "We've all got our crosses to bear."

Gerda crossed herself and then hugged her new tenant back. Morgan suddenly realized that they weren't alone any more. Two women, separated from their men in danger, in the middle of the war to end all wars, not twenty miles from the bloody battlefront.

# # # #

Tadgh was exhausted and sore, especially his leg. It seemed more swollen than when he left the hospital. The truck they had been on was old and creaky and the roads when they started out must have been in the warzone it was so bumpy. But now, lying here inside the medical hut behind the barbed wire of some prisoner of war camp, things had calmed down. He was well enough to be deloused. Since he couldn't undergo the normal procedure the orderlies had to do it manually in the horizontal position. He was stripped and his hair shaved. At least he got a clean set of prisoner clothes that weren't striped. His arms were bruised from the struggle he put up when they came for him in the hospital before they strapped him down on the gurney. He had called out for Morgan but they must have waited until she had gone off duty. *The bastards.*

His mind raced. How could he escape and find Morgan? What would they do with her? He knew what soldiers could do to attractive women. *Bastards.* How far apart were they. He guessed about four hundred miles or so given the half day it had taken to get here.

He had been visited by an orderly who had looked at his leg and given him a dose of his normal medicine to take. At least that was a good sign.

While he was stewing over his predicament, a bedraggled prisoner came into the tent. His thread bare clothes were at least clean and he looked gaunt but not stooped. A well dressed German soldier accompanied him luger in hand. Tadgh longed for his own luger, tucked safely in his bedroom drawer at home. He vowed to get Morgan and go home soon.

"My name is Sean Flaherty." The prisoner spoke with an unwavering voice. "You are in Limburg prisoner of war camp and I was captured during the Somme offensive. They are using this camp to house about 2,200 of us Irish soldiers here. I understand that you also are our countryman."

"I am Tadgh McCarthy from County Cork."

"Are you indeed? Where were you captured?"

"In the Celtic Sea, by a U-Boat."

"Well, that's a wonder. Never heard of that before."

"Are you part of Redmond's Irish Volunteers Sean?"

"Aye Tadgh. A terrible war in the trenches I can assure you."

"How are you treated here?"

"Fairly, but as you can see, with meager supplies and food. We're still alive. You will be kept here until your leg is better and then transferred to us. I have asked if you can join us in our hut."

Tadgh had so many questions like what plans they had for escape, but now was not the time to ask given the hovering German present.

"I'll see you shortly then. Thank you for coming to see me."

# # # #

It took almost two weeks for Tadgh's leg to heal to where he could walk on it. During this time he had devised several fantasy escape scenarios in his mind. He had to plan or he would go crazy. He was transferred to hut #108 where Sean was housed. On his way across the graveled compound Tadgh noted that the wire boundary fences were electrified as well as barbed.

It turned out that Sean had been made a senior officer for the Irish contingent, given his rank of lieutenant. The huts holding fifty men were at least ventilated to limit the spread of TB and other contagious diseases among the captives. He was told that a year ago the accommodations were comfortable with plenty of blankets on wooden trestle beds, but their condition had deteriorated in the meantime. The rats that carried the germs took care of gnawed their way through almost anything.

They were inspected twice daily and marched around the compound for two hours morning and afternoon. Tadgh was initially allowed to watch the exercise since his leg was still not strong enough to march very far. He would hobble after them none-the-less until he could walk no more. They got two meals a day of some scraps of meat, coarse bread in water. It could have been cat or rat for all they knew. It kept them alive.

The third day in the hut Tadg finally got a chance to talk to Sean privately on a brief walk. "What are the plans for escape?"

"Nonexistent. A group of twenty tried that more than a year ago by tunneling and were caught not a quarter mile from the fence. The Krauts marched them back to our parade ground and shot them all in front of us."

"We could try again Sean."

"Not me or the others as far as I know. We learned our lesson."

"But bollocks it's our obligation to try, don't ya know."

"We're not going to get ourselves shot, lad. We don't want to go back to the Front neither. That's suicide."

Tadgh was disgusted with Sean's attitude. A Redmond crony.

"Have you ever heard of Roger Casement, Tadgh?"

Tadgh's ears pricked up He had to proceed cautiously. "Aye. I heard he was here in Germany."

"What a traitor," Sean spat. "He wanted us to join what he called the Irish Brigade, to turn coat away from the Allied ranks and support Germany. We drove him away, the lout."

" Did you now." Tadgh knew he was being tested.

"Ya, but he didn't give up. They starved us to make us agree but we resisted. A man named Kenny showed up from America to try and persuade us. Then in May, Casement's deserters Keogh and Dowling interviewed us again along with a man named Plunkett. They got about fifty and moved them to another camp nearer the Kaiser. They call it Zossen. He has a new underling named Monteith who is here at Limburg right now trying to recruit more deserters. The nerve of the man."

"What does he want to do with this brigade, Sean?"

"Casement is a loony fanatic. He fantasizes that this group can get back to Ireland to free it from the English while this stupid war is still going on. What poppycock. When the Allied forces win this war we would all be branded traitors and shot on sight if we joined his cockamamie scheme."

"You don't believe in a free Ireland Sean?"

"England will make good on its plan for Home Rule, Tadgh. After the war."

"With a divided and armed north and south?"

"Maybe that's inevitable."

"Maybe." Tadgh left it at that. He wasn't going to ostracize his countryman. He had obviously been beaten into submission.

Tadgh realized he had to get to Monteith.

The next day was Sunday, November 14. Those who were Catholic turned out for open air chapel. Father Crotty had recently been sent from Rome to minister to the inmates. Tadgh could see a soldier, smartly dressed in a green uniform with an Irish harp on the neck band, clearly different from the Germans He was standing by the priest, eyeing the crowd of prisoners. He was about 5 foot 8 inches tall with a small black moustache and sporting an officer's peaked cap.

"That's the traitor Monteith," Tadgh heard a prisoner nearby shout out over Father Crotty's incantations.

Captain Monteith stood ramrod straight and didn't react to the taunt, if he heard it.

Tadgh inched his way forward as the service droned on. He realized that it would be a mistake to try and contact Monteith in front of these men. But Father Crotty . . . The sermon was about Jesus' forty days in the wilderness. Tadgh could see the parallel, another attempt to persuade the Irish captives to make the right decision to come the aid of their country. They weren't buying it.

Monteith moved off to talk to another green uniformed soldier who was striding from the side. He wore the insignia of a sergeant major. "That's the traitor Keogh," one of the prisoners mumbled to another of his mates. "He left us and now he leads the defectors over at Zossen."

The service ended and Father Crotty came down into his 'flock' as they started to disperse. Tadgh rushed forward as fast as his leg could carry him. Drawing the priest aside he said quietly, "My name is Tadgh McCarthy. I am new here and would like to meet with Captain Monteith in private. Can you arrange that?"

"Certainly my lad. I see you hobbling. Are you in pain?"

"Just a flesh wound Father. It is getting better."

"You're sure son? Which hut are you in?"

"Never better." Tadgh told him where he was located in the camp.

"They'll get back to you," the priest said as he turned to talk to another prisoner who was approaching.

# # # #

It didn't take long. The next morning during the exercise period a German sentry came up and asked, "You McCarthy?" Tadgh nodded. "Come with me."

Tadgh was led and prodded to the Commandant's office complex at the far end of the compound while the other prisoners watched closely. Once inside he was ushered into a side conference room. "Captain Monteith I presume." Tadgh took the initiative with the officer sitting behind the desk and stepped forward to shake his hand. "And I'm told that you are Sergeant Major Keogh," Tadgh added shaking the hand of the soldier standing beside his superior.

As Monteith started into his spiel to try and convince this potential recruit to join the brigade, Tadgh cut him off. "I heard that Joseph Plunkett was here in May, sir. What was his purpose?" He wanted to find out what these men knew.

Monteith was taken aback. "Tell me more about yourself." he requested, looking intently into Tadgh's eyes."

"Answer my question first."

"Joseph was here to help negotiate support from the Germans for our planned Irish insurgence against the English. Now answer my question."

Tadgh didn't want to push him too far. He needed his support. "I am Tadgh McCarthy and I know Joseph and his colleagues in Dublin."

"Do you now." Monteith was clearly intrigued.

"I should like to meet Roger Casement." Can you arrange that?"

"Sir Roger is under the weather at present, lad. I am his deputy. What can I do for you?"

"I'll need to talk to Mr. Casement I'm afraid." Tadgh knew that Casement was a founding member of the Volunteers who had been instrumental in the successful Howth gun-running acquisition of arms a year earlier, but he had no knowledge of where these two men's allegiances lay. They could be German or English double agents for all he knew.

"What battle were you captured at lad."

"I was picked up by a German U-Boat in the Celtic sea and brought to their base at Ostend in Belgium." Then Tadgh had an idea. It carried some risk. "I have a message from my superiors only for the ears of Roger Casement." He was lying through his teeth.

"So you got yourself captured at sea in the hope that they would bring you to Germany and that you could escape to find Sir Roger?" Monteith was skeptical.

"It worked didn't it?"

"You've got balls, I grant you that," Monteith responded. "They could have just as easily relayed their message through Devoy in New York to the Germans in Washington."

"They don't trust the Germans or their secure communications system. Do you know if this room is wired?"

"It's not. We check each morning. We don't trust the Germans either anymore," Monteith admitted. He seemed satisfied.

"Sir Roger is staying with friends just outside Munich. He has not been well, some recurrent illness that he first caught in the Congo."

"Malaria?"

"I don't honestly know. But it's got him down physically and emotionally."

"You seem free to travel between here and the camp at Zossen so I'm told. Can you get me freed to travel to Munich?"

"I'm sure that's not all they've told you about us 'traitors. Am I right?"

"Let's just say you're not popular with the men."

"They're not patriotic for Ireland Tadgh. Are you?"

"Fiercely sir. Many in Ireland are. You should have seen the forty thousand who turned out for O'Donovan Rossa's funeral and Pearse's eulogy last August."

"You were there? Tell me what was said?" Monteith and Keogh leaned closer.  
 "Tadgh proceeded to recite the gist of Padraig's speech. He remembered it since he helped his superior create it. At the end he said, ". . . but the fools, the fools, the fools! - they have left us our Fenian dead, and while Ireland holds these graves, Ireland unfree shall never be at peace."

Monteith and Keogh seemed genuinely moved, just as Tadgh and thousands more had been during the funeral itself. Tadgh was starting to have confidence in these two men.

"In answer to your question, I am authorized to transport you to Zossen if you agree to be a member of the Irish Brigade. We are some fifty strong. But that's in the opposite direction from Bavaria where Sir Roger is lodged. I will have to check with the German General Staff in Berlin. Rudolph Nadolny is a main contact at GGS and Arthur Zimmermann is the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs."

At that moment a German officer opened the door, pointing at his watch.

"I guess I have to go." Tadgh stood up and headed for the door but not before shaking both men's hands sincerely.

"I will be in touch with you shortly," Monteith offered as Tadgh was ushered out.

**CHAPTER SEVEN - SIR ROGER (WC 2848) ©**

**November 23, 1915**

**Limburg an der Lahn, POW Camp, Germany**

**Eorgan**

ight days later Tadgh was called back to the prison office. His leg felt strong and the swelling was gone. This time he met with the Commandant, a squat pugnacious officer who sat behind a beat-up looking desk and didn't get up. We wore a scarf and gloves which hid his chubby stub fingers. Tadgh's could see his breath in this dreary lime green colored room.

"You cold?" he asked as he motioned his prisoner to sit in the lone chair in front of him.

"*Nein* commandant." Tadgh was not going to give him the satisfaction of knowing that his teeth were clamped to prevent chattering.

"I have been instructed to transport you to Munich under guard. You will be met there by Captain Monteith. When you have done your business you will be returned to POW Camp *Zossen bei Berlin. Verstehen sie*?"

Tadgh knew that much. "I understand." Anything to get out of this den of deadbeats.

"You leave tomorrow morning at six hundred hours."

With that the interview was over.

That afternoon they marched him over to the infirmary where the camp doctor checked him over and gave him a vial with seven doses of his medicine to take with him. "You should be completely healed in a week, but get checked out at your destination."

Tadgh realized that somebody must have pulled some strings. The Boche were treating him much better than when he arrived at Limburg.

The men of hut #108 were up and out on the parade ground the next morning when the guard came for Tadgh. They were surprised to see him get into the front seat of the lorry with the guard and even more astonished when the vehicle drove right out through the front gate of the camp. He hadn't told them anything. Tadgh waved goodbye out the side window.

The ride to Munich was tortuous. Heading southwest through the pristine rolling hillsides one couldn't have realized that this country was in the midst of an all out war and losing thousands of men each day on each front. Except once in a while a convoy of army trucks would go by to remind you. The soldiers coming from the western front were on their last legs or worse. Those heading there looked fearful at best. They passed by Frankfurt and the the country became more rural and mountainous.

After about eight hours of gentle climbing Tadgh noted a sign for the high plateau they had reached, Schwäbische Alb. He assumed it meant Alps although they didn't seem to be anywhere near as high as he had expected the Alps to be. But it was beautiful and reminded him of home. Cattle and sheep grazed placidly in the fields. Damnation. Why had he prompted Morgan to go sailing that day of all days? That day where he found out she had a lover who also survived the Lusitania disaster and was looking for her. God, where is she now and what has she had to endure? Tadgh thought of overpowering the guard and the driver, but the luger in the guard's hand told him to wait.

Below them a long lazy river spread out before them heading west with the sun. It took another hour to wind their way down to it. Danube the sign said as they crossed it at a place called Ulm. Such quaint villages and towns where the townsfolk came out to wave at them as they passed. The houses typically had high pitched red tile roofs and ornate wooden upper floor balconies with painted flower boxes. The walls looked like stucco with precise square-patterned exterior wood beams. Even in November these edifices looked pristine, despite the bluster of oncoming winter. The villagers looked happy in their native environment. Tadgh wondered if they were aware that they were raising livestock and growing crops for a war machine that was trying to obliterate Belgium and France.

Tadgh felt that his bladder would burst as they rolled into western Munich two hours later. He tried to get his captors to stop but they refused to let him relieve himself. They passed by what looked like an ancient stone gate into the old city named Karlstor. The inner city reminded him of Dublin with its many baroque style churches and close cropped streets. Finally they came to a halt in a shopping district opposite an ornate and stately three story building with a quarter round corner facade. It had a name HB with a crown above it and Hofbräuhaus below the initials. Being the supper hour, there were many people milling about in the street and coming in and out of the structure.   
 The guard stepped out of the lorry and pointed his gun in the direction of HB. Tadgh needed no further prompting. There had to be a bathroom inside. The guard understood and led the way, his gun hidden under his coat. It seemed that he had as great a need as Tadgh. While there, there was a tap on Tadgh's shoulder.

"Glad you could make it lad," Monteith said. "We've been waited for you." When the guard started to object Monteith spoke to him in German. "There is no further need for your weapon. This prisoner is in my custody now. You can return to Limburg tomorrow."

Tadgh was surprised that Monteith, an obvious Irishman, had this power as the German soldier evaporated from what was a restaurant and brewery..

"Come with me Tadgh. I want you to meet someone."

"Casement?"

"No. You'll see him tomorrow. His American friend Dr. Charles Curry who lives here in Munich."

Tadgh couldn't believe his good fortune. Was he free or still a prisoner? Real food and beer?

Dr. Curry was a fine learned man, clearly an intellectual. "Mr. McCarthy, how do you know my friend Sir Roger?"

"I have never met him sir, only by reputation. I was present, however, at Bachelor's Walk in July last year when unarmed citizen of Dublin were killed by the English oppressor during the Howth gun running event that Sir Roger was involved in."

"Yes. He told me about that. Nasty business."

"We've had more than three hundred years of that nasty business as you put it sir."

"I understand lad. You must be famished."

"Food at the camp is not the best is it Monteith."

"You're not there anymore. You'll find it better at Zossen."

Tadgh didn't mention that he had no intention of going to Zossen, wherever that was. The smells of the Bratwurst and beer from the neighbor table were driving Tadgh mad.

"Can't you tell us your message for Sir Roger?" Charles asked as they dug into their own sausages.

Tadgh ate slowly since his stomach wasn't used to real food. "I'm sorry. It's a message meant only for Sir Roger."

"Then you need to know something before you see him. He has been visiting with me and my family at our summer home at Riederau on the Ammersee, a lake about 25 miles west of Munich. Even though we have returned to the city for the winter he insisted on staying in his comfortable rooms at the country inn out there. He is not well you know."

"So Monteith here told me. I still need to meet with him personally sir."

"And so you will, lad. But you and Robert here will stay with me tonight."

Monteith turned to Tadgh while downing the last of his mug of beer. "They told me Tadgh that if you tried to escape they would take it out on your girl."

"What would I escape to?" Tadgh replied savoring the last of his own beer.

"I think that Sir Roger shares that view," Charles said, picking up the cheque for their dinner.

# # # #

Tadgh enjoyed the ride out to the lake, luxurious by comparison to the last month's transportation. Charles' 1909 Daimler Simplex roadster was low and wide for stability. With its 60 horsepower manual-crank engine it easily cruised along at 40 miles per hour, comfortably carrying the three men. Tadgh felt much better having a full breakfast served by Charles' feisty mother Mary Abby in his tummy and clean clothes from Charles' closet on his back. The bath last night had done wonders for Tadgh's disposition, especially after the doctor gave his leg a thumbs up after inspecting it carefully.

The Ammersee lake with the jagged snow covered Bavarian Alps to the south reflecting in its calm waters was literally breathtaking. The crisp November air, whipping by while travelling at high speed in the open automobile, took your breath away. The leaves on the elder trees were turning orange and yellow as they heralded the shift from Fall toward Winter. Tadgh wished that Morgan could see this splendor of nature with him. God, keep her safe. *I am coming for you aroon.*

The tiny village of Riederau sat in a combination of forest and cleared farmland, quite beautiful in its late autumn setting on the west shore of the lake. Tadgh noted the couples rowing out on the Ammersee, young ladies holding parasols to shield themselves from the bright morning sun. No wonder Sir Roger wanted to stay here as long as he possibly could. What war?

Tadgh promised himself that he would bring Morgan here sometime in their lifetimes. After Ireland was free.

"Sir Roger is resting in the country Inn. He will be up by now I should think," Charles said as he stepped out of his Simplex and pointing to the lakeside guesthouse. It was a splendid three story stucco building with protruding facades so that all the guests would have a birds-eye view of the lake. Just the kind of Tyrolean chalet design that Tadgh had seen in picture books in grade school. Magnificent, especially in this setting.

Dr. Curry went in first to make sure Sir Roger was presentable.

Monteith appeared somewhat nervous. "You'll probably only get a few minutes of his time. He is busy writing his journal, for posterity you know."

"You've been here before then Monteith?"

"Yes several times. I am his right hand man these days. I'll stand by him whatever comes."

"You're making it sound rather grim, don't ya know."

"It is grim here with the devious Germans. But then, he'll tell you."

"It's more grim at the front. The blokes here don't appear to have a care in the world."

"Sir Roger does. More than any man should."

Dr, Curry returned and ushered them up and into the parlor room of Sir Roger's digs. Then he waited outside.

Casement sat in a winged arm chair looking out the window onto the lake, a blazing fireplace to his right. "They're all bastards you know," he mumbled turning inward to face his visitors. "It's the curse of Prussian militarism, the embodiment of soulless efficiency."

Tadgh had seen him from a distance in early 1914 in Dublin. He had been a dashing gentleman then, aristocratic even, with his wavy black hair, wide moustache and full beard. In those days his eyes would pierce right through you. They had called him the father of twentieth-century human rights investigations. He had been knighted for it, especially for his work with the British foreign service in the Congo. That's when the colonial atrocities against indigenous peoples turned him against the imperialism of the British Crown. That's when he had taken on the mantle of organizer of the Irish Volunteers with Bulmer Hobson and the attendant role of arms provisioner for the Republican revolution. That was in 1913 before the war started.

Now, sitting here slouched in his arm chair, he looked defeated. His sunken black eyes darted from side to side and his still-wavy hair was disheveled. He coughed from time to time.

"Sir Roger, sir, I am pleased to meet you in such an idyllic location." Tadgh offered his hand which was limply engaged.

"They tell me you have an important message for me. From whom?"

Tadgh sat in a chair near the fire. "It's awfully hot in here."

"It's my malaria starting to get hold of me again I'm afraid. Bloody Congo insects."

"I am a member of the Irish Volunteers, sir."

"Are you now. How is my friend Eion MacNeil then?"

"Well, as far as I know. Do you know Tom Clarke then."

"Yes sir. I'm part of his organization.

"Have you heard about O'Donovan's funeral and eulogy, sir? From someone who was there I mean."

"No. Tell me."

Tadgh proceeded to recount the event and Padraig's speech. Casement was spellbound.

"Do you think there are enough patriots then to muster an effective rising, lad?"

"There was definite enthusiasm along the funeral procession." Tadgh was hedging his bets.

Casement looked at Monteith. "Where does Connolly stand?"

Tadgh didn't know. He was the most military of all of them, leading the Irish Citizens Army during the Irish Transport and General Workers Union Walkout of 1913. A socialist and syndicalist follower of James Larkin.

"He's a force to be reckoned with, sir."

"Would he go it on his own?"

"Could be. He's certainly militant."

Tadgh was establishing his credentials. Casement had clearly been in Germany since late 1914 and his information was being filtered by the Clan na Gael in New York through the German Embassy in Washington.

"That's what I thought. You must know that I negotiated an important agreement with Mr. Zimmermann, the German undersecretary for Foreign Affairs and with the Imperial Chancellor von Bethmann Hollweg last November for Germany to acknowledge the sovereign state of Ireland and to agree not to invade us for occupation."

Tadgh had no such knowledge but it sounded good to him. Casement was obviously proud of himself.

"Then in May, Plunkett and I negotiated a deal with the German General Staff and to provide 175,000 rifles and ammunition, and officers."

It was sounding better and better.

"But now I think they will welch on most or all of it." He was wringing his hands as he spoke.

"Why sir?"

"Because they're damn devious bastards at the GGS. They want us to fail."

"I think the fact that we have only been able to recruit 56 men for our Irish Brigade is part of the problem," Monteith offered, coming around to arrange the blanket which was slipping off his boss' legs.

"You need to tell them not to rise McCarthy."

*Damn. That's not what we want to hear. Don't bail out on us now.* "We'll rise with or without the Germans. We have to."

"No. Not until we're strong enough. You've got to stop them!"  
 Sir Roger was so agitated he was shaking.

Monteith decided that the interview was over.

"What is it you were sent to tell me McCarthy?" Casement asked again. He hadn't forgotten.

"To inform you of the positive response of the Rossa funeral and to encourage you to bring home those weapons. We had heard that you were becoming disillusioned." He had synthesized the answer from what Casement himself had said and how he had reacted.

"From whom?"

"From Joseph of course."

"Oh yes, Plunkett. I think he was discouraged also."

Tadgh didn't want to tell him that Joseph was now the head of the military council for the IRB.

"Let's go," Monteith commanded as he headed for the door.

Tadgh couldn't let it end this way. "Just a minute. I need your help Sir Roger."

Monteith yanked Tadgh's arm. He obviously wanted to leave his boss alone. Tadgh dug in his heels.

"How can I help you?" A quavering voice came from behind the winged chair.

"I can't convey your message if I am incarcerated at Zossen sir."

"Who said you were going to Zossen?"

"I did," Monteith answered, stepping back in front of his boss. "We need his skills there."

Tadgh had been very careful not to demonstrate his prowess for that very reason.

"Robert, I need that message delivered, soon."

"We can find someone else to carry it. I will contact McGarrity in Philadelphia."

Tadgh thought of bolting. It would be easy although he might have to endure pain in his right leg. Then he thought about what Monteith had said about Morgan. Was it a bluff? Surely not. A fellow Republican. He couldn't take the chance.

"There's one more thing." Tadgh had to confess before he lost the audience. "My partner, another IRB member, is captive in Belgium."

"Is he on the front, Tadgh?" At least Casement understood that you never leave one of your men behind.

"She is a nurse and forced into service at the German hospital in Ostend. At least that's where she was 4 weeks ago. I expect they would have kept her there. She's good at what she does." Teige proceeded to tell Casement about their submarine adventure.

"Tell me more about the ride in the submarine. I may have to go home in one." Sir Roger's energy level had perked up.

"I was horizontal, strapped down and unconscious some of the time, sir, from my leg wound. Not a very good person to ask I'm afraid. But Morgan would tell you I'm sure."  
 "Morning?"

"No. My partner's name is Morgan. I have to rescue her."

"Is there a romantic attachment there lad?"

"I call her *aroon* for a reason."

"Darling is it?"

"*Jawohl* as they say around here. I saved her when she almost drowned after the Lusitania was sunk by the Germans."

"You don't say. Give me some time to think about it, Tadgh my lad. Robert, see if our guest can stay with Charles for the time being. His leg is not fully mended."

"But sir . . ."

"There'll be no buts about it. Now leave me to rest. I'll call you when I've decided what to do with him. Notify Nadolny that McCarthy is my aide. I will take full responsibility."

**CHAPTER EIGHT - QUEEN NURSE (WC 2886) ©**

**December 9, 1915**

**Munich, Bavaria**

**Torgan**

wo weeks later Tadgh got the news to return to Riederau from Charles. The Currys had been treating him better than he had ever been looked after before. The medicine he had brought from Ostend and Limburg was all used up but the good doctor had substituted wholesome foods which were still plentiful in Munich. And Mary Abby made sure that he ate everything her son prescribed. Tadgh had never had beets before and he didn't like them. But he ate them.

He was torn between the urgency to find and save Morgan and the warning he had been given by Monteith. That man seemed to genuinely support Casement wholeheartedly, yet Tadgh sensed he was on the verge of making his own decisions about the Irish Brigade with the Germans if his boss didn't snap out of his depressed physical and mental state.

Tadgh's leg now felt strong. He had been doing deep knee bends with brisk walks the mile down to the Isar river and back. Yesterday he ran back and the leg held his weight.

"Tomorrow we will go and visit Sir Roger," Charles announced, checking Tadgh's leg scar once more. " I think you're fit for duty. By the way, Monteith sent a signal. He will be coming here to take you to Zossen."

"Isn't that up to Roger."

"Roger's condition is deteriorating I'm afraid."

Tadgh had a restless night.

# # # #

Dr. Curry was right. Sir Roger was running a high fever when they arrived at noon. He also seemed more despondent than at their first meeting.

But he had a purpose for this meeting that shone through the gloom. "Tadgh, I want you to return home and warn Hobson and MacNeill that the situation here is grave. I don't trust Nadolny or any of the GGS for that matter."

"Meaning?"

"I'm not sure they will give us the weapons they promised nor the German officers to support us. And our Brigade is meager and not yet conditioned."

"Conditioned? They were soldiers on the Front."

"They are mostly self motivated to escape and not yet committed to our cause, Tadgh."

"I noted their reluctance at Limburg, sir. Redmond has them brainwashed."

"Damn Redmond. They're afraid of being shot as deserters."

"A valid concern, given their circumstances I'm afraid, Sir Roger. If I can escape I will deliver your message. What about Morgan?"

"Did you hear of 'Queen Nurse' when you were in Ostend?"

"No, who is she?"

"She's Elisabeth Gabrielle Valerie Maria, the Queen of Belgium, married to Alfred I. Did you know that Belgium tried to stay neutral in this war between Germany and France/England, but Alfred wouldn't let Germany pass through. I believe his words were 'We're not a road, we're a country.' So much of the deadly fighting has been in the lowlands of Belgium. The Belgian army is holding the line only a few miles west of Ostend from the west side of the Yres River. Only a very small northwest corner of Belgium is still intact. Alfred is leading his army into battle with a headquarters there at Furnes after having retreated from Brussels through Antwerp and finally Ostend last year. I am very impressed by the Belgians even though we are on the other side."

"We are against our foe, England, sir and not the Belgians."

"That's what I said."

"You started to talk about the Queen Nurse."

"Oh yes. Elisabeth has been a staunch supporter of her husband and the Belgian army. She functions as a nurse superior, organizing the hospitals and sending ambulances to the front. She is apparently fighting alongside her countrymen in this way as is the King. Quite remarkable really. They say that the Boche won't fire on either of them out of respect, or maybe their Kaiser ordered it."

"Chivalry in this awful war?"

"Perhaps, lad. But I saw the atrocities at Liège and Louvain on my way to Cologne last year. On the other hand I also saw gruesome things in the Congo that Alfred's uncle, Leopold II had inflicted there. So it's not all one sided you know."

"Back to Elisabeth sir."

"Yes, Yes. Elisabeth is the daughter of Charles-Theodore Wittelsbach, Duke of Bavaria. So she was in the royal house. It is amazing that she is now fighting her countrymen. In fact her brother-in-law Ruppert, Crown Prince of Bavaria is the commander of the German 6th Army I believe. It shows a great love for her husband and the Belgian people."

"And she can help me save Morgan?"

"Yes, I hope so for your sake."

Tadgh was surprised that this very sick man with the troubles of the world on his shoulders and in a hostile foreign country would take up his personal cause. *He must really want his message delivered. But why me?* That's when it hit him. Casement's only contact with the outside world was through the Germans to Devoy in New York. He was cornered, forced to rely on the men that he most suspected of deceit. He was, in fact, a prisoner.

Sir Roger coughed, which started a series of them. At first Tadgh thought he was having a fit. He rushed out into the anti-room where Charles was waiting and pulled him into Casement's presence.

"It's the recurrence of malaria that he caught in the Congo." Charles wiped Sir Roger's brow and steadied his shoulder which was drooping in his chair. Slowly the convulsive coughing subsided, leaving the poor man holding his side.

"This wretched bug. It'll do me in I fear, if Nodalny doesn't get me first."

"He'll be all right now," Dr. Curry said as he turned to leave the room.

Tadgh could see that Casement's condition had worsened. Those sunken eyes.

"As I was saying, I have contacted Elisabeth through a mutual friend here in Bavaria, a close childhood friend. She sent a letter to Lisa about your friend Morgan and I got the reply yesterday. Elisabeth has an underground network of Belgian patriots that have sometimes been able to penetrate German lines. Like everything in this damned war, this is a dangerous business Tadgh. Edith Cavell, and very brave English nurse in Belgium found that out on October 12."

"Sir?"

"Edith Cavell helped nurse soldiers from both sides and facilitated the escape of over 200 Allied soldiers from German occupied Belgium before she was betrayed and arrested. There was an international outrage but the Germans executed her for treason anyway less than two months ago."

"I've got to get to Morgan."

"Fortunately Queen Nurse is of the same opinion. She will try to find out where Morgan is and get a message to her but she doesn't think it wise to try to extricate her from Ostend through the enemy battlefront unless you are there to support her. You are to stay here until we get a response that she is still at the hospital there."

"I need to go now."

"No. We are all being watched closely Tadgh here and in Munich. You will be shot if you try to escape. You must understand one thing. Elisabeth's motivation for helping is to give Morgan, a fellow nurse, safe passage. From her perspective, you will just be along as a bodyguard. She has no knowledge of me directly or our cause here in Germany nor at home."

"Then why would she go to this trouble?"

"I don't know but it is fortunate indeed that she is willing to help."

"What about Monteith?"

"He's back in Zossen trying the train our Brigade such as it is. I wish I had an officer of sufficient rank to satisfy the GGS, but this is all we have. Robert has only recently arrived, but he seems loyal. Despite his great experience in the Boer War and the Egypt campaign, he doesn't think he is up to the job of senior Brigade officer, so he wants you to join him at Zossen. I have to try and dissuade him and the GGS."

"I heard of him back home," Tadgh said. "He was a drill instructor for the Irish volunteers before the English drummed him out of Dublin. I heard he went to Limerick."

"Let me handle him. Your job is to stay put with Charles here until we hear back from Queen Nurse."

A second coughing fit consumed him and Charles rushed in to help.

"We should go," Dr. Curry said, having helped his friend calm his respiratory system once more.

Sir Roger nodded, waving them out weakly, and the men made their exit.

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Morgan Xed out another day on the calendar Gerda had given her when she got home just before midnight on December 14, 7 weeks less a day since she last saw Tadgh. She didn't have the energy to eat anything. She was now Dr. Heinrich's right hand nurse. He depended on her for organizing the nursing corps and for assisting him with the most difficult amputations. He even gave her an interpreter so that she could work efficiently with the nurses and orderlies who didn't speak English. Her German was improving; phrases and words of the trade mostly

Fritz had come back from his mission, dog-tired and filthy, but Gerda didn't care. He'd come home safe. And the boys were overjoyed to see their Papa. But that was short-lived. Raimund Weisbach had recovered and was back in command of U-19, getting ready for the next mission. Gerda was upset. They had to leave before Christmas.

Before he had been released a fortnight earlier, Morgan had met with Captain Weisbach at his request.

"I am forever in your debt for saving me after I was burned."

" . . . saving my Tadg and myself you mean. It is us who are in your debt. But why . . .?"

"I have such guilt. It is my job and I do it, but I have such remorse. You were trying to save those poor sailors."  
 Morgan thought it better not to recount that frightful afternoon on the Lusitania. He was in enough pain and she didn't want to think about it anyway. What's the point. "What's the point of all this war anyway."

"I ask myself that question Morgan, every day. But it's my job."

"And my job, it would seem is to patch you all up and send you back in to the battles."

"Dr. Heinrich tells me you are good at that."

"Well I've worked on one of the best I can see."

"Perhaps we'll meet again when I return from my next mission."

Was he making advances? She had heard that he was unmarried. "I certainly hope not for both our sakes." Morgan swept her arm out toward the ward full of mangled humanity.

To drive home her point she added, "Tadgh will be here shortly to rescue me."

"That's very unlikely, I'm afraid. But at least you are not also in a POW camp."

In truth she was at her wits end. She had found out the address of the camp at Limburg and Gerda had helped her a month ago with the writing, knowing that the Germans would intercept and read the letter. Just last week she got a response. At first Gerda was afraid to read it to her. 'Mr. McCarthy was removed from this camp on November 24 by GGS personnel. His whereabouts are unknown to us at this time'.

Morgan remembered hearing of the atrocities on both sides where prisoners were take into the woods, shot and thrown in a shallow grave.

"Perhaps I'll see you in more peaceful circumstances then, I hope." Captain Weisbach had turned on his heel and was gone.

Now, in mid December, the snow was falling as she had trudged back to Gerda's home. If it hadn't been during the War to end all Wars being not 10 miles distant, Christmas spirit would be filling the air. Morgan had heard that last December 25th there had been an unofficial truce in no-man's-land between the trenches where the soldiers had exchanged souvenirs and even played sports together. Based on the condition of the wounded soldiers who were streaming in to the hospital these days it didn't look like that would happen this year.

What do they say? *It's always darkest before the dawn.* She kept telling herself that as she plopped into bed. It seemed to help except in the middle of the night at Gerda's house. That night as usual she prayed the Lord's prayer that Tadgh had taught her what seemed so long ago. At the end of 'forever and ever, amen' a phrase from the Bible popped into her head from where she didn't know. 'My God shall provide all your needs according to his riches in glory by Jesus Christ.' Phillipians 4:19.

The very next day, mid afternoon, Morgan took a break from the operating room to check on a patient in the ward. A priest named Father Jan Peeters whom Morgan had seen ministering to the seriously wounded came up and asked her to pray with him over a dying soldier. As they knelt by his mattress together the clergyman removed a folded envelope from his robes and thrust it into her hand. Looking over into her eyes he said softly, "The Lord shall provide." Then he added, "with a little help from our Queen Nurse."

Morgan was shocked. "From where may I ask sir?" She tucked the curious letter under her tunic. But not before she saw the official royal wax seal. She had heard about the Belgian Queen who was fighting the war same as any commoner. She was loved by her people and even the Germans respected her and her husband. She looked back through the ward to see if there was anyone looking, particularly.

When she turned back to the dying soldier the priest merely said "De Panne, miss," as he rose up and moved off to another soul needing saving.

Morgan could see ambulances pulling up to the side entrance. The evening onslaught was beginning. She rushed in to the operating room and started scrubbing for surgery.

"Where have you been?" Dr. Heinrich wanted to know. "We have had three new cases in the last fifteen minutes."

"I needed some fresher air. The stench in here you know."

"Yes, well from now on ask me if you need to go outside the operating room during your shift."

"Yes sir." That was rich. That shift as he put it could be more than 24 hours long.

For the rest of the evening Morgan was agonizing over what the contents of this very important letter could be. She didn't have a private minute to herself to look. Tadgh's death notice? From a priest. That was ominous. Unlikely though to be coming from the Belgian side unless he was killed at the Front. *God, maybe that's where GGS sent him. It's always darkest before the dawn...Maybe she just heard about my good nursing work.*

All the way back to Gerda's Morgan was looking over her shoulder. There had been times when she had been followed. She dared not stop to look.

"My, my," Gerda exclaimed when Morgan flew in the door. "What's the matter?"

"I'm afraid to look," Morgan replied pulling the dirty document out from under her tunic. She trusted Gerda now as much as she would have trusted Tadgh. Who else could she trust?

"Is it about Tadgh? Oh Lord it has the crown seal of Belgium." Gerda had turned it over in her hands.

"Open it and read it to me." Morgan couldn't bear to do it.

Gerda sat Morgan down and poured her some tea. Then she used her one sharp kitchen knife to open the letter. She read it slowly to herself first.

"Well?"

"It's in English. I'll read it."

"I am in communication with my childhood friend in Munich. She tells me that your friend Tadgh is alive and well . . ."

Morgan burst out crying. Gerda came over and held her tight, noting how her shoulder and arm muscles were taut and rigid. She rocked her softly until she relaxed.

"Well that's a relief, isn't it now."

"Yes," Morgan stammered, wiping her eyes with her handkerchief. 'What else does it say?"

". . . your friend Tadgh is alive and well in Munich. He wants you to know that he is coming to save you. I have certain resources that may be able to aid you both in reaching our side of the Western Front. Go to the Petrus and Paulus Church when he arrives. Since my emissary has confirmed your existence where Tadgh last saw you, as witness your receipt of my letter, I will notify your man by return correspondence through my friend that you are indeed there and as well as can be expected. Be prepared to be liberated at all times. You are in danger so be wary. Please destroy this correspondence. Signed Elisabeth Gabrielle Valérie Maria, Queen of Belgium."

Morgan looked at Gerda who lifted her chin. "We are two women with men in danger. That takes precedence over nationality. I will do anything I can to help you Morgan."

For the first time in almost two months Morgan had hope.

**CHAPTER NINE - ZOSSEN (WC 2280) ©**

**December 23, 1915**

**Munich, Bavaria**

**Torgan**

adgh wasn't going to wait much longer, Nadolny or no Nadolny. It had been 13 days since he met with Sir Roger with no word. Morgan must still be there. They needed her. He had a bad feeling.

Just as he was eating his breakfast with the Currys and looking out at the snow falling on the serene landscape, Monteith came striding down the walk to Dr. Curry's home accompanied by a German soldier. *Damn. I've waited too long.*

"It's time to go to Zossen, McCarthy. I need you there."

"We need to talk to Mr. Casement before I go."

"Nodalny says you must come with me, now." Monteith pointed at the armed guard beside him. "Sir Roger is incapacitated."

Charles left the room and went to his telephone. Five minutes later he returned and slipped Tadgh a note, just as Monteith was getting him to gather up his few loaned belongings. "I've spoken to Sir Roger by telephone. There's only one telephone at the general store in Riederau so they had to go and fetch him at the hotel. He says you should go with Monteith and do what you need to do."

"There. I told you so. Come along then." Monteith tried to push Tadgh out the door but he resisted. The guard drew his luger.

"Charles and Mary Abby. I am so thankful for your kindness. I will repay it someday, I assure you."

"No bother lad. You take care of yourself." Charles winked.

As Tadgh was thrust into a waiting German Stewart truck with staked canvas bed he noted the short-handled shovel strapped to the side of the outside of the vehicle on the passenger side. When Monteith went around to jump up into the driver's seat Tadgh looked quickly at the note in his clinched fist. 'Morgan at Ostend hospital. Lisa will help. Your mission crucial. Evade Monteith but don't hurt him. God speed. Casement.' Tadgh smiled. Casement thought he could get the upper hand.

The armed soldier brought up the rear on his NSU 7 PS motorcycle. Tadgh had read about them somewhere. They were more powerful than his *Kerry* 670 cc sv V twin built by Ablingdon back home. 60 horsepower he remembered. Quite a machine.

Tadgh decided to play along for the time being. "Where is Zossen Robert?" He had heard Casement call him by his first name.

"It's just south of Berlin. Convenient for my visits to GGS. And convenient for Nadolny to interrogate us. We are still prisoners."

"Who is this Nadolny?"

"Kapitan Rudolph Nadolny is the Chief of the "Sektion Politik", the military's sabotage department of the GGS. He's responsible for the development of new chemical warfare weapons, a force to be reckoned with I can assure you."

"This soldier?"

"One of his lackeys."

"Got you under his thumb then. Do you think they will supply arms and men when the time comes?"

"Hard to tell. I've only been here a month or so. They are devious though."

"Casement is gravely concerned, to use his phrase."

"Sir Roger has been here over a year. I trust his judgment . . . although his illness concerns me."

"He seems to be losing this round to the malaria, more so than when you saw him last Robert."

"I'm not surprised based on what Dr. Curry told me."

"It puts you in a hard spot with him almost out of commission."

"It's what Devoy wants, so I'm here for better or worse. You'd better settle in. We've got a four hundred mile trip ahead of us."

Ten hours Tadgh reckoned. Plenty of time to figure out what to do. Berlin, he remembered was in the northeastern section of Germany, near the border with Poland. Not exactly close to Ostend in Belgium. By his guess it would be another four hundred mile trek between the two, should he be able to escape. But how would could he do that in a way that wouldn't compromise Monteith with Nadolny or, more importantly, Morgan if Nadolny's warning were to be real. And based on what Robert had just said there was every reason to believe that he would go after her. He probably knows that Casement is starting to turn against him and he won't let me escape since he knows I have been meeting with Sir Roger. *No messages to get out of Germany without his consent I suspect.*

As they passed by Nürnberg three hours later, Tadgh had a plan. He remembered something he had seen in the western countryside on their way south from Limburg. He hoped it would be the same on the east side of Germany. It had to be in this time of war. If so the timing would be everything. He closed his eyes for some rest. He would need all his strength later that night.

They reached the northern edge of the foothills of Thurlinger Wold at 3 pm. The guard pulled up even with the truck cab on the driver's side and signaled Monteith to stop. Tadgh woke up. Now might be his chance. But it was too early and this wasn't the place. *Of course. The motorcycle needs petrol,* Tadgh realized when Monteith got out and helped the guard remove a petrol can from the bed of the truck. Hearing the clanking, Tadgh jumped down from the cab and sauntered around to the back where the two men were in animated conversation by the motorcycle.

"Drive faster. This prisoner must get to Zossen tonight."

"What's the rush? They aren't expecting us until late tomorrow. I didn't know if I would have to visit Casement on this trip."

"Nadolny wants him there as soon as possible."

Tadgh saw two more cans of petrol in the bed of the truck. Good.

The guard un-holstered his luger. "Hey you. Get back in the cab."

Tadgh could play along. He raised his arms and turned to return to the truck. The guard started to pour petrol while Monteith watched and stretched.  
 On his way around the passenger side of the Stewart, now out of sight, he unclipped the shovel and hopped up into the cab with it in hand. Looking around he settled on the space behind the backs of the seats where he positioned it horizontal crossways to the vehicle, within easy reach. Peering forward down the foothills Tadgh could see the arable plains opening up. Good. Two more hours should do it.

When Monteith returned to the cab Tadgh was feigning sleep.

"Bastard Nodalny," Robert muttered as he fired up the Stewart and headed down the hill.

One hour later they were down on the plain passing by Leipzig. No snow on the ground on this dull cloudy day. Tadgh estimated that twilight was about an hour away. That would help. He started scouring the countryside. There, up ahead to his right. An unkempt farm with no animals in the fields. This was going to work.

At a quarter to five the light started to fade and Monteith turned on the headlights. Tadgh guessed that they were about two hours from their destination. Two hours from unacceptable captivity, but, if this worked, only a few minutes from freedom. They passed the small village of Mockrehna with a forest to their left and pastures to their right.

Lights started blinking on in the farmhouses they were passing. There was no other traffic on this straight rural road in either direction. Tadgh stretched and slid his left arm casually up and behind the driver's seat back. There. A quarter of a mile ahead on the right. A dark farmhouse set in the trees. They'd be on it in twenty seconds. He could barely make out that it's fields were overgrown. Perfect. It would be too dark to see in a few minutes. *It's now or never.*

Tadgh's guerilla warfare training kicked in. Raising his right arm high up across his body he delivered a swift and stunning downward blow to Monteith's carotid sinus, just where the two branches split. Instantly Monteith's brain erroneously sensed his blood pressure was rising dangerously and signaled the heart to slow down. The plummeting in blood pressure starved his confused brain and he fainted. All this happened in less than three seconds.

By then Tadgh's right hand had a firm grip on the steering wheel. The truck had swerved slightly and was decelerating while Monteith was losing consciousness. Tadgh shifted left, scrunching Monteith against the door and jammed his own left foot onto the accelerator. He pulled the short-handed shovel up over the seat back with his left hand and placed it across his lap. Then he rolled down the driver's side window and slowed the Stewart until it was going less than ten miles an hour.

He was counting on the guard to get angry at the delay and to drive up on the driver's side. Moments later he could see him approaching in the rear view mirror. When he was a couple of feet behind the cab he saw that Monteith was incapacitated and started to draw his luger with his right hand, accelerating. That's when Tadgh jammed on the brake. Simultaneously, with his right arm he thrust the shovel out the window. Like a jouster in the medieval court, the shovel caught the guard across the neck and down he went, his motorcycle spinning out of control, coming to rest in the ditch on the driver's side of the road.

Tadgh shot out of the cab on the passenger side and reached the guard just as he was starting to get up, holding his throat. Tadgh easily disabled him with an uppercut to the jaw as snow began to fall.

Quickly, Tadgh used the guard's belt to tie his arms behind his back. Then, using a fireman's carry, he hoisted his inert frame into the bed of the truck. His size would do nicely.

Tadgh jumped into the cab on the drivers' side pushing Monteith to the middle. He was still out cold. Then he turned the Stewart around and drove up the lane to the darkened farm house, hoping, as he had guessed, that it was unoccupied because it's owner was away fighting the war. At the end of the driveway he noticed a barn off to the right of the house at the far end of a clearing near the woods. Perfect. Five minutes later, after jimmying the padlock on its door, Tadgh had the Stewart safely inside the barn. It least they wouldn't freeze to death in there.

Tadgh was now dressed in the guard's army uniform and helmet, not an exact fit but good enough. The guard was tied to one of the barn's internal support posts, clad in Tadgh's borrowed clothes. He looked far better than he did in his own uniform. Tadgh felt better now, sporting the guard's luger in its holster on his right hip. Monteith was tied upright to a separate support post twenty feet away from the guard. Both men were well away from any implements that could help them escape. Tadgh checked Monteith's neck for a pulse. There was always the chance that a carotid blow could cause a stroke or worse. But no, there was a pulse. He'd be waking up soon.

Tadgh trudged down the lane towards the road just as a military convoy came into view heading south. Their lights glared through the falling snow. If they saw the motorcycle in the ditch there would be trouble. Tadgh flattened himself behind a bush and waited. There must have been ten trucks in the line and none of them saw the NSU. So much for German efficiency.

When they had passed out of sight Tadgh quickly ran down to the road to where the motorcycle was already covered in snow. No wonder they didn't see it. Tadgh lifted it up and noted that the front fender was pushed in against the tire. He gave it a kick and the damn fender fell off. No problem. Tadgh tried the ignition and the bike roared to life. It looked as if the frame and spoke of the wheels were still aligned. Tadgh steering the NSU up out of the ditch, turning around and heading up the laneway to the barn. Monteith was stirring when Tadgh closed the doors, stopping the motorcycle beside the Stewart. He removed two full gas cans from the truck and lashed them on the back rack of the bike.

Then he checked the truck compartment,. finding what he was looking for, a detailed road map in the driver's door pouch. He pocketed it and looked for more weapons. None. Monteith was unarmed. Obvious. Nadolny wouldn't permit it. There was no food either.   
 Tadgh opened the bonnet of the Stewart and disabled the ignition system, taking the rotor with him.

There was no time to waste. He wasn't sure whether there were people in the house, although it looked deserted. It was time to go. Nodalny be damned.

Monteith mumbled. "You won't get away with this."

Tadgh went over to him and said. "Just do your job and protect your boss. Sir Roger needs you." Then he gagged Robert with a rag and stuffed a similar one in the still-unconscious guard's mouth.

Two minutes later, the barn door was locked and Tadgh started to backtrack southwest to Leipzig. Stopping at its outskirts Tadgh consulted his map which showed territory all the way to the Western Front. Damn. Four hundred and ninety miles to his destination. Fourteen hours he guesstimated if he could stay awake that long. He had to. Nadolny would go after Morgan. He turned his motorcycle west towards Düsseldorf. This would lead eventually to Belgium and his *aroon*. There would be no Zossen tonight. It was snowing hard.

**CHAPTER TEN - REUNITED (WC 3330) ©**

**December 24, 1915**

**German General Staff Headquarters, Berlin**

**Rorgan**

udolph Nadolny was striding up and down his office, slapping his officer's strop against his leg. "Where are they, Hans?" The commander of the Camp at Zossen had been in his office throughout the lunch period.

"They should have arrived last night before midnight. I am trying to determine whether they stayed over in Munich to see Casement. My man there went to Riederau but Casement pleaded ignorance."

"Casement is a problem. Malaria you say."

"Yes sir, from his time in the Congo."

"Don't we know where McCarthy stayed in Munich?"

"Monteith didn't say."

"I don't like it. That man McCarthy is trouble. Do we have a photograph?"

"Yes sir. Standard one taken at Limburg."

Rudolph turned to his second-in-command, Hauptman Friedric Gruber.

"I want you to have that hospital in Ostend watched. We won't pick up the girl yet. If he shows up we'll detain them both. And send a dispatch rider back along the path Monteith should have taken from Munich. They must be stopped from spreading Casement's lies at all costs. Report back here by 18:00."

Nadolny hated this duty. A damned distraction. But these were his orders from the Imperial Chancellor. Germany wanted an Irish distraction. Von Bethmann Hollweg had negotiated with this ineffective Irishman. How much support would the Irish rebels get from the populace if Casement couldn't even convince Irish prisoners of war to fight for their country. They'd prefer to stay in our camps, under despicable conditions. The few that have agreed are an undisciplined lot, hardly military. Now their leader Casement sounded like he wanted to call it all off. The Chancellor forbids direct communications between him and his superiors in Ireland. *This stupid affair could cost me my job or worse if McCarthy isn't stopped.*

Friedric Gruber saluted smartly and hightailed it out of Nadolny's office. You snapped to attention for the head of the Sabotage Department of the GGS.

# # # #

Gerda was doing her best to get ready for Christmas with whatever meager handmade decorations she could scrounge up. Stringed popcorn and looped colored paper rings draped the mantel. There would be no feast to celebrate the birth of our Lord and no presents for the children. But they would make do until Papa came home from his mission. Yet Fritz had surprised her just before he left a week ago. He had a marvelous gift wrapped in a brown paper box. A beautiful ancient locket with crown surmounting folded hand over a heart. It was silver and she loved it even though she couldn't get it open. She squirreled it away in her top drawer with her undies. It was the gift of a lifetime. She'd hate to do it, but if things turned bad enough for them all she could sell it for some marks.

"Gerda, I'm going on-shift now," Morgan announced as she finished the watery soup Gerda had made from a scrawny chicken they had consumed three days earlier. "I will try and get some things to bring back for the boys for Christmas morning." She wasn't sure how she could do that given that she wasn't being paid for her work.

"Don't worry about it dear. Having you here is gift enough."

"You have been too kind Gerda. I don't know what would have happened to me if you hadn't taken me in."

"Nonsense. You have been a great help. When young Fritz cut his finger, you stitched it up didn't you?"

"Well yes. It's what I do."

"It is a wondrous time you know. The coming of our Lord."

"Yes I know. We should be thankful no matter what our circumstances. You know, last night when I was walking home I saw a very bright star directly above us. Do you think?"

"Think what dear?"

"That he will come tonight?"

"Who? Jesus? Yes of course. He comes every Christmas Eve."

"No. I mean Tadgh. Next to Jesus, he is my savior. He saved me once already you know."

"It's a wonderful thought to keep with you today. Just like my positive thoughts about Fritz coming back to me. But things are not as they should be, are they?"

"We live in hope in these times Gerda." Morgan crossed to where her friend was darning socks and hugged her tightly. "We're two peas in a pod, aren't we now."

"Gerda wiped her eyes with her apron."

"I should be home by dark tonight. We're expecting a short shift. There seems to be a lull at the Front just now."

"Jesus is coming," Gerda said. "I can feel it."

# # # #

Tadgh was exhausted. The snow had slowed him down. Then there was the checkpoint near Eindhoven at the border to The Netherlands. He had to detour ten miles south through the fields. Now at Budel he stopped to refill the tank with the last can of petrol. He had found three grenades and some dry soldier's rations of some strange dried jerky and stale bread in the saddlebags of the motorcycle. That food had long since been consumed. The snow had stopped and the temperature was above freezing but his gloveless hands were like ice on the handlebar. The guard's gloves wouldn't fit, with hands much smaller than his own.

He looked at his watch. *Damn, is it that late*? 1 pm. Checking his map he decided that there were still 4 hours to go. He'd kill Nadolny if Morgan was harmed.

Here, at the border into Belgium he could not avoid the check point. He remembered the day last July when he, Morgan and Wiggins blustered their way through the English barricade just outside Dublin with the crates of arms hidden under stout kegs in Wiggin's Beamish and Crawford Brewery lorry. That was relatively easy compared to this situation because he at least spoke the language. Tadgh pulled the Prussian helmet down tight over his ears. Maybe the soldier's goggles would help him. He unsnapped the cover on the luger's holster.

To his surprise the guard at the gate snapped to attention when he rolled to a stop. Tadgh returned the salute. Then the guard said something about 'das Sektion Politik' and pulled up the barrier. The motorcycle and or soldier's uniform must have some insignia that showed he was a member of the sabotage section of the GGS. Tadgh yelled "danke" with his most authoritarian baritone voice and gunned the throttle. Looking back he saw that the border guard was still saluting. Damn, he could have avoided that earlier detour.

Once he had passed Antwerp he realized that he was on the home stretch. Two more hours give or take. He had overtaken and passed several convoys of armed personnel carriers without anyone stopping him for questioning. The men and machines coming east from the Front were all pretty beaten up and the countryside looked like pictures he had seen of burnt out and bombed no-mans land. At least the road was passable.

Finally an hour before sunset he stopped the bike on the outskirts of Bruges. With its intricate waterways it looked like Venice of the North, just as he had been told in school. So picturesque, even under German occupation. They had spared the bulk of the old town.

He was ten miles southwest of Ostend now. Twenty minutes away from his *aroon.*

# # # #

Arndt Ritter had been an orderly by day at the hospital in Ostend ever since the occupation started. As a covert member of the Sektion Politik, he took care of sabotage or the avoidance of same here in Ostend and all the way to the Western Front where the Yres River meets the sea at Nieuwpoort. The Germans had driven the pugnacious Belgians back to the west side of that river last year where the defenders had made their stand supported by the French Marine Fusiliers. They fought ferociously, battle after battle, heroically holding the line, preserving a small northwest corner of Belgian soil. Finally in desperation on October 23, 1914 they opened the canal locks of the Ypres flooding the eastern lowlands including the German trenches. It forced the Prussians up and out in a final all out attack which failed. What a bloody battle. This set the western boundary of German aggression between Ypres and the North Sea coast. There it had stayed, mired down in mud for over a year. The German Generals now seemed content with holding that line in the west while they concentrated on the battles at the Eastern Front with Russia. What had been rich pasture land, intersected with ditches and canals was now a bare and sinister plain laid waste by falling bombs, shells and shrapnel. The mucky soil lay broken by heavy traffic, and plowed up by projectiles. The rows of poplars, bent by the sea winds, were now jagged, uprooted and twisted stumps. And in the process hundreds of thousands of young men had died or had been maimed on both sides. All this in the ten miles west of Ostend.

Each time he had to take an ambulance out, Arndt hated making that trip across this desolate battleground to bring back more casualties.

While he had been changing bed pans this afternoon Arndt had been watching the door to the operating room closely. His boss would kill him literally if he screwed up this assignment. The girl they called Morgan had come out several times to give instructions. He had even talked to her once. She was very efficient and a nice enough person. But she was the enemy. He remembered what her partner looked like from when they arrived. Septic leg wound.

The only way out of the operating room was into the ward, and he had the exit from it to the hotel lobby and street covered. The fugitive McCarthy wouldn't elude him if he showed up, which he doubted.

Dr. Heinrich strode out of the operations room and gathered the nurses and orderlies together in the ward. "He are not expecting a wave of casualties tonight, it being Christmas Eve. Except for the skeleton staff who agreed to work, you are all released from duty. May God go with you until tomorrow."

He took Morgan aside and shook her hand. "You've done well here. Thank you."

"I don't know what I would have done without your support doctor. I should be thanking you sir." With that she gave her superior a hug and turned to consult with the remaining nurses in the ward. Ten minutes later she gathered up her coat and walked out the front door.

Arndt was conflicted; follow Morgan or wait for McCarthy. He decided to wait. The fugitive would have to come to the hospital and the girl wouldn't try to escape.

# # # #

He was helping an amputee try to walk an hour later when a soldier wearing Sektion Politik insignia came into the ward. He looked stooped and, rubbing his backside, saddle-sore. A messenger from Nadolny? Then he looked closer as the visitor removed his helmet. Damnation. That's McCarthy. Ritter watched his prey as he looked around at all the nurses. Then he stepped through the partially open operating room door.

Arndt dropped his patient on the nearest mattress, nearly crushing its occupan,t and rushed to the hospital military telephone in the adjacent office to call his boss. He could still see the operating room door across the ward. It only rang once. "He's here," he announced.

"Arrest him and the girl," Nadolny ordered and then he hung up.

A minute later McCarthy emerged from the operating room, smiling ear to ear with Dr. Heinrich on his hip. The doctor pointed out the door; it looked from across the ward like giving directions. Then he clapped his former patient on the shoulder. Arndt rushed from the office just in time to see Tadgh disappear out the front door.

Tadgh noted the hurried action by the white uniformed orderly out of the corner of his eye as he exited the ward. Nadolny's lackey. As he headed down Christina Straat away from the beach he could see the orderly following at a distance. That confirmed it. An idea took shape. Would he have the strength? Ten minutes later he arrived at #135 Ooststraat, a nondescript town home. He had anticipated this moment for two months now. And all he had brought her was danger. The orderly lurked out of sight half a block away.

# # # #

Morgan was helping Gerda by skinning the few potatoes that they had for dinner when the door knocker pounded. She remembered their talk that morning and her heart started pounding.

"Are you expecting someone?" She looked at Gerda who shrugged her shoulders.

"Through the door she heard "*Aroon*. Is my love to home do ye know?"

"My god it's Tadgh," She cried, dropping the potato bowl on the floor as she flew to open the door.

"*Mavorneen. Oh Mavorneen.* I'm here, waiting for you."

The door burst open and Tadgh almost knocked her down. The two boys came running from the kitchenette. Gerda was crying for joy.

He took her in his arms and held her tight, tighter than ever before. He was never going to let her out of his sight ever again. His body responded, tingling from head to toe. Tadgh turned them both as one and kicked the door shut. "There's an orderly out there who is following us."

"But how . . ."

Never you mind right now, Morgan." Oh how that word was music to his ears. And she looked wonderful, simply wonderful.

"Won't you introduce me?" Gerda was so happy for Morgan.

"Tadgh, this is Gerda. She and the boys have been so good to me."

Tadgh looked at his watch. Then he crouched down and gave the boys a salute. They giggled and ducked behind their mother's skirts.

"This is Gerda, my new good friend. She is Fritz's wife."  
 Tadgh's eyes went wide. "Really. Ma'am we are forever indebted to your husband for his heroic efforts to save both of us."

Tadgh noticed that Morgan was shaking her head sideways."

"Er, he was a fine substitute captain to get us here to Ostend, Ma'am."

"Tell me more Tadgh?"

Morgan shook her head again. Tadgh got the message. "He took the leadership of his U-Boat to guide us here as quickly as possible."

"Come on love, we've got to be going. I have instructions."

"What instructions. From whom?"

"From the priest at Paulus and Peterus Kirken. I must go there. He will know what to do."

Gerda said, "The savior comes on Christmas Eve. Follow the star of the east."

Morgan smiled at her friend and then ran to her room to get her meager belongings. Gerda followed her. "I'm sorry to see you go but I know it is dangerous for you here."

"I'm worried that there will be repercussions on you and Fritz, Gerda."

"Nonsense, we just put up a weary traveler and contributor at our hospital. Go with God dear."

Morgan kissed her on her forehead. "We wish the best for you and Fritz."

"I don't think that he will survive this war dear but I hold out hope."

"You do that. I had hope that Tadgh would come for me and look what happened."

"Yes it did. Now what will happen?"

."We will survive. I know it now."

Tadgh called from the living room. "*Aroon*, we need to go."

"Can I take the back door Gerda?" Morgan asked, returning to the living room with a her bundle of clothes.

"You can't go alone," Tadgh stated. "Let me go with you."

"You stay here and show your face Tadgh. I'll be right back. It's only two blocks away."

"But . . ."

"But nothing. I'll be all right."

"I have an idea." Tadgh explained his plan to Morgan.

"Can you take him? You look so tired."

"Not to worry, love. Hurry back."

# # # #

Gruber wasn't satisfied. When he got off the telephone he called in his oberleutnant. "Can the Albatros C.I land at Stene-Ostend airfield at night?

"Yes sir. They can put out smoke pots along the runway."

"I want this McCarthy stopped. "Get me a car for the airport."

Twenty minutes later Friedric was in the cockpit of his beloved Albatros, running through the preflight check with the ground crew. Then, the same time as Morgan was sneaking out the back door of Gerda's place, Gruber had lifted off from Berlin at Staaken Airport pointing his aircraft westward into the dying rays of the day. He had already calculated. He'd have to refuel at Essen which would take twenty minutes. The total transit time would be five hours, getting him into Ostend before midnight.

# # # #

Morgan returned thirty minutes later. Tadgh noted that the orderly was still watching the house from the front. "It's 8 pm now. We're to go to the church at 11 to meet with Father Peeters. He is telegraphing the Allies on the western side of the Front from his religious communicatios link."

"Nurse Queen?"

"I think so."

"We'll need to go back to the hospital at 10:30 then."

Gerda finished preparing the meager Christmas Eve dinner and they all sat down to eat. The children wanted a present but their Mother sadly had none. Morgan went to her room and returned carrying a gingerbread house that she had made using pieces of dried bread, chocolates and candies that she had been storing up for this occasion. The children jumped for joy and Gerda was overcome with gratitude. Even Tadgh was impressed. What an impact Morgan had had on this needy family of the U-Boat watch officer turned Captain who had saved their lives. What a strange, yet wonderful quirk of fate in a time of great turmoil and cruelty at the national level.

"It's time for me to act," Tadgh stood up from the table and headed for the door. "Thank you Gerda."

"I have something for you, Morgan, for your love and generosity to us," Gerda said, starting to unfold the handkerchief in her apron. "Fritz gave this to me, but I'd like you to have it."

She picked up the Claddagh locket lovingly from the folds in her apron and handed it to Morgan.

"My God, Tadgh. It's your locket! I thought that I lost it on the U-Boat."

"Your locket?"

"Yes Gerda. See my Ma's picture is in it." Tadgh snapped open the clamshell.

"But Fritz . . . I'll have to scold him when he gets home."

Morgan took her friend's hand. She knew what that silver piece of jewelry meant to war ravaged Gerda. It could mean the difference of having food on the table for her children.

"Oh Gerda, you are a saint," she said holding her friend close. "The Lord will reward you and your children."

"And my Fritz I hope."

"Yes, and your Fritz. We will see you all after the war."

"Can I count on it?"  
 "Yes my dear friend."

# # # #

Tadgh had slipped out the back way. Three minutes later there was a scuffle in the street and Tadgh returned this time through the front door, dragging the inert form of the orderly behind him.

"Time for me to change clothes again. I feel like a chameleon."

"You are a chameleon, mavorneen." Morgan hugged her man from behind and wouldn't let go.

Gerda covered her children's eyes while Tadgh stripped the orderly's clothes off him. Then he interchanged clothing with the man. "Good, he is now properly dressed as a agent of the Sektion Politik and I am an ambulance driver."

After saying their goodbyes, Tadgh deposited Arndt back in the street two blocks away and they headed to the hospital. There they found, as Morgan had expected, three ambulances that had come back from the Western Front earlier in the day. The motorcycle was parked alongside.

"A fair exchange don't ya think," Tadgh said after he had managed to get one of the ambulances started in the darkness.

"You came on that contraption?"

"Five hundred miles my love, after four hundred more in a truck."

"My God Tadgh. Where were you?"

"With Casement in Bavaria, my love."

As they drove south to the church Tadgh filled her in on his adventures and Casement's message.

"Well, weren't you living the life of Riley," Morgan joked. "And me all the while worried if you were dead."

"A promise is a promise."

"Don't the Currys know there is a war going on?"

"It is beautiful in Bavaria, Morgan. Someday I will take you there."

When they reached the church Father Peeter was waiting. "We are to go to the Front opposite Furnes," he announced jumping in the back. Tadgh checked his map.

As they headed west out of Ostend Morgan looked back at the city lights receding in the distance. "They took good care of me didn't they." She missed Gerda and the boys already.

"It sounds as if you took good care of them. All of them."

"All the broken boys. Yes. What a waste."

**CHAPTER ELEVEN - WESTERN FRONT (WC 4341) ©**

**December 25, 1915**

**Road to the Western Front**

**Torgan**

adgh had to be careful in the dark. The bomb and shell craters made the road barely passable; hit any one of them and risk breaking the axle. The sky had cleared on this moonless night. Directly above them the star Polaris hovered brightly as they headed westward at 1 am.

"What's the plan when we get to the Front?" Tadgh asked the priest who was constantly fiddling with his rosary. He needed time to assimilate whatever action they would need to take. Ahead on the horizon he could see flashes of light.

"Is that thunder?"

"No Morgan, Artillery fire. We'll be there soon enough."

Morgan knew what that artillery could do to the human body. She shuddered.

"Come over here aroon. It'll be all right. I'll make it so, dont ya know."

Morgan snuggled onto Tadgh's right shoulder and felt better.

"We're to get to the front trench and minister to the wounded. Then wait for a signal from the Allied side."

"I don't speak German," Tadgh confessed, looking back at Father Peeter momentarily.

"Don't worry *mavorneen*. I can get by. Just follow me."

Tadgh couldn't get over the grit and ingenuity of his love. His darling love. He removed his right hand from the steering wheel and encircled her torso, pulling tightly. Morgan leaned in and gave him a long suggestive kiss on his right temple. "I missed you. Oh how I missed you. I had trouble with my thoughts."

"I had faith that God would protect the righteous, *aroon*." Tadgh leaned down and kissed the top of her head.

He missed seeing the hole ahead. The right wheel hit the edge of it and threw the ambulance left. Now they were off the road and in the edge of an old no-man's-land. "Damn." The truck almost flipped on its side. The right wheels were off the ground. They all instinctively leaned right. Tadgh held the wheel steady, his reflexes slow to respond. Anything else and they would have crashed. Gradually Tadgh tickled the wheel right and within a minute they were back on the road. *Bloody buggering bollocks, I'm exhausted.* He decided that comforting Morgan would have to wait.

Squinting at the war zone ahead he said "It can't be more than two miles ahead now.

# # # #

Gruber wiped his eyes. McCarthy was a force to be reckoned with. He and the girl couldn't be allowed to escape. His guard and Monteith had untied themselves and flagged down a northbound convoy. He had heard from them at 5 pm before he took off..

Was that the runway ahead or ship lights in the Bay? He'd been airborne a combined five hours and the only dinner he'd eaten were the bugs in his teeth. .Ritter better have them in custody, There, on the right. A line of signal lights. He deftly banked right and eased the throttle. The engine coughed and he got a face-full of exhaust oil. Damn. He'd have to have his mechanic check the fuel mixture ratio again.

Twenty minutes later he was in the military office in the hospital dressing down Arndt Ritter. "Dammit man. You couldn't take down a tired fugitive and a woman?"

Gerda was asleep when the two sabotage men knocked on her door at 1 am. She locked the boys in the bedroom.

When she cracked the front door Gruber pushed it open and strode into the room. "Where are they Frau?"

"If you mean the nurse who is staying with me and the soldier who came for her? You should know. He was wearing your insignia."

"Don't talk back to me." Friederic stepped forward to slap Gerda. She stood her ground, rigid.

"She's the wife of a U-Boat officer. I checked her out," Ritter interjected.

Gruber stepped back and lowered his arm. Damned U-Boat officers were off limits. His superiors worshipped the ground they walked on.

"Did you check the hospital? They left about an hour ago on foot." Gerda tried to deflect them. Anything to slow them down. She desperately wanted Morgan and her man to have the best chance for freedom, even if she and Fritz couldn't be together. If they get away then maybe there's a chance that Fritz and I can survive this God awful war.

"Show me her room," Gruber demanded, pushing Gerda to action.

Five minutes later, having searched in vain, the Hauptman returned to the front door.

"They didn't say anything about where they are going?"

"No. They just left. I expect Morgan will be returning in the morning. It's Christmas you know. The day of our savior's birth." She wasn't going to compromise the priest at the Kirken.. These brutish officers. Just like the ones ordering her Fritz into terrible danger.

"I will be back Frau. If you are lying . . ." He turned on his heel. "C'mon Ritter. They must have headed for the harbor or the Front."

"Jesus be with you officers," she called out and then prayed to herself. "Lord protect Morgan and her Tadgh."

# # # #

Tadgh could see the check-in barricade ahead. Several ambulances were lined up on the side of the road. A gruff sergeant ordered him to follow suit. Father Peeter and Morgan went off to talk to the officer coordinating triage efforts leaving Tadgh feeling helpless in this environment. Fortunately, Morgan was still dressed in her nurse's uniform.

"The Allied forces are sending an artillery barrage over night. We think they're going to attack at dawn," Morgan reported when they returned, helping Peeter up into the ambulance. "We have to wait our turn. The front is half a mile ahead."

"So it's we now?" Tadgh laughed.

"Comes with the territory *mavorneen*. Do you know how many German soldiers I've helped in two months?"

"Probably half of this army."

"Let's just say a battalion's worth."

"I heard the Germans are using the 'Defence in Depth' tactic so there are probably two trenches and we are behind the last one," Tadgh remembered.

"What tactic?"

"It's where the Front line is manned lightly so the attacker is initially allowed to gain some ground beyond his own artillery cover in the opening phase of an attack. Then he is counter attacked by groups of well placed defenders in second position constructed behind the Front line.

"I was told there is a cop of trees still standing behind the Allied trench at the south end of Furnes. We need to be in the front German trench opposite those trees," Peeter replied."Can we get there in time?"

"We might need to abandon the ambulance."

Tadgh checked his watch. "It's still six hours before dawn. I'm going to catch some shuteye if you'll stand guard Morgan. I'm bushed don't ye know."

"We both will," the priest said.

"Give me an hour unless something happens."

# # # #

Gruber had to rouse the harbor master at two in the morning. After checking with his guards he announced. "No boats have left the harbor since before 9 pm. It's quiet here on Christmas Eve."

"You're sure? They would have been subversive. Small boat coming in from or heading out to the west."

"We patrol the harbor with three crisscross boats. They wouldn't have slipped through, without our knowing it, I can assure you."

He had to believe him. The only other alternative was the Western front. But where on the line? Gruber had an idea. *Why didn't I think about this earlier? The only way to communicate with the Allied side quickly is by telegraph*.Transmissions would have been coded. As a long shot they went to the telegraph office over by the Petreus and Paulus Kirken. Closed. The telegraph operator who lived above his office wasn't home. It was Christmas.

Gruber felt like Herod searching door to door for the baby Jesus in Bethlehem so many centuries ago. He liked the analogy. He was going to be more successful than that Roman governor. Taking the butt of his luger he smashed the front window of the telegraph office. The end justified the means. The Belgian operator would keep a copy of all correspondence. An alarm started sounding as he and Ritter stepped through the opening.

Gruber pointed over the door. "Break that damn bell."

While he was sifting through the operator's desk the local German military police officers showed up guns drawn. "What are you two doing in there?"

"Official business." Gruber turned to display his Sektion Politik insignia.

The police officer hated military leaders who took advantage of their position, especially on Christmas. He had just finished dealing with another hard ass who had raped one of the local Belgian girls. "Put your hands up sir. You have just destroyed public property."

Gruber shot him through the eyes. The other policeman withdrew on the run to find help. Ritter just stood there dumbfounded. "Nobody's going to stop me from finding McCarthy. Why do I have to do everything myself?" Don't just stand there. Go turn off that alarm."

Five minutes later Gruber had found the copies of the telegrams that had been sent last evening. Five of them. "Aha." He suspected two of them, outbound and then inbound a few minutes later. The Belgian operator should have notified the military of such a communication. But being Christmas Eve and a Christian message he hadn't bothered. What did they mean?

Outbound 20:40 "Our savior is born to Joseph and Mary. Where can they find shelter?"

Inbound 21:15 "In a manger south of Bethlehem at the Inn of the trees. When dawn breaks the Magi will come."

Ritter knew the Front positions well enough. "There's only one place on the Front where trees have been allowed to stand on the Allied side. It's in front of the Belgian King Albert's field headquarters. We think him an honorable adversary and we don't shell him or his Queen."

"So, opposite Albert's field control center before dawn then." Gruber checked his watch. Four o'clock. It would be dawn in 4 hours.

# # # #

"Tadgh, the ambulances are moving." Morgan tugged on his sleeve.

Tadgh checked his watch. 6:20 am. "You let me sleep four hours love."

"You needed it."

Tadgh twisted the ignition switch and nothing happened. He tried again. Nothing. There were four ambulances lined up behind him. "Talk to them," Tadgh commanded pointing at the soldiers approaching their vehicle.

Morgan jumped out grabbing a triage first aid kit bag on her way. The priest followed suit and the two advanced to cut the soldiers off. Tadgh opened the bonnet of the truck and peered inside. It was too dark to see much. Then he went to the petrol tank cap and removed it. The smell of petrol was faint. Probably out of fuel. He checked the back of the vehicle. No petrol cans.

The rear ambulance drivers got out of their vehicles to assist. Tadgh made a command decision, abandon the ambulance. He grabbed Morgan and Father Peeter who were just starting to talk to the soldiers. Pulling his partner aside he said, "Tell them that the ambulance has broken down. We will go to find help to fix it."

Morgan relayed the message but the soldiers ordered them to stay by their vehicle. Tadgh feigned compliance but then directed the other two to slip sideways into the deep ditch paralleling the road."Get down and move forward. Keep out of sight."

At first the soldiers didn't see what was happening. Then one of the ambulance drivers yelled at them and pointed at the ditch. It took the soldiers more than a minute to spring into action. Deserting your vehicle was tantamount to deserting your army. They jumped down into the ditch.

Tadgh and Morgan were ahead and now running at full gallup. Father Peeter was petering out.

"Keep going Morgan," Tadgh yelled and turned around to assist the priest.

"Sorry son. I'm not cut out for this field work I'm afraid." He was panting.

Tadgh picked him up in his arms, all five feet of him, and lumbered off to catch up with Morgan.

The soldiers gave chase half-heartedly for a few minutes and then tired of this diversion in the dark. They realized that they weren't authorized to leave their post and doubled back to where the line of ambulances were waiting for access to the battlefield.

Tadgh set Father Peeter down as soon he saw that the soldiers had given up the chase.

Five minutes later Morgan almost fell into the first trench. She teetered forward and Tadgh lunged ahead and pulled her back. They had been feeling their way forward in the eerie darkness since the shelling up ahead had ceased half an hour earlier.

"Ease back there lass," he whispered, not sure whether German infantry were in earshot.

"I've been here before to minister to the dying," Father Peeter said. "Follow me and keep down." He headed parallel to the trench for thirty feet to where wooden steps led down intothe dank darkness. Down, down they went. At least ten steps until the their heads were below ground level. If it had been dark up top, down here was pitch black. The first thing Morgan felt was the muck oozing up over her shoes. Water was dripping out from the seams between the logs shoring up the trench. She wondered how many of them had collapsed burying the soldiers beneath the mud. Plenty, she decided. She couldn't get over how quiet the night had become.

While she was wondering what to do next, Father Peeter grabbed her sleeve and pointed off to the right. A point of light had just appeared maybe 50 feet away, not enough to illuminate the trench. "Cigarette," he whispered.

Tadgh came loping down the trench from their left. Morgan could hear the gloop of his boots as he jogged. "There's stairs forward to our left, but no men."

Morgan pointed to their right. "Over there."

"Let me go talk to them," Father Peeter offered. He disappeared into the darkness. Morgan heard a conversation in German which she couldn't make out.

Three minutes later he was back. "They're expecting an Allied attack at dawn in about an hour. Some are hurt from the shelling they took over night. They're waiting for the orderlies and ambulances at first light. There is a whole company in this trench strung out to the north. Some of the less injured are hobbling back. I'm surprised we didn't run into them."

"Did they say where we are relative to where we are supposed to be at dawn?" Tadgh asked. He couldn't see his watch.

"We need to be a quarter mile to our left to be opposite the cop of trees."

"Let's go then," Tadgh said.

"I think it best that I stay here son where I can do some good. Some of the men are in a bad way."

"Let me help you," Morgan offered, taking his hand.

"No, dear girl. You've come this far to gain your freedom. Don't jeopardize that now."

Morgan looked at Tadgh who she could barely see in the gloom.

"He's right, don't ya know lass."

Morgan turned and hugged the priest who gave her the sign of the cross on her forehead. "Go with God," he said and then disappeared to the right into the darkness.

"Back up and out lass," Tadgh said. "I don't want to trip over the Boche in the dark in this trench."

When they were back up at ground level they could barely see a sliver of light behind them at the horizon. They would be sitting ducks from the Allied snipers in a few minutes. "We have to hurry lass." Tadgh tilted his watch until he could make it out. 7:15am.

They scurried to their left along the back edge of the trench making sure that they weren't visible to anyone in the trench. On three occasions they heard soldiers down below them starting to prepare for the expected onslaught.

Finally, ten minutes later, at another set of stairs, Tadgh could see that they were at the right location of the trench. Squinting west through the gloom beyond what looked like the Allied trench he could barely make out what looked like an old farm house set in a group of scrub trees, some of which had been up-ended. They were at the Front and not at a secondary trench. The no-man's land looked to be about 100 yards across. "Down we go again." He pulled Morgan after him.

By now there was enough light to be able to see in the trench. They descended into a platoon of German soldiers who were checking their guns and tending to their wounded. When the sergeant saw the nurse and orderly arriving he motioned them to one of his men obviously in pain who was sprawled in the muck, his left leg twisted at an un-natural angle.

"Kommen sie hier," he ordered, motioning them forward.

"Let me do the talking," Morgan whispered, rushing forward to assist.

Morgan greeted the wounded man and then administered a needle from her first aid kit. When he had calmed she crunched his leg to re-set it. Taking splints and gauze from the first aid kit she bound up the leg. "Ambulances will be here soon," she reassured him.

The sergeant was clearly impressed. "Danke Fraulein."

"Tadgh wasn't sure whether he was more in awe of her nursing prowess on the Front line or her ability to communicate in German, after only two months. Amazing.

Morgan was motioning to him. Help me move him out of the muck her arms were signaling. Tadgh carefully lifted him up, making sure he supported the leg from below the break, and laid him on a wooden platform Then seeing a jacket lying nearby, he covered the affected leg area.

"Danke," the sergeant said and then moved off to ready his men for battle.

"See. Sign language works just as well, doesn't it Tadgh?" Morgan spoke in hushed tones as they stood at the base of the nearby stairs leading forward, away from the men.

"Can you see the barbed wire at the top of these stairs?"

"Yes. but there's a gap to the right in that overlap area."

Morgan started up the stairs to look right. Tadgh pulled her back down.

"It's too light now. We wouldn't want you to be the first casualty of the morning my dear."

So there they stood, poised for who knows what. Waiting for some signal. The attack? What then? They were a hundred yards from freedom, dressed in German uniforms and about to attempt to cross no-man's land at the start of an Allied offensive. What could be easier, and what did "Queen Nurse" have in mind? They would find out in a few minutes, perhaps their last minutes on this earth.

# # # #

Gruber was livid. Ritter had hit a shell hole on the road and they had careened off into the torn up countryside. The truck was finished with its front axle broken and its radiator smashed in. If only he had driven Rudolph thought. It was now 7:10 am as they walked towards the Front. Why weren't there any other vehicles on the road?

"You will fry for this Ritter. I should shoot you right now."

At that point an ambulance approached heading east away from the Front. Gruber flagged it down. He'd have shot the driver if he hadn't stopped.

"I need transport to the Front immediately. Turn around."

"If I do, my patient will die, sir."

"Turn around and get out."

Once the orderly had jumped out, more because of the luger leveled in his direction than because of the rank of the officer, Gruber ordered, "Now take your patient out. Ritter, help him. When another ambulance comes out from the Front it can take you both to the hospital."

By 7:25am they were on their way with the sun peaking up behind them. Gruber was driving. "We'd better not be too late." Seeing that the attack had not yet commenced he knew there was still time yet."

Fifteen minutes later he was stopped at the line of ambulances waiting their turn to go to the Front, Friederic spun the wheel turning out and attempted to bypass the line. Two military officers jumped in front of the vehicle and Gruber thought about mowing them down.

He stopped long enough to yell, "Get out of my way. There is an important fugitive and his girl trying to escape Germany. I must get to the Front before dawn."

One officer came to the cab. "We saw them an hour ago. they headed there on foot. One half mile."

Seeing the Sektion Politik insignia he waved them through.

Gruber jammed the accelerator down and was at the triage point ten minutes later, as far as the ambulances could go in the mud.

"Where is Albert's field office?"

"Half a mile southwest, sir."

Gruber took off on the run with Ritter trying to keep up behind him. The sun was now rising above the eastern wasteland.

# # # #

The eight o"clock hour arrived to the sound of silence. The Germans in the trench were crouching, rifles forward with bayonets attached, expecting either an assault from the Allied forces or a barrage of artillery fire to soften them up first. Those who had them were wearing their primitive gas masks that made them look like giant flies with their eyes bugging out on the sides of their long snouts. What a way for grown men to act, Morgan thought. What a waste of humanity and topography.

Tadgh and Morgan were still positioned at the bottom the forward stairs holding hands and their breaths.

Suddenly, from across no-man's land at the Allied headquarters, a gramophone feeding loudspeakers belted out a German rendition of O Stille Nacht. The soldiers were shocked. Morgan could see them look at each other. "Is this a trick?" one exclaimed. They were all frozen in time and place.

Before Tadgh could grab her, Morgan climbed the stairs so that she could see out. There across no-man's land, standing high on steps of the old farm house, was a lone woman dressed in a Belgian Army officer's uniform, waving a large white flag and singing Oh Silent Night at the top of her voice.

All Morgan could think of was the Madonna at the Inn on Christmas heralding in the birth of her son, Jesus. She looked so beautiful. "Tadgh, come up here."

'My God, Morgan. That must be Elisabeth, 'Nurse Queen'. Look, beside her. See how he's dressed. That must be her husband King Albert I."

The Germans crouched, transfixed.

"They really won't shoot them Tadgh. This must be our signal. We must run for it." She wasn't sure how far she could run in her mud-caked shoes.

"I don't think this is just for our benefit," Tadgh said, looking back into the trench where the infantrymen were confused, discussing what to do.

"Let's go," Morgan yelled as she stepped up onto no-man's land. Tadgh chased after her up and out, luger drawn.

The music stopped at the end of the hymn and Queen Elisabeth called out Fröhliche Weinachten in a loud voice.

The German captain below Tadgh yelled back Merry Christmas. The King this time returned Fröhliche Weinachten.

That did it. The Germans started up the stairs behind Morgan and Tadgh crying "Weinachten waffenstillstand."

Morgan translated, "Christmas truce. It wasn't to be an assault, but a Christmas truce like last year. Tadgh quickly holstered his weapon. Unbelievable. Killing each other one minute and celebrating together the next.

Morgan almost got run over before they could pass through the barbed wire opening on their side of no-man's land. Seeing the Germans coming up without weapons, the Belgians and French infantrymen followed suit. What a wonderful turn of events, Morgan thought. *Gerda was right. Jesus saves all.*

They were on the German side of no-man's land with mingling Allied and German soldiers all around when a stern voice from behind them yelled "Einhalt zu gebieten McCarthy."

Tadgh wheeled, dropping to the ground, taking Morgan with him. He could see the German officer with the same insignia that he had been wearing earlier in the day standing at the opening of the barbed wire with his luger aimed directly at him. The infantrymen appeared oblivious in their joy to be celebrating and not fighting. He walked slowly forward until he was only twenty feet from them, his weapon pointed directly at Morgan's chest. If he went for his own luger she would be dead at an instant.

"Kommen sie hier, on your knees," he commanded.

Tadgh wasn't going to turn back now.

Suddenly a very small Belgian soldier nearby whipped around and threw his bayonet, hitting Gruber in the chest, unfortunately butt end first. That stunned Gruber momentarily. The German recovered and turned to shoot his attacker. That gave Tadgh the moment he needed to act. He lunged forward, swooping up the bayonet and thrust it into Gruber's heart.

Friedric dropped like a rag doll without firing a shot, dead before he hit the ground. Ritter poked his head up out of the trench and thought for a moment about taking action. When he saw that his boss was dead he disappeared back into his hole.

The Belgian soldier took Morgan's hand, briefly kissing it and helped her to her feet. Then he clasped Tadgh's hand and shook it violently. He was a young boy of about fifteen. "My job was to protect you, for my parents. But it is you who just protected me sir."

"You did your job well lad."

"Prince Leopold I presume," Morgan grinned and gave the boy a hug. She had heard that he, like his parents, was fighting for his country.

"Yes Ma'am." The lad jumped back apparently not wanting to look less than military.

"A fine job, to be sure lad," Tadgh said wiping Gruber's blood off the bayonet with his sleeve and handing it to him butt first. "Smart too. No gunshot to rattle the troops, eh."

"Yes sir. Come now. My parents would like to meet you both."

He led them through the melee of soldiers of both sides who were happily organizing to play some form of football game.

**CHAPTER TWELVE - THE ROYALS NEEDS (WC2505) ©**

**December 25, 1915**

**De Panne, Belgium**

**Torgan**

he Belgian hospital in De Panne on the North Sea coast, not ten miles west of the Front at Nieuwpoort and Furnes, had been opened in the Grand Hôtel de l'Océan by Dr. Antoine Depage, chief physician to King Albert I and master surgeon. He was the founder of the Belgian Red Cross and of the International Surgical Society. Albert and Elisabeth had established their residence in de Panne after retreating from Brussels through Antwerp and Ostend. Their small force of 65,000 men had held the line against the mighty German army at the Ypres River, thereby maintaining control of a small northwest corner of their beloved country.

"Morgan and Tadgh, let me introduce you to our dear friend Antoine Depage, the head of our hospital here in De Panne," Queen Elisabeth said when they arrived later that afternoon from the Front. Morgan saw a rather distinguished gray haired and bespectacled gentleman in a blood spattered white coat, not portly but headed that way. His moustache and goatee were still mostly black and full, attesting to the virility of the man.

Elisabeth and Albert were proud of how their son Leopold had acted in providing safe passage for Morgan and Tadgh across no-man's land. They were even more thankful when they saw Tadgh's swift action to save their son from being shot and likely killed. Now, both Morgan and Tadgh would be very valuable allies in their fight for their country.

"Morgan, I have so been looking forward to meeting and working with you. I understand you had an important nursing position at the Ostend hospital." Dr. Depage put his arm around her as he enthusiastically shook her hand.

Tadgh looked askance at Morgan. "We have to get home to Ireland as soon as possible sir."

Dr. Depage looked quizzically at the Queen.

Elisabeth turned to Tadgh. "I'm afraid that is out of the question right now. We need you both to support our cause here in Belgium. We are hard pressed as you know."

"Come outside with me for a minute," the Queen commanded, guiding Morgan out onto the beachfront where they could be alone. "Dr. Depage lost his wife Marie recently in a tragic incident that you will relate to, my dear."

"Me? How?"

"She was on the Lusitania with you Morgan. She was a nurse also and tried to help some of the injured. Unfortunately, her foot snagged in a rope and she was dragged under. Her body was one of the 289 which were found."

"How terrible, ma'am." The agonizing memories flooded Morgan's memory. "How did you know . . ."

"My friend in Bavaria. Your Tadgh must have mentioned it. It's good that he did because that has enabled me to convince Albert to mount your rescue. You see, Antoine has been soldiering on but his wife's loss is taking its toll on him I'm afraid. He is crucial for our success, Morgan. Albert relies on him. You can see that can't you my dear?"

"How can I help ma'am?"

"When he heard about you and your experience on the Lusitania his temperament changed for the better."

"You don't mean . . ."

"I'm afraid so. He sees you as a reincarnation of his wife Marie who was so like you. He wants you to work very closely with him, if you know what I mean. That's why I agreed to help get you out of occupied Belgium dear."

"But surely I don't even look a bit like her."

"She was quite attractive like yourself."

"I see, but I need to go with Tadgh."

"Tadgh's not going anywhere except to the Front. We saw what transpired today, so Albert and I now want your man to be a guardian for our son Leopold."

*What a mess. The Queen and King of Belgium need our help, command it in fact. We're being asked to fight for the Allies against Germany, all those boys whom I treated in Ostend. It's a good cause, but . . .*

"I see that this comes as quite a shock to you my dear. But surely you see the necessity."

"Yes, yes. Of course." What else could she say?

"Good. Come now Morgan. Let's find you lodging at my temporary residence."

"What about Tadgh?"

"He can come too until Albert makes travel arrangements for him to go to his Furnes headquarters nearer the Front."

Tadgh's questioning eyes told the story when they returned. Dr. Depage had left him standing all alone at the entrance to the ward, waiting for the Queen's conversation to end.

"Come with us , Tadgh." The queen commanded and they both followed.

The royal couple had commandeered the top floor of the hotel for their own private use when in De Panne. Morgan and Tadgh were given two adjacent bedrooms at the far end of the hallway. The queen had noted the lack of wedding bands which served her purpose nicely.

"I'll leave you two to freshen up. The bathroom is down that hallway to the right. We'll have some clothes sent over. Dinner's at 8 pm and you're our guests."

Tadgh followed Morgan into her room and closed the door. "What the hell's going on, for all that?"

"Is that how you greet me after we've been apart and maybe dead for over two months?"

Tadgh realized he'd made a tactical error. "Of course not, my love." he swooped her up in his tired arms and deposited her on the four-poster bed, never letting his lips leave hers

throughout the process. What a marvelous relief. He tasted salty. But he looked so tired.

"That's much better, *mavorneen*." I need a bath."

"Can we do it together? I'll pass out if I don't keep moving."

"Let's see what we can do for your libido."

"My libido's as tired as the rest of me I'm afraid."

"We'll see about that my dear."

Ten minutes later they were squeezed into the claw-foot tub together. They had decided that their uniforms would have to be destroyed.

"Well?" Tadgh needed answers.

"I see that your leg is healed now."

"Yes, you did a fine job of sewing me up. The scar is a fine souvenir of our adventures. So are they going to help us get home?"

"There's a problem Tadgh." Morgan explained what she had been told by the Queen.

"Reincarnated? Really?"

"It would seem that we owe our escape from the Germans to that concept, yes."

"I'm not going to fight for the bloody English."

"But the English aren't here in this neck of the woods."

"What woods? They've all been obliterated. Can I wash your back?"

"Certainly my love. But don't expect the same results as at the An Stad in July."

"Yes, that was exciting."

Morgan couldn't believe that he had the stamina after all he'd been through, but there it was, popping up under the water.

"You would be fighting for the beleaguered Belgians who have been so courageous in their outnumbered state."

"Yes, I can see that. But Casement's mission is to get German support for our cause."

"How is that going?"

"Not well. Sir Roger wants me to give that message to the Irish Volunteer leaders."

"But we should support the underdog."

"Belgium?"

"I don't think we have a choice at the moment."

"We need a plan, *aroon*, after a sleep and some food. First things first."

By the time they had returned from the bathroom, wrapped in towels, a pressed Belgian officer's uniform was laid out on Tadgh's bed. Morgan found a Belgian red cross nurse's uniform in her own room. Clearly the Queen had an eye for detail because both sets of clothes fit perfectly. When Morgan returned to Tadgh's room after donning her uniform, she found him naked, erect and sound asleep on his bed. The plan would have to wait.

Queen Elisabeth was regal despite the wretched war. Her black, close cropped hair framed a long aquiline face and nose. Her penetrating brown eyes were both inquisitive and comforting and her determined mouth demonstrated that she was committed to the cause of her people.

This evening at dinner she was dressed in her khaki uniform. Morgan noticed the pendulous black pearl earrings, which softened her military appearance.

"Tell me Tadgh how you ended up captured by the Germans in Ostend?" King Albert asked between bites of Belgian lamb, one of the delicacies he could still afford to eat.

Tadgh explained the loss of their boat, his injury and their capture by the U-Boat crew, being careful not to discuss Irish politics.

"So you weren't a part of the Irish Volunteers regiment here in France then."

"No sir."

"Why is that lad?"

Morgan could see Tadgh was about to boil over and speak. "We're fishermen, sir, critical for the health of our people." Morgan hoped that would defuse the situation.

"Well, now's your chance to make amends lad. You will come with me tomorrow and be guardian to Leopold. We depart after breakfast. "

"Why not leave your son out of this, your highness? It would be much safer, especially if he is your successor."

"Nonsense. He must build his character just like I did and my father before me. We are fighting for our country and its people and we all must be committed to that cause."

"But fourteen years old . . ."

"Do you know how old Joan of Arc was when she led her country?"

"No sir."

"Sixteen at the Siege of Orléans in 1428."

How could Tadgh argue with that? He could protect the boy without fighting for the English. But they had to get home to Ireland. Tadgh took a bite of lamb and a gulp of wine. *I'm too tired to argue.*

# # # #

Tadgh couldn't go to sleep even though his body was exhausted and Morgan's drowsy nude body was pressed up against his side for comfort. He needed a plan and it wouldn't come to mind. The problem was spinning in his head and its solution wouldn't reveal itself. Maddening.

He had to get help, but from whom? Clearly the King and Queen weren't going to help them get home. Neither was Dr. Depage. They were at least in a Free State country but they weren't free. It would appear that he could be shot as a deserter if they tried to escape. Damn bad decision to head west across the Western Front. It would have been better to take their chances crossing the border into the neutral Netherlands just as he had done a day and a half ago. But that would have left them on the eastern side of the British Naval blockade which had sealed off the northern side of the North Sea. And they were still boxed in east of the Dover Barrage.

Tadgh couldn't fly an aeroplane so that method of escape was out of the question, unless he commandeered a Belgian pilot at gunpoint. Tadgh toyed with the idea and then decided it was not practical considering Morgan's safety and the size of the dual cockpits. And besides that the aeroplanes didn't have the range to get to Ireland.

That left a boat rescue. First they'd have to travel west through France near the coast. If they could get to Le Havre, the second largest French seaport, they'd be west of the barrage. Maybe they'd have a chance, even though it would likely be teaming with English sailors and vessels; ships for the stealing?

It would be more certain if there was a friendly boat waiting for them. What about Wiggins, their Beamish and Crawford Brewery ally from Cork City who had helped them get the munitions to Dublin at the time of O'Donovan Rossa's funeral? Would he be allowed to bring a ship to Le Havre? He'd probably have done it dozens of times, to that major northern French port. Why not now with the war on?

By 3 am Tadgh had a plan. It would take time. It depended on getting the word out. Morgan stirred against him draping her right arm over his torso. Tadgh allowed himself the luxury of a cat nap against her sensuous body. At least the King and Queen didn't know that unmarried lovers were sleeping together under their roof during this terrible time of war.

# # # #

When Morgan awoke at 7 am Tadgh was sitting at the writing desk in their bedroom hastily scribbling a letter on the paper he'd found in the center drawer. She got up and enfolded him with her arms from behind as he sat there. "Whatcha up to my love?" She kissed the top of his head.

"Morgan. Listen to me. We don't have much time this morning."

"Not before you kiss me, silly." She leaned over his shoulder and turned his face towards hers.

Tadgh stood up and spun around to face her, grabbing her nude backside in the process. Her breasts bounced across his chest.

"You vixen." He pulled her in and crushed her lips to his before she could answer. She virtually melted into him and he had to hold her up.

Finally, recovering her stance, she tossed her head back, breaking the lip lock. "I've missed you so," she whispered while nibbling at his right earlobe.

"When are the royals expecting us for breakfast?"

"They said 8 o'clock, Tadgh."

"We could make them wait." Tadgh pinched her left nipple.

"Ouch. I'd like nothing better, but they're our rescuers."

"We're still their prisoners Morgan." Tadgh stepped back. She had broken the spell.

"Get your clothes on then Morgan. We need to talk."

While Morgan dressed in her new nurses uniform Tadgh outlined his plan. "They're not going to let me go anywhere before I have to leave for the Front. So you will need to take this note to the telegraph office later today when you can break free. It seems that they trust you but not me."

"Can't we just escape now?"

"Without a plan in place we wouldn't get too far. Then I'd be tried and possibly shot as a deserter."

"But you never joined their army."

"They think I should have. Therefore I am. So listen. You will get a response and we will be allowed to write to each other. We need a code. Do you remember the one with Padraig?"

"Yes. ???

"Good. I will get us land transportation when the time comes. We will meet at the telegraph office, not here at the hotel."

"It could take a while, maybe a a couple of weeks."

"Don't you go getting yourself killed."

"It's not my intention *aroon*."

"Well. Make sure of it."

"I'll just tell those Germans to stop shooting off their artillery then."

"Don't you joke about that."

"Says you who popped your head up out of the trench yesterday to see what you could see."

"Well, don't you do that."

"I'll concentrate on saving our young prince if need be. Don't you get sucked in by the tentacles of the good doctor who thinks you are his dead wife."

"I won't of course, but I need to help him until our plan can be implemented."

"I understand."

With that said, they went down to breakfast and uncertain separation once again.

**CHAPTER THIRTEEN - GAS ATTACK (WC4409) ©**

**December 26, 1915**

**German General Staff, Berlin**

**Norgan**

adolny had gotten the word from Ritter on Boxing Day. Gruber had been a good soldier, not an easy mark. McCarthy must certainly be a foe to be reckoned with. Curiously, that damn king and queen were likely to be an ally in this case. They'll consider him to be one of Redmond's Irish Volunteer POWs and will send him back to the Front. Rudolph was sure of it. The Belgians needed all the help they could get. McCarthy wouldn't stay there for long, only until he had an escape plan for himself and the girl. Whatever message Casement must have given him must not reach Casement's bosses. It wouldn't be favorable to the GGS.

Nadolny got Ritter on the military telephone. "Why didn't you attempt to kill McCarthy after Gruber was knifed?"

"A gunshot would have endangered our troops who were honoring the Christmas ceasefire in no-man's land sir. Many would have been killed on both sides."

"You could have rushed him then and killed him in close-quarter combat."

"I wanted to report to you, sir. You would have been completely in the dark if I had been killed in the attempt."

Nadolny knew that this was cowardice talking but he needed his operative in Ostend. There was no other timely choice. He would have to use the new gas that his laboratory had been testing to incapacitate the Belgians. One of the benefits of being the head of the Tecnik Politik was the arsenal of weapons he'd been developing. *I've been dying to try this new weapon on the enemy anyway.*

"Do you still have that turncoat available in the Belgian trenches?"

"Yes sir, Pauwels. He is a communications officer who has a brother in Limburg. We've threatened to kill him if our man doesn't cooperate. We can send each other coded messages if I am in our trenches."

"How?"

"Torch at night with a code we invented."

"Good. I want him to confirm the McCarthy is still there and what his duties are. Report back."

Higgins knew that he wouldn't get a third chance to prove himself.

# # # #

Morgan spent most of the day in orientation at the hospital. Antoine made sure that she was close at hand as she witnessed a few of his amputations. She didn't like the way he was eyeing her.

Finally, mid afternoon, she asked for a break. The small seaside village of De Panne had a beautiful sandy beach but no deep water port or even docks. Morgan found it to be the kind of place to while away a summer's afternoon in peace, except for the war. The small country store contained a telegraph and post office. After talking to the postmaster she determined that letter delivery out of the immediate vicinity was sporadic at best but the telegraph was quick and reliable.

Tadgh's message went out to Cork City without question, but Morgan was suspicious of the telegraph operator. He might be relaying all correspondence to the King. She hoped that the message was coded enough.

*'Your Beamish Boy is alive west of the Front. He and partner need extraction by the normal method from French LH. Can you assist and if so when. Hold response at De Panne P.O.'*

When she returned to the hospital Dr. Depage was looking for her.

"Where have you been my dear?"

Morgan didn't like how that sounded. "For a walk doctor. I wanted to see the town."

"Please don't do that again without asking first."

He was starting to sound like Dr. Heinrich. She wondered how he was doing without her.

"Do you understand?"

"Perfectly."

"I would like you to join me for supper this evening at 8 pm in the main dining room. I've had some clothes sent to your room."

Morgan wondered what size his wife Marie had been.

# # # #

Tadgh hunkered down in the same trench they had come through just a day before. He was showing the prince how to clean his luger when the first evening artillery shells tore a hole in the trench to their right. It made him jump even though Leopold didn't flinch in the slightest. Who was looking after whom?

"Corporal McCarthy, don't worry. They won't try to cross no-man's land at night." Leopold headed down the trench on the run with a shovel. "C'mon. We've got repairs to do."

They arrived at a cave-in after slogging 100 feet down the muddy trench. Railroad ties, which had previously shored up the 6 foot deep trench lay askew and the mud from no-man's land had tumbled and oozed down until it filled the trench to a depth of four feet. Two soldiers were frantically digging with their bare hands, scooping like dogs after their buried bones. Leopold jumped in to help. But the bones they were clawing after were attached to the flesh of at least two soldiers. Only their legs were visible from the knees down, one pair kicking wildly and the other still as a tomb. Tadgh thought he heard shouts from the other side of the pile.

Tadgh grabbed the kicking legs and pulled. At first nothing. His back ached. Leopold was digging on either side of the legs with his shovel. Finally another soldier arrived and grabbed one of the legs leaving Tadgh with the other. Together they pulled with all their might. Their feet slipped and slid in the muck but finally they managed to drag the legs backward to where the torso was available. The attempted kicking had stopped so they gave one more heave and the whole body popped out covered in slime.

"God, I need Morgan," Tadgh screamed, looking up at the sky.

One of the soldiers flipped his fallen comrade on his back and dug mud out of his mouth. Then he started pounding on his chest. The legs kicked again and the downed soldier breathed once and spat mud. The soldier kept up the chest pressure until the man was breathing on his own.

The other soldiers and Leopold were continuing to dig, Within three minutes they had exposed the other soldier. He was dead with a gash across his forehead.

Tadgh could only imagine the panic of being buried alive. He hoped for the dead soldier's sake that the blow to his head had killed him instantly before the muck engulfed him. No one would ever know and the family would likely be told only that he died in the line of duty.

Three hours later, the soldiers had cleaned out the pile and shored up the trench even though it had started to rain. Three soldiers had been smothered in this one shell attack and only one saved.

They had taken the wounded soldier to the small hacked-out underground shelter in the side of the trench, out of the rain. There he sat still coated in mud, traumatized, shivering and in shock.

They were all rats in a hole. If they weren't being shot they were being poisoned. In the next three days Tadgh assisted with seven such artillery caused cave-ins, one within 30 feet of their position. Leopold informed him that these trenches had been static for almost a year now, neither side being able to advance. What a waste. Thousands of men dying without anything to show for it except holding the defensive line. I guess that was something. Obviously the munitions and ammunition manufacturers were making a killing as well as causing that killing.

He thought about his homeland and the need for a revolution. It couldn't be this kind of warfare surely, digging up and obliterating his beautiful green countryside. It would need to go back to the warfare of the Clans, guerilla hit and run tactics. The English couldn't be allowed to dig a trench around Dublin. Surely they wouldn't bring artillery to bear on the capital. Or would they? Tadgh decided that he had to tell Padraig about the horror of these tactics. The war council would have to evaluate the impact.

The food at the Front was abominable, barely edible dried beef and sodden bread which at least offset it's staleness. Soldiers were getting scurvy and typhus, so the gas masks were often used to protect soldiers from their contagious mates. And ablution was a testy subject with latrines unfit for human habitation. But then your life expectancy in the trenches was low anyway. Soldiers dreamt of home and loved ones as a way to maintain their sanity, but few thought that they would ever see any of them again.

Tadgh got to thinking. At least if you died here in the trenches you wouldn't be trapped below the ocean in a submarine. Then he thought about the cave-in. Dying, starving for breath probably wasn't much different whether it was under water or under a deluge of mud. What a waste of humanity. But we follow orders.

On the sixth day, January 1st Tadgh received a letter from Morgan.

*'Mavorneen. How are you? I am fine. Wiggins overjoyed. Superiors had been worried. LH 8 MM, B&C.'*

Tadgh fired back a letter. *'Excellent aroon, Life here is bearable. Leopold is fine. 7 at 06.'*

# # # #

Higgins heard from Pauwels on the 3rd. *'He's here. Guarding LIII. Letter interceptions. Girl LH 8 MM, B&C and McC 7 at 06."* What does that mean? Couldn't he be less cryptic? Higgins in turn passed the message on to Nadolny. Let him figure it out.

Rudolph knew it. He didn't know what the message meant except that it looked like something was going to happen on January 7th. Not if he could help it. He'd been wanting to try out the new chemical that the laboratory had been working on. Phosgene would be more deadly than the chlorine gas they had been using and it was almost undetectable with a faint odor of moldy hay. The only drawback to this lethal respiratory killer was that would sometimes take up to 24 hours to take full effect, allowing victims the opportunity to fight on temporarily after dispersal. It depended on the victim. Some of the test prisoners had showed him this unfortunate situation. Nadolny ordered the projectiles containing phosgene to be delivered from the laboratory to the Front opposite Furnes by the 5th. If the wind didn't cooperate on the morning of the 6th he'd get Higgins to have Pauwels kill McCarthy. They would lose a covert operative in the enemy camp but that couldn't be helped.

If the wind was easterly they would release the phosgene at dawn so that their manned attack would come out of the sun. Higgins would be assigned to capture or, if necessary, kill McCarthy during the attack. If he was killed then Pauwels would have to finish the job. The new hooded gas masks with the mica eyepieces should protect the troops. In any event they would see how effective they were against the phosgene.

# # # #

Morgan had her hands full. The work was a continuation of her efforts at Ostend which was difficult enough. The wounded and maimed boys just had a different uniform and language. Here they were Belgian and French with a few Canadians and no Irish. Her biggest problem was with Antoine. It turned out that Morgan had an uncanny resemblance to Marie and her clothes fit her passably. It was painful to wear them because it made her feel like her drowned counterpart, and that brought her back to the awful sinking and the maddening lapse of memory of anything earlier in her life. But they were beautiful clothes. The only problem was that her gorgeous shoes pinched, probably one size too small.

Antoine had been a gentleman at their private dinners but be was clearly grasping for female companionship, especially a woman that reminded him of his dear Marie. Morgan could understand. What if she lost Tadgh? She knew the feeling from her time in Ostend. She felt sorry for the good doctor. She admired his knowledge of surgery, medicine in general and his work establishing the Boy Scouts.. Morgan was stretched to carry on a knowledgeable conversation of most of these subjects, except where she could compare Antoine's amputation techniques to those of Dr. Heinrich. There were differences. It appeared that Antoine had a higher survival rate than the Germans. He seemed pleased with this fact. Morgan liked him very much; a tough man in an equally tough situation. In just a week she had become not only a responsible operating room nurse but also a life confidant. Therein lay the problem. She didn't want to hurt him further but it was going to be painful when she left.

Morgan agonized over whether to confide in him. Would he understand and would it help him or would he get angry and turn them in to the King and Queen as enemies of the Allies? Clearly talking directly to the royals would be a mistake. She decided to stay quiet for the time being. Tadgh would be back on the 7th. She would sleep on it.

# # # #

On the evening of January 5th the wind came up from the east. The night was clear with a full moon which illuminated no-man's land in a eerie glow. Tadgh thought it resembled what the moon's surface must be like, cold, empty, alien, and lonely. Each of the Belgian soldiers in his section of the trench was uncharacteristically quiet, alone with his thoughts. The enemy had been inactive all day long.

Even Leopold was silent. Finally he said, "They're up to something over there. Usually it means that they'll try to attack us."

"Have they ever taken your trench on this side?"

"Not yet. Thanks be to God. But we're worried about their weaponry development."

"Such as?"

"They're starting to manufacture armored vehicles.. They call them tanks. If they bring them to the Western Front they'll steamroll right over us."

"Surely the Allies are also developing tanks as well."

"Of course. It will depend which army can field them in quantity first."

"I have some knowledge of the same situation in a different military service. Submarines."

"Really Tadgh? You were on a submarine?"

"Not just any submarine. I was captured on a German U-Boat."

"Tell me about that. Submarines fascinate me."

"Submarines are very confining and if the boat fails underwater it's a terrible way to go. Up until now the Germans have had control of the sea with their U-Boats, sinking merchant and military ships at will. Now the Allies have developed better sonar techniques to find them under water and depth charges launched from surface ships to destroy them. The tide will be turning."

"Interesting. How about these gas masks?" Leopold unbuckled his mask from his belt. "In retaliation the British tried using chlorine at the battle of Loos not thirty miles south of here back in September. The wind blew against us and the German shelling hit some unused cylinders in the British trenches. It was a disaster. Their primitive flannel masks got hot, fogged up and the some of troops took them off and were gassed. That's also a terrible way to go."

Leopold looked over the newer PH helmet that they had recently been issued. "This tube helmet is made with two layers of flannel hood, one treated with the chemicals sodium phenolate and hexamethylene tetramine to protect against chlorine and hydrocyanic acid, a second against my head because the chemicals attack the fabric. There's an exhaust valve fed from a metal tube that I have to hold in my mouth. The two circular mica eyepieces are small, restricting my vision, but the exhaust mouthpiece seems to avoid the fogging up problem. What a way to fight a battle."

"You know all the details but will it work for any new gases that the Germans invent. It doesn't look like it would fit your head very well."

"It doesn't really. I'm only fourteen you know."

"Yes I know. You are brave to fight for your country at that tender age."

"We do what we have to for our country and people."

Tadgh saw his opening. "I agree with you, Leopold. What would you say if I told you that I am a freedom fighter for my country."

"Of course you are. That's why you're here."

"No. I'm here to help you save your country. I really need to go home to save my own country which continues to be in peril."

"What? Ireland? Are you at war there?"

"No. In our case it is like Belgium would be 300 years from now if Germany were to defeat you and then treat your citizens like vermin to be exterminated in the meantime. How would you like that?"

"Don't talk that way. We will not be defeated and that's that."

"Hopefully not. But if you were?"

"We'd rise up against the Boche until we defeated them."

"Precisely. That's what we need to do."

"I see. But surely England wouldn't. They're our allies."

"In this case Leopold. But I can assure you that England was the terrible conqueror and is the oppressor in my homeland."

"Is that why you were in Germany?"

He was getting too close to the truth. "No. Morgan and I were captured by a U-Boat in the Celtic Sea and brought to Belgium and Germany. We were prisoners there and we are prisoners still."

"Prisoners? You're not in a detention camp."

"But we can't leave to go and fight our own war don't ya know."

"I see. What if were to talk to Papa?"

"That wouldn't work, lad, but thanks for offering. Your Da and Ma have to focus on your country and you need all the help you can get. I understand that, believe me."

"You should just go then. I am old enough to look after myself. I was doing it before you arrived."

"Yes and admirably I understand. If I leave I will be branded a deserter and shot if I'm captured, don't you see."

"But you must get back to your own battle, for your own country I mean."

"Yes lad. I must try. So I have talked to Corporal Janssens who seems trustworthy. You know him right? I asked him to support you, your highness if something were to happen to me and he agreed."

"But I don't need . . ."

"It will please your Papa."

"All right then. For his sake. I won't tell on you."

"Thank you lad. Now let's see if we can cinch down this infernal gas mask so it fits you."

# # # #

The artillery barrage started just before dawn, lighting up the sky and rearranging no-man's land. The whir of an incoming round was menacing. If you could hear it, duck. The explosion, when it hit, was deafening; if close enough, eardrum shattering. There was no time to rush to the assistance of some poor mates buried or otherwise wounded down the line.

At least it wasn't raining.

"They're coming this time," Leopold predicted, donning his helmet. The Brodie steel helmets had been designed by a Brit and issued to the Allied troops not three months earlier. It was a great improvement on the soft peak fabric caps that had been useless against the German's weaponry.

Tadgh sniffed the air. "That's strange. I smell moldy hay. There's none of that around here." His nostrils started to tingle and he wanted to sneeze. "Put on your gas masks" he yelled down the line.

"Why? There's no yellow chlorine gas that I can see," Leopold replied, looking up to the edge of the trench.

"Just do it for me," Tadgh said, his gas mask already in place. "Crouch up on the parapet. Now."

The parapet at this location was a platform some three feet off the mucky bottom of the six foot trench, which allowed soldiers to peek over at the enemy's defenses.

Tadgh rushed off to the right to warn the others. Some were starting to cough and rub their eyes. "Put on your masks for heaven sake. Get up out of the bottom of the trench," he yelled before returning to his charge.

When he trotted back to Leopold, the lad's gas mask was in place. He was talking to a soldier Tadgh had not seen before.

"Tadgh, this is Hans Pauwels, our communications officer."

Tadgh shook the soldier's hand. He couldn't see his eyes behind the mica lenses, which were always a signal of a man's character. Jumping up on the parapet with the other two, Tadgh dared to peek over the top. Incoming shells but no manned attack yet. The sun was up now and it was hard to see.

"It's some new kind of gas, Leopold. Colorless. Keep your mask on." Tadgh looked down the trench left and right. Some men were crouched down on the parapet, waiting. Others in the bottom of the trench appeared in distress. *This gas must be heavier than air.*

Suddenly the barrage stopped. "Get ready," Leopold said, fixing his bayonet.

"Here they come," he announced poking his head up.

The men on the parapet stood up and unleashed a volley of bullets at the Germans who were snaking through their barbed wire. Many died, impaled in the wire. But many made it through and were rushing across no-man's land, shooting as they came.

"Here we go," Leopold shouted as he scrambled up out of the trench with his comrades. Tadgh was right beside him, covering him if necessary.

The next two minutes were deadly, men falling on both sides left and right. Tadgh dispatched three Germans who approached the lad with his luger in his shooting hand. The Germans seemed to be getting the upper hand.

Suddenly a new wave of Belgians emerged from the trench. *Where did they come from?* Then it hit Tadgh. The Belgians were using the German tactic of Defense in Depth but without the second trench. No wonder the trench had initially been staffed by so few soldiers. The small German force was overwhelmed*.* A whistle blew and the enemy turned and ran for their trench. Many more were shot and fell into their barbed wire as the Belgians ran after them, unable to crawl back through the openings to their trenches. It was a slaughter but not without Belgian casualties who also littered no-man's land. Tadgh and Leopold reached two such unfortunates who were writhing in pain. They each grabbed hold of one and turned to bring them back to the safety of the trench.

"Not so fast." It was Pauwels who had emerged from the Belgian trench, rifle pointed in their direction.

"What's the meaning of this Hans," Leopold demanded, taking a step towards their communications officer.

"I have to save my brother, Prince. Do not try to stop me." He was only twenty feet away and his rifle was now pointed at Tadgh's heart. Leopold was ten feet ahead of his bodyguard.

Tadgh was at a disadvantage since he had holstered his luger and his hands were tied up holding his fallen comrade.

"I have to kill him or they'll kill my brother," the communications officer went on.

"Who will Hans?"

"The Germans at the POW camp."

Tadgh figured out who was pulling the strings. "It's Nadolny isn't it?" He saw a flicker of recognition in the would-be assassin's eyes. "I thought so. I've been in Limburg POW camp. They don't shoot prisoners for no reason."

Tadgh knew darn well that Nadolny could have someone shot with a well placed telephone call.

"I don't believe you. Stand aside Prince."

Leopold lunged for Han's gun just as he pulled the trigger and sliced his hand on the bayonet. The deflected shot rang out puncturing Tadgh's PH helmet and nicking his right ear. In one fluid motion Tadgh let go of the soldier from his right hand, un-holstered his luger and dropped into the mud. As Pauwels was swinging his rifle around for another try, Tadgh shot him cleanly through the forehead. He collapsed immediately at Leopold's feet.

Tadgh jumped up in a moment and looking at Leopold's hand. "That's a severe wound sir." Blood was gushing out. Hans had a relatively clean scarf around his neck. Tadgh whipped it off and bound the prince's hand securely. "Press down on this. Let's get back in the trench now."

Leopold insisted on helping his fallen soldier back through the barbed wire opening and down into the trench. Tadgh did likewise but urged this charge on. They left Pauwels lying grotesquely in the mud of no-man's land, a man who was just trying to save his kin.

By the time they reached the relative safety of the trench the fighting had subsided. Many men in the trench were starting to show the effects of the gassing, eye and throat irritation. Some without gas masks had succumbed and were lying still forever in the muck of the trench. The gas had evidently dispersed. Medics started to jump down from behind the line to assist with the fallen.

The scarf, red and dripping, had not stopped the bleeding. A young medic, recognizing the Prince, had rushed to his assistance. He had proper disinfectant and bandages which he administered immediately in the trench.

"You look very pale sir," Tadgh said, having removed Leopold's gas mask.

"I feel kind of faint." With that the prince's knees buckled.

Tadgh scooped him up. "Where is your ambulance?"

"A quarter mile behind the line, at the end of that road."

"I'll take the prince back to the field hospital, lad. Give me the keys."

"Good. There's a lot of work I can do here and I can ride back in another ambulance."

As Tadgh walked out from the trench carrying Leopold in his arms, he looked back past the trench, out onto no-man's land with its deceased and dying soldiers from both sides strewn helter-skelter amidst the mud, craters and barbed wire. Except for the odd shout of a medic or cry from the fallen, the battlefield including the enemy trench was silent. Both sides were honoring the process of collecting the wounded and dead, dragging them back into their holes in the scarred earth. A fog off the coast was settling in, draping the dead in its macabre veil.

Just another day in the trenches, Tadgh thought. No one won, no ground was taken. And they had all been guinea pigs while the masterminds, this time Nadolny it would seem, tried out another lethal poison. What a waste of humanity.

**CHAPTER FOURTEEN - WITHDRAWAL (WC2741) ©**

**January 6, 1916**

**De Panne, Belgium**

**Morgan**

organ was shocked when Tadgh strode into the ward with Leopold in his arms. He was a day early. "My God, Tadgh. You're alive." She rushed up to embrace him as he handed the prince off to an orderly.

"Of course I am, *aroon*." He swept her up in his arms and held tight. "I promised you I would be."

After a long welcoming kiss, Morgan commented. "It would appear that you didn't handle your assignment very well *mavorneen*."

"He'll be all right after you sew up his hand and give him some nourishment. But you're right. I was supposed to keep him from harm and it was Leopold who saved me from death by his quick action." Tadgh explained what had happened.

"I'd better go take good care of him, hadn't I then."

"Aye. Do that lass then come back to me. I'll get us transportation in the meantime since I think we should leave as soon as possible.

"But I haven't had a chance to tell Antoine."

"Antoine is it? It's only been what? Twelve days since you met him?"

"He's really very sweet, and hurting."

"Is he now? Well I'm not sweet but I'm hurting to get home with you lass."

"I can't just leave without telling him."

"Do what you must but recognize that we are certainly not out of the woods by any means, don't ya know. Nadolny doesn't give up easily. I will be considered a deserter even though I brought Leopold back to safety. And your Antoine may turn us in to the royals before we can get out of here.

Tadgh spat that last sentence out for effect. What had his Morgan been doing while he was out in the muck almost getting himself killed?

With that Tadgh turned on his heel and hastened out of the ward into the street.

# # # #

Back in Ostend Higgins called his boss. "Your phosgene seemed to work well on their trench but the Belgians used our Defense in Depth tactic to overwhelm our men. It was a slaughter in the end."

"McCarthy. Did you kill him?"

"I'm not sure."

"What do you mean, not sure? Did you or didn't you man?"

Higgins had chickened out and stayed in the German trench to watch when the fighting started. Pauwels would have to do the job from the Belgian side. "I was approaching McCarthy who was protecting young Leopold. I know that we are not supposed to hurt the prince. He was blocking my shot. That's when the second wave of Belgians came up out of their trench. I couldn't advance. Our fighters retreated. I saw Pauwels confronting the two of them though."

"Did he shoot McCarthy?"

"Shots were fired." Higgins knew that it was Pauwels that had been killed.

"Did he shoot McCarthy?"

"I don't know."

Nadolny had had enough. Higgins surely had disobeyed orders to save himself. He would deal with him later. "Get back to the Front and confirm the kill."

As a last resort Nadolny made a call to his covert operative in Furnes on a separate secure line at his residence. It might cause him to lose this critical informant within King Albert's headquarters but it couldn't be helped. "Find out if communications officer Pauwels is still alive."

"I was going to contact you, sir. Unfortunately Pauwels was killed during our attack today. And the prince Leopold was injured. We'll need a new covert operator at the Front."

McCarthy. It had to be McCarthy. He's still alive, damn it. "Jacobs, go immediately to De Panne, to the hospital. Look for a nurse there named Morgan. You'll find an Irishman named McCarthy with her. He is a fugitive who must not be allowed to escape to Ireland. Do you understand?"

"Yes sir. But I can't just leave my post here at the King's headquarters."

"Do it. Now."

"And Jacobs, they'll be trying to get to Le Havre for the 8th." He had figured out the code.

"Yes sir."

# # # #

"There you are Morgan," Dr. Depage said, looking up with suture in hand.

"When will you be finished this operation doctor?"

"In about thirty minutes."

"I need to see you then."

"Meet me in my quarters."

At a quarter past noon Antoine came up the outside staircase. Morgan was waiting for him in the stairwell.

"Come to my suite."

"I think it's better to meet here sir."

"Antoine, Morgan. I asked you to call me Antoine."

"All right Antoine. Did you know that they brought Leopold in to the ward this morning with a badly cut hand? He also has minor respiratory effects from a new poison gas the Germans used today near Furnes."

"New gas you say?"

"Yes Tadgh says that it is almost odorless and invisible. Something about smelling a little like moldy hay."

"Your friend Tadgh told you this?"

"Yes. He's the one that brought Leopold in. He was responsible for him as you know. He says that it was Leopold who saved his life from a Belgian soldier who tried to kill him during the German attack this morning."

"A Belgian soldier?"

"Yes, being coerced by the Germans who have his brother captive."

"You said you needed to see me."

"To tell you about Leopold and the gas . . ." Morgan hesitated, ". . . and that I have to leave here to return to Ireland with Tadgh whom I love very much."

"But I thought you liked it here, with me."

"You are doing a fine job in very difficult circumstances Antoine. I really admire you. But I'm in love with Tadgh and I need to help him with his mission in life which is critical for Ireland. We were captured by the Germans off the coast of Ireland and we need to get back home. You can understand, can't you?"

Morgan could see that Antoine looked crestfallen. "You and Marie were in the same circumstances for Belgium as Tadgh and I are for Ireland, don't you see?"

"But she's gone."

"If I stayed here Tadgh would still go and I'd be gone from him."

"I see your point." Dr. Depage was a compassionate man.

"Tadgh saved me from drowning when the Lusitania was torpedoed. I just wish Marie had been nearby so that he could have saved her too."

Antoine looked like he could cry. "She was a brave lady Morgan."

"Yes, I'm sure she was." There was nothing more she could say.

"I am very disappointed Morgan. But I understand. I will not stand in your way nor will I tell the King and Queen about your departure until you are safely away. I owe you that."

Morgan couldn't help herself. She rushed forward and flung her arms around the doctor. "Oh thank you Antoine. I wasn't sure that you would understand."

The doctor returned the hug and held on until Morgan gently pried him away. "After the war Tadgh and I will come and find you. We will be together again then." Morgan wiped her eyes with her sleeve.

"Well now girl. I must be getting back to the operating room. We've more work to do this afternoon don't we nurse."

"Yes you do Antoine. Great work for all of Belgium."

With that the doctor slowly started to descend the staircase, his shoulders stooped over. Morgan stayed in the stairwell until he had disappeared down into the ward, tears rolling down her face.

# # # #

At a quarter to three Tadgh walked into the ward looking for Morgan. He half expected to be arrested since he had no idea what she might have said to the good doctor. Morgan was in the corner tending to an amputee.

"Nurse, can I see you for a moment," he asked walking up to the mattress where the invalid was lying.

Morgan went over to an orderly and directed him to the bed.

"What can I do for you," she asked pulling Tadgh towards the exit.

"You ready to leave *aroon*?"

"Yes and Dr. Depage won't tell a soul."

At the door, Morgan stopped to pick up her trench coat from the rack.

"Your chariot awaits my love." Tadgh kissed her hand as he led her out onto the street.

Morgan leaped at Tadgh and hung on fiercely. "I was so worried about you."

Tadgh took the time to return her hug and to kiss her passionately on the lips. "I missed you more."

"No, I missed you more."

"I would love to do this and more all afternoon but there are likely Germans tracking us as we speak. I'm not sure why this fierce mouser Nadolny is so interested in stopping us from leaving."

"Nadolny?"

"German General Staff, apparently responsible for chemical warfare development among other diabolical war tools. We'd better get going to our rendezvous in France."

"France? We're certainly seeing Europe aren't we now."

"Desolate countryside over here isn't it."

"We'll come back after we free Ireland. It'll be lush and green by then. You'll see."

"Always the optimist aren't ya lass. Get up in my chariot."

"This looks like the Kerry," Morgan said jumping into the motorcycle's sidecar, except for this gun in front of me."

"Best I could do under the circumstances my love. This is an Indian. I've tested her up to sixty miles per hour. She's a beast. Got to be at least a sixty cubic inch engine, side mounted as you can see."

" I like the light brown color dear. Is it full of petrol?"

"Yes and there's an extra can on the back rack. Shall we be off?"

"Home Jeeves." Morgan pointed in the direction of Ireland. "Did you bring the picnic?"

"No but I have sandwiches and what fruit I could find."

"My my. You are the resourceful one."

"You should have seen me in the trenches.."

" I did see you in the trenches. Both of them."

"So you did, my love. So you did." His life in the Belgian trench over the last few days was a story that would have to wait.

"Through good fortune we are half a day earlier than I had expected. But that gives Nadolny extra time to find us," Tadgh said as he started up the Indian. "I really like this three speed hand shift."

"Surely he couldn't follow us here?"

"It was his man in a Belgian uniform that tried to kill me this morning in no-man's land."

Morgan didn't like the sound of that. "Let's get going then."

The road out of De Panne was better than the ones from Ostend. They were beyond the conquered line. Thank God for the Belgians. They didn't even realize that they had crossed the border into France until they were at the outskirts of Dunkerque some twenty miles to the west. Tadgh stopped to consult the German map that he had folded into his Belgian corporal's uniform when he got it from the Queen. It mapped all the way to the Atlantic Ocean.

"We need to send a thank you note to the King and Queen when we get to Ireland."

"That's the least we could do. I told Dr. Depage that we would come back and visit him after the war."

Tadgh didn't want to discuss their last tete-a-tete. " By my reckoning it is about two hundred miles to Le Havre. We're going to be there a day early."

They traveled close to the coast skirting around Calais mid afternoon and arriving at Dieppe an hour after sundown. Tadgh had turned on the gas headlamp at dusk. Fortunately it had not rained but the temperature was just above freezing.

"We need shelter for the night my love." He could see that Morgan was cold despite her coat and gloves. She was wearing no hat nor scarf. Tadgh himself just had his corporal's uniform. In his hurry to get Leopold to safety he had left his great coat in the trench.

On the way into Dieppe Tadgh found a farmhouse with smoke curling out of the chimney. He debated whether to approach the occupants. It could be risky. After another look at Morgan he decided to chance it even though they didn't speak French.

"Bonsoir monsieur le soldat et mademoiselle la infirmière de Belgique. Vous devez être gelé."

Tadgh looked at Morgan and shrugged his shoulders.

Morgan answered. "Yes we are very cold. Could we come out of the cold monsieur?"

"Certainement. Entrés.

The man's wife rushed in from the kitchen with a warm towel and put it around Morgan's neck. "Gracious Francois. Let them pass. Come in my dears, come in before you freeze to death."

Thank God she spoke English.

"Thank you madam. We are travelers on a delicate mission and we got caught out in the cold tonight."

Good comment, Tadgh thought to himself.

You have held the Germans out of our part of France so you are welcome in our home. You will stay with us for supper and the night."

"Thank you ma'am." Tadgh clasped her hand and the hand of her husband warmly.

After a dinner of chicken and potatoes from their own farm, with locally made beer of some sort, the farmer who had been introduced as Francois asked his wife, "Demandez-leur de parler de la guerre."

Monique, as she was called started to speak."Sir . . ."

"I understand the word for war ma'am." Tadgh responded, taking a last bite of the delicious apple pie that Monique had served them. "Belgians are doing an heroic job of holding the line near the Ypres River, along with your French Territorial 45th and 87th divisions, sir." He turned to face Francois. "Unless this new poisonous gas the Germans have just released is more potent than the others, our troops should be able to hold the Boche off."

"C'est un méchant business, n'est pas."

"Francois says it's a nasty business."

"Oui ma'am. Deadly."

"We are all in your debt, monsieur. Without you we would be overrun. We may yet be. It is agonizing for us here."

Tadgh thought about his poor countrymen and the conditions back home. In a sense the English had already used chemical warfare by forcing the Irish to eat rotten black potatoes. He hoped to hell that the English bastards didn't use whatever it was the Germans used today when they rose up in Dublin. "I understand ma'am. They're doing their best. You are safe at least for the time being."

That seemed to quell Monique's nerves and she offered them strong coffee before bed.

The guest bedroom was in fact the barn with the animals. At least there was warmth from the mass of mammals in the structure but the hay bed stuck through their clothing. And the smell rivaled the trenches. Tadgh had brought the Indian in out of the cold in case they were being followed and to make sure it's engine didn't seize up overnight. It had been stolen from the motor pool. He checked the bike for functionality. They had plenty of petrol.

Morgan snuggled up to Tadgh, clothing and all. One prolonged kiss and then it didn't take but five minutes and she was asleep. Tadgh thought out his alternatives as she snored against his chest. One of the goats came over to see what the noise was all about and lay down by their feet. Travelling down into Le Havre the next morning would take about two hours. They could scout out the harbor and make sure they knew how to rendezvous the next day. But where would they stay that night? Le Havre was a major French port, the biggest on the north coast. It must be the landing and logistics depot for the English army supplying men and materiel resources to the Western Front. That could be dangerous. They could be questioned given their uniforms. He decided to prevail upon the good graces of their benefactors and ask to stay at the farm for another day.

Getting safely out of Germany was certainly no simple task. You needed friends. Why oh why had he decided to go and help those sailors on that doomed freighter? At least Morgan survived after the Lusitania sinking where poor Dr. Depage's wife had not, and he and Morgan were together for the time being. They were at least better off than they had been for the last two months. God works in mysterious ways. Tadgh fell asleep feeling Morgan's breathing against his side, reciting the Lord's prayer in Gaelic.

The goat snuggled closer.

**CHAPTER FIFTEEN - LE HAVRE (WC3822) ©**

**January 6, 1916**

**On the Road to Le Havre**

**Hugoorgan**

ugo Jacobs left De Panne just after sunset without finding Morgan. She had just disappeared according to one orderly in the hospital ward. He had checked with the motor pool and an *Indian* motorcycle with an armed sidecar was missing.

After receiving his orders from Nadolny, he informed the King that his wounded son's bodyguard had fled, making him a deserter. Hugo offered to go after him. The King had already heard about the incident and the Queen was already with their son at the hospital. They both wanted McCarthy and Morgan returned for questioning so Albert agreed for Hugo to try and apprehend them. This clever idea would protect Jacobs' cover.

Before he left Furnes the king admonished his man, "Bring them back alive Hugo. If you can't do that, then let them go."

Hugo had no intention of releasing them, but he would extract Casement's message to his Irish leaders before he terminated them. The King be damned. He feared and obeyed his master Nadolny first and foremost..

Jacob decided to go to Le Havre as soon as possible and scout around. Maybe he could figure out what MM and B&C meant ahead of the rendezvous time. And besides, Marlene, an exceptional lay, lived there and she would put him up.

# # # #

Tadgh and Morgan were treated to a fine country breakfast of ham and eggs by Monique. Francois was already out in the fields despite the light rain. "What is your mission, if I might ask?" Monique offered warmed milk from their own cows.

"It is most secret I'm afraid," Morgan said, gratefully accepting the milk. The rain had been cold, almost like sleet, when they had come across from the barn. "Let's just say that it has something to do with the English."

"They are a good ally, aren't they dear."

"Ally to some and foe to others," Tadgh grunted, grabbing for the strawberry jam jar to coat his brown toast.

"Yes, those Germans must think them a menace, thank God."

"Yes I'm sure." Morgan cut in to change the subject. "Would it be all right for us to stay one more day Monique. I know it must be an imposition."

"Nonsense dear. I enjoy the company. We don't get many visitors during this awful war and certainly not ones that can give us information about the conditions at the Front."

"We'd like to repay you in some small way. Tadgh could help Francois in the fields, couldn't you corporal."

"Tadgh shrugged his shoulders and then snapped to attention when Morgan gave him a dirty look.

"Well, off with you then and be quick about it," she half-chided, going around the table and giving him a big kiss.

"Could I have one more piece of ham first. I like the sweetness of the cure."

"Of course you can, dear boy. Anything for the war effort."

After Tadgh departed Morgan thought for a minute. "Do you have anything, a scrap of material, burlap, anything that I could make a coat out of for Tadgh. He came away without his overcoat and the weather is turning frightful."

"I can do better than that, dear. Francois's brother Lars died in the war last year, poor lad. He left his street clothes here at the farm. I think his great coat might fit your lad."

"Oh Monique, you are too kind."

The farm wife retrieved the coat and Morgan hastened to take it to Tadgh in the field. "This will warm you *mavorneen*, and cover up that Belgian uniform from prying eyes."

"You are truly a marvel, *aroon*, on many counts."

"Aren't I though."

The men came in at noon for dinner looking frozen. Their women were waiting with hot food and open arms.

# # # #

Jacobs arrived at the docks of Le Havre at about the same time that Morgan and Tadgh were sitting down for dinner. Le Havre had been the major northern French seaport since 1517 when the town was founded by François I there on the north side of the Seine River estuary into the English Channel due south of London.

The rendezvous was presumably set for the next day, likely by boat from Ireland. Since he missed finding Morgan at the De Panne hospital he didn't know what she looked like. All he had to go on was the rough description from the orderly. She was obviously a looker. Nadolny had given him a pretty good description of McCarthy. And what about that *Indian* motorcycle with an armed sidecar. What else did he know? MM and B&C. That must mean something important about the boat that they would meet. He had already considered and ruled out air escape. The Irish had no aeroplanes as far as he knew and they wouldn't dare to try and commandeer an Allied airship. He set about scouring the waterfront.

He found many English and American ships in port, disgorging provisions, military equipment and, in the case of the British vessels, men. It looked like they were preparing for an offensive. Hugo decided that he would need to get a coded message about this back to Nadolny.

Just as he was about to give up and go find supper somewhere, he spied a small ocean-going trawler rounding the north breakwater and entering the mouth of the harbor, chugging along almost at idle. It couldn't have been more than 50 feet in length, black and somber, with a small elevated wheelhouse aft. What interested Hugo most was the name on the side of that structure, *Beamish and Crawford Stout.* The boat eased its way into the protected harbor and up toward Southampton Quay.

Jacobs fortuitously was standing on Quay de la Marine just five hundred feet across the front harbor. Two stevedores dropped what they were doing on Southampton quay and reached for the ropes that the boat's captain threw to them fore and aft. He appeared to be the sole occupant of the boat until another sailor emerged from the wheelhouse.

One of the stevedores apparently knew the ship's captain and called out, "Marty Murphy, you old sea dog. What brings you to this neck of the woods again in the midst of this crazy war monsieur?"

"Émile. Is it yourself you bleedin brawler? I'm after deliverin stout what your military mongrels ordered to drown their sorrows, don't ya know." Martin swept his arm around to point to the cinched down pallets of Beamish barrels neatly stacked on the deck. Tie me up."

Hugo couldn't believe his good fortune. MM, B&C and an Irish accent. While the stevedores berthed the B&C trawler, Nadolny's spy circled past the Bassin de la Citadelle until he was on Southampton Quay. Keeping his distance, Hugo waited until Murphy had battened down his trawler. Then he followed him north on Boulevard François I to a local eatery La Sirene where he stopped for supper. Jacobs wasn't going to let him out of his sight until the rendezvous took place. Marlene's sleek body would have to wait until he had dispatched McCarthy and his girl.

Seated only three booths away from his target, Hugo ate a supper of plaice and Brussels sprouts while he waited and schemed. It would indeed be beneficial if McCarthy were to show up now rather than at the point of sailing. It would be easier to interrogate and then kill him in the backstreets of the old city tonight rather than on the open quay in broad daylight. Too many people around there. Otherwise he might have to apprehend him at sea. All of it carried significant risk based on what he had heard about McCarthy.

That's when he got the idea. If he couldn't deal with him before they sailed, he would use the French harbor police to support him at sea. Wearing his Belgian uniform, he could garner their support to apprehend a deserter, then dispatch them all before dropping the police launch down the coast and doubling back to Furnes. He simply couldn't allow McCarthy to get away or be captured by the French.

After supper Murphy returned to his vessel and bedded down for the night. Jacobs waited in the shadows of the quay for an hour after the lights in the wheelhouse were extinguished to make sure that Murphy wasn't going to sneak off his ship. The north wind off the Channel bit deeply into his face and neck to where he couldn't feel them. By 9 o'clock Hugo revised his thinking and decided to visit Marlene unannounced. Several months had passed since his needs had been satisfied and besides, McCarthy would not likely show up in the middle of an extremely cold dark night.

# # # #

When Tadgh and Morgan said goodbye to their hosts after breakfast the next morning, Morgan felt the need to promise to return when the war was over. The wind had calmed slightly but the clouds were menacing for a storm.

"Take care and win your war in Ireland," Monique exclaimed as Tadgh fired up the *Indian.* He was a little annoyed that Morgan had shared some of the information about the travesties back home.

"Au revoir," Morgan called back as they headed down the lane. She had already started to pick up the French lingo.

Two hours later Tadgh stopped the *Indian* at the northern outskirts of Le Havre, searching for a vantage point to view the harbor. To the south he could see ancient Fort de Sainte-Adresse standing on a hill. Fifteen minutes later they were out on the terrace of the Fort looking down towards the estuary of the Seine River as it flowed into the English Channel. There on its north bank the Le Havre harbor spread out before them.

Tadgh could see several deep water basins and port docks alive with military and commercial ocean-going ships of every size, from small trawlers to large destroyers. There was even a huge ocean liner painted zigzag light and dark gray, a troop carrier he surmised. Now where, in all that maze of marine vessels would Martin Murphy moor the B & C ship if indeed he was there?

He decided that his friend would tie up as close to the outlet between the north and south dike walls as he could for a fast getaway. The north end of the inner harbor entrance appeared to be the nearest quay. The inner basins each had narrow openings to the outer harbor, too tricky to navigate in a hurry. Tadgh could barely make out several smaller ships moored along that entrance sea wall. He wished that he had a pair of binoculars. There would be no time for hunting around if one of Nadolny's men was still searching for them.

"We're going to check out the northern entrance quay first."

"I'm excited to finally find Martin and escape from the continent," Morgan said straining to see where Tadgh was talking about. "Let's go."

"Returning to the *Indian,* Tadgh checked the mounting of the sidecar machine gun. It could be removed. Its swivel mount bolted to the car with a wing-nut thumb screw on each side. It looked like it might weigh about ten pounds. He noted the belt of bullets in a side pocket of the car, maybe fifty in that belt, and he rolled it up into his new overcoat pocket. Then they headed for the north quay.

# # # #

Jacobs had found an harbor police boat patrolling the docks at 6 am. He hailed it and explained his mission to the two police officers on duty.

"The ship in question is tied up on Southampton Quay. I don't know when the deserter might show up to try and escape."

"Shouldn't we just seize the ship and question its crew?"

"I am not sure that this ship is the right one. I don't want to scare the deserter off. We would need to capture them when and if McCarthy shows up and boards her. Then we will know for sure. He is carrying spy messages for the Boche which we will confiscate to incriminate him." Depending on how quickly the ship makes way we need to be ready to give chase. Can you help me?"

"We need to continue to make our rounds of the outer harbor but we will come to your assistance if you wave to us from the quay.

Jacobs returned to Southampton Quay at 7 am, just as the wharf was coming alive. Murphy was busy offloading his cargo of beer with the help of the two stevedores and three of their mates. There was no sign of his quarry or their motorcycle, if indeed they had stolen one. Marlene had been more than happy to see him. Hugo felt that today, January 8th was going to be a very lucky day for him. He positioned himself about a quarter mile down the quay from the B&C trawler, amongst some crates that were not currently being moved by the many workers swarming the area. He could be seen from the water but not the B&C trawler.

# # # #

When they reached the English Channel end of Southampton Quay Tadgh stopped the *Indian* and dismounted. The quay workers gave them no mind. "You stay here Morgan while I scout around."

"Not on your life my love. Where you go, I go. I'm not going to be separated from you again."

"Fair enough." Tadgh drove the motorcycle behind a warehouse building located across the street from the quay. "Let's go. Stay close."

Tadgh used the buildings as cover as he progressed eastward where he could see the ships tied up along the quay. It started to drizzle and the north wind was bitter cold.

"There. Three ships down. That black trawler. What's written on its wheelhouse?"

Morgan strained to see through the spitting rain. "Beamish & Craw . . ."

"That's it. Stay here. I'll be right back."

Jacobs was a quarter of a mile east of the trawler and didn't see his target.

Five minutes later, huffing under the strain, Tadgh rejoined his mate hauling the machine gun and its swivel mount over his shoulder.

"C'mon *aroon*. We have a ride to catch."

Murphy was chatting with Thomas, his single crewman, by the rail when he saw a man and a woman loping down the quay towards his ship, the man hefting some mechanical equipment. They were six hundred feet away when he recognized the pair.

"Thomas, cast off aft. Quickly lad. Then to the wheelhouse." Martin, himself raced to the stern to loose the aft lines. The trawler was already running at idle.

At the same time, Jacobs saw the commotion through the intensifying rain. So that's how it was. He darted out from behind the crates and ran down the quay brandishing his 7.65mm Colt 1903 nine round pistol. When he realized that they were about to get away he started to hail the police launch. There'd be no time to apprehend and deal with McCarthy before they set sail. How could they be so coordinated?

Martin saw the Belgian and had the trawler slowly moving westward by the time that Tadgh and Morgan reached it. The separation between the quay and the boat was almost two feet. They turned a hundred and eighty degrees and started running parallel with the trawler. Martin had the rope ladder draped over the side amidships.

"Jump Morgan. Grab the ladder."

She hesitated. Visions of the Lusitania and Tadgh's hooker when she was commanded to jump flooded her mind for a moment.

A shot rang out which ricocheted off the machine gun.

"Jump Morgan for God's sake."

Tadgh gave his love a nudge and she sprang off the quay and landed against the side of the trawler, her torso dragging in the harbor. She had the wind knocked out of her but she secured a firm grip of the rope ladder and was holding on.

"Martin you old barnacle. Are we glad to see ya. Catch this gun." Tadgh threw the machinegun on the run and Martin caught it like a catcher at home plate would catch a ninety-five miles an hour fastball."

"Halt McCarthy. You are under arrest," Jacobs yelled out just as Tadgh leapt off the quay. He was one hundred yards behind them. The boat was now four feet away from the quay and picking up speed.

Morgan had pulled herself up out of the water and Tadgh landed just below her, his legs akimbo. His right hand grabbed for the second rope ladder rung above the water and slipped off. As he fell his right arm fell behind the lowest rung and he was snagged like a fish being dragged along on a hook.

Morgan reached down with her free hand and grabbed Tadgh's collar. Another shot rang out which hit the gunnels a foot left of where Martin was bending over, now grabbing Morgan by the torso.

Gradually he pulled her up and with her, Tadgh. Morgan thought that her arm was going to fall off, but it didn't. A minute later both of the escapees were lying prone on the deck, gasping for air and looking up into the rain.

"Welcome aboard mates," Captain Murphy said, hauling in the rope ladder. "It looks like we have company."

The rain was pelting down harder now, sheets of it. In the wheelhouse Thomas was having trouble seeing the opening between the north and south dikes.

Tadgh regained his functionality first. "What company?"

"The harbor police lad. That soldier chasing you flagged them down."

On his feet now, Tadgh was staring back at the police launch. Could it be Nadolny himself? Whoever it was wanted him dead in a bad way.

The trawler was now even with the harbor dikes exit and Thomas gunned the engines. Tadgh could see that the launch was gaining and would overtake them before they got very far out into the Channel.

Tadgh frantically fed the machine gun with the band of bullets, released its safety and hid it behind two crates of dry goods battened down on deck. Martin had received them in trade for some of his beer.

"I have to stop for the police Tadgh. Them's the rules and as a commercial company we have to comply or we'll be blackballed from using their ports."

"That soldier is a German killer sent to assassinate me and Morgan."

"Kraut eh! I hate the bastards," Murphy replied," looking to Tadgh for guidance.

"I don't think he'll shoot us in cold blood in front of the police," Morgan offered, having regained her balance.

"Would you bet our lives on that, Morgan?"

"Hello, the B&C trawler. Heave to. This is the Le Havre police."

"Tadgh. I've got to stop." Martin signaled the wheelhouse with a chopping motion across his throat.

The trawler came to a stop and was wallowing in the three foot swells as the police launch pulled along broadside. "Prepare to be boarded," one of the two policemen on board bellowed as he nudged the launch along the side of the trawler.

The German in Belgian clothing looked adamant as he jumped from the launch to the deck of the trawler, gun drawn.

"McCarthy, you are under arrest as a cowardly deserter from the Belgian army."

One of the policemen succeeded in tying the launch to the trawler. "Who is the captain of this ship?" the other policeman asked as he stepped out from behind the wheel of the launch, pulling his revolver from its holster.

"What spy message were you ordered to deliver by Casement?" Jacobs demanded to know, stepping behind Morgan and putting his Colt to her temple. He didn't have to explain his threat.

Tadgh took one step back, his heel bumping into one of the crates. The machine gun was an arm's length away behind him."I have no idea what you're talking about." He was stalling for time. "

"Five seconds and I will blow her brains out. I mean it McCarthy. You're the one he wants."

"Who is he? Nadolny of the German General Staff? You're a German spy."

"Never you mind. The message?"

Tadgh thought a second. *It's him or me*. "Go the Rising with or without the Germans."

"You're lying."

"What's this about German spies?" one of the policemen asked from his launch.

In one fluid motion Jacobs turned and put a bullet in each of the two policemen's hearts. He wanted no living witnesses.

Morgan saw her opportunity and took it stepping hard on their assailant's left foot and crouching down. Tadgh dove backward behind the crate.

Jacob's shot penetrated the crate and missed McCarthy by inches. Tadgh rolled right on the deck from behind the crate, machine gun at the ready and stitched a row of bullets through Jacob's abdomen. Their attacker bellowed and fired once more at Tadgh, hitting the machine gun trigger and jamming it. That trigger saved Tadgh's life, although he had a nasty gash incapacitating his right trigger finger.

Jacobs fell to his knees, his eyes blazing and attempted to raise his gun for a kill shot.

Tadgh reached under his tunic and flipped open the holster of his luger which was concealed under his right armpit. Before Jacobs could aim his Colt, Tadgh extricated his weapon, flicked the safety with his thumb and put a bullet in Jacobs' brain.

The fight was over, leaving three dead men in pools of their own blood. The rain continued to fall in waves, washing the blood to the port gunnels.

"It's a good thing they can't see us from shore, lad. And the rain probably dampened the sounds of the gunshots," Martin remarked, looking shoreward. " I'd say that we're about half a mile out into the Channel with the drift."

"Help me get this German imposter onto the police launch," Tadgh said, noting that Morgan was already there administering to the policemen.

"They're dead, I'm afraid Tadgh," Morgan confirmed.

"Martin and Tadgh dragged Jacob's body into the launch and positioned him facing the policemen, making sure his Colt was still curled in his now stiff fingers. Then he took one of the policemen's guns, lying on the deck and shot Jacobs in the stomach and brain with it. Finally he placed that gun in the policeman's hand.

"That otta do it," he grunted throwing the machine gun on the deck between them.

10 seconds later they were back on board the trawler, releasing the ropes tying the two boats together. As the police launch drifted away Tadgh commented, "Good riddens to the Western Front."

"Amen to that *mavorneen*."

It suddenly dawned on them that they were free from their captivity on the European continent. Tadgh and Morgan clapped Captain Murphy on the back as they headed for the wheelhouse. The trawler's engines sprang to life and they headed eastward for Ireland and home.

**CHAPTER SIXTEEN - HOME (WC2532) ©**

**January 11, 1916**

**Entrance to Queenstown Harbor, Ireland**

**Tugoorgan**

adgh had dropped to his knees on the deck of the B&C trawler when the south coast of Ireland had come into view three hours earlier. He crossed himself and prayed to God that he would free Ireland or die, despite Casement's pessimism. In the trenches of Belgium, during the gas attack, he had briefly despaired of being able to fulfill this destiny. Yet his love of country and Morgan had seen him through. Clearly the Germans could not be counted on to support the revolution, but that didn't matter. The strength of young Leopold buoyed him up. *If the Belgians can preserve their country against great odds, then surely we can liberate ours. We are in the right and the English must be vanquished*.

And Morgan was a wonder; such a strong young woman who had ministered to the severely wounded, German and Allied alike, with and without his support. Surely this was the woman for him, to support his mission and to build a life and family with afterwards. His libido had to wait. Privacy on the trawler was non-existent. He had cornered her once behind the deck crates, but Thomas came by before their needs had been satisfied. Frustrating.

Now they were coming into Queenstown harbor, their intended destination last October when they were so dramatically sidetracked. The manager of Cunard operations, Jack Jordan, who had been third bosuns mate on the Lusitania, held the key to Morgan's history. Her husband or lover, who wrote that impassioned plea in the Southern Star newspaper that only Tadgh had seen must be alive somewhere in the world. So the girl he had named Morgan was in reality Claire. Morgan's own remembrances after the freighter blew up showed that she had children, probably now drowned. Was she on a trip with them without her husband? Or was he onboard and saved? With or without the children? Jordan presumably knows. Her stubborn amnesia still blocked her memory before that fateful torpedo hit the Lusitania. Maybe that was for the best.

*God, what shall I do*? He crossed himself again before standing up.

"What are you thinking my love?" Morgan stepped in and held him close.

"I am so thankful to be home."

"Me too, *mavorneen*. I did despair once or twice that we wouldn't be reunited and see Ireland again."

*Amazing*. "But here we are *aroon*. Do you remember where we were headed when we were saved and then captured?" He knew he had to broach this crucial subject. He owed her that, whatever the outcome.

"Yes of course. We were going to see the Cunard manager. But that isn't important to me now."

"Not important? Your history?"

"Yes. Not important. After I saw what was happening on both sides of the Western Front, and with you coming to save me, that's all that matters to me, my love. Whatever happened in my life before is inconsequential. I think that is why I can't remember. Because it doesn't matter. What matters is us, now and in the future. Don't you see?"

"Yes, *aroon*, I see and I believe in us."

Tadgh was happy with her point of view but what about the husband? And the children? "What if you have a husband and children from before?"

"Then I would remember Tadgh, wouldn't I?"

"Perhaps." He felt guilty but he leaned in and gave Morgan a warm kiss and held his tongue.

"Tadgh, I after took the liberty to go and get your motorcycle lad."

"Did you now Martin? That was ever kind of you. *The Republican's* lost don't ya know."

"I know's it lad. A mariner without his ship's like a shepherd without his sheep."

"Or an Irishman without his country."

"So it is lad. But you've a mind to change all that I venture."  
 "Aye Martin, to be sure, to be sure."  
 "We'll support ya lad, me and Wiggins, when the time comes I mean. So it's good that you're home again safe is it?"

"You don't know the half of it. We're happy to be here and alive Martin. Thanks be to God, you and Thomas here."

"You'd be welcome lad, you and the missus."

Morgan blushed. "He hasn't asked me yet Martin."

"He will if he knows what's good for what ails him, lass, won't you Tadgh."

Tadgh hadn't given it much thought. "Maybe so, you old salt, if we survive the revolution and free Ireland together. Then we'll see, won't we *aroon.*

*Was that a sort-of proposal?* It took Martin to bring it to the surface. Morgan had been giving it a lot of thought while she was with brave Gerda and her family. This was what she wanted more than anything in the world. If only the revolution wasn't a pre-requisite. "Maybe Tadgh, if you behave yourself."

Two hours later they landed where they had docked several months earlier, near Martin's cottage home on the north shores of Queenstown harbor, and less than a half a mile east of the Cunard Pier.

"We can't thank you enough for bringing us home Martin," Tadgh said and Morgan leapt forward to embrace their benefactor.

"T'is nothing lad. You know my politics. Are you sure that you won't stay with me tonight?"

"No thank you. We need to get on our way. Tell Jeffrey we owe both of you big time."

"No bother lad and lassie. Call me anytime."

"We will, undoubtedly Martin. The condition demands it," Tadgh said as he held out his arms to lift Morgan gently onto the deck."

With that they were gone on the Kerry, waving backwards to Captain Murphy.

"Home my love?"

"Soon *aroon*. First we must visit Tomas. I've got to get Casement's message to Padraig."

"But . . ."

""I know. It's negative. But he entrusted us with it. People tried to kill us so that we wouldn't deliver it. We owe that to Sir Roger."

"I see. I never met him."

"Some day you will my love. Some day you will."

Fortunately Tomas MacCurtain, Tadgh's Cork Brigade boss, was home, having just returned from Dublin.

"My God Tadgh. We all thought you were dead. I went to your safe house a month ago and your boat was gone. Padraig is distressed."

"Well, we're alive and well Tomas. But the Republican is sunk."

Where have you been?"

Tadgh filled him in on their adventures on the continent.

"My God Tadgh. The trenches?"

"Yes. we need to reconsider the value of the IrishVolunteers that support Redmond. They are patriots of a sort."

"But not to free Ireland."

"Not the ones in the prison camps in Germany. But I'm just saying, they're hard fighters. Don't count them out."

Tadgh delivered the pessimistic message from Casement to his boss, Padraig Pearse.

"I'll see that he gets it," MacCurtain said, taking notes. " But it won't matter."

"Blood must flow," Tadgh remembered.

"Precisely. You're to continue to lie low Tadgh."

"Is there a Rising planned?"

"You're to lie low Tadgh."

"You know something, don't ya now."

"Lie low Tadgh."

"Let's go Tadgh. I want to get home." Morgan tugged at his sleeve.

Tadgh was furious. Tomas knew something and he wasn't telling.

"I want to kill Boyle," he announced when they were passing by Cork City.

"Not today *mavorneen*. I know he killed your parents but you need to be at your best for that."

Tadgh had to admit that he was tired and in need of home.

# # # #

When they walked into the kitchen of their ancient farm house that they had left for the day almost three months earlier they were surprised. The butter, now rancid, was still on the kitchen table. The dishes, still partly washed were in the sink. And it was cold. But it was home, wonderful home.

"I'll set the fire and boil the water if you get ready for a bath," Tadgh said as he closed and locked the front door. He remembered the intoxication and excitement of their first lovemaking at the An Stad Hotel and Pub just before O'Donovan Rossa's funeral last July. He crossed and brushed her black ringlets out of her smoky green eyes. There'll be time enough for a repeat performance this evening.

Morgan thought how it was odd that they immediately drifted back into the domestication of home after all their exploits abroad. Their lovemaking was long overdue. She too was reminded of the An Stad. "Come up quickly to me, my love," she cooed as she headed up the stairs.

Five minutes later the fire was blazing in the stove and two large pots of water were set to boil. Tadgh started up the wide spiral staircase. When he reached the top he found her still standing there examining the banister closely.

"You're still in your clothes lass."

"Did you see this carving here on the back side?"

"I'm more interested in your backside," He leered as he attempted to undo her blouse.

"Whoa there, Casanova. Look at this." She knocked his hands away.

"Oh, all right. What do you see?"

"Skull and crossbones." Morgan pointed at the gouge marks.

"Interesting. I never noticed this before. What's that underneath it?"

"Looks like initials of some sort. 'JdcM' maybe. They've been here a long time I'm sure."

Tadgh looked closely. "Let me get my glass." He bounded into his secret room.

After examining the marks closely under his magnifying lens, he proclaimed, "There's a faint horizontal mark in the 'c'. I think it was an 'e' originally."

"Okay, so what does 'JdeM' stand for?" Morgan asked as she peered down at the skull.

"Any student of the medieval Christian religion knows the answer," he exclaimed, running his forefinger over the ancient carving.

"But I can't remember back beyond seven months ago."

"By all that's holy, Jacques de Molay," he whispered, almost reverently.

"Who was he, and why was he here?"

"Unless this house was here in the thirteen hundreds, he was never here," Tadgh answered mysteriously.

"Okay, smarty pants. Who was he?"

"Jacques de Molay was the last Grand Master of the Knights Templar. Let me explain. There were a group of Christian knights who got together starting around eleven twenty AD to protect Christian pilgrims on their way to the Holy Land . . . that is Jerusalem and areas around there."

"Why did they need protecting?"

"Because the Muslim nations were invading the Christians in that part of the world. This started a series of Holy wars called the Crusades which lasted for over two hundred years. These Christian knights, who came from all over Europe, fought in the eastern Mediterranean area and eventually headquartered in Jerusalem, near what had been Solomon's Temple. So they became known as the Knights Templar.

They were also very good businessmen, and the organization became quite wealthy. There were some stories that they found substantial buried wealth in or under what was Solomon's Temple. But that is just hearsay.

By the end of the twelve hundreds they were the bank for several emerging nations. King Phillipe IV of France, for example, owed them great sums of money that he had borrowed to finance wars and other campaigns. Although they initially had the blessings of the various Popes of that time because of their good deeds for the Church, Phillipe convinced Pope Clement V, a Frenchman, in the early thirteen hundreds that the Templars were too powerful and corrupt. This was probably a trumped up set of charges by Phillipe to gain financial control of his country."

"What happened then?"

"Phillipe, with the Pope's reluctant blessing, had many of the Knights Templars arrested and thrown in jail in 1307. This included the leaders of the organization. He had them tortured until they finally admitted to some of the charges brought against them. Apparently that was an accepted form of interrogation in those days. Come to think of it, that's what the English are doing to us today. Mr. Rossa got a lot of that when he was in jail years back although he never succumbed to his captors.

Jacques de Molay was kept in jail for seven years before the Pope finally agreed to convict him of the crimes he had admitted to under torture. In thirteen fourteen the Pope was going to sentence him to life in prison, but Jacques recanted his confession at the last minute. Phillipe quickly took matters into his own hands and had him and others slowly burned at the stake the next day.

While he was being burned, de Molay cursed the King and the Pope and predicted they would soon die.

After that the Knights Templar organization disintegrated and their immense land and monetary wealth were confiscated, much of it by Phillipe and the Pope."

"That's what the English did to the native Irish Clans in the fifteen and sixteen hundreds, isn't it?" Morgan remembered.

"Exactly. The same barbaric travesties. Interestingly enough, both Phillipe and Pope Clement died within one year. There are many stories that have emerged through the ages about the Templars, few of which are substantiated."

"Like what, for instance?" Morgan was intrigued.

"It's a fact that many of the Knights were killed or executed at that terrible time. They were martyred for their cause. But, it is purported that some survived and joined another Christian organization called the Hospitallers which had the Pope's favor at that time. This group of Knights initially provided medical care for Christians in the Eastern Mediterranean region. It is told that they were above suspicion. The Pope had tried to get the Knights Templar to merge with this other order but De Molay had refused. As it turned out, the Pope got his way in the end."

"What other stories are there, Tadgh?" Morgan asked with rapt interest. She was resting on the stairs and he sat down beside her, raising her head to look into those smoky eyes.

"Well, there are three that come to mind from my research. First, there are rumors that some of the Knights Templars went underground and that the organization, much like our IRB, exists in a clandestine way today in several countries of the world. Second, and related, there are rumors that the Templars found some artifacts of profound religious significance, or knowledge about the whereabouts of them, in or near Solomon's Temple. So the presumption is that this ongoing underground organization, if it exists, is still trying to protect these artifacts, wherever they are. Of course, there is no proof of any of this."

"That's fascinating, dear. What's the third story?"

"That brings me to why I came up with Jacques de Molay's name so quickly from the carved initials. That's why I was so startled. There is a rumor that some of the Knights retrieved the bones of Jacques de Molay after he was burned at the stake. According to this story, only his skull and femur leg bones survived, although blackened. These knights, so it is told, were furious with the King and the Pope for destroying their beloved organization in such a devious and barbaric way. They say that these knights joined the pirate organizations that ravaged the Mediterranean Sea to get revenge on their oppressors. They chose de Molay's skull and crossbones as their emblem of defiance. And some of them eventually became..."

" Barbary pirates?" Morgan asked, remembering Tadgh's comment the first time he showed her his claustrophobic office.

"Precisely my dear. What a quick study you are," Tadgh replied, giving her a lick and a kiss on her cheek.

"Wow. So these initials under the carved skull and crossbones could be very significant, couldn't they?"

"The exact thought that I came up with. We do know that Jacques de Molay is revered by much of the world."

"You don't think . . ."

"I dunno," Tadgh interjected. "The thought came to mind, so it did."

"I'm intrigued and puzzled at the same time," Morgan stated, standing and feeling the indentations in the old wood once more. "Of course it could just be the meaningless scratchings of the child of some previous owner."

"Maybe. As you've said, this house is full of surprises. Now, how's about that bath *aroon*? Go get undressed and I'll bring up the hot water. It should be boiling by now."

While Morgan was removing her nurse's uniform she wondered what Antoine and Dr. Heinrich were doing. And Queen Nurse. How was she taking their departure? And then she thought of Gerda and the boys, then all those poor young soldiers on both sides of that crazy war. What a bizarre and dangerous few months it had been. And yet the friendships forged in this frightening time, kinships really, had transcended national boundaries. She concluded that people basically are good. It's the avarice of the warmongers and politicians controlling them that was causing the horrific war and its terrible consequences. She prayed for their health and their souls, for all of them.

She hoped fervently that whatever might be about to happen here in Ireland if it couldn't be avoided would not be as ghastly as what she had seen in Belgium.

**CHAPTER SEVENTEEN - LIAM (WC 1402) ©**

**March 5, 1916**

**Toronto General Hospital, Canada**

*What a blessed day!* Kathy O'Donnell was joyous, although the contractions were coming now on ten minute intervals. She never thought that her father would be so supportive. As her best friend Liz Finlay had so often said, "What a self-centered ogre!" But he changed dramatically after her Mother had finally got up enough gumption to move out to live with Kathy It had shocked her when he turned up unexpectedly and contritely at her wedding to her beloved Collin back at Thanksgiving. They say that a history professor lives in the past. Well not today.

And Collin my dear husband. What a prince he has been through all of this. The earlier altercations with father because of my love's questionable background are a thing of the past. He has even gotten the old boy interested in the history of his Irish O'Donnell clan. What a turnaround.

"Mom, you're going to have to move after the baby is born," Kathy blurted out as they wheeled her into delivery at Toronto General Hospital.

"Don't you be thinking about that right now, darling," her Mother Fiona said, gripping her hand tightly. "Let's just make sure that you and your baby are happy and healthy come sundown."

"I hope you move back with father," Kathy continued. "He's changed, really changed since you left him."

"He certainly surprised me at the wedding, daughter. Come on now. Breathe like I told you. You're turning blue."

Between contractions Kathy had time to reflect on the last of her twenty four years, the time since she met Collin at Liz's home . Thoughts of him usually helped her stay as happy as possible. Who'd have thought that a public schoolmarm would have met the man of her dreams, a rough cut Irishman so different from the man of her father's dreams, when she needed him most. Collin had saved her from being raped and had protected her during their hair-raising search for his lost sister in the United States. Along the way she had saved his life as many times as he had saved hers, and her life had taken a thrilling turn for the better.

Her mother was right. Her primary goal was to deliver a healthy baby girl that they could call Claire, after Collin's lost sister. Kathy was proud that Collin had prioritized his new wife and the expected baby in his life, even though he was still compelled to try and find his sister who might still be alive in Ireland. What agony they had felt when they had finally determined that Claire was onboard the Lusitania when it was torpedoed and sunk last May. She was reported lost at sea like so many others.

Then, the very day that they held that empty casket remembrance service in Toronto they heard that she might have been spotted in Ireland in the company of a young Irishman. But the facts are certainly not clear, Kathy concluded. If only he didn't feel responsible for Claire's disappearance from Brooklyn in the first place. *It wasn't his fault, poor lad. Why can't he see that?* He'll never give up looking. *His manhood and our marriage are clearly at risk until this is resolved. Wait, this isn't making me happy.*

It is odd what thoughts run through your head at a time like this. Kind of like your life flashing before your eyes when you are in mortal danger. *Well, hell, giving birth is mortal danger, especially the first time.*

"Focus girl," Fiona admonished, bringing her daughter back into the reality of the moment at the same instant as a new contraction wracked her body.

"Yes, do," Liz added, sweeping Kathy's tangled auburn hair back behind her left ear. Her normally piercing cobalt blue eyes were almost gray with her exertion. "It's almost time."

"Okay mother. Come on Claire. It's time you were born. Maybe you can help your daddy deal with his demons."

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"How's it going at the Paper," Sam asked, cuffing his strapping protégé by the chin. He was hanging his head again, as usual. Collin realized that he was starting this line of questioning to get his mind off what was going on in the delivery room.

"Well as can be expected, boss," Collin answered, focused on what his beloved Kathy might be going through. Then he remembered. Sam had saved him five years earlier from a life and potentially death from crime. He owed him, Liz and their two daughters the world.

"I just hope it's a girl," Collin added, making fists with his hands for the umpteenth time since they had arrived..

"I know my boy, It's all in God's hands don't ya know. If it's a boy I could loan you one of my girls."

"Sam, don't you be kidding me, not now. You know those young beauties are your lifeblood."

"Aye lad."

At that moment Kathy's father Ryan strode into the waiting room, roses in hand.

"Well now, Collin, how's my lass doing?"

"Fine sir, as far as I know. You're welcome to join us men in the dark, so to speak. It's been four hours since we got here."

"She's my only daughter, she is.."

As if they didn't know.

"The doctor knows what he's doing. My wife Liz and your Fiona are in there giving moral if not physical support."

"She's not my Fiona now."

"But she could be yet." Collin welcomed the diversion. "It's up to you."

"If only that were true."

"It can be. I know from personal experience, don't I now."

Sam smiled.

"I always wanted Kathy to be a fine lady," Ryan offered, lowering his head and scuffing the tile floor.

"She's the finest lady in Toronto in my book," Collin said, rising and clapping his father-in-law on the back. "Have my seat."

"Thanks son. May I call you that? I owe you an apology lad."

"How's that sir?"

"I thought you an oaf lad, what with that motorcycle and all."

"I thought me an oaf if the truth be known. But your daughter and my boss here, Samuel Stevenson Finlay have made a man of me."

"You did it yourself lad," Sam stated, thinking to himself *poor brother Liam would also be proud.* It made all the difference in the world.

"I know that you agonize over the whereabouts of your sister, Collin. How's that going?"

Collin couldn't believe his ears. Only a year ago he had almost come to blows because this father was so inconsiderate of his family. Now he was all sympathy and support for others instead of himself. He had an epiphany on their wedding day, showing up that way at the last minute at the church. His wife's departure had made the old bastard think. And the prospect of a grandchild. Good.

"I believe that she is still alive in Ireland, sir. Kathy and I are going there during her summer break you know."

"But the baby?"

"Liz and I are going to look after your baby while you're gone," Sam reminded Collin.

"Thanks boss. I'm sure that little Norah and Dot won't mind having a baby cousin around for a few weeks."

"If I could win Fiona back then she and I could take care of the baby too, even though we haven't had a newborn around the house for twenty years or so."

"That's the spirit."

"You are a fine example for me, Collin. Made me see the error of my ways so to speak. I can see the love that you and my daughter share and how you treat her. Kathy's agreed to give me a second chance so I guess I can hope that Fiona will too."

"You have a fine wife, sir. I should know. She's been living with us nigh on these six months. If she returns to you then I will thank you for your offer to care for your granddaughter Claire. In that case, perhaps both families can share the nappies duties."

"That's a deal." They shook hands.

"You sure it will be a girl?"

"Absolutely, sir. It as to be."

Twenty minutes later the midwife came out of the operating room accompanied by an infant's scream penetrating through the walls of the waiting room

"He's got a fine set of lungs doesn't he," she said, shaking Collin's hand. "Congratulations sir. You have a healthy baby son and your wife is fine."

"Congratulations, my boy," Sam exclaimed, pulling cigars out of his waistcoat pocket.

"A son you say." Collin looked dazed.

"Yes. Eight pounds and three ounces. And jet black hair just like his father."

"Well now, that's a shocker," Collin exclaimed, taken aback. " But my wife is doing fine and well you say?"

"Yes fine. She's a trooper. You can go on in to see her and your baby now."

"Oh Collin. I am so sorry that it's a boy," Kathy blurted when the men joined her in recovery.

"Don't talk nonsense lass," Collin replied, soothing and kissing her sweaty brow. "You look terrific by the way. Let me see my fine son if you please."

"You're not mad at me?"

Collin squeezed her hand and gave her a bear hug to reassure her.

"Here he is," she offered opening the blanket to reveal a perfect sleeping baby.

"Oh, he's gorgeous," Collin gushed. "Just like me really."

"But what about Claire?"

"We'll just have to make Claire next time," Collin answered, looking at her intently.

"But what about Claire, your sister, I meant."

"We'll talk about that later lass. Right now I want to celebrate you and our little tyke."

Kathy nodded, and after kissing his cheek, pulled him down onto the bed to snuggle with her and their baby.

Collin noted that Kathy's Mother had crossed and taken her father's hand as he looked up at Sam. "Kathy and I talked about this. We decided. If we got a boy we want to name him Liam and we would like you and Liz to be his godparents."

Sam wiped the moisture now dripping from the corner of his eye with his middle finger. "I can't imagine a better name for the young Irish lad," he said, clapping his protégé around the shoulder.

The sun broke through the March storm clouds shooting rays through the window and into the recovery room.

Liz smiled. Now maybe Sam's misguided guilt about the death of his younger brother would end, allowing them both to rest in peace.

**CHAPTER EIGHTEEN - SEA PATROL (WC 3698) ©**

**March 6, 1916**

**Creagh, County Cork, Ireland**

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he weather in January and February had been colder than usual with several days of snow on the ground. That kept Tadgh and Morgan mostly indoors. The latitude of Ireland closely matched that of ice-bound Labrador, yet the gulf stream normally kept the waters and therefore the land much more temperate than its Canadian counterpart.

Tadgh remembered that fierce storm back in January 1910 where the polar maritime blasts had driven snow to a depth of 2 feet in the southwest. Normally snow, if it came at all, wouldn't last for more than a day since the air temperature was usually well above freezing. But that year the whole of southwest Ireland had been blanketed for two weeks.

This winter the gulf stream had more or less kept the Polar winds at bay. Today, however, those winds were up and a sleeting rain had started unexpectedly around two in the afternoon.

"I'm tired of waiting here like a caged tiger," Tadgh cursed, his muscular six foot one frame striding back and forth around the red-hot pot-bellied stove in his confining kitchen. "When are we going to get some orders?" He flicking his black curls out of his left eye.

"More tea, my dear?" Morgan was tired of hearing it "It's certainly not a day fit for man nor beast is it."

"I've been on maneuvers in worse. But I'm certainly glad to be here with you now. Don't you think you should put some clothes on?"

"But I was hoping for a repeat performance after tea, my love."

Morgan could see that her words had struck home, particularly when she purposefully bent her lithe hourglass figure over to retrieve some scones from the oven. Tadgh was contemplating his answer or attack plan when the front door knocker sounded.

Morgan dropped the pan of scones on the stove top and rushed upstairs for a robe.

"Who the hell would be needin to visit us during this storm?" The luger was in Tadgh's pants pocket. He flicked off the safety. Then he rubbed a frosted area of the door pane to check before opening.

When he saw who it was and his condition, Tadgh threw open the door and ushered him in with a big bear hug.

"Well now. Aidan. What in heaven's name are you doing here, brother? You must be frozen through."

His younger brother looked like Frost-man with icicles dangling from his whiskers, eyebrows and his board-stiff scarf.. His face was blanched from the cold and he was shivering down to his boots.

"Come over and sit down by the fire, my boy, for heaven's sake." Tadgh guided him to a chair. He sagged into it and started to melt.

"Morgan. It's Aidan. Bring down the heavy blanket."

His partner came bounding down the stairs, robe flying. "Aidan, we're so glad to see you. Oh my God, you're freezing!" She tried to bundle him up in the blanket.

Aidan gave a faint smile when Morgan hugged him through the blanket and flashed her smoky green eyes his way. "So glad I made it," he chattered through clenched teeth.

Grabbing her half-filled cup from the table she coaxed, "Here, sip some of this tea. But not too much, too soon." She checked his cheeks. His shoulders were square, not sagging, despite his condition. Aidan was two inches shorter than his brother but the same build and curly black hair. He looked a little gray at the moment.

"Frostbite?"

Morgan gently removed Aidan's gloves that seemed hard and brittle. His fingers were cold as ice but the circulation was still there. She started to massage them back to life. "Thank God no."

And since she noticed that his wool-lined boot tops, she announced, "I think you're going to live, my boy, but just barely."

"What possessed you to leave St Edna's and come down here in this weather brother?"

"It wasn't like this when I started out. Mr. Pearse sent me with a letter for you," he answered slowly as his body stopped shaking. "And a present. I'm a courier now."

"How did you get here, Aidan," Morgan asked while she checked his temperature with the back of her hand on his forehead.

"By train to Galway."

"Galway. Whatever for?"

"The present."

"You're kidding me." Tadgh threw on his overcoat. "By yourself lad?"

"Pa taught both of us you know Tadgh, before he and Mam were killed." Aidan looked down at his boots and started fiddling with the laces.

"That he did lad," Tadgh yelled as he raced out the door and down toward the dock. The sleet swirled into the kitchen through the open door, sparks flying up out of the fireplace in the corner. Morgan pulled her robe around her and peered out.

The ice was building and Tadgh stumbled down the last few steps. He would have ended up in the Ilen River except for the present.

"My God. She's beautiful," Tadgh exclaimed gripping the main mast as he slipped onto his new hooker." Geotag class just like the *Republican*. But at least ten years newer." *Unbelievable. This is Padriag's doing. And Aidan. What a feat."*

There she sat gathering a coat of ice, carefully cleated to the dock, sails furled. The river beyond was just starting to freeze at the shore but the center channel was open. *How did he do it?"*

"My God Aidan. You could have died out there," Tadgh exclaimed when he had finally returned to the kitchen after carefully examining his new boat stem to stern.  
 "It wasn't raining when I left Galway last evening. Padraig said it was important to get it to you."

"You're lucky you made it then, to be sure," Tadgh concluded.

"We'll, it's here I am," Aidan exclaimed, with a little more gusto to his voice.

"What present?" Morgan tried to look outside again. "

"Close the door lass. Aidan here has brought us a fine new hooker all the way from Galway, by himself no less."

"But where did you get the . . ."

"Money? Padraig arranged it, right lad?"

"Yes Tadgh. All arranged before I got there."

Morgan could see from the twinkle in Tadgh’s eye that they had the same thought. Aidan had changed. He now had perseverance and commitment to carry out his orders. They could see that his time at Pearse's Rathfarnham Gaelic Military School had done him a world of good.

"We'll, we're really glad to see you brother. How are they treatin you up there?"

"I really like it there. A bunch of us that have been through hard times are being taught how to work together towards a better future for our country."

"So then. What have you brought us? We've gotten no information directly or through Tomas MacCurtain at Cork West since January."

"This letter from the Headmaster. It must be important." Aidan opened his trench coat and handed his brother the sealed envelope. "He told me to get this to you immediately. So here I am, don't ye see."

"We're proud of you for braving this weather to bring us this message as quickly as possible," Morgan announced and gave his hand a squeeze.

"Thanks, Sis," Aidan acknowledged, and he gave her hand a tickle with his fingers.

Tadgh opened the envelope and started to read to himself,

*'March 1, 1916,*

*Dear Tadgh, I am sorry to have kept you in the dark these last few months, but it couldn't be helped. We were very worried when you disappeared. I sent Tomas to find you in December. You seem to have survived quite an ordeal on the continent. We must talk about it sometime, the necessary spilling of blood. I got Casement's message you sent. We expected as much after Joseph was over there last June. But we are still counting on munitions at the very least.*

*I am writing this letter and delivering it in this way because there have been some security leaks. We can't use the telephone and telegraphs any more at this juncture except in an emergency. Aidan has proved an apt student and is becoming a trustworthy Volunteer. You can share this letter with him and with your partner, Morgan who I understand has also survived your travails.'*

At this point Tadgh informed the others that he could read the message aloud.

He continued,

'I *want Aidan to stay with you, Tadgh, for support down in Cork and Kerry. I now have great confidence in his loyalty to our cause.'*

Morgan beamed a broad smile at Aidan, who acknowledged the complement sheepishly.

*'The IRB Military Council is planning a country wide Rising to occur on Easter Sunday, April twenty third. This will be the start of our glorious revolution. There are twelve thousand Irish Volunteers who, we believe, are committed to supporting us in this overthrow of the English menace throughout the Country. And despite Casement's views we are expecting that many more of Redmond's hundred thousand National Volunteers will join us after we Rise. We have not informed our Irish Volunteers or their Chief of Staff, Eion MacNeill yet. This is because he will not Rise unless the Volunteers are threatened first by the Government or by the protestant Ulster Volunteers. The only other reasons why he might agree would be if the Home Rule Bill did not get implemented or if Conscription is forced on Ireland.*

*Because Asquith loaded his cabinet with wretched Ulster anti Home Rule ministers last year, we believe that the English will not honor the Home Rule Bill when the war is over. But that isn't enough for MacNeill. On January eighteenth Westminster enacted the Military Service Act which requires single men between eighteen and forty one to enlist in the war effort. Our English overlord, Chief Secretary Birrell, recognizing that Irish conscription would mean certain revolution, convinced the English parliament to exclude Irishmen at the point. But it’s only a matter of time.*

*James Connolly, whom you know as head of the Irish Citizen Army here in Dublin, has been threatening to start a revolt against the English on his own. So Clarke and I met with him in January and shared some of our plans for the Rising. Connolly agreed to form an alliance with the IRB and the Irish Volunteers and he will follow our lead here in Dublin. We will seize the General Post Office as our Headquarters for the New Irish Provisional Government and we will occupy other strategic facilities in Dublin.*

*As you know, Tadgh, we are very short on weapons. There is a plan in place to get more help from the Germans. It is not clear at this point based on your input, whether they will provide officers or just munitions. We will use the rifles we got at Howth for Dublin, but the additional German arms that are coming will need to be distributed to the Volunteers in the rest of the Country.*

*The present plan is for a ship masking as a Norwegian freighter to land the arms, and perhaps men, near Fenit in Tralee Bay late on Thursday, April twentieth. Casement will come back from Germany by submarine after the shipment has left. He will rendezvous with the freighter at the drop point and time. I have assigned Austin Stack, as you know, the Commandant of the Kerry IRB, to be responsible for this operation. I am coordinating with him.*

*Tadgh, I hope you like your new boat. I want you and your team to patrol the southwest coast for abnormal English naval blockade convoys from now on. Then I need you to backup Stack if it becomes necessary. I will signal you if I need your emergency support in Tralee.*

*There will be a Rising rehearsal here in Dublin on St. Patrick's Day. MacNeill will think it is just a parade. Birrell seems content with letting us drill. But I'm not sure about his Lord Lieutenant, Lord Wimborne. This way we will find out.*

*You should support the Rising under your leader Tomas MacCurtain in Cork when the time comes.*

*Make sure the Safe house is ready and secure when we need it.*

*The old heart of the earth needs to be warmed by the red wine of the battlefield. God help us all.*

*Padraig Pearse, Headmaster, St. Edna's School.'*

When Tadgh had finished reading the message he threw it into the fire and watched it burn up.

"All right then. We're finally goin into action," he exclaimed as he slapped his brother on the shoulder.

"Can we beat the English?" Morgan asked, remembering the futility and travesty of the battle ensuing on the continent.

"Yes, if Padraig is right about getting the arms and the numbers of Volunteers who will support our cause with their blood if necessary. We want to do this now, when England is pre-occupied with the war with Germany. That was Tone's plan back in ninety eight and it's a good one. With the support of the Germans, we can finally prevail and set Ireland free, don't ye see."

"I learned about Wolfe Tone at St. Edna's, Tadgh," Aidan said. "He was the father of our Republican movement who tried to unite all Irishmen against England in the seventeen ninety eight Rebellion, wasn't he."

"Yes, but in his case the help came from the French. Just like the Spanish Armada in fifteen eighty eight, the landing force was thwarted by the weather," Tadgh informed them. "Now it's the Germans who may help us attack our common foe. Roger Casement believes himself to be a modern day Florence MacCarthaigh or Wolfe Tone. He's busy in Germany soliciting help from yet another ally of Ireland against the English tyrant. I met him there."

"In Germany Tadgh. You went there?"

"Aye lad, not willingly. But we're home now and ready to fight."

"How'd it happen, brother? Did you go too, Morgan?"

"We were both captured by a German U-Boat out where the Lusitania sank. It's a long story with a happy ending Aidan."

"You're kidding me, right?"  
 Tadgh rolled his pant leg up and showed his brother the protracted scar on his leg."

"*The Republican* went down and the U-Boat captain and his men saved us. Then Morgan here saved not only my life but also the Captain's. We were both in bad shape and she nursed us until we could get to a German hospital in Belgium."

Aidan ran his finger along the scar on Tadgh's leg. " That looks like a nasty wound."

"Almost killed me brother."

"Were you hurt, Sis?"  
 "No, Aidan, not a scratch." She didn't want to tell him that she almost drowned or how claustrophobic she felt with all those sailors in that sea snake.

"Some day we'll tell you what it's like in the trenches of the Western Front."  
 "You saw them, Tadgh?"

"Fought in them lad. Believe me. We don't want to be conscripted for that war, don't ya know."

Aidan was flabbergasted. Morgan could see that he thought he was the one with the big news.

"You two certainly do get around now, don't ye though."

"That we do," Morgan replied crossing over and giving Tadgh a big hug."

"But what about Nadolny," Morgan asked, turning and administering some salve to Aidan's weathered hands.

"Who's Nadolny?"

"German general staff, brother. He tried to stop us from returning home. I suspect that he will try an thwart Casement's attempts to get the arms we need, Morgan. We'll have to see how it plays out."

"It concerns me that we are siding with the Germans who are the aggressors in Europe," Morgan interjected. "We now know it's true that millions have been killed in the trenches. But the poor boys on both sides . . ."

"But the English have killed millions of us Irishmen over the centuries," Tadgh countered. "Look at the potato famine as an example. And they're still doing it, don't ye see.”

"And don't forget that they murdered our Mam and Pa," Aidan added.

"Wasn't it that rogue RIC Head Constable, Boyle, and his henchmen, boys?"

"Yes *aroon* and they're part of the bloody English establishment."

"I love you, Tadgh but not the thought of wholesale bloodshed."

"And I love you Morgan. But I agree with Padraig. I resonate with his phrase about the old heart of the earth, don't ye know."

"I'll follow you and him into Hell if necessary," Aidan exclaimed, stepping out of the blanket.

Morgan noted that, for the first time since they had met, the partial split in their fundamental philosophies of life had been enunciated. She somehow believed that her commitment was to save lives just like she had done on both sides in Belgium. Yet she understood, for some equally inexplicable reason, that British evil must be stopped, somehow.

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Morgan made up a section of the second floor storage room into a bedroom for Aidan, who seemed quite content with his digs. Tadgh noted that Aidan would not touch any alcohol. They really did some good up there at Padraig's school, he decided.

Tadgh wanted to change *The Republican's* name to avoid notoriety during their upcoming reconnaissance mission. "What should we call her?"

"How about *Marie, Mon Amour*," Morgan offered, giving Tadgh a squeeze.

"That seems like a dumb name, and French. Who's Marie my love?"

"Antoine's wife who died on the Lusitania."

"Fair enough. *Marie, Mon Amour* it is."

Then they started their maneuvers. Staggering the days to avoid suspicion, they headed northwest up the coast as far as the mouth of Tralee Bay on the north end of the Dingle Peninsula.

The first time that they passed Berehaven Harbor at Castletownbere on the southwest coast, Tadgh cautioned his mates. "There's a Royal Navy anti submarine base here. I'll bet that's the port that the English patrol ships will sail out of. Can you see that metal loop on the point over there?"

"I see it brother. What's it for?"

"It's a magnetometer. They can see a signal each time a ship passes. If they see the signal but no ship visually then they know a submarine is passin by. At night they can tell if a ship approaches, don't ye see."

"That's ingenious. But can they see us *mavorneen*? We're mostly wood construction I should think."

"I don't know. We've got a fair bit of metal on board."

Through the rest of March and early April they patrolled. The weather cleared and what precipitation fell was rain. They only saw the odd Royal Navy anti-submarine sloop coming in or out of Berehaven or plying the Celtic Sea south of the coast. And they were not challenged or stopped. Quite often, further offshore, they would see the smoke from convoys presumably running the gauntlet between America and England. But they saw no indication of a concerted effort to intercept a shipment of arms from Germany.

One sunny and warmer day in early April they were pretending to be fishing for mackerel shoals off the island of Inishtooskert at the mouth of Tralee Bay.

"Why is that boat heading right for us," Morgan asked, somewhat alarmed.

"Looks like a Manx Nobby trawler coming out of Fenit, so it does," Tadgh announced, squinting into the sun. “We have to be careful not to anger the local fishermen who rightly feel that these are their fishing grounds. Let me do the talking."

Since this was a Gaeltacht community, the locals often spoke in the Gaelic language that only Tadgh could fully understand.

"Who are you and where is your port?" an old salty captain yelled from the bridge of the trawler *Slanu III.*

"We're the *Marie Mon Amour* from Galway," Tadgh hollered back, using his best Galway Gaelic accent.

"You're trespassing on our fishing grounds. Your mates in Galway won't let us fish there. So you get out," the Captain growled as they came alongside.

"Happy to oblige," Tadgh replied as he turned the hooker into the wind. "Haul in our nets Aidan."

"And don't come back or we'll sink your puny hooker with you on it," the Captain called after them, switching to the English tongue as they headed out to sea.

"Friendly sort, love. A tad territorial, aren't they?"

"These fishing grounds are getting fished out by ships from the United Kingdom and beyond. After the Great Hunger, these good Irishmen turned to fishing for their livelihood, despite being ill equipped. They have every right to be territorial. Each seaside community has their own local fishing area. We're just going to have to be more careful when we're in this Bay, to be sure."

For the first time, on their way back to Baltimore, they spotted three Royal Navy Sloops and a Light Cruiser patrolling west of Berehaven. Three days later they passed the same patrol just coming out of Berehaven Bay.

"They don't seem to be interested in us," Aidan observed, tracking them through their binoculars.

"I guess we don't look Norwegian or German. In case they have wind of our plan, we should not go into Tralee Bay from now on."

Two days later, on Sunday April 16th, they saw them again, up near Great Skellig Island, half way to Tralee Bay.

"I'm guessing that they know something is up," Tadgh surmised peering intently in their direction. "We need to tell Padraig."

"The lead ship is turning our way," Morgan noted, tugging on Tadgh's sleeve.

"We'll stay on course for home now. Morgan, please get under the tarp lass."

Tadgh watched carefully as the warship approached on the starboard beam. When it had closed to approximately four hundred yards it slowed until it was pacing the hooker.

"That's a wicked looking ship," Morgan exclaimed from her vantage point looking out from under the tarp.

"She's a flower class anti submarine Sloop. *HMS Bluebell*," Tadgh read out loud as he scrutinized the bridge area of the ship.

"There's three officers looking at us through binoculars right now. Aidan, keep folding those nets, if ya please."

"I'd say she's about two hundred and fifty feet long with two stacks. She can probably make twenty knots at least. And I can see the depth charge racks clearly at her stern."

Morgan shuddered when she heard those words. Fortunately Tadgh had been unconscious during that murderous attack on the U-Boat. She felt a strange compassion for Fritz and his crew and wondered if they were still alive. This destroyer looked overwhelmingly menacing compared to the submarines, especially at this close range. Yet, just like David, those Goliaths could be brought down. But now, these new depth charges had changed the war. What a terrible way to die.

Tadgh also noted the two 4.5 guns and several machine guns that, thankfully, weren't pointed at the *Marie.*

This cat and mouse vigil continued for at least five nerve wracking minutes. Tadgh thought for sure that they would be hailed or boarded. The sound of their diesels rumbled across the waves.

Then, suddenly, the *Bluebell* veered off to starboard and made speed for the rest of its patrol group.

"That was a close call," Tadgh exclaimed. "They've got our signature now. They must have noted our presence all three times that we saw them. They finally came over to investigate. We're goin to have to avoid them at all costs from now on. They may even suspect that we're part of the welcoming committee."

All the rest of the way home Tadgh scanned the horizon and the shoreline for any evidence that they were being followed. He couldn't detect any.

But in Berehaven the officers on duty saw them pass by and noted the tiny blip signature on the magnetometer. Then they notified the Captain of the Bluebell.

Tadgh wondered how he could get his intelligence information back to Padraig. By the time they reached home he had decided that it was high time for him to take the risk and visit his local boss Tomas MacCurtain in Cork.

**CHAPTER NINETEEN - FINALLY INTO ACTION (WC 2340) ©**

**April 17, 1916**

**RIC Headquarters, Cork, Ireland**

Dean Maloney paced his Cork Royal Irish Constabulary Headquarters office downtown on South Terrace just south of the Lee Rivier. His career was on the line and he had no clue how to deal with his orders. And he hated the thought of having to rely on Darcy Boyle for advice. His Head Constable was out of control.

"What do you want?" Boyle demanded as he burst into the Inspector's office.

"Close the door," Maloney requested. "Sit down. We've been given some delicate orders that I want you to handle."

Boyle chose to stand. It gave him a height advantage over his superior.

"Admiral Hall has intercepted communications between the German embassy in Washington and Berlin. He's broken their code. Apparently, the Clan na Gael leader in New York, John Devoy, is masterminding German support for the Irish Volunteers. Hall says that Republican Roger Casement is in Germany, and the Admiral thinks that a ship is going to bring arms for the rebels from Germany to the southwest coast of Ireland in the next few days. He's not sure which day or where, but either Shannon or Tralee is a good bet. He's guessing that it will be Tralee. Casement will be there at the drop point, they understand. Hall has set up a Royal Navy blockade out of Berehaven. If they try to approach along the south coast, they'll be intercepted at sea."

"So what are your orders?" Boyle inquired impatiently.

"Our orders from the Admiral are to assist the Kerry RIC in patrolling the Dingle Peninsula and Tralee area, to stop the shipment and to arrest the traitors if they try to land there. I'm putting you in charge of our part of this operation, Boyle. Take whomever you need from the detachment and don't screw up this time.

“I will stay here in Cork in case of an insurrection. Although Chief Secretary Birrell is unconvinced, Lord Lieutenant Wimborne and Chamberlain are concerned about the Volunteers’ St. Patrick's Day parade in Dublin today.. They wanted to raid Liberty Hall at the beginning of the month, but Birrell stopped them. At least they have shut down the production and distribution of Republican newspapers like *The Gael.”*

"Have you notified Chamberlain of Hall's findings?" Boyle asked.

"I assume that he already knows," Maloney answered. He certainly didn't want to be the bearer of bad news. Not good for the career.

Boyle hated the Inspector General of rhe RIC, Sir Neville Chamberlain, who had run him out of Dublin last August,. The bastard wouldn't give him the time of day now. Why should he get the glory?

When he left the Inspector still anxiously pacing, Boyle had to admit that this might be an interesting diversion. He wasn't making any headway on finding the McCarthy brothers anyway.

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Tadgh rode the Kerry motorcycle and went alone the next day to find MacCurtain,, leaving the other two to make sure the safe house was fully provisioned.

Morgan hadn't been happy. "Don't you be going after that bastard Boyle, *mavorneen*. The cause is too important."

"We'll see about that."

MacCurtain was not at home when he arrived at the clandestine headquarters of the IRB in Blackpool, north Cork City, so Tadgh waited in the shadows. An hour later, when Tadgh saw him appear and go inside, he waited a few moments before approaching the door. At his knock, MacCurtain opened the door and exclaimed. "Tadgh, I'm really glad you came. I was going to have to take a drive down to your safe house."

"I'm here to tell you that there's a sizable Royal Navy patrol in place off Berehaven. I think the English must have knowledge of the German arms shipment. I need you to get this information to Padraig as soon as possible."

"I just came from Dublin. He has changed the landing date from the twentieth to the night of the twenty-third so that any knowledge of it won't pre-empt the start date of the Rising."

"I presume that the Germans know this Tomas."

"Supposedly the Clan na Gael knows, and they're connected. Casement is coming separately by U-Boat and will rendezvous with the freighter at the drop point. This ship has been disguised to look like the Norwegian tramp steamer *Aud-Norge,* and it will be coming south down the west coast from the area around Iceland to avoid suspicion."

"But what if the Captain of the *Aud* didn’t get the change in date?"

"He'll either have gotten it directly or the submarine will surely communicate with him. Just in case of a screw-up, Collins is sending three Volunteers he trusts down to the Valentia Signaling Center on the Dingle coast on Friday the twenty-first. They're to commandeer enough equipment so that they can communicate with the *Aud* when it arrives."

"Does Mick (Michael Collins?) say that they will rendezvous with Casement and the weapons?" This concerned Tadgh.. *Too many cooks,* he thought.

"I don't think so. Austin Stack has that responsibility as well as distribution of the arms after they are safely landed. They brought some powerful green lights down from the coal mine at Arigna to Tralee. They will be used to signal the *Aud* on Sunday night.

"Where are they to come ashore, Tomas, do ya know?"

"Fenit Pier for the weapons, as I understand it. But first, Casement and two others are to be landed on Banna Strand Beach from the submarine just after midnight."

"What about German personnel support and Casement's Brigade, such as it is?" Tadgh asked, remembering the conversations from Ridereau.

"Casement's pretty upset, I understand. You told me as much, lad. There may not be any Germans or Brigade members, but there will be at least twenty thousand Russian rifles and a million rounds of ammunition plus some explosive mechanisms, according to the Clan na Gael"

"Based on what I have seen down near Berehaven, they could easily be headin’ into a trap, sir."

"We need those weapons, Tadgh, and this is the plan..He's decided that he wants you to bring Cork's allocation of arms back to us on Monday by sea," MacCurtain explained. "You're to moor your fishing boat up at Fenit pier after dark on Sunday night and contact Austin."

"Well now. How am I to get them back through the blockade? Surely it would be safer to bring them by land, don't ya think."

"With the Rising started by then, the RIC will likely have all the roads blocked. At least that's what Padraig thinks."

Tadgh definitely did not like the plan, but he didn’t want to argue with Tomas. He'd been left in the dark so long and at least now there was some action. Tadgh didn't want to be left out any more.

With that, Tomas ushered his colleague out. As Tadgh started back home, he couldn't help but think that this plan was too risky. Too many late changes and the communications chain seemed too disjointed.

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(Afternoon sun on his right?) Tadgh drove (south) through the city to turn on Barrack Street, and headed southwest towards home. As he passed over the Lee River near the counting house of Beamish and Crawford’s Brewery, he remembered the fight to the death with Boyle's RIC goons. Morgan had saved him that day almost a year ago in more ways than one. He began to boil at the thought of it. That gravitated to the agonizing memory of his parents’ deaths at Boyle’s hands five years earlier. Bastard.

He stopped when he reached Barrack. If he turned right, he'd be on his way home, focused on his mission for the revolution. Home to Morgan and Aidan. If he turned left along Sullivan's Quay, he could be at the RIC Barracks on South Terrace in a few minutes. That's where he would find Boyle, if he was at his office.

Tadgh fingered the Luger in his trousers pocket. It would be so easy to put a bullet in Boyle's brain. It would be worth the risk. The image of Boyle putting his Webley to his mother's head and gleefully pulling the trigger burned in his skull. He wheeled left and headed down the quay.

Five minutes later Tadgh turned south on Rutland Street and parked the Kerry out of sight in an alley. He adjusted his fake glasses and sailor's cap and strolled out onto South Terrace. The RIC barracks looked every bit like a stone jail. Even the few windows had bars on them. Undoubtedly there would be a wanted poster for him and Aidan posted on their bulletin board. His chance of finding Boyle quickly inside, even if he was at work, was slim given that Tadgh didn't know the interior layout of the building. (The police van parked outside the building was empty. Necessary sentence?)

*What am I doing here?*He could hear Morgan's voice in his head. But he was so close to his adversary.

While he was looking up towards the window to his left and debating how to attack, an RIC sergeant came out the front door, absorbed with the report in his hand and bowled him over. Tadgh's hat and glasses went flying.

"Excuse me, sir." The sergeant leaned down and offered a hand up. "You all right?"

Tadgh reached for his hat on the ground. "Pardon me, Sergeant." He kept his face turned away. "I'm righteo (?) to be sure,” he mumbled and turned to walk away towards Rutland Street.

The sergeant reached him well after he had rounded the corner. "Your eyeglasses, sir."

"Thank you kindly." Tadgh approached the alley.

"Can I help you, sir?"

"I'm fine, I tell you. Leave me alone." For a moment he deliberated. He could likely knock this officer out but there were people on the street and they were too near the RIC barracks. Not a good choice. Tadgh turned into the alley. It was time to make tracks. What had he been thinking? It all seemed so risky now, one man against who knows how many RIC sergeants. And Padraig and Tomas would never forgive him for causing a ruckus so close to the Rising.

That is when Sergeant Toliver recognized the motorcycle with the wicker sidecar from the wanted poster. He reached for his Webley. "You're McCarthy! Hands up, traitor."

Tadgh flipped on the Kerry and gunned it past the startled sergeant. With one kick he dislodged the Webley from his hand and battered his right temple. Tadgh turned left down South Terrace and disappeared.

Toliver blew his whistle. Within seconds three RIC constables were by his side, including Gordo James. "McCarthy, I tell you. It was McCarthy."

"Which way, man?"

"West. He went west."

"Get the wagon," Gordo yelled to his sergeants.

Two minutes later, all five men were speeding west on South Terrace in the paddy wagon. The traffic was light until they reached Barrack Street. "Shit. Anybody see him?"

Ahead on Bishop Street, the traffic was stopped for a horse-drawn milk wagon. "Not this way, sir, unless he got by them."

Gordo stared left down Barrack street as it curved to the right ahead, with the old Elizabeth Fort high up on its right. Beyond Evergreen Street, the traffic was a snarl of carriages, horse-drawn vans, motorcars and police vehicles. . There down around Tower Street he saw the Kerry, its rider trying to squeeze around the blockage. "He's heading west for Bandon Road." Gordo wheeled the wagon left and gunned the motor.

Tadgh squeezed past the stalled lorries, barely missing the patrons streamimg out of old Lynch's Bar. He glanced over his shoulder and saw the police wagon accelerating in pursuit .

"Damn." He had a critical job to do and now he had put that at risk. He couldn't lead them back towards his home. That's when he had an idea that was a long shot, but it could work. Timing would be everything. The turnoff was just three streets ahead.

Gordo cleared the obstruction by driving right into it. Hansoms and lorries scattered as the paddy wagon rolled through. Gordo knew that capturing Tadgh was his one chance to satisfy his demanding boss. It might even mean a promotion.

"There, he's turning left on Lough Road." Toliver pointed to his left, egging his boss on.

"I need him alive," Gordo yelled as Toliver drew his Webley and leaned out the open side window.

Tadgh glanced behind and slowed the Kerry as he approached a lough on his left. He was hoping that they wouldn't open fire on him. He could see Cork Lough, a quarter-mile oval, coming up on his right, It was a popular park area, a shallow quarry that now held water a meter in depth. He knew that the road came within twenty feet of the lough at its southern end, down where the island overgrowth came close to the shore. He could see that Cork residents who were out for an afternoon stroll walked ahead on the footpath by the lake.

Fortunately the road ahead was clear. Tadgh drew his Luger and flicked off the safety. Toliver aimed and took a shot. The bullet hit the carry bar just behind Tadgh's seat and ricocheted harmlessly away.

"Stop shooting, dammit. I want him alive, man."

Tadgh gauged the timing.As the paddy wagon drew up close behind him, he abruptly pulled to the left so the police overshot him on the right. Gordo flicked the wheel left to knock the Kerry over and shouted, “Pull over, McCarthy!”

In response,Tadgh calmly fired two rounds into their front right tire, which blew out immediately. The police van veered towards him, and Tadgh hit the brake. He immediately dropped behind before the paddy wagon could hit him. One more bullet through the right rear tire did the trick. Its wheels screeching, the van veered sharply to the right, jumping up and over the pedestrian walkway. It launched itself into the lough, nosing down into the edge of the island brush. Startled walkers jumped out of the way and were now pointing and laughing at the policemen's predicament.

Tadgh waved as he accelerated south down Lough Road. Gordo and his men were out of the van and stumbling around in the waist-deep water. Tadgh heard him yell

“Fuck!” at the top of his lungs.

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When Tadgh at last returned, Morgan asked, "What did Tomas say? Are they going to stop the shipment?"

"On the contrary, my dear. It's going forward despite our information about the likely blockade, but it will be three days later," Tadgh responded. "The ship is coming from the north-west and not through the Celtic Sea. Tomas doesn't think that the English would know the landing site or date even if they have wind of the possible arms landing."

Tadgh told them about their orders to bring guns to Cork.

"Sounds risky to me," Morgan drew her lovely face into an uncharacteristic frown. "Is all this necessary? A lot of people are going to get killed, aren't they?"

"These are desperate times, lass," Tadgh commented. "We need to gain our freedom from tyranny now, during the Great War. If we don't get these weapons, then it'll be pitchforks against machine guns, to be sure. "

Aidan spoke up. "Well, then. I'm with you all the way, brother."

Tadgh looked at Morgan for the same commitment, but her nod was tentative at best. "You know that I love you, desperately," was her only commitment. She moved to him and hugged her man fiercely.

"Aye, then. It's not clear to me that the German captains will have gotten the date change orders. They left Germany before this decision was made. So we're going to Tralee on Thursday night in case they didn't get the message to delay."

They spent the next two days organizing, loading and concealing equipment and provisions on the hooker for what might be a four-night voyage. They also perfected some disguises to look more like local fishermen, especially for Morgan.

Finally, at seven pm on Thursday, April 20th, they emerged from the shelter of their home at Creagh and took the familiar route out to sea past Baltimore.

"Mind now. Keep an eye out for the Royal Navy," Tadgh yelled above the strong easterly wind whistling in the sails as they poked their head around Clear Island. "I don't want to give away our home port."

"Do you think they'll be out at night?" Morgan mused, looking out at the horizon.

"If they think the Germans are out there, yes,, lass. Sunset is at eight thirty. We need the cover of darkness to get by the blockade, if it's out there."

"No vessels in sight," Aidan announced at they passed north of the Fastnet lighthouse, heading west. "We've got a good ten miles per hour easterly wind and calm seas. It couldn’t be better."

Tadgh set the trim and steered into the sun. "We're going to stay close to the coast at night so that we can duck out of sight it they find us."

By nine thirty it was dark, and they could see the Bull lighthouse shining on the horizon to the west ahead.

"Okay, everyone. We're comin’ up on the Berehaven Royal Navy Harbor. They may be listenin’ with that loop magnetometer. Keep your eyes peeled."

An hour later they had crossed Bantry Bay and passed Bere Island approaching Crow Head. "We're visible now each time the Bull Light sweeps past us," Morgan remarked, looking west.

"It can't be helped," Tadgh answered. "We're going to pass between Dursey Head and Bull Island in about half an hour. Then we'll be past the Naval Center area. If the Cruisers are out, they're far out at sea, I'm after thinkin’. So far, so good."

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In the Naval Control Center at Amnikinna Point, the magnetometer operator called to his supervisor, "Sir, come and see this signature, I dunno, it's so faint. But it looks just like the one we saw a few days ago. You remember, that Galway hooker the *Bluebell* thought was suspicious."

"What would a fishing vessel be doing out at this time of night?" Ensign Johnson wondered. "I'm going to call the Captain."

Captain Flood prowled the bridge of the *Bluebell* at anchor in the harbor. The Royal Navy was on high alert, ready to move into action at a moment’s notice. Several naval vessels were on night patrol on the Celtic Sea.

"Capt'n, there's a call from Command." Ensign Cornwall handed him the new-fangled ship to shore. What a boon it was.

"Captain Flood, we see the signature of that fishing trawler *Marie* you shadowed a few days ago. It's heading west toward Dursey Head."

"What? Now at night?" Flood sprang to action. Maybe Amiral Hall was right. "Sound general quarters.” Within three minutes the *Bluebell* was underway, set on an intercept course based on the magnetometer readings.

"Captain, we will lose magnetometer coverage when the hooker passes Dorsey Head, in about ten minutes. She should be illuminated for you by Bull Lighthouse by then," the magnetometer signal operator announced.

Flood peered ahead from the bridge into the darkness .. "We will be on scene in fifteen minutes. Contact me when you lose signal." *What a stroke of luck*, he thought as he ordered the engine room to make speed.

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Tadgh saw the signal lights from the Control Center at a distance. Faintly over the water, he heard the horns sounding general quarters. “Damn, the Navy's starting after someone, and I'll bet it's us. Aidan, douse the runnin’ lights, lad."

"Done, brother, but we're sitting ducks out here every time the Bull light comes round. How much of a head start do we have?"

"Five miles, but we're still two miles from the lighthouse," Tadgh calculated. "They will be comin’ at twenty knots compared to our ten."

"What's the illumination distance of the lighthouse?"

"I'd guess five miles," Tadgh speculated, peering ahead towards Bull Island.

"They'll catch us to be sure," Aidan concluded. "Let's head into one of those coves on shore like you suggested earlier."

"No can do, brother. With the shoreline here, we'd smash on the rocks at night, and if we didn't they'd find us under the Bull light."

"What are we going to do, Tadgh?" Morgan worriedly looked back in the direction of the harbor. "We can't give ourselves up."

"Never, lass," Tadgh yelled back while he agonized over their course of action. They couldn’t let themselves be detained at this point. He decided that they only had one chance, and it was slim at that. He set a course directly for Bull Island. He didn’t have time to explain his plan, just what they needed to do..”Now then, Aidan and Morgan. I'm going to need your help at just the right time," he ordered. "When I say, lower the sails, Aidan, you lower the lug sail, and you, Morgan, lower the foresails. And have the oars ready. Got it?"

Although they didn’t understand, they agreed, and ten minutes later, the trawler sailed directly into the Bull light a third-mile from the Rock. Its light blinded them as they sped towards its base...When they turned their heads, they could see the searchlight of the navy vessel sweeping the sea behind them. It was gaining on them but still a mile and a half astern. Tadgh could only hope that the officers on board were not using binoculars to look at the Island.

"This is crazy, brother," Aidan yelled from midship. "We're either going to duck behind the island or crash into it. Either way we're done for, to be sure. They'll find us or our debris."

Morgan was too stunned to say anything. Aidan had said it all. But she believed in Tadgh. He must have a plan, she told herself. But what?

A minute later, when the light came around again, they were again temporarily blinded, and Morgan thought they were only moments away from smashing into the near-vertical rock face. “Look out,” she yelled, cringing in anticipation of the impact.

**CHAPTER TWENTY - AUD-NORGE (WC 2633) ©**

**April 20, 1916**

**Fenit Bay, West Coast of Ireland**

(Note on this chapter: there are a bunch of place names that are referenced only once. The reader may find it more satisfactory if some are deleted, so they don’t bog down the pace)

At that moment, three bays to the northwest, down near Fenit, Captain Karl Spindler, on his currently assigned German freighter, consulted with his crew of twenty-two mariners. They had arrived at the rendezvous point at Inistooskert Island at four pm Thursday April twentieth, as ordered. Now, six hours later, after plying Tralee Bay for four hours searching in vain for a signal from the Irish rebels, they were beginning to suspect a trap. Camouflaged as the Norwegian tramp steamer *Aud-Norge*, they carried twenty thousand obsolete Mosin-Nagant rifles fitted with bayonets captured from the Russians, over one million rounds of ammunition, ten machine guns and several bombs with timing devices. But without Irishmen to receive them, these arms were useless. And without wireless on their ship, they could only use their green signal light to try to establish contact.

At one point, before nightfall, they had been close enough to the drop point, Fenit Pier, to see the English sentries patrolling it with their binoculars. They had paid the steamer no mind, or so it had seemed. As darkness settled, they saw none of the expected green signal lights in the town or surrounding hills.. What could have happened? And U-19, carrying Roger Casement and his brigade of Monteith and Bailey, had not appeared at the rendezvous as expected either. They had waited there for two hours for them. Where could they be?

"Well, *meine* crew. The men at the gun emplacement on the top of that hill were probably looking for us." Spindler looked each of his sailors straight in the eye. "The Sinn Feinners might be in hiding if the political situation changed after we left Germany. Since we've been at sea for two weeks taking the long way here to avoid suspicion, a lot could have happened. But we have our orders. We have two options. First, we can assume the worst and leave under cover of darkness tonight. Or, we can wait another day and hope that we can make contact with the rebels by then."

First Mate Dusselmann was quick to answer. "We've all decided, sir. We came all this way to do a job and we should stay another day to get it done."

Spindler expected that response, and was proud of his close-knit and loyal crew. "So be

it, then. Let's return to the rendezvous point and lay to in that bay against the western shore before moonrise at one am (nautical term?). Perhaps Casement and Weisbach will be there waiting for us. Keep the running lights extinguished."

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"Now!" Tadgh shouted as he jigged the hooker to starboard slightly. Simultaneously Aidan and Morgan yanked their respective halyards and the sails came billowing down. They braced for impact against the mast and waited.

One second. Two seconds. Surely the boat would be mangled on the rock face or worse, Morgan thought. They were in the darkness under the beam of the light. But the collision never came. The stars disappeared, and it was as if they had been swallowed up by the earth. Morgan could hear the wind whistle a spooky tune, and like a bat she sensed proximity to objects on her left and right.

"Oars out starboard, and hold on," Tadgh yelled.

With their oars out, Morgan and Aidan could hear and feel them scraping rough walls. Morgan almost lost hers when it hit an outcrop. Their speed quickly slowed, and they came to an abrupt stop.

"Okay, let's hold on to the rock on the starboard side, Aidan," Tadgh spoke quietly, just louder than the wind. His voice echoed down into the void.

As her eyes adjusted to the nearly complete darkness, Morgan could barely see that they were in the middle of a tunnel that was about as wide as the hooker’s length and taller than the height of its mast.. She could also make out that Tadgh was attempting to tie off to a rock protruding from the tunnel wall on their starboard side.

"Drop the anchor, Morgan," he commanded, and she immediately complied. It hit rock only a few feet down. "We're in a hole made through Bull Rock by the sea," Tadgh explained. "I wasn't sure that it would be high enough to clear the mast or deep enough to clear the keel. We are almost four hundred feet below the lighthouse. Quiet now until we know that the Navy ship is out of range."

Five minutes passed, and then they could hear the throbbing of the warship's engines as it approached the island. The engine sounds grew louder and then dropped in pitch as the ship slowed,. It must be near the island, she thought when she started hearing muffled voices yelling unintelligible orders.

Suddenly a momentary flash of light appeared at the tunnel entrance. Nobody moved a muscle. Morgan's heart was in her mouth. The illumination stopped thrity feet short of the *Marie*. She creaked and groaned as she lapped up against the rough-hewn rock wall.

It seemed like an hour had passed before the engine noise and sailors’ voices faded into a watery silence.. *Good*, she thought. They have passed us by. It had only been eight minutes.

When the sounds from the warship had died away completely, Morgan opened her moth to speak, but .Tadgh cut her off with a whisper. "You've done a fine job. But they’re still hunting us, and. I'd be willing to bet that they will circle the island before moving on, don't ye know."

Sure enough, fifteen minutes later, they heard the engine rumble echoing down the tunnel ahead of them. Again the brilliant searchlight lit up the end of the tunnel , falling just short of the hooker before flashing out. They waited another ten minutes, hearing only wind and lapping noises, before anyone said a word..

"They could be scouring the coastline of Ballydonegan Bay for us at this point," Tadgh said. "We're going to have to wait here until midnight before moving on."

Morgan came over to Tadgh and noticed his knuckles were bleeding from the beating they took on the rocks. "Let me bind your right hand, Tadgh."

"Just wipe them off, lass. I'm goin’ to need the use of all my fingers for the work we have ahead of us.”

Morgan didn't like that answer.

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"Casement, where are your Volunteers?" Captain Weisbach demanded after he had done another three-sixty with the periscope of U-19. "It's a quarter of midnight and we've seen no green lights since we got here four hours ago."

Casement and the captain stood (correct word for submarine?) offshore from Banna Strand on the west coast of Tralee Bay just north of Fenit harbor. The Sampire Island light cast an eerie glow on the rolling surf at the south end of the beach. Their periscope examination of Fenit Pier half an hour before had shown that it was well guarded.

"I don't understand it, unless they have been arrested. They knew we were coming tonight," Roger Casement responded weakly.

"Since the *Aud-Norge* was not at the rendezvous point when we arrived at eight o'clock, we should assume that they have been delayed or captured," Weisbach continued, turning to his first mate who nodded in agreement.

"So what do we do now?" Casement's adjutant Monteith asked..

"Well, I'm not taking you three back to Germany," was Weisbach’s emphatic reply.

Roger Casement coughed before he spoke. "As agreed, you are to put us ashore tonight. I've got to get them to stop this insane Rising, especially now if the arms cannot be delivered."

Sir Roger sagged after the effort to speak, and Monteith rushed to his boss' aid, propping him up against the stairwell of the control room.

"We'll give it two more hours," Weisbach concluded, checking his watch. "If we haven't made contact by then, you'll have to row the dinghy ashore through the surf. I can't risk surfacing in daylight."

"Boss, you're in no condition to be travelling on foot," Monteith observed, listening to Sir Roger's labored breathing.. "The rendezvous point with Stack at the fort is about a mile and a half from the beach."

"I'm going to see this through," Casement admonished, coughing up phlegm and wiping his mouth with a damp handerchief.

"Yes, sir," Monteith muttered.

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At midnight Tadgh gave the go ahead to cautiously paddle out of the tunnel. He poked his nose out and sniffed the air. The wind had dropped considerably.

"No sign of our friend," Tadgh whispered. "Hoist the sails quietly."

With that accomplished, Tadgh steered north northwest toward the Great Skellig light. They passed by it on their left at about two am, just after the moon rose and bathed the ocean in silver.

"That warship just plain disappeared," Aidan observed.

"Lucky for us so far. But now we're sitting ducks again if it shows up. We lost two hours and the wind has dropped. We're only making five knots now, so we won't get to Tralee Bay until well after dawn."

"What are we going to do when we get there, exactly?" Morgan now sat beside her man and held tight. The night chill had raised goosebumps under her tunic.

"Well, now. That'll depend on what we find there, won't it now," Tadgh answered as he pulled a blanket from under the gunnels and wrapped it around his love. "In the worst case, we will sail into the fishin’ harbor at Fenit and tie up like we belong there."

"Won't the locals expose us?" she countered, snuggling closer.

"Maybe, but we've got to take that chance. We have to get those guns if possible."

They passed the next four hours heading north across the mouth of Dingle Bay without seeing another vessel. Then as dawn broke, they passed Great Blasket Island. Tadgh noted with satisfaction that Morgan had been sleeping soundly propped up against his shoulder.

"Is it morning?" Morgan asked, rubbing her eyes.

Before Tadgh could answer, the sea behind the hooker began to boil. Tadgh spied an enormous dark shape almost directly beneath them and held the tiller tight. With terrifying gurgles and creaking sounds, it rose. A submarine’s conning tower broke the surface.

"Good God, Tadgh," Aidan screamed as the black behemoth emerged from the depths with a thunderous roar. Tadgh let the lug boom swing out to kill their propulsion. It was like déjà vu for them. The submarine quickly drew alongside the hooker, looming above her and knocking whatever wind remained out of her sails.

When Morgan saw the stenciled U-19 emblazoned on the side of the U-Boat, she cried out, "It must be Captain Weisbach and Fritz. Unbelievable!”

"Hold on, Aidan," Tadgh cautioned when his brother went for the rifle at his feet. "Leave it be."

This time only one officer appeared in the conning tower. There was no need for binoculars at this range. Tadgh and Morgan could easily recognize *Kapitan* Weisbach. "It looks like you patched our savior up just fine, aroon," Tadgh remarked, as he waved in a friendly fashion.

"Ahoy, supply ship. You got fish?" Kapitanleutnant Weisbach yelled in English as he waved back, laughing. "I see you replaced your old scow."

Tadgh smiled and held up a mackerel that was part of their props. Aiden could only look at the two men with a look of confusion on his face. He was even more puzzled as neither Tadgh nor Morgan appeared to be concerned when several sailors launched a dinghy and rowed over to them.

Weisbach greeted Tadgh with a crisp salute and a handshake. "I see you decided you'd had enough of our hospitality." To Morgan’s observation that he healed quickly, he replied,

It is thanks to you, *Fraulein*," with an approving wink of his eye.

Aidan was dumbfounded but chose to keep his mouth shut.

"Do you have Casement on board?" Tadgh asked, cutting to the chase.

"What do you know of these matters?" Weisbach's eyebrows arched.

"I met Sir Roger near Munich."

" You're full of surprises, *mein freund*."

"We've been sent for a part of the shipment, so we have," Tadgh answered in a level tone.

"There were no green signal lights in response to our red one," Weisbach answered. "Your compatriots didn't show up last night."

"Where's Casement?"

"As agreed, we let him and his brigade of two men go ashore on Banna Strand at about two thirty this morning," the Captain explained. "We watched their dinghy overturn in the surf. Casement was in bad shape when he boarded my boat in Germany. I was told he had malaria. We couldn't tell if they survived."

"Where were they headed?"

"They mentioned that someone named Stack at ‘the fort’ would pick them up.. Said he had to get information to the leaders in Dublin. He seemed hell-bent on stopping the Rising. That's all I know."

"And what of the shipment, do ye know?"

"The ship was not at the rendezvous point yesterday when we arrived. We couldn't find it in the Tralee Bay."

"Where was the rendezvous point?"

"One of the Magharee Islands called Inishtookskert."

"Didn't you get notified of the change in delivery date?"

"What change?"

*What a screw-up*, Tadgh thought to himself. "Delivery was supposed to be changed to Sunday."

"Damnation. Then our supply ship couldn't have gotten the message either. They sailed over two weeks ago and they have no wireless."

"Could you have missed them in the bay?"

"Possibly, if they were trying to conceal themselves in the dark last night," Weisbach commented, stroking his chin. "But I will tell you that the area is well fortified. There are manned gun emplacements on the hilltops at the bay’s entrance. And we observed police sentries on duty at the arms drop point at midnight. We think that the English knew we were coming and may have apprehended your Sinn Feiners."

"Sounds like it, so it does."

"We were heading out to sea to determine if there is a naval blockade when I saw you coming. We'll intercept the supply ship if it has not yet arrived and apprise the Captain of the situation."

"The Royal Navy is out there," Tadgh assured him. "We were chased on our way here last night. We will continue on into the bay. If your ship is there, or shows up, we will find an alternate landing site. Do you have any of the arms shipment on board your vessel?"

"Yes we have three cases of the rifles and two of ammunition."

"A fair trade for saving our lives?”

Weisbach nodded his assent. “They're ancient weapons anyway. And s

Tadgh stepped forward and shook his hand. "We're even, then."

Morgan’s voice cut through the silence to ask if she could see Fritz. She was anxious to see an old friend and learn any news of his family who had so kindly opened their home to her.

“Can Fritz come here?”

The captain shook his head."He is my second in command. He must stay with the boat."

(what is the reason for the two following sentences? Is Tadgh afraid of kidnapping?)

"But you'll stay here with me until she returns."

"Certainly Tadgh. Certainly mein freund."

After Aidan helped the German sailors load up their dinghy with fish, two sailors escorted Morgan aboard the dinghy and rowed her over to the submarine. She jumped up and soon disappeared below decks

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As Morgan descended into the bowels of the U-Boat, she was surprised that she wasn't afraid. It was like she was coming home. The smells of oil and that obnoxious cologne greeted her nostrils and set her to sneezing. She immediately felt the warmth of the close space crowded with men, the air thick with their sweat and exhalations.

Fritz, stood in the control room giving orders to his men and didn’t see Morgan behind him. When she tapped him on the shoulder, he whirled around and almost knocked her over

He immediately broke into a wide smile when he recognized her and asked, "How? Where? *Mein Gott*, it is you, Morgan." He picked her up in his arms, hugged her to his chest and tipped his head back in laughter.

When they both had regained their breath, Morgan lost no time in asking after Greta and the boys “Fritz, I’m so flad to see you, my friend. Gerda is well and the boys, they are full of life and mischief?”

"Yes, my family is well and we often talk about those days you were with us. A most happy time amid all of this.” His voice faded as he turned his eyes to take in the cramped quarters and the very real feeling of anxiety and fear that hung in the air. He took a deep breath. “But how did you escape? Gerda worries for you, she will be so full of joy when I can tell her that her prayers have been answered and you got away.."

"I worried so that the police had hounded you all on our account, and we had brought harm to you, Fritz." (Morgan does not answer his question about how she escaped.)

"We submariners carry some weight. My family has been left alone."

"When we all survive our wars, we will get together in Germany, at your real home, I promise."

"Well, that's something to live for, isn't it."

"As well as seeing your boys grown up and married, Fritz."

"That's my plan, Morgan, God willing. Is McCarthy with you?"

"Yes, of course. But now I have to go, and I'm supposed to take some munitions that you brought. It's in trade for these damn fish."

Fritz queried his men and confirmed the trade. "Good riddance to these old weapons. They are taking up valuable space anyway."

After the men moved the munitions up and out onto the dinghy, Morgan turned to the men and wished them all godspeed. She took a step up the ladder and then bounded back down to embrace Fritz right in front of his men. She was crying, as much fot all the wounded men that she had seen, as for these brave souls.

"Really, *Fraulein*," Fritz scolded, his face turning red under his unkempt beard.

Morgan squeezed hard and held him close for a moment. Then she saw it, a tear streaking down from the corner of his eye. "There, there now, be off with you." He gently pushed her away. What would the men think.

"*Auf wiedersehen,* Fritz." She blew him a kiss as she ascended the vertical stairwell.

"*Auf wiedersehen,* Morgan," the entire crew cried in unison as they saluted her departure.

. During the transfer of munitions to the hooker, including a hundred rounds of nine millimeter bullets for Tadgh’s Luger, Captain Weisbach asked Tadgh, “Did you get a message from Captain Schwieger with his gift of that weapon?” Weisbach asked.

“If you want peace, prepare for war…which is why you are here,” Tadgh answered and the German smiled.

The two captains shook hands again. “We’re in this fight against the English together, so we are,” Tadgh stated, looking his counterpart square in the eye.

"After the war, then." Weisbach saluted him and prepared to return to his ship.

The three Irish patriots watched as the dinghy crossed back to the submarine. Within three minutes it was gone, leaving no trace on the surface of the sea. In all, the encounter took less than thirty minutes. Tadgh set the sail trim, and they started off again.

"What was that all about?" Aidan needed answers, He could not make sense of the entire experience. He needed his brother to set right this world that had so suddenly turned on its head.

"Friends we met when we were on the ccontinent," Morgan said with a twinkle in her eye. They hadn't told him about their adventures in Germany, Belgium and France.(THEY DID TELL AIDAN – BACK IN CHAPTER 18)

"We'll tell you all about it later, brother. Right now we've got problems. Big problems."

"What are we going to do now, Tadgh? Sounds like the tyrants are in control at Fenit."

"What a bloody bollocks. We've got to find the supply ship and arrange a new drop point, brother. The Rising depends upon it."

**CHAPTER TWENTY ONE - TRAPPED (WC 2401) ©**

**Friday, April 21, 1916**

**RIC Headquarters, Tralee, Ireland**

Boyle didn't like taking orders from anyone, least of all from this local Tralee Head Constable, John Kearney. At 7:15 am, he hardly listened when the Head Constable explained the task of seeking out and apprehending three rebels who, from all reports, had landed on Banna Strand.

"Our intelligence from Captain Hall indicates that Roger Casement should be one of them. They're closing the net on the German ship with the arms. They won't be allowed to land on Irish soil," Kearney informed them. "Head Constable Boyle, are you listening to me?" he impatiently demanded.

Gordo James knew that his boss was about to retaliate, so he jumped in. "Head Constable Boyle is fully aware of the situation, as am I. The two of us were sent here to help. What can we do, exactly?"

Boyle still looked like he would like to rip Kearney's throat out. James knew that look all too well.

"I'm sending a patrol up the coast to check farm by farm and house by house. I want you to go with them. We need to capture these rebels before they can get to Austin Stack, the leader of the Tralee Irish Volunteers,," Kearney explained. "We have him under surveillance. And Boyle, we want them alive."

It was all he could do to keep Boyle from revolting, but James managed to agree to the assignment and usher his boss out of RIC headquarters before there was any altercation.

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At 8:20, the *Marie* passed by the first gun emplacement on Brandon Point, at the entrance to Tralee Bay.

"It doesn't look like they are interested in us," Tadgh commented as they passed right under their noses. "Just another trawler coming in from a night's fishing."

"Unless the Naval Control Center has been in contact with those bastards," Morgan offered, looking up (from where?or at whom?)) anxiously.

"Point well taken, my dear. ‘Come in to my parlor’ said the spider to the fly, eh."

Twenty minutes later they were skirting the Magharee island chain heading into Tralee Bay. "Look, Tadgh, over there by the island." Morgan pointed northward.

Tadgh was already intently examining the two ships in the distance. One was a tramp steamer flying Norwegian colors. And the other, moored alongside and dwarfed in comparison to the Norwegian vessel, was a steamer flying the Royal Navy Ensign. "Aidan, lad. Take cover behind the mast and use the binoculars to tell me the names of those vessels," Tadgh ordered. "We're probably bein’ observed, so we need to keep movin’ into the bay."

Aidan squinted and peered through the binoculars. "The tramp steamer's name is *Aud-Norge* and the Navy vessel is the *Setter II*," Aidan announced after close scrutiny from their distance of a half-mile. "The Navy ship has deck-mounted machine guns trained on the larger ship. There seems to be a boarding party on the Norwegian vessel."

"Damn," Tadgh swore. "That's our supply ship to be sure, and the bastards have got her."

"Can't we go to her rescue?"

"Just us, one Luger and old Russian rifles?" Tadgh countered. "Hardly a fair fight, brother. The whole Navy fleet will be here in no time."

"Is it possible that she dropped her cargo?"

"Unlikely, but it’s possible.” Tadgh saw that both vessels were close on the hooker’s stern. “If we turn around now, it will raise suspicion.Keep an eye on them while we scout out Fenit Harbor. They would have needed a dock to unload all the crates of weapons."

"Tadgh, there’s the fishing boat that stopped us a few days ago," Morgan yelled, tugging on his sleeve. )

Tadgh wheeled around to face forward in the direction that Morgan pointed. He could clearly see that the Manx Noby trawler, coming out of Fenit harbor, was making a beeline for them. "That's just what we need right now. Another problem," he exclaimed, as they reached mid harbor.

"Ahoy, *Marie*. Lay to and prepare to be boarded," the Captain of the Slanu III bellowed in Gaelic as they pulled abeam of the hooker. "You were warned."

There were eight crewmen on the Noby, Tadgh noted. And they looked menacing, armed with grappling hooks. "Look on the bright side," he muttered to calm his mates. "It's probably a good thing that they look Irish and speak Gaelic."

Before they could react further, the crewmen of the *Slanu III* lassoed the hooker with their grappling hooks and pulled the boats together. Their captain jumped the gap before the boats collided, landing squarely on the aft deck of the hooker, club raised. "Come on, boys. Let's break this pipsqueak tub apart."

Morgan jumped back, but Tadgh held his ground with his Luger pointed directly at the Captain's heart. This act did not go unnoticed. At the same time, he signaled Aidan with his eyes to do nothing.

"My name's Tadgh McCarthy, Captain. What's your name, sir?" He asked coolly in English, offering his right hand to shake.

Completely caught off guard, the captain stammered back in English, "Maurice Collis, Fenit Harbor." Seeing the gun leveled at him changed his demeanor. "Stand down, me lads," he ordered, and he put his hand in the air to stop his men.

Tadgh took a chance. "Are you Volunteers?"

"No, but sympathetic," Captain Collis answered cautiously. "Why?"

Tadgh eyed his face carefully as he spoke and found indications of sincerity. The man stood six foot if he was an inch and his weathered face showed the scars of a hard life at sea, pock-marked from decades of salt spray and wind burn. But there was a kindliness in those green Irish eyes. That overcame the otherwise rough manner that undoubtedly came from a life of deprivation and persecution.

"Because we are Irish Volunteers sent here on a mission."

"Not fishing?"

"Not fishing," Tadgh confirmed, as he lowered his gun.

"Hell, why didn't you say that in the first place?" the Captain exclaimed and lowered his club.

Sensing that the situation was becoming defused, Tadgh said, "What do you mean by the word sympathetic, if you please?"

"We'd kill the murdering English swine if we could get away with it."

"How would you like to do something significant for that cause?"

"Illegal?"

Tadgh ignored the question. "We need some intelligence about what has been happening here recently, so we do."

"The police have been swarming all over us since Tuesday," Collis explained, turning and pointing at Fenit harbor."They're waiting for something big to happen. We heard that two nights ago they arrested several Volunteer leaders in Tralee."

"Did the Norwegian steamer yonder drop off cargo at Fenit Pier in the last day?" (the one there? It’s right on the hooker’s stern, right?)

"Not to my knowledge."

Tadgh guessed that Collis would be in the know at his home port. So the *Aud-Norge* had been boarded by the Navy with the munitions still onboard. It looked like a complete screw-up, he decided. Even if these men could be brought to bear, they didn't have the horsepower to liberate the supply freighter. And even if they could, there was now no place to offload the munitions. Then there was the issue of starting a ruckus here two days before the surprise Rising. Pearse would be furious.

He changed his tack. “Is there a fort about a mile and a half from Banna Strand Beach, do ya know?"

"Now you're talking about my bailiwick," Collis answered enthusiastically.

"How so?"

"I know the place. It's McKenna's Fort, to be sure. It is just the broken down overgrown ruins of an ancient ring fort within a copse of trees." I live near there just south of the Strand. Why do you ask?"

"Well now. I've got to reach three of my compatriots who came ashore last night at the beach. They may be there yet." Tadgh also knew that they might already have been picked up by friend or foe.

"That reminds me, so it does," Captain Collis remembered, stroking his unkempt beard. "At the Fenit docks an hour ago, I overheard some RIC guards talking about finding an overturned dinghy, a gun and ammunition on the beach just before dawn. They were headed out to find the culprits."

"Will you help us, Captain?" Tadgh asked, offering his hand once again in friendship. "Our plan was to sail into Fenit Harbor and tie up to the wharf like any other fishing trawler."

Collis shook Tadgh's hand and almost broke his knuckles. "All right. I hate the English, too. But you'll have to follow my directions."

Tadgh assessed the integrity of the man and answered, "We're in your hands, Captain."

“Okay. First, I will dispatch my crew to continue with our planned fishing trip and then accompany you on your boat here. My men can be trusted." He turned and gave his crew their orders to continue on their day's work without him. They released the grappling hooks and soon *Slanu III* headed for the horizon. Captain Collis then told Tadgh, "It would be foolhardy to go to Fenit. I have a better way. Make your course for the north side of the island by the Samphire Light and just south of the Banna Strand Beach."

Twenty minutes later, as they approached the shoreline from the west, Tadgh could see the narrow channel leading east into a bay behind the island. Banna Strand Beach swept away on his left to the north.

"This is my home," Collis told him.. "We'll be safer here. Head through the channel and mind your draft."

"Aidan, check our depth from now on, brother," Tadgh ordered. "High tide is comin’ in, which should help, so it should."

As they glided by the island into the narrow entrance to the bay, Collis narrated its history with a sweeping arm. "See that ruined castle on the right there, on Fenit Island. That's my ancestral home," he waxed nostalgically. “It belonged to the mighty FitzMaurice Clan. They were a powerful force around here up until the Desmond Rebellion in the last few years of the sixteenth century. Then they were squashed by the English invaders. Bastards." The captain paused for a moment, as if deep in thought.,”After the FitzMaurice Clan was almost destroyed in 1598 by the English invaders, Fenit Castle was no longer habitable. The Collis family was granted the land in this area and here they built a home called Barrow House. We will see it ahead on the left by that sea wall. The Collis family intermarried with the FitzMaurices, and I am the product of a long line of FitzMaurice Collis's. Tadgh you can tie up at the sea wall where the steps are."

Tadgh swung the tiller and boom to spin the hooker so that he was pointed towards the entrance of the harbor. He nimbly brought the boat to rest against the wall. "Lower the sails," he ordered, and his crew complied. After tying off they ascended the stairs of the sea wall towards their new friend’s home. (need a description – house, stone steps? How many? Steep?) Along the way, as the captain continued to tell his story, the ancestral history took on new meaning for Tadgh and Morgan

"Let me explain about the history of this area," Collis went on. "In the Middle Ages, the town of Ardfert, which is about two miles north of here, was a major ecclesiastical center for not only Ireland, but for all of Europe. Scholars studied there from all over the known world. This was the Irish renaissance, and we were its leaders at the time. This bay was the harbor for ships from far and wide, bringing supplies, students and their masters to the great Cathedral. Fenit and Tralee didn't exist in those magical days."

Tadgh thought this was quite a different man than the gruff fisherman captain who had challenged them at their first meeting. *A learned man who loves the history of the Irish,*Tadgh thought, *a man after my own heart.*

"In 1307, when my ancestor Thomas FitzMaurice returned from the Crusades as a Knights Templar, the order was just being disbanded. Some of the knights shifted alliance, at the order of the Pope, to a sister organization, the Knights Hospitaller of Jerusalem. This group carried on the good work of providing hospitals and religious shelters to care for pilgrims seeking the Holy Land. Thomas established a Hospitaller Monastery near Ardfert, his home.. In time, he became the Grand Knight for Ireland, so he did."

When Collis mentioned the role his ancestor played in the history of the Knights, Tadgh and Morgan looked at each other inquisitively and riveted their attention on his words.

The captain continued. "There was another Hospitaller monastery up north in Sligo called Ballymote. Together, these two Hospitaller centers in western Ireland provided the refuge for Knights Templar escaping persecution. So, you can see that this was a very important area of the country in those days. Unfortunately, all this was destroyed by the wicked English, starting with King Henry VIII and ending with Cromwellian forces in the mid 1700s."

Now Tadgh felt a strong kinship with this man."We share your pain, my friend. We McCarthys suffered the same brutal fate. I am descended from the MacCarthy Reagh Clan near Cork. Our ancestors fought together at the Battle of Kinsale, I am sure."

"If you are descended from Florence MacCarthy Reagh, then you will know that our clan and yours fought over the territory of southwest Ireland for centuries. Florence did not fight with us in the Desmond Rebellion, but he did not fight against us. He and our Clan Chieftain Fitzthomas, rebel Sugan Earl of Desmond, did band together in 1599, after the Desmond Rebellion was lost, to continue to fight the English heretics. Unfortunately, both Florence and Fitzthomas were arrested and sent to the Tower of London by order of the wicked Governor of Munster, George Carew, in 1601, just months before the Battle of Kinsale. Still their followers pressed on to support the rebels in the Battle. So, yes, indeed, we are compatriots now as our ancestors were then," Maurice agreed, clapping Tadgh on the back. "Welcome to my home."

They entered the foyer just as the grandfather clock struck 9:30 (need descrption, high stone walls, staircase, ancestral artifacts)

Maurice added, "Did you know that we are also brothers with the O'Donnell Clan from that time? When they were marching south in late 1601 to engage our enemy at Kinsale, their Clan Chieftain, Red Hugh, sent his cousin to liberate my ancestor, FitzMaurice, so that he could fight on the side of the Clans."

Captain Collis didn't notice that Tadgh and Morgan's jaws had dropped open simultaneously.

**CHAPTER TWENTY TWO – CASEMENT (WC 2962) ©**

Tadgh needed a guide and needed him to act quickly. (clarify)

( Collis brings them into kitchen for introductions) Collis introduced them to his wife Martha and insisted that she cook them a proper breakfast.

"Armies march on their stomachs, you know," she chortled, flipping the Kerry bacon on the sizzling skillet. (what else is there for breakfast?

"Can I help you?" Morgan offered, realizing that time was of the essence.

"No lass, it's almost ready." They had only been in the house ten minutes and she already had their places at the table set.

Tadgh couldn't say no to this hospitality, given that they hadn't eaten anything in the last eighteen hours. Collis joined Tadgh, Morgan and Aidan at the table to do justice to the meal, and all four leaned back in their chairs when they could not eat another bite. As Martha poured out mugs of strong tea with great lashings of sugar, Tadgh told Aidan and Morgan they were to stay and guard the boat while he and Collis had to leave immediately.

"But we are coming with you," they responded vehemently.

Tadgh held up his hand to stop any further objections. ,"If we lose the hooker, we'll have a very tough time getting home. There'll be no arguments on this, to be sure."

Aidan said, "I see the merit of having me ready to cast off if need be, but I think I could be very helpful in a fight." Both he and Tadgh glanced at Morgan whose fiery expression let them know she was not about to play nursemaid to the hooker.

Tadgh saw the futility in further debate with Morgan. She wasn't needed to guard the boat, and he didn't really like the idea of letting her out of his sight. He was just about to agree that Morgan accompany him and the captain and Aidan serve as boat guard when they all heard a knock at the front door of Barrow House, followed by a voice demanding, “Maurice Collis, open the door. This is Constable Coltrain from the RIC.”

Maurice rushed them down into his root cellar and on returning, pulled his forty-five gallon pickle barrel over the floor opening. Meanwhile, Martha answered the door and, without a word, ushered in Constable Frank Coltrain in the company of five men. Captain Collis recognized three of them as locals. He thought that the other two seemed cutthroat (because?)

"Collis, we're looking for three chaps who overturned a dinghy in the surf off the Strand this morning. We're worried about their safety," Constable Coltrain explained. "Have you seen them?"

"No sir, I haven't," the Captain said with a smile.

"Mind if we take a look around?" The uglier of the two strangers asked. (WAIT – THE REMAINS OF THE BREAKFAST ARE STILL ON THE TABLE – A DEAD GIVEAWAY)

"This here's Head Constable Boyle and his deputy, Constable Gordo James,” Coltrain waved his hand at them by way of introduction.. “They were sent from Cork to help us."

"Okay by me. Be my guest."

While Boyle, James and Coltrain’s men searched the house and grounds, the constable stayed behind to talk to Colllis.. "How come you're not out with your lads fishing today?

"Got a boat to fix. Jimmy is quite capable of running my crew for a day or so," he answered without batting an eye.

"You mean that Galway hooker you got tied up at your wall? That it?"

"That's right, Frank. Owed a friend a favor." His answer seemed to satisfy Coltrain.

Just then they heard the sound of a crash in the back kitchen and Martha call out for her husband.

"What's going on here?" Maurice boomed as he raced into the kitchen, Coltrain in tow.

"They've spilled our pickle barrel and want to tip it over completely," his wife cried in anger. "That's our whole year supply until the next harvest."

Coltrain observed the damage the two men from Cork had done and shouted, "Boyle, that's enough." There's no reason to destroy these citizens' property. They're clearly not here."

"But there's a root cellar below that we haven't checked," Gordo James protested.

Coltrain gritted his teeth."I said, that's enough. They're not here. We need to head down to Banna closer to where they landed."

Boyle would have just as soon torn apart the place to give the woman something to really cry about, but he headed out of the house to their vehicles. Coltrain and the rest hurried out the door, jumped into their cars and drove off

The trio emerged from the cold cellar dripping with pickle juice, thankful not to have been captured. It took a further few minutes to wash with Lye soap to remove the smell. Tadgh wanted to make sure that if they were captured, they could not lead the RIC back to Barrow House.

"If they go directly to Banna there are several homes there to visit near the beach," Collis announced. "If we leave now we should be able to get to McKenna's Fort well before they go there."

"Time's a wastin’," Tadgh urged, checking his watch. It was already eleven o’clock (they came through the door at 9:30 – was there enough time for all this?). "Be back soon, brother."

As the three climbed into an old Hudson, Collis told Morgan and Tadgh they would take the fastest route, a beeline to the fort. “And hold onto your hats,” he grinned and stamped down on the accelerator.

There was no road to speak of. They headed northeast, skirting Carrahane Strand on their left along an ancient sand track. Morgan thought that they would get stuck on two occasions, but Collis managed to get through by gunning the engine and dropping the clutch at just the right moment. The grinding of gears would have woken the dead. As it was, tstartled

"Not the most stealthy of vehicles, to be sure," Tadgh muttered, looking anxiously back at Banna Strand.

"Not when we're caught in quicksand. But it’s the best that Barrow has to offer," Collis joked as he smashed the metal teeth together once more. He reached out the driver’s window to scrape dirt off the windshield . "It's only another half mile and we'll be there."

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Down the beach the commotion of birds did not go unnoticed as they flew up out of the brush. "Follow that trail of birds," Boyle commanded.

Coltrain didn't like his orders being countermanded, but he had to agree that Boyle had a point.

"Okay, turn around and follow that trail," he ordered. He would deal with Boyle's insubordination later.

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Morgan saw the fingerpost first. McKenna's Fort was not a building but a dense stand of scrub mulberry trees and ground vegetation that covered jumbled rocks. Whatever building had been there was long gone, a five-foot high dirt mound its remains. Tadgh thought the deep trench surrounding the mound looked to be an easy place to get lost in, and Collis told them it was a typical Danish Rath fort, meant for domestic rather than for military purpose

"Pull over there behind those trees in that tall weedy area, out of sight of the road," Tadgh suggested. Strategically, he had chosen a location that was on the other side of the 'fort', hidden from view, but with access to the road downhill and around a bend from the Rath. Maurice confirmed that this would lead them back south towards Fenit and Barrow Bay on the circular route.

Tadgh handed Collis Aidan’s rifle and cocked his Luger. "You two wait here, and keep the motor running." He then took off into the bushes at the edge of the Rath.

Despite Collis’ objections, Morgan followed afterTadgh one minute later. She had to meet this Casement fellow Tadgh had talked about.

Tadgh found him in the trench, slumped against a shrub under the scant cover of some branches. Beardless, Casement didn't look much like the swarthy gentleman whose tintype picture appeared in the Gaelic press. He looked much worse than when they had met in Riederau.

As Tadgh quietly approached him, he called out his name. "Roger Casement, is that yourself?" Now he could see the man’s agitated state. His eyes darted from side to side like a those of a caged animal. His forehead was covered with a sheen of sweat, and his breathing rattled from his lungs, Sir Roger's coat, trousers, and green muffler were wet and his boots were full of sea sand.

Casement did not recognize Tadgh so he croaked out his cover name, "I'm Richard Morton, Denham, Bucks, author of *Life of Saint Brendon*.”

"It's me, Tadgh McCarthy, sir, from the Ammerssee."

Tadgh’s voice jolted him, and he looked up into his face. "The message. Did they get the message?"

"I delivered it, sir. But I don’t think they will stop.” Tadgh could see that this aggravated Casement even more.

At that instant Morgan darted out of the thicket.

"I told you to stay in the car,." Tadgh growled at her.

"Where you go, I go.” (okay, this makes Morgan reckless – if this needs to remain, could it be reworded – “I had to follow you and find out about this man” – where you go comes straight out of the biblical story)

Tadgh turned back to Casement. "We are going get you to safety."

Casement's eyes became wilder and his mouth twitched. "We've got to tell them. They're not coming. We've got to stop it. Tell MacNeill," he cried out softly.

"Who's not coming?"

"I told you before. The bloody Germans. They're not coming," Roger mumbled, fidgeting with his scarf. "Tell MacNeill and Hobson to stop the Rising. It's insane." He was obviously exhausted and his voice trailed off at the end.

"Where are the others?" Tadgh asked urgently.

"The brigade is coming back for me. I almost died in the surf, you know. Monteith saved me. Good lad."

Tadgh had many more questions, but they would have to wait. "Let's go now,' he said gently as he reached down to pick the man up in a fireman's carry.

At just that moment, they heard thrashing footsteps coming from the road side of the thicket and a rough voice ordered them, "Hands up. You're surrounded!” Five men burst into the clearing, their guns leveled at the three Republicans.

Tadgh knew that voice. He wheeled and trained his Luger on Boyle's forehead. Damn. How the hell did he get here? It would be so easy to pull the trigger and rid the world of this evil. But that would get them all killed.

"Drop your gun, McCarthy," Boyle spat.

Tadgh could see that his nemesis was as surprised to see him as he was himself. And that gloat. *I'm going to ram it down his throat*, Tadgh vowed.

"Is that..?" Morgan started to say, looking horrified.  
 "Yes," Tadgh replied, lowering the Luger slowly to the ground. "The man who murdered my parents in cold blood." He'd have to find another way.

Coltrain spoke first. "You are all under arrest for treason against the Crown. Did you all three come ashore from the German submarine?

"No, you fool. I have been tracking that man and the woman in Ireland for a year now," Boyle sneered. "They are German spies and my prisoners. The old man is probably Casement, the only one from the U-Boat."

Casement told Coltrain that his name was Richard Morton.

"Sorry, Boyle, but all three of these prisoners are coming with me to RIC headquarters in Tralee."

At this point Boyle leveled his rifle at Coltrain, and Tadgh could see that it was all Boyle could do to refrain from pulling the trigger.

"Constable Coltrain. We agree," Gordo James interjected, putting his hand on Boyle’s weapon to push its muzzle towards the ground. Boyle twitched and try to shrug off James’ hand

"We'll take these two with us in one car, and you men can take Mr. Casement here in the other. I'm sure he needs medical attention. We'll meet you in Tralee.”

The Tralee Constable looked skeptical, but he saw the merit of the man's suggestion. He still believed in the integrity of the RIC force.

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Collis had heard the thrashing approach of the police from the other side of the Rath. *This* *can't be good*, he thought. He stole his way towards the clearing on foot as silently as possible.

With the ruckus in the clearing, his approach went unnoticed. He heard and saw the whole exchange between the various policemen and realized that Tadgh and Morgan were in big trouble.

Now he had to decide if this was his fight or not. Like millions of his countrymen, he hated the English. But he had a good living, a home with a wife and three kids. That was more than he could say for most of his mates. On the other hand, there was the burning desire to avenge the travesty done to his ancestors. It was one of those moments of truth that come to all men at least once in their lifetime. The decision had to be made now.

He decided he was all in. After looking at the situation, he figured that he had no chance against the five of them. And he knew Coltrain personally. He wasn't such a bad person. So he was relieved when he saw them split up. He watched the two strangers handling Tadgh and Morgan roughly as they roped their arms behind their backs. They took Tadgh’s pistol from where he had dropped it and got quite agitated when they examined it.

Collis followed at a distance and watched as the two strangers unceremoniously loaded Tadgh and Morgan into the rear car. Coltrain,,in the lead , waited for the other car to start up and follow them. But the stranger they called Boyle was having trouble getting it started. It would not even turn over. He got out and opened the bonnet. Coltrain got out and came over.

"What's the hold up, Boyle?"

"Your damn car won't start."

"Let me try," Coltrain offered. After a minute or two of futile attempts he got out of the car.

Boyle said, "I'm sure it's just flooded. I'll get it cleared. You go on and we'll meet you at headquarters."

Frank didn't like that solution. "Jamison, get over here," he yelled and a scruffy-looking junior constable jumped out of the forward car.

"Yes, sir?"

"Go with these officers. Make sure they find their way to headquarters."

When Boyle clenched his hands into fists, a clear sign that he was about to get violent, Gordo James intervened and accepted the help.

Collis watched as Coltrain drove off to the south towards Fenit and Tralee. When they were out of sight, he heard Boyle asked Jamison, "Help me here under the bonnet, lad." When Jamison leaned over the engine, Boyle slammed the hood down on his head and shoulders and knocked the lad out.

"Gordo, put him in the boot. And reconnect those ignition wires. We need to find a different place for our interrogation."

The smaller constable dumped the body in the boot and then peered into the car’s window to check that the prisoners remained secure in the back seat. Tadgh pulled himself up and shot him a look of pure defiance.

Almost directly behind the constable,Tadgh spied Collis crouched in the underbrush. Their eyes met for a second before the car started up and began to move away. Tadgh mouthed the words 'get Aidan' with the hope that Collis could read lips.

The implications of Boyle's statement were obvious to Tadgh. He realized they were in for a rough time at best. Morgan's eyes were fixed on him, and she looked petrified.

"We're going to get out of this all right, dear. Watch for my signals," Tadgh offered lamely. In truth, he didn't have any idea yet how they were going to escape alive. He realized that bringing Jamison along was tantamount to signing his death warrant. Nothing was going to stop Boyle from getting the information he wanted, and there would be no living witnesses afterward, unless he could find a way to stop him.

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The police car turned around and headed north on the dirt track in the direction of Banna Beach.

Collis turned and ran, faster than he had done in a long, long time. It took him two minutes to reach the Hudson and another two to drive around the Rath and onto the road. He prayed that he wouldn't lose them. He drove a mile and a half at the highest speed the old Hudson could muster. He couldn’t see the car ahead of him. He stopped where he had a view of the road winding down to the beach, but Boyle and his prisoners were nowhere in sight. Shit, they couldn't have gotten that far ahead.. He cursed himself for not taking them on before they drove away. But that would have been suicidal.

*Think*, he told himself. There was no other route to the Fort. Turning, he saw the answer. Rahoneen Castle stood like a sentinel on the hill to the west.. Proud, even in its ruinous state, it reminded him of his own ancestors; broken but still standing. In fact, this had been the home of the Bishop of Ardfert in the glory days, he remembered. When he was a boy, his father had shown him through the ruins, explaining how his ancestor Nicholas FitzMaurice had been the bishop there in the early 1400s.

Training his eyes more closely he could see the police car, partially hidden by trees, parked up against the east wall above the road. He pulled off behind a thicket as silently as possible and scurried up the hummock and pressed himself against the upper wall. From there he could see down into the ruins.

Tadgh and Morgan were separately tied up to ancient iron rings mounted in what had been an altar stone of the castle's chapel. Jamison lay in a crumpled position on the ground nearby. The smaller constable called Gordo stood guard while the bigger oaf, Boyle slapped and punched Tadgh. He seemed to be toying with his prey and enjoying it immensely.

Collis realized that he could not possibly overpower these men by himself. He didn't fancy shooting them in cold blood from his position, even if he could be that accurate. They were, after all, the law. He made a snap decision. He gambled that he could get home and back before it was too late. He ran back to the car, jumped in and drove back down the hill to home. He summoned Aidan to uncrate a Russian Mosin Nagant five shot rifle, bayonet and thirty rounds of ammunition, and they were within minutes on their way back to the fort .

“Faster,” Aidan kept yelling in Collis’ ear.

He could see fire in the boy’s eyes as he mashed down on the accelerator pedal. The Hudson groaned under the stress.

**CHAPTER TWENTY THREE – PERIL (WC 3955) ©**

**Rahoneen Castle Ruins, Ireland**

Boyle was taking his time. "Come on McCarthy, I know you've got the information I need," he yelled into his bloodied face as he pounded his fist into Tadgh's solar plexus once again.

"I don't know what you're talking about. You killed my parents." Tadgh spat out a mouth- full of blood and willed his mind to stay clear.

"So you did see us then, you little bastard. Where's your pipsqueak brother, the drunk?"

"I'm going to kill you." This time, Tadgh’s spit contained pieces of a broken tooth.

Boyle let out a hideous, evil laugh. "I don't think so, McCarthy. I'll tell you what's going to happen here. First, you're going to tell me what I need to know. If you don't, then I'm going to kill your girlfriend here, but not before I've had my way with her. If you still won't talk, then I'm going to kill this fine lad here with your Luger,” he indicated Jamison’s unconscious body with the gun. “And all the while I'm going to keep beating you until you bleed to death internally. I've got all afternoon."

Tadgh had no misconception about the outcome of this encounter if he didn't get his arms free. Boyle would beat up and kill them both with Jamison's Webley then kill Jamison with Tadgh's Luger. It would be a firefight with Boyle and GordoJames claiming innocence in the matter. After taking another blow to the head, Tadgh muttered, "What is it you want from me, you bastard."

"The same thing I wanted from your grandfather and your father?" He was shouting now. "Where is the McCarthy Gold? I've done my homework. You are in the bloodline."

"What makes you think that I would know anything about it?" Tadgh asked, stalling for time.

Boyle was whipping himself into a frenzy. "I know there's a trail in family heirlooms. And I know there's another Clan involved."

Tadgh couldn't believe his ears. It was as if Boyle had seen the Clan Pact. But he had killed Tadgh's father and mother years before his parents had found it in the *Cumdach*.

"That's ridiculous mythology, Boyle. I know nothin’ about any heirlooms or family gold. I'm just a simple fisherman, so I am."

"Well, maybe your woman, here, has something to say on the matter, eh bitch?" he delivered aface

"Is that how your Mother brought you up?" Morgan asked, licking blood from the corner of her mouth.

"You leave my mother out of this."

"Your father then."

"He'd have killed you already."

"Leave her alone, Boyle. She knows nothin’ about it. Your fight's with me," Tadgh snarled.

Before Morgan could open her mouth again, Boyle grabbed her tunic and ripped it wide open in one violent motion, exposing her heaving breasts beneath a thin camisole.

"We'll see what she knows, won't we, darlin." When Morgan spat in his face, he laughed. "I love a spirited woman."

Tadgh's wrists were raw from trying to rub through the rope on the rock and ring. So far his struggle yielded no success. "Where did you get that ridiculous story about the heirlooms anyway," he asked in part to get the bastard to refocus on him.

Boyle turned back onto Tadgh and gave him an uppercut to the jaw that loosened two more teeth.   
 Being in full command, he was clearly ready to gloat. Good.

"My mother's maiden name is Boyle." He hissed like a snake. "Maybe you've heard of us. We owned Cork and areas east, like Youghal. We bought all the lands that Sir Walter Raleigh was given by good Queen Bess for routing your puny forefathers in the Desmond Rebellion. We ruled from Lismore Castle until Lord Muscry attacked us during the Confederate Wars in 1643.. Maybe he was mad after we destroyed Kilbrittain Castle and the McCarthy Reagh Clan the year before. Then we lay siege and destroyed Blarney.

“That treasure is rightfully mine as spoils of the victors, and I mean to get it if I have to kill all the McCarthys in Ireland," he bellowed into Tadgh's face.

Finally Tadgh understood Boyle's insanity. The villain was so worked up with his quest and the joy of killing slowly, that he couldn’t see that Tadgh had nearly worn through the rope binding his wrists. He would be free at any moment.

Gordo James was sadistically enthralled with the carnage about to unfold, and ached to participate. His eyes focused on the circus at the altar and Morgan's breasts in particular.

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Collis and Aidan had arrived and silently taken up positions behind the wall just before Boyle yelled those last words. All at once, this fight had become personal for Collis. He was fuming.

Now in their position above the wall, they discussed attack strategy in whispers. "I say we just shoot them both simultaneously from the castle wall," Aidan recommended. "You take the little one called Gordo. Boyle is mine."

"I'm a fisherman, not a soldier," Collis responded honestly. "They are at least 30 yards away from our cover. I can't guarantee that I could kill or disable one of them before they could shoot Tadgh and Morgan."

Aidan had to agree that this was a distinct possibility. His burly companion was an unknown quantity in the shooting department. And Aidan had had no chance to test fire the Russian weapon. It looked outdated and its sight could be way off. He had been given some guerrilla warfare training at St. Edna's, but he had never killed a man. Yet he wanted Boyle dead in the worst way.

"Then we need a distraction," Aidan reasoned. "If you could get the police car door open and start the vehicle rolling down the hill in plain view, that might do it." Aidan was trying to find a way that Collis could contribute without risking his life and family.

"What then?"

"Based on how you came at us this morning, Maurice, I imagine you are pretty good with your fists."

"I've broken up a few pub fights in my day."

Aidan figured that was an understatement. "I'm sure you have. See that tree down there in the courtyard, maybe half way to them?" Aidan pointed. "It will provide us intermediate cover because it’s in a direct line between the wall and the altar. Its trunk has got to be a foot and a half in diameter.

"Here's what we'll do. I will sneak down behind the tree. If I am seen, we’ll have to try simultaneous shots. You take Gordo and I'll take Boyle. If I get to the tree undetected, then you start the police car rolling down the hill. In that moment when they are distracted, I’ll rush Boyle and shoot him at close range before he can shoot Tadgh or Morgan. As soon as you release the car’s brake, I am counting on you to follow me to the tree. From there you can take out Gordo with your fists or your rifle. He should be preoccupied with what I'm doing at the altar. All right?" Aidan secretly hoped that he could take out both men before Collis would be at risk.

"All right, man. I'll be right behind you."

From their hiding place at the south end of the wall near the police car, they could see that Boyle was starting to work on Morgan to get Tadgh to talk. He was manhandling her breast while starting to pull down her trousers. He seemed to be delighting in the task. They could hear Tadgh cursing and struggling against his bonds. With the nightmare vision of how Boyle ruthlessly executed his parents burning in his memory, Aidan knew that Morgan's life was about to be snuffed out. They had to act now.

"Here we go," he whispered and darted for the tree.

Just then, unexpectedly, Jamison stirred and rolled over. Aidan watched in disgust as Boyle turned from his attack and calmly used Tadgh's Luger to put a bullet in Jamison's brain. What was most revolting was the look of satisfaction on his face, the same expression of joy he had seen on that face when he killed their parents. Before Aidan could raise the Mosin Nagant, Morgan leveraged her back on the altar and kicked upwards with all her might. Her boot caught the monster squarely in his crotch from behind. Boyle crumpled up, and with a sickening groan, fell to his knees.

Taking advantage of this commotion, Aidan stepped from behind the cover of the tree to get a clear shot. Taking a bead on Boyle's chest, he pulled the trigger. The bullet jammed in the breach of the old rifle, and it misfired.

Gordo, who was halfway between the tree and the altar, moving to the aid of his boss, had his back to Aidan. On hearing the hollow click of the hammer, he spun and fired from the hip. The bullet caught Aidan in the left thigh, narrowly missing his femur.

Before he could get another shot off, Aidan lunged at him off his good leg. The bayonet pierced Gordo just below the rib case, rupturing his spleen and liver. Still standing but in the throes of death, Gordo let out a bloodcurdling shriek . To be sure the wound he dealt was fatal, Aidan yanked the bayonet upwards to lift the sagging body from the ground and shake it like a ragdoll. Aidan had landed on his bad leg and collapsed, spent, beside the body.

"Oh, Aidan!" Morgan cried as she watched his wound gushing blood, powerless to help him.

Collis had started the police car rolling down the hill after just before he heard the rifle shot. He rushed back to the wall to see Aidan collapse and hear Morgan’s cry. Then he saw Boyle, swaying like a drunkard, .raise the Luger to finish Aidan. Collis fired from the wall at Boyle and missed, but the bullet grazed Morgan's shoulder behind him.

Tadgh knew it was now or never. Using all his remaining strength, he pulled on the rusty old ring from the altar, and it popped out with a clang. With his hands still tied behind his back, Tadgh dove the short distance into Boyle’s path and swung the heavy ring to knock the Luger from Boyle’s hand

Surprised and furious, Boyle went for his Webley. With his back turned to the murderer, Tadgh raised his arms and threw them backwards over Boyle's head. Lunging forward, Tadgh yanked on the Head Constable's thick neck so Boyle gagged and struggled violently for breath, and the last remaining strands of the bonds on Tadgh's bleeding hands came free.

Before he could react, Boyle was upon him, Webley in hand. He grabbed Tadgh in a choke hold and put the Webley to his temple. "Tell me now what you know about the gold, McCarthy, or you're a dead man."

Tadgh's vision was starting to blur as the blood flow to his brain was being blocked "Never," he hissed through gritted teeth.

They were facing Morgan, only a few feet away. In agony, she could see her man's life being choked out of him. She had to do something. "You bastard, let him go and I'll tell you what you want to know."

Boyle looked up, and without letting up on his death grip on Tadgh, he pointed the gun at Morgan and shouted, "Tell me now, bitch, or he dies."

Collis had reached the tree undetected, but he couldn't shoot for fear of hitting his compatriots. He was about to rush Boyle who had his back to him, when he saw Aidan crawling towards the Luger. Noticing the movement behind him, Boyle turned to fire, but Aidan reached the Luger and beat Boyle to the draw. Afterwards he would say that he was deathly afraid of hitting his brother, but he had to take the shot to save their lives. The bullet passed through the flesh of Tadgh's forearm before striking Boyle just below his collar bone. Both men slumped to the ground. Aidan didn't have the strength to fire again.

Boyle came to first. Realizing he had been gravely wounded, and with his partner dead, he no longer had the upper hand. He had lost both guns. There was another man with a gun hiding behind the tree ready to shoot him. McCarthy would finish him off as soon as he came to. He had seen the police car roll by down the hill. Now alone, he did the only thing that might save his coward’s skin. Dragging himself to his feet, he lurched off after the vehicle.

Collis ignored Boyle’s pathetic retreat and rushed from behind the tree to his compatriot's aid. He would deal with that coward later.

"Untie me first," Morgan cried, knowing that Aidan's life was in the gravest peril.

Collis pulled out his scaling knife and cut Morgan's bonds with one slash. While he tended to Tadgh, she dove for Aidan and discovered that the bullet wound was, thankfully, in the lower part of his thigh. She used her tunic as a tournequit and wrapped the tunic tightly around his groin. Then she bore down directly on the wound with the weight of her arms to stem the tide. Aidan’s eyelids fluttered as he struggled to breathe, and she could see that he had lost a lot of blood.

."Help me here, Maurice," Morgan called him away from Tadgh, who seemed to be regaining consciousness, "I need you to tighten the tourniquet on Aidan's leg." After he had done so, she asked him to apply pressure on the wound so she could check on Tadgh’s condition.

"Oh Tadgh," she cried. He had raised himself to a sitting position, coughing and massaging his throat, so she knelt down beside him and took his head gently to her bosom. They both trembled from the shock and bitter cold. Morgan moved her hands through his hair and beard, relieved that he had no other wounds. She covered his beautiful face with small kisses to soothe his battered skin and calm his beleaguered heart. "I love you," Morgan whispered to him again and again.

"Well now. Is it time for tea yet, aroon?" he managed weakly and looked up at her with a twinkle in his eye. That seemed to break the tension in the air. They both laughed, more from the joy of still being alive together, than from Tadgh's frivolous remark.

"I don't want to put a damper on your tête-a-tête, but we have one sick boy over here," Collis interrupted them.. "Not to mention that you both have your own bullet wounds."

Morgan's nursing training kicked her back into action. She checked Tadgh's flesh wound. "The bullet had passed through without hitting any arteries," she announced while she ripped Tadgh's sleeve off to use as a temporary bandage. "I think you'll live."

Recovered now, Tadgh got to his feet and walked lamely over to check on his brother. "Morgan, Aidan looks really pale."

Morgan checked his wrist. "His pulse is weak and irregular, Tadgh. We've got to get him to a hospital fast." she said through her chattering teeth.

"Maurice, can I have your coat for Morgan? She's freezing to death."

"Thank you, Maurice," Morgan said as Tadgh helped her into the trench coat. "That's much better."

Finally the cobwebs cleared and Tadgh asked, "What happened to Boyle?" Collis told him that Aidan had shot him in the chest and even with that serious wound, had recovered enough to drag himself downhill to his car,Tadgh took charge. He pried the Luger from the vise grip of Aidan's hand and gave directions. "Maurice, let Morgan tend to Aidan's wound. Can you bring your Hudson down the hill near us?"

"Yes, I think so."

"Good. Do it. I'll be right back,"

Although Aidan’s serious condition was of paramount importance, Tadgh did not want to let Boyle get away. He forced himself to function. He looked down the road to see that a tangle of bramble bushes blocked the police car’s escape He watched Boyle’s frantic attempt to back it up the hill enough to get around this obstacle, but the front wheels just spun wildly in the mud.

Tadgh gave chase. By the time he was half way down to the car, Boyle had managed to get traction. The car backed uphill a few feet and then lurched diagonally forward onto the road.

Realizing that he couldn't reach the car on foot in time, Tadgh fired the last four rounds in his Luger at the disappearing vehicle. The first two hit the back windshield, shattering glass. The last two hit the main body on the driver's side. And still Boyle wove crazily down the road, but accelerating until the police car sped out of sight around a bend.

After rejoining the others, Tadgh commented, "I hope I hit Boyle with my shots, but I can't be sure. If he survives, he will blame us for all the mayhem. Yet we know the truth."

Collis and Morgan had somehow gotten Aidan into the back seat of the Hudson. Morgan sat with him cradled in her arms and Tadgh could see that she looked very worried. Collis urged him from the driver's seat to get in, so they could be on their way. Now he was taking charge.

As soon as Tadgh pulled the door shut, Collis slammed the car into gear and sped down the hill (A Hudson has good shocks, right?) He explained as he maneuvered the car to avoid any potholes, "We're going to my house. Aidan's going to stay with us. There is a small network of Hospitallers still working secretly to help our people. I am currently their leader. They took care of the sick and dying during the Famine and organized emigration to America from Fenit. Now we take care of families displaced by the English landlords. We have two doctors who have access to blood supplies and medicines who can tend to Aidan at Barrow House without notifying the English authorities. I just hope that we aren't too late."

Tadgh looked back at Morgan and she nodded her head in agreement.

"Did Boyle see you or your Hudson?" Tadgh asked Collis. “We don’t want to put you or your family in danger, Maurice. . ,

"No, I don't think so. I had good cover behind the wall and the tree. When he took off after the police car down the hill, the Hudson was at the top in that stand of trees."

"Aidan's pulse is getting weaker." Morgan didn’t have to say any more.

Redoubling his efforts to avoid any jarring bumps along the way, Collis soon drew up to a house hard by the side of a deserted country road. Bringing the car to a stop, he jumped out, and made for the front door, saying, "Doctor O'Callihan lives here. I hope he's home this afternoon." At his knock, the door opened, and Collis hurried a man out to the car to examine Aidan where he lay in the backseat.

When the doctor asked Tadgh if he knew Aidan’s blood type, he admitted he did not, so the doctor produced a syringe from his pocket and drew of sample of Aidan’s now-precious blood.

"Get him home and keep him warm," O'Callihan advised. "I'll be along presently with blood and equipment."

Since they were initially travelling in the same direction that Boyle had taken, Tadgh hoped to see the police car with the bastard dead at the wheel off in a ditch somewhere. But that was not to be.

On their way to Barrow House, they encountered very few cars or horse-drawn carts.. And fortunately, there were no RIC Constables in sight. Collis drove the car around to the side of the house and stopped the car before the kitchen door, When he saw his wife rush out to greet them, he beckoned to her, "Quick, Martha, give us a hand here.” Together, they carried Aidan carefully into the house and laid him on the bed in a basement bedroom.

"I've had occasion to care for friends who have gotten crossways with the authorities," Collis explained. “This room can be sealed from prying eyes with this outside curtain that is painted the basement wall color. And we put those boxes over there up against it if we get searched. I didn't have time to get you down here earlier when the Constables arrived." Tadgh could see that Collis was, indeed, maintaining a safe house of sorts, not unlike his own. And he was already putting it to good use. His admiration for the man had grown by leaps and bounds since their initial encounter.

Ten minutes later they heard Doctor O'Callihan drive up in his horse-drawn cart. He quickly set up a hospital room at Aidan's bedside and started to give him blood and electrolytes through an intravenous injection.

Then he addressed the wound. Due to the direct pressure that Morgan had continued to apply, the bleeding had stopped. He determined that the bullet had passed clear through the leg, and although Aidan had lost a great of blood, the bullet had not nicked the femoral artey. After cleaning the area, he wrapped it with antiseptic bandages.

"Which of you did the triage here?"

When Morgan answered, he asked, "Are you a nurse ma'am?"

"I am not sure," she answered, and the doctor looked puzzled.

"Well, young lady, nurse or not, you do good work. Your tourniquet saved this lad's life. He should regain consciousness shortly."

Then he added, "I guess that he should be ready to travel in about a week. I'll stay with him here until he wakes up."

"Thank you, Morgan." Tadgh's eyes glistened with his gratitude..

They had been so concerned with Aidan's condition that the two had forgotten all about their own injuries. Collis pointed them out to the doctor, who tended to Tadgh's arm and Morgan's shoulder. "You're pretty banged up, my boy," he commented after examining Tadgh.

"Comes with the territory," Tadgh quipped. "I know it sounds trite, but you ought to see the other guy, that brawler." As a member of the clandestine Hospitaller troop, the doctor knew better than to ask what had happened.

By the time they had finished tending to the wounded, Martha had prepared a hot lunch for them all and had collected some clothes for Morgan to wear that were almost her size. During lunch they discussed their next course of action.

"Morgan and I need to get to Cork as soon as possible," Tadgh started.

"I can't let you have the Hudson or we would be stuck out here. Of course, you could steal a car."

"I don't think that's wise, Maurice. The roads are going to be heavily patrolled after what happened this afternoon. It's best if we take the hooker. I'm hoping that the Royal Navy will have stood down if they’ve captured the German supply ship."

"You should be prepared for an uprising in the next few days," Tadgh cautioned.

The Collises were full of questions that Tadgh couldn't or wouldn't answer.In turn, Tadgh wanted to ask more about the connection between the FitzMaurices and the O'Donnells, but decided that he couldn't afford the time. Collis would just get started again into his historian mode, and there were more pressing matters at hand. He had to get Casement's message to Pearse personally.

Just before they left at two pm they went down to check on Aidan.

"He's got more color, and his heart beat is stronger," Dr. O'Callihan told them. "He should wake up shortly."

"I want to stay until he's awake," Morgan said, kneeling at the bedside and holding Aidan's hand. She could feel his improving heart beat clearly.

"He'll be all right now, lass. I'll take good care of him. You go with your man."

"Thank you all," Tadgh said helping Morgan up and preparing to go. "We are so lucky to have had your help today."

Morgan was more demonstrative. She hugged and kissed them all and then gave Aidan a big kiss. "He saved us, you know."

"As did Maurice here." Tadgh clapped him on the back.

"Take good care of our brother," Morgan urged the doctor.

"Will do, Nurse."

**CHAPTER TWENTY FOUR - DAVY JONES’ LOCKER (WC 1841) ©**

**Friday, April 21, 1916**

**Tralee Bay, Ireland**

Tadgh took the chance to sail close enough to Fenit Pier to see if the *Aud-Norge* tramp steamer had been escorted there by the Royal Navy. The one berth which was deep enough for it to anchor in was empty.

As they passed by the Magharee Islands at three o’clock, Morgan exclaimed, "We'll, they're gone from here."

"Interesting, my dear," he commented as they sailed by. "*The* *Aud-*Norge either escaped or the Navy diverted them to Berehaven. I can't imagine, given what we've been through, that they could have fooled the Navy with their Norwegian camouflage."

As further confirmation that the authorities felt under control again, Tadgh noticed when they passed by that the gun emplacements on Brandon Point Hill were not currently manned.

With the sails set and trimmed to the mild nor-westerly wind, Morgan settled beside her man at the tiller and cozied up to his warm body. "What were the chances that we would run into Maurice just when we needed him?" she asked as they plied their way through the Celtic Sea.

"Well now, lass. I think that the Lord steps in when he needs to in critical situations," Tadgh philosophized. "Do you believe in God, Morgan?" He realized that they had never talked about religion before this moment.

"Of course, I can't remember whether religion was part of my upbringing, but I believe that some force greater (omnipotence is not comparable)than Captain Weisbach brought you to me in this sea, my love. I feel that it was no coincidence that I was there and that you saved me. I am beginning to believe that we are both part of a grander scheme than ourselves. You can call that destiny or God, whatever you like."

"Some day we will discuss the relationship and differences between God and destiny, aroon," Tadgh suggested, and left it at that. (“will” means he is determined that this discussion will happen))

"I was surprised when Maurice talked about the connection between his FitzMaurice ancestors and the O'Donnell Clan," Morgan commented. "Do you think that they could be involved in the Clan Pact in any way?"

"I have no idea. They aren't mentioned in the document. The thing I find the most bizarre is that Boyle seemed to know about elements of the Pact, don't ya think."

"Yes, that was puzzling. How could that be?"

"Again, I have no idea, Morgan. At least we know now why he has been pursuin’ and killin’ my kinsfolk. There is a connection between the Boyle family and mine that we need to explore in our free time, whenever we get some."

"And the Boyles apparently helped to persecute the FitzMaurices just before the Battle of Kinsale, Tadgh. It all seems connected in some mysterious way."

They both agreed that history was fascinating, and especially one's own family history. Morgan was left wondering, without answers, what her family history might be.

The breeze had freshened, and the hooker made swift progress. Six hours later, as the setting sun touched the horizon behind them, they approached the Bull Island lighthouse. Morgan saw for the first time the hole in the vertical rock face that had sheltered them.

"My God, Tadgh.What a small opening to navigate into at night with the beacon light shining in your face. We could have all been killed."

"You could say that about the entire day's activities since we were here. It was our only option, to be sure!"

Crossing the mouth of Bantry Bay past Berehaven was a risk that Tadgh knew he had to take. Two hours later they passed safely through the gauntlet without incident. He had stayed far enough out to sea to prohibit a visual sighting of them from the Naval Base in the gathering twilight. So they were not able to see if the *Aud-Norge* was berthed there.

As they sailed up the Ilen River past Baltimore at eleven thirty, Tadgh was still kicking himself for letting Boyle get away. *Maybe he will have died from his wounds*, he hoped. With Morgan snuggled under a blanket by his side, Tadgh guided his trustworthy little ship to its home dock. He felt secure for the first time in twenty-four hours.

"Are we home yet?" Morgan asked when the motion of the vessel stopped.

"Yes, my love," Tadgh replied. "Help me offload these three crates onto the dock and then let's get *Marie* inside the boathouse. We need to be on our way again."

"Can't we at least sleep in our own bed tonight and head out tomorrow?" Morgan pleaded with a look of complete exhaustion. (WAIT – their bullet wounds!)

"Sorry, lass. We've got to get Casement's message to Padraig as soon as possible and I don't want to risk using the telephone. You can sleep in the sidecar all the way to Cork." (He’s going to drive a motorcycle with an injured arm? By god, these Irishers are crazy!)

Before leaving on the Kerry, Tadgh threw a tarpaulin over the crates in case anybody came snooping around.

Just after they started out, Morgan asked, "I see there’s damage to the carrier. What happened?."

Tadgh did not want to worry Morgan with his escapade at the RIC barracks. "A minor mishap when I went to see Tomas."

"What kind of minor mishap?"

Tadgh came clean, leaving out the risky details.  
 "Oh Tadgh. I knew I should have gone with you. You risked the mission."

"But if I'd have killed Boyle then, we wouldn't have been in such trouble today."

"Yes. Instead you would be in jail, Tadgh. "Promise me you won't do that again, go after Boyle on your own."

"If he's still alive, you mean."

"Yes, that's what I mean, precisely."

Tadgh went silent without answering. Let her think it’s a rhetorical statement.

They arrived at MacCurtain's home at two am Saturday. He was up and pacing. "Well Tadgh. How did it go?" he asked as he opened the door to their knock "Jaysus, you both look like you've been in the trenches!" he exclaimed when he saw their condition in the light of his hallway.

"Tomas MacCurtain, this is Morgan, my partner. Yes, we've been having a great lot of craic in Tralee. I've got a couple of cases of rifles and a case of ammunition, but the news is bad." Tadgh proceeded to tell his superior the events that had transpired, leaving out any mention of Boyle's true motive for interrogating them.

MacCurtain listened until Tadgh was finished and then said, "I've been worried that things weren't going well. There's a rumor in town this evening that a German supply ship has been apprehended at sea and is being escorted back here to Queenstown Harbor. I was just getting ready to head down to the docks to see for myself. "

"I'd like to come with you if Morgan can stay here and get some sleep while we're gone. We've been on our feet for almost thirty hours straight."

Tomas agreed and showed her to a small bedroom just off the hallway. Morgan thanked him for his kindness.

At five thirty the two men stood on the Cunard dock in Queenstown looking out at the harbor. A crowd in military uniform begab to gather at the shoreline.

"Look at that flotilla of military craft. The whole Royal Navy must be out there," MacCurtain exclaimed, indicating the silhouettes against the first hint of dawn.

Tadgh could also see RIC and military vehicles and personnel two docks beyond. He was pleased that Boyle did not appear to be among them. Hopefully he was dead. "I'd say that the rumors you heard are probably correct," Tomas offered solemnly.

They waited there, in the shadows of a cargo warehouse, until sun up. As the sky lightened at around six thirty, they could see a tramp steamer emerge from the flotilla, crawling into the harbor entrance. Using his binoculars, Tadgh recognized it as the larger ship he had seen a day before near Inishtooskert Island. It still showed its Norwegian colors.

"That's the supply ship, to be sure."

"Damn," MacCurtain muttered, squinting out to sea. "That's the end of the Rising." Up until then they had been discussing potential ways of getting the arms off that ship. The German ship was tightly surrounded by escort vessels, and Tadgh recognized the *Bluebell* cruiser bringing up the rear.

"Look," Tadgh pointed out. "The supply ship is turning crossways in the channel just by the midchannel pilot light." They watched as it ground to a halt, nearly blocking the east channel.

Peering through his binoculars, Tadgh narrated the action that followed. "They've run up their German colors and the crew is assembled on deck. They're now dressed in German navy uniforms. Holy Christ, Tomas, they're lowering their boats on the port side."

They felt as well as heard the first explosion. A cloud of dirty gray smoke belched up from the *Aud-Norge* and flames shot out of the wheelhouse, the saloon and the ventilators.

"They're scuttling her."

Then they witnessed a second more violent explosion amidships, which ripped her apart. Given that the ship was rapidly sinking by the head, they couldn't understand why the *Bluebell* subsequently fired a shell into the inferno.It was over in a matter of minutes. The *Aud-Norge* and its critical cargo were at the bottom of Queenstown harbor and its crew had been captured from their boats.

"This news will travel fast to Dublin," Tadgh surmised. "Our plans have been thwarted."

Just then Tadgh noticed at the end of the pier a man in a wheelchair. Not only did he look familiar, but the man stared back at Tadgh. He waved both hands at Tadgh and then deliberately set off in his direction.

"Let's get out of here before we are recognized," Tadgh urged his superior, although it was already too late

. They left the pier hurriedly and headed back to Tomas's home, dejected at the terrible outcome of the arms shipment.

The man in the wheelchair was disgusted with his physical limitations when he realized that he had missed another opportunity to find Claire. That Irishman did look familiar, he was sure of it..

Morgan had been awakened by the sounds of the explosions, and she was racked with worry until she heard the men return. She flew to Tadgh and threw her arms about him with relief. "What happened?"

"They blew up their own ship. The weapons that we so desperately need are at the bottom of the harbor, aye, they are rusting as we speak.."

"I want you to take Casement's message to Clarke, MacDermott and Pearse," MacCurtain ordered. "The Rising was set for Sunday. I don't think that the telephones are safe anymore. Those three will have to decide what to tell MacNeill and Hobson."

"If they haven't heard already."

Before they left for Dublin, Tadgh and Morgan stopped by the B & C brewery where they hoped to find Jeffrey Wiggins. There he was in his office, hard at work at nine o'clock that fateful Easter Saturday morning.

"Tadgh, me boyo and the fair colleen, Morgan," he exclaimed as they entered and closed the door. "Do you need a ride back to France?"

When Morgan hugged him, he looked closer at her and then at Tadgh. "Yeow. You've been in a scrape, that's for sure. I shouldn'a been so flippant."

"We need your help again, if you please Jeff. There are three crates under a tarpaulin on my dock. More guns for our cause. Could you please pick them up and deliver them to this address?" He handed Wiggins a scrap of paper. "We have to leave for Dublin immediately.

"Certainly, me boyo…anything for you two and the cause," Jeffrey answered. "It's pretty dull here when you're not around; just business and beer."

"We could use a little dull and beer about now," Tadgh joked. "Don't worry , there are exciting times ahead for all of us. I promise you."

**CHAPTER TWENTY FIVE - CARRYING THE MESSAGE (WC 2744) ©**

**Saturday, April 22, 1916**

**RIC Barracks, Cork City, Ireland**

Maloney didn't know whether to cheer or cry. He had just received a telephone call informing him that his Head Constable Darcy Boyle had been gravely wounded in the line of duty.

"He is in hospital here in Tralee," Head Constable Kearney had said. "He has bullet wounds in his upper chest and in his right leg," he went on. "He and his constable, Gordon James, were part of the patrol that apprehended Sir Roger Casement and two Sinn Feiners, a man and a woman. They were bringing in the Sinn Feiners when the man got the upper hand, forcing them to drive to a nearby castle ruins. The man then knifed Constable James to death and killed a Tralee constable in cold blood. Before he collapsed from his wounds, Head Constable Boyle had told them how he tried to save the constables but got shot in the bargain. He had apparently escaped through a hail of gunfire and made it to the RIC headquarters. Boyle had said that these two rebels he thought were German spies were the same ones he was chasing in Dublin."

Maloney knew Boyle's character and didn't believe any of this story. But he couldn't prove it, not having been there, so he had kept quiet. He was saddened by the death of one of his constables, especially one who had had to put up with workimg under Boyle.

Maloney asked Kearney, "Where are the man and woman now?"

The head constable had to admit, “They seem to have vanished into thin air. We have patrols controlling all the roads, but it looks as if those rebels have slipped through our net."

Maloney was glad that he was away from the action, safe in Cork. The Royal Navy had taken charge of the German prisoners from the ship that blew up without involving the local RIC. Good. Keep your head down.

His secretary knocked and opened the door, "District Inspector Maloney, there's another call for you."

*Never a good sign.* (WHY?), he thought as he picked up telephone/

"Good morning, Inspector. I am Jack Jordan, manager of the Cunard Steamship Lines Queenstown office."

Maloney perked up when anyone called him Inspector. "What can I do for you today, Mr. Jordan?"

"I've been working with your Head Constable Boyle to find a missing woman from the Lusitania sinking, sir. They tell me that he is away on assignment. Well, I think I’ve seen the Irishman who was in her company…the one with her on his motorcycle."

"Where and when did you see him."

"This morning on our pier in Queenstown when the German ship blew up.But he disappeared again before I could get to talk with him."

Maloney had forgotten anything that Boyle might have told him about the man and woman on the motorcycle in Dublin. As a result, he didn’t put two and two together.

"We have a lot of people in the Cork area, son. I'm afraid you are going to have to get a constable involved in real time if you see him or her again."

"But I'm still in a wheelchair. I am not moving too fast these days."

"Sorry, but I can't help you, son." Maloney terminated the conversation.

Jack slammed down the telephone..

♣ ♣ ♣ ♣

At the same time that the U-19 had been searching Tralee Bay for signal lights that Thursday evening, Chief of Staff Eion MacNeill realized he had been duped. Hobson brought him news that Pearse and the IRB Military Council had been planning more than a parade for Easter Sunday. Eion's Irish Volunteers, some twelve thousand strong, had become the muscle for a fanatical revolution led by academics.. Eion had believed that they all understood. The Volunteers would only Rise if conscription was imposed, if the Home Rule Bill was not implemented, if they were attacked by the Authorities or by Carson's Ulster Volunteers or if the Great War ended. None of those events had come to pass.

Even when a report had conveyed information the day before that the authorities were going to crack down on the Volunteers, Eion had tracked down that it was false.

"There will be no Rising!" he and Hobson ordered Pearse when they had stormed into his home at Rathfarnham in southern Dublin later that Thursday evening.

"The Rising is going forward with the Volunteers," Pearse had asserted this as a fact..

On Good Friday morning, when Tadgh was busy finding Casement and facing Boyle, Pearse and other members of the IRB Military Council, not informed of the debacle occurring in Kerry, visited MacNeill.

"I will only speak with MacDermott, and never again with Pearse, the idealist who wants a blood sacrifice," MacNeill insisted.

"There is a landing of arms by the Germans, spearheaded by Roger Casement that is coming ashore on Sunday in concert with our Rising in Dublin," MacDermott stated. "These arms will allow mobilization of the western half of our country. If we don't Rise then, the authorities will crush us."

Having had no adverse news from Kerry himself, MacNeill believed Flaherty and saw the inevitability of the situation. He had been cornered.

"Well, if we have to fight or be suppressed, then I suppose I'm ready to fight," he lamented but agreed..

Early Saturday morning, about the time that the *Aud-Norge* was being scuttled, one of MacNeill's compatriots and a successful Dublin businessman, The O'Rahilly, burst in on him.

"Eion, they've kidnapped Bulmer Hobson."

"Who did this? Has a government crackdown started?"

"It was the IRB, sir. Also, there's been a man captured in Kerry. Don't know his name. He came off a German submarine."

"That does it!" MacNeill exploded. "I am writing countermanding orders to all Irish Volunteer Units that cancel any instructions they may have been given to support a Rising tomorrow." (is this correct – he cancels the cancellation for support?)

♣ ♣ ♣ ♣

From his office in the British stronghold of Dublin Castle, Sir Matthew Nathan, Under-Secretary for Ireland, called his boss, Augustine Birrell, Chief Secretary in Asquith's Cabinet for Ireland. He was at his home in London that Saturday morning while Tadgh hurried to Rathfarnham.

Nathan spoke down the telephone line, “We’ve thwarted the arms shipment that spymaster Admiral Hall predicted when he deciphered the German coded transmission between Washington and Berlin. Admiral Blythe, in Cork, heeded the warning and his fleet intercepted the Germans. What do you think of the threat now, sir? Lord Wimborne has stepped up his demands that the Sinn Feiners be rounded up this weekend.”

“Well, we know that there is a revitalized militancy in the Volunteers based on their mock Rising and parade on St. Patrick's Day where MacNeill took the salute,” the Chief Secretary replied. “And we’ve known for a year, after Asquith loaded his cabinet with Ulster anti-Home Rule members, that there would be trouble brewing. But I’ve been trying to avoid bloodshed by showing tolerance. As you know, Matthew, that’s why I stopped Major-General Friend's planned raid on Liberty Hall two weeks ago.”

“Yes, sir. GOC Irish Command was pissed. But what do you want us to do now?”

“Surely this defeat of the gun running operation will stop them from Rising and defuse their zeal, at least in the near term,” Birrell reasoned from afar. “What are your thoughts on this, Matthew?”

“I think you are right, sir,” Undersecretary Nathan dutifully agreed with his boss. “It’s just that their newspaper calls for a parade on Sunday. And it is Easter Sunday, after all."

“Meaning?”

“Meaning that it would be symbolic to attempt a coup when the Lord is being resurrected from the grave, sir."

“So you agree with the Lord Lieutenant, do you?” Birrell pointedly asked.

“It’s your decision, sir, not Wimborne’s,” Nathan responded, shirking his responsibility by deferring to his superior.

“I don’t think that MacNeill will allow the Irish Volunteers to Rise under these circumstances,” the Chief Secretary stated emphatically. "We will defer a decision on rounding up the militants until after the Easter weekend. Let your men attend the Grand National Fairyhouse Races on Monday as planned. It’s only a few miles south of you if trouble brews. We will revisit this on Tuesday.”

*And with that our die is cast*, Nathan thought as he hung up the call.

♣ ♣ ♣ ♣

Tadgh almost burned out the side-valve V-twin motor of the Kerry in getting to Dublin as quickly as possible. He was surprised that the roads were clear of roadblocks. He thought it comical that the English would have been more concerned with the funeral of Rossa than with the potential of a national insurrection at this moment. But then, he reasoned,, if they had heard that the arms landing had failed, they might be assuming that there could be no Rising.

In was unbelievable to him that Morgan had been able to sleep for almost all of the six hours of their trip, despite the constant, jolting punishment handed out by the wicker sidecar.

"Morgan, we're here," Tadgh announced as they pulled into the expansive grounds of Pearse's home at St. Edna's in Rathfarnham just in time for tea.,. He knew from his time of residence there that the Hermitage had been called Odin's Rest since its construction in the late 1700s, Tadgh thought that it looked like a giant mausoleum, with four Doric columns fronting the three-story granite-walled building. *How fitting,* he mused, *that its style and appearance resemble a para-military teaching facility.* The fact that the patriot Emmett had been forced to meet his lover here in a clandestine manner only added to the Gaelic appeal..

They found Pearse at home, huddled with MacDermott and MacDonagh in serious discussion. He stepped out of the parlor to meet his colleagues from Cork.

"I thought I told you to stay with the Cork Brigade. Tomas will need you."

"I needed to bring you the news from Kerry, sir." He proceeded to tell Pearse everything he had told MacCurtain, as well as what they had witnessed in Queenstown Harbor.

"We had an unconfirmed report a few minutes ago about the likely fate of the German supply ship," Pearse stated, rubbing his forehead. "Thank you for the confirmation. As for Casement's message, it was probably intended for MacNeill and Hobson. Thanks for the information from Sir Roger, himself, confirming that the Germans did not send officers to support us. It is as we expected."

"Why the hell did they come three days early?" Pearse cursed, slamming his hand against the foyer wall in evident frustration.

"It would seem that they didn't get the change in date that Devoy ordered from America sir. I couldn't see any wireless aerials on the *Aud-Norge*. My guess is that she could not communicate with Headquarters in Berlin."

"Plunkett’s aide, Michael Collins sent some wireless experts to Valencia Island yesterday. They were supposed to commandeer wireless sets to help make contact with the supply ship and Casement's submarine on Sunday," Pearse flexed his fingers and swore "Damn fools drove off the pier at Ballykissane and all but one of them were drowned. It was all for nothing now that we know the ships couldn't communicate anyway.”

"So much for the Entente with Germany then, sir."

"I never believed in Casement and the Germans anyway, Tadgh. Joseph wan't optimistic either. It's our fight anyway."

"I can assure you that Sir Roger was trying his best, Padraig."

"Well, his best wasn't good enough, Tadgh, was it now."

Tadgh didn't want to point out that it was Clan na Gael and IRB communications that had broken down. That would do no good and Pearse knew it anyway.

"Well, then. What does all this mean for the planned Rising, sir?"

"The Rising is going ahead, Tadgh.The orders are out to all the units of the Volunteers across the country for tomorrow. They'll have to fight with pitch forks and Hurley sticks, if need be."

"Excuse me for saying so, sir, but don't ye think that decision seems militarily risky,?"

"Blood sacrifice is necessary to cleanse the heart of the country, Tadgh," the academic pontificated.

Tadgh knew not to push the matter further. Martyrdom seemed to be the order of the day.

Finally Pearse noticed that his 'soldiers' looked beaten up and exhausted. "Stay with me tonight as my guests. We will see what tomorrow brings."

Morgan and Tadgh accepted his kind offer with thanks...

"Margaret?" Pearse called to his mother. "Please take care of our guests. They need food and to cleanup and rest."

"Excuse me, I have to get back to my Military Council meeting," he said, turning on his heel and disappearing into the parlor behind closed doors.

♣ ♣ ♣ ♣

At about the same time on Saturday afternoon when Tadgh was confirming to Padraig Pearse the unfortunate events in Cork and Kerry, Denis Daly was making a similar report to Michael The O'Rahilly not ten miles away.

"I was driving the lead car out of Killarney yesterday evening," he said. "Thomas McInerney was driving the communications experts in the other one. Plunkett had sent us to seize control of the wireless station on Valencia Island near Cahirciveen down the Ring of Kerry. We were to give false signals of a German naval attack on the Scottish coast in an attempt to divert the British Naval Command. Then we were to contact the *Aud-Norge* and U-19to help guide them to the rendezvous.

“We got separated in the dark and McInerney inadvertently drove his car off the Ballykissane Pier, north of Killorglin, into the Laune River. He was the only one of the four in that car who survived. They've got him in detention. Without the experts, I couldn't carry out the mission."

Daly then told The O'Rahilly about the fate of Casement and the *Aud-Norge,* thinking him a supporter of the Rising. The message got to MacNeill immediately.

While Tadgh and Morgan were eating supper in the Pearse dining room alone, they heard the commotion of MacNeill and The O'Rahilly’s arrival and confrontation with Pearse.. Their raised voices could be heard clearly through the parlor wall.

"The arms shipment failed," MacNeill shouted. "I'm going to forbid any mobilization.”

"We have used your name and influence for all they're worth, but now we don't need you anymore.It's no use you trying to stop us. Our plans are laid, and they will be carried out."

"So well laid that the police at Adfert have already upset them," MacNeill growled, and they stormed out. (Does MacNeill say all this? Shouldn’t Pearse get a word in?)

Having heard this from the dining room, Morgan said to Tadgh in a low tone. "I don't know anything about military operations, but it seems foolhardy to proceed with a General Rising without the proper equipment.

"They must be hell-bent on proclaiming the Irish Republic now while England is still at war with Germany," Tadgh concluded as he put down his knife and fork, a clear sign he had no further appetite.. "By doing this, I believe that they hope that the Nation will rally behind them with the inspiration they provide. Knowing Padraig as I do, he will lead the martyrs to sow the seeds of revolution, even if he knows this physical battle will be lost in order to achieve a moral victory."

"Now you're scaring me," Morgan groaned, taking a gulp of water from her glass

"At least the cause is just, for certain."

"But do the ends justify the means, Tadgh?”

"Yes, to be sure if these are the only means we are given."

"Then where is God when you need him?"

"He is our just cause and our redeemer," Tadgh stated unequivocally. "He will provide on his timetable, not ours."

"Then why not wait for his timetable?"

"Maybe this is his time, lass. The Germans tried, and we failed them. We are on our own. Now is the time the English overlords are most vulnerable. The Military Council must feel that it is now or never."

"Or maybe, with what just happened in Kerry, the Lord is telling us to slow down."

"It's too late for that now.."

"Not in my humble opinion.".

"On that not-so-happy note, we should retire for the evening to get much needed sleep," Tadgh wisely suggested. But he knew for the first time that there was a major disagreement of ideology between them.

"Oh, Tadgh," Morgan murmured when they were lying together in bed. "These matters are too heavy for me. You are the love of my life and my true joy. I trust you to keep us safe. Promise me you won't go getting yourself killed senselessly. I need you!"

"I shall keep us safe, my love, no matter what happens."

Despite their tired state, Tadgh and Morgan made passionate love before falling asleep in each other's arms. It was the urgent necessity to cement the bond of commitment they had just made. It gave them both great comfort at a very unsettling time.

**CHAPTER TWENTY SIX - EASTER RISING – PRELUDE (2432) ©**

**Saturday, April 22, 1916**

**Dublin, Ireland**

At ten pm, when he hadn't heard back from Pearse that the Rising was cancelled, Eion MacNeill finally acted with The O’Rahilly. "Michael. I need you to carry this countermanding order to our Irish Volunteer Units around the country tonight. I'm counting on you." He read, 'Volunteers completely deceived. All orders for special action are hereby cancelled and on no account will action be taken.'

“I won’t stop until I’ve given your orders to the Volunteer leaders throughout the south,” The O'Rahilly assured him.   
 Eion watched dejectedly as one of the few men he could trust at this point sped off by automobile to deliver the countermand. He then summoned and dispatched a few other trusted couriers with the same message, just to be sure.

Finally, before turning in for a fitful, sleepless night, MacNeill authorized an announcement to be published in the Dublin Sunday Independent the next morning.

♣ ♣ ♣ ♣

When Tadgh and Morgan awoke on Easter Sunday morning, Pearse's house was in an uproar. At breakfast, Margaret informed them, “Padraig has already left for Liberty Hall for a meeting of the Military Council.”

"Well, he was true to his word," Tadgh groaned, looking up from the encircled notice in the Sunday paper that was strewn all over the table.

“Who was?" Morgan stopped eating her coddled eggs that Margaret had laid out on the dining room table.

“MacNeill. He’s published a countermanding order nationwide.” He read it out loud to her. '*Owing to the very critical position, all orders given to Irish Volunteers for tomorrow, Easter Sunday, are hereby rescinded and no parades, marches, or other movement of Irish Volunteers will take place. Each individual Volunteer will obey this order strictly in every particular*.' This is really going to cripple the Rising, if it is called out at all. There is certainly no solidarity and there must be mass confusion throughout the ranks of our Volunteers by now, I should think."

"Surely they'll call it off," Morgan hoped for all their sakes.

"One thing's for certain, Morgan. There's probably only about fifteen hundred Volunteers here in Dublin that the IRB can count on, including the two of us.. The other ten thousand throughout the country will probably not Rise after this since they don't have rifles. And any hope for support from a goodly fraction of John Redmond's one hundred thousand National Volunteers to join in is almost extinct by now, I should think." Tadgh took a great swallow of tea as if to drown his sorrow.

"What about the English forces?"

"They can bring in thousands quickly. And they are military personnel with sophisticated armament, don't ya know."

"So if the Military Council votes to go forward, they are basically signing their own death warrants as well as those of many of our compatriots, aren't they, Tadgh?"

"I'm afraid so, my love," Tadgh agreed reluctantly. "Just remember what Padraig wrote to us, 'The old heart of the earth needs to be warmed by the red wine of the battlefields.' I think we know which way he'll be voting, to be sure."

Tadgh was torn between his hatred of the English, his commitment to the Republican cause for freedom and his love for, and commitment to, the woman beside him. Somehow breakfast wasn't that appetizing.

"We need a safe place to stay if and when things get really ugly. Not here, not at all." After giving the matter some thought during breakfast, he announced," Morgan, I think we need to go for a drink at the pub."

"What? At this time of the morning?"

"Yes, absolutely," he responded with a twinkle in his eye. "The pubs open at eleven.”

When they rose from the table and thanked Mrs. Pearse, Morgan saw that look in her eyes. Clasping the woman to her bossom, she whispered, "The Lord will protect us all, including your Padraig."

"I know, dear, but even Jesus was slain to save us all." Margaret was crying now.

Tadgh took the napkin from the table and dabbed her eyes. "But he rose again, ma'am, didn't he, though."

"Aye, lad, but the Blessed Mother never saw him again after that."

Morgan stroked her silver locks. "They are together in heaven."

"Aye, lass, there's that."

Morgan couldn't think of any other words of comfort to give the dear woman. She wondered if they would all be meeting Jesus in the next few days.

"It's a great thing he is doing for our country, Margaret."

Morgan shot him a cautionary stare. Although she wasn't a mother as far as she knew, somewhere back in the unconscious reaches of her mind that instinct was there. She had cared for the young. Somewhere, sometime. Ooh, it was maddening.

A few minutes later as Tadgh steered the Kerry downtown, Morgan observed "Everything appears normal today. Folks decked out in their Easter finery are coming out of the churches. The sun is shining and flowers are starting to poke through in the gardens of the city.”

Tadgh knew that all this was about to change.

They arrived at the *an Stad* just after eleven. True to form they found Tadgh's mentor, Sean O'Casey, holding forth in his standard corner booth.

"Hello, Sean." Tadgh greeted him enthusiastically with a slap on the back. "Don't ya ever go home from here?"

"Tadgh, my boy. You look a sight for sore eyes. Have a drink."

Tadgh knew he could use one. "Not just yet, Sean. Can I talk to you privately, my friend?"

"If you bring the lovely Morgan with you, yes."

O’Casey excused himself from his cronies and the trio moved to sit down at a corner table, away from other patrons.

"Sean, we need a favor."

"What kind of favor, son?"

"We need a place we can come to in Dublin in the next few days, Sean. It's liable to get dangerous around here. Can we stay with you tonight?"

"Yes, of course you can. But what kind of dangerous, may I ask?"

"Well, now. The kind where people get killed with bullets, Sean."

"I agree with the cause, but you know that I abhor violence, Tadgh. There have been rumors. Tell me it isn't a Rising, son."

"Ask your ICA friend Connolly," Tadgh said. "He's a big part of it."

"Not my friend anymore. Not since he's become militant. How much time have we got?"

"If it happens, maybe a day, I'd guess."

"It's mass suicide, you know," Sean groaned..

"As a literary luminary, you understand the value of martyrdom for a cause, don't ya now."

"But the people don't want it, Tadgh. They don't want to see their cities torn up and people killed."

"Yet they need it, don't they. We can't let the British continue to treat us like vermin."

Morgan listened to all this dialogue and she was conflicted. "Gentlemen, logically, I agree with Mr. O'Casey. It seems to me prudent, given the lack of armament, to regroup and keep our powder dry until sufficient arms are available. Otherwise we are wasting the very men needed later when there’s the chance of winning."

Although it was hard for Tadgh to get past his hatred for the English, he had to agree that Morgan's suggestion made sense, particularly since the Great War showed no signs of ending soon.

"I like the way you think, Morgan," O'Casey exclaimed, obviously admiring her mental skills as well as those attributes he could just see beneath her clothing. Casey was a man of rich imagination, and Morgan’s figure gave him much to appreaciate. "I don't actually agree with the fighting and killing part, but I agree with you that patience is a virtue."

"Well, it isn't up to us luminaries, is it," Tadgh concluded, reaching across the table and downing Sean's whiskey. "It's 35 Mountjoy Square if I remember correctly, right?"

"That's right, son. And contrary to public belief, I do go home at night."

"I think that might be a good place to stay over the next few days, Sean.”

♣ ♣ ♣ ♣

The seven Military Council members were not struggling with what to do, but rather when to do it. At the end of the meeting, Connolly cast the deciding vote.

“Are we all agreed to go forward with the Rising but postpone its start one day until Easter Monday at noon then?” Pearse summarized.

The three dissenters knew that they had to follow the will of the majority even though military success was very likely out of the question given the events in Kerry and MacNeill's subsequent disastrous intervention. They nodded their assent.

Pearse noted the general depression in the room when their council ended. Tom Clarke spoke for the group, saying, "MacNeill has ruined everything. All our plans. I feel like going away to cry."

♣ ♣ ♣ ♣

When they arrived home from church that beautiful Easter Sunday, the authorities at Dublin Castle and in London were still confident. Nathan spoke to his military generals.

“The Republicans would not dare to Rise without weapons. You and your men are authorized to go to the Grand National Fairyhouse Races tomorrow. We will potentially round up the conspirators on Tuesday.”

“I object,” Lord Wimborne protested.

“Overruled,” the Undersecretary barked.

♣ ♣ ♣ ♣

Tadgh checked in with Pearse later in the day and found out, as he had suspected, that the Rising was on for the next day. He didn't try to dissuade his boss.

"Now that you're here, Tadgh, I want you to support Michael Mallin in capturing and holding St. Stephen's Green. It is a strategic entry point into the city. I think that the ICA may need your military expertise. Headquarters of the New Irish Republic will be in the General Post Office, the most defendable fortress in the City other than Dublin Castle."

"Why aren't you storming Dublin Castle and using it as the headquarters sir? You can disrupt the English Army communications and operations from there."

"We discussed it, but we are not sure how many English are garrisoned there. And as you know, we will be stretched pretty thin because of MacNeill."

Tadgh saw a different motivation. "You must realize that you will be boxing in our senior staff in a building that will become the prime target of the English retaliatory forces. It's like painting a bull's-eye on our back. They'll sight on the Irish flag raised above the GPO and bomb us into oblivion. It's symbolic, isn't it, gallant literary martyrdom in the cause that stirs up the population to fight for independence when Home Rule is defeated after the Great War. Am I right sir?"

"Something like that, Tadgh. Now go along and do your duty."

On parting, Tadgh wondered if he would ever talk to his leader again.

♣ ♣ ♣ ♣

During suppertime at O’Casey’s home, Tadgh got word by telephone to Peader O'Donnell, a senior student in residence at St. Patrick's College. "We need to meet with you at the *an Stad* this evening. It’s critical, lad. Can you arrange it?

"I'll be there at eight pm. Does this have to do with the Clan Pact?"

"Yes, and more, much more."

Later, as they sat together in a private guest room, Tadgh, Morgan and O’Donnell discussed the current political situation and their mysteries.

"I am against futile armed insurrection, Tadgh. Civil disobedience with trade unions is a different matter."

"I understand your views, Peader, but this is the moment in history that our leadership has chosen to attack our common foe, the English tyrants."

"Your leadership you mean, don't ya, Tadgh."

“Insanity,” Morgan piped up, and Tadgh shot her a wicked glance.

This was not getting them anywhere. Once again. all they could agree on was that there was a common foe."This is my last semester," O’Donnell told them. "I graduate in June and start teaching at Arranmore this winter. I want that to happen."

After Tadgh and Morgan filled O’Donnell in on the bizarre information that they had received from Boyle and Collis, Morgan wondered aloud, "I've been thinking, What if there is another copy of the Clan Pact, and Boyle somehow got a copy of it."

"It stands to reason that the McCarthys would have retained and hidden an original document just like Red Hugh Roe O'Donnell did in the *Cumdach*," Tadgh conjectured. “But where?"

"I was a bit preoccupied at the time on Friday, but didn't Boyle say that his family defeated the MacCarthaigh Reagh Clan at the outset of the Confederate War in 1642?"

"Yes, that's right, lass. That was my family Clan, the bastard."

O’Donnell interjected. "You told us that your family owned and lived in Kilbrittain Castle, which was taken over at that time."

"Right again. lad. We now know that Florence MacCarthaigh Reagh was the McCarthy mastermind of the Clan Pact, with Red Hugh, before the Battle of Kinsale that took place not too far from his castle."

"But Florence was captured and incarcerated in the Tower of London six months before that battle," Peader got up from his seat and began to pace the room.

"Well, now. We know they formed the plan and Pact when Florence visited Donegal Castle a year or so earlier, in case the war went badly.".

"So, it's a possibility that Florence hid his copy of the Pact somewhere in his stronghold, and the Boyles found it when they besieged the castle, mavorneen."

"And their descendants have been looking for the 'McCarthy Gold' ever since." O’Donnell stopped pacing.

"That would explain why Boyle has been torturing and killing McCarthys in the MacCarthaigh Reagh bloodline, wouldn't it now," The reality finally hit Tadgh.

"If Florence hid it in a McCarthy relic, then it may contain a clue as well as the Pact itself."

"That bears investigation when we have the time, lass. There are more pressing matters at hand."

"What about the FitzMaurice connection just before the Battle of Kinsale," O’Donnell wondered. "What's that all about? And is it related to the Clan Pact?"

"That's truly a mystery since the FitzMaurices are not mentioned in the Clan Pact, boys." It is likely a red herring I should think." It seemed to Morgan they had a solution to the mystery staring them right in the face, but it was shrouded in the dust of hundreds of years.

"I've been thinking, too, my love. We know that *an Cathach* probably contains a clue that we need to decipher, right? And it is housed in the Royal Irish Academy here in Dublin."

The other two could see the wheels churning in Tadgh's mind and didn't like where this conversation was headed. "Not another break-in, for God’s sake, and in the middle of a Rising," Morgan and Peader cautioned, hoping Tadgh would see the foolishness of such a venture.

"No more break-ins, I assure you. But we may not get another chance to be in Dublin, so we need to act now, don't yesee."

"That's a relief, if there can be relief under these circumstances, love. So what's the plan?"

"By coincidence, I happened to read in the paper at Padraig's home this morning that Reverend J. H. Lawlor, who is the Professor of Ecclesiastical Studies at Dublin University, is currently examining the relic and writing a book called the *Cathach of St. Columba.* It got me to thinking about our little mystery, and that this might be a way to find out about the document in a non-invasive way."

"By pretending to be students of theology and questioning the Professor,” O’Donnell finished the thought. “Tadgh, ‘tis brilliant, that is.”

"Thank you..He might even show us *an* *Cathach*, if we ask him." For the first time in many days, Tadgh’s face bore that smile Morgan loved so well.

"When do you propose to try and contact him, given your other responsibilities?"

"I will have to contact you when the time comes, Peader. Will you be able to break away?"

"For this, of course," Peader responded enthusiastically.

"Let's hope we survive to follow through on this," Morgan,” said wistfully.

"I will fulfill my commitment to you, my love."

With that said, their meeting was over. They returned to their domiciles to rest up for the ordeal ahead, whatever God and man had ordained for them

# # # #

The next morning approximately eleven hundred Irish Volunteers and their supporters turned out in Dublin. Four hundred and twenty of these, including Tadgh and Morgan, started from Liberty Hall on the north side of the Liffey just east of O’Connell Street.

"The lucky ones are carrying the antiquated 'Howth' single shot rifles," Tadgh observed solemnly.

"The rest have pitch forks, clubs or nothing but their own fists," Morgan lamented, twisting her scarf against the morning breeze. "These troops are so poorly equipped compared to their counterparts on the Western front and look what happened to those blokes."

"Clearly MacNeill's countermand has reduced the force considerably. Morgan. I think that we've only got about a fifth of the attendance that was expected." He pushed a gun roughly into her hands."Here, take Boyle's Webley for defense. I've got my Luger."

She took the Wembly and jammed it into her coat pocket."Very few men and women are wearing uniforms, *mavorneen.* When the fighting starts, how are the English going to distinguish between rebels and the general population?"

Tadgh realized that was an excellent question.

They saw the Headquarters battalion of about three hundred peel off, heading up O’Connell Street, making for the General Post Office. This group included five of the Military Council leaders; Pearse, the President and Commander-in-Chief of the self-proclaimed 'Provisional Irish Republic', Connolly, the Commandant of Dublin, Tom Clarke, Sean MacDermott and Joseph Plunkett. The latter, due to his ill health, was accompanied by his young aide-de-camp Michael Collins, who was dressed smartly in a starched uniform.

"It's a fine day for a Rising, Mick," Tadgh shouted.

"It's a start, to be sure, Tadgh. You watch your back."

"Same to you."

Morgan overheard Connolly say to his ICA compatriot, "Bill, we're going out to be slaughtered." It didn't buoy her up with optimism.

Tadgh had met The O'Rahilly on one occasion before. At the last minute, he drove up in his ??? automobile. Seeing that the Rising was going ahead anyway, he joined the Headquarters battalion, saying, "Well, I've helped to wind up the clock, I guess I might as well hear it strike. Help me, boys. We’ll load up this motorcar of mine with bombs and some of the old rifles.

True to form, MacNeill was nowhere to be found.

“It’s a sorry rag tag group we’ve got here, Tadgh."

“But what a glorious cause, and that's the God's honest truth,” . He threw his arm around Morgan, kissed her soundly and together they marched forth,

THE END of Book Two   
  
 Book Three entitled Rising is coming soon!