

LONDON
Ministry of War
May 1944

"Well chaps, there it is at last."

Air-Marshal Arthur Tedder looked over a thick manila folder to his guests, Admiral Bertram Ramsay, General Bernard Montgomery and Marshal Trafford Leigh-Mallory. The folder had arrived by military courier some fifteen minutes earlier, and the head of the RAF had just finished reading aloud its contents to the gathered members of the British High Command. The folder held by Tedder contained twelve identical copies of the complete plan of the Normandy invasion. The plan laid out every detail of the forthcoming assault beginning with the time and date, and continuing through the pages and pages of logistics directing the massive mobilization of troops, ships and planes in most important war operation in history. Now, as they sat in his spacious office at the Old War Office building at Whitehall, he waited for their reaction to the top-secret document.

Admiral Ramsay gazed at the ceiling and moved his lips, Leigh-Mallory seemed to be choking on something, and Montgomery paced, his long trench coat flapping.

"I've got something to say." said the General, "I'm thinking of removing my coat."

"Good lord, Monty! I've just read you the entire logistical summery of our invasion at Normandy, and all you can think of is your coat?"

"Well, it is my trademark, you know. My coat is part of who I am, my contribution to history. No one recognizes me without it. It's a symbol, a powerful symbol. And symbols are crucial in time of war. It would be unpatriotic to deny our citizens such a symbol." "

"Yes, of course," said Tedder, rolling his eyes, "but...well, dash it all, man, what about the plan?"

"Bloody fifth of June! Why didn't they listen to me, the damned fools!" shouted Leigh-Mallory.

"Pull yourself together, Mallory, please." Admiral Ramsay spoke for the first time. "There are people in the corridors. Do you want all the clerks in Whitehall to learn every detail of this plan? Besides, what's wrong with the fifth of June? It's seems perfect to me. The sea tides will be with us, and we can ride them right into Normandy."

"Well, the tides might be in our favor, by the skies are another matter. Weather forecasts show high winds, cloud cover, and generally poor visibility through the seventh of June. Or, are the allied forces no longer interested in air support?" Leigh-Mallory's face was flushed.

"Look," said Ramsay, "Ike knows perfectly well that a low tide is absolutely necessary to move five thousand - five thousand three hundred thirty-three, to be exact - ships and landing crafts full of men. Do you want those poor kids to drown before they even engage the enemy?"

"And what about the nine thousand two hundred and ten aircraft?" Leigh-Mallory snapped. "Do you think they're radio-controlled? It's our chaps on those planes, same as the boats. Does Eisenhower know this perfectly well, too? I'm not at all sure he does."

"Look, Mallory --" began Ramsay.

"But the thing that's really got me is how the British Army has come to be commanded by an American with a German surname! Generations of British Kings must be tossing and turning in their regal graves at this very moment!"

Tedder sighed. Any attempt to intervene would be received like a bad call at a football match. He checked his watch and waited for the argument to play itself out. He moved to his desk and pulled his old cherry wood briar out of his pocket, filling it from the hand-carved tobacco box that sat on the mahogany desktop. Tamping down contents of the pipe bowl, Tedder strolled over to the open window and sat in the huge sill to smoke and think about the upcoming assault on the French coast. He set the folder containing the invasion plans onto the windowsill beside him, and reached for his matches.

"Ike isn't a fool!" General Montgomery was saying. "Even though he's got a Jerry surname, I believe he's demonstrated his considerable military skill in this damned war, and the Americans have proved themselves to be our allies again and again. Nonetheless, despite Ike's rank as Supreme Commander, one cannot discount the superiority of English military strategists. Don't you agree, Tedder?"

"Of course. And now, I believe we could all do with some tea." Tedder leaned out the window and tapped the pipe's contents into Horseguards Avenue below.

He slipped the pipe into his pocket and stepped behind his desk to lift the phone receiver.

"Miss Dickford, would be so kind as to bring us some tea, please? Thank you." He replaced the bakelite into its cradle.

"Oh, I don't agree." Admiral Ramsay said abruptly

"About what? The tea?"

"This is no time to joke, Tedder. You've told us that the time of the invasion is fixed at half past six in the morning in the western zone where the tide comes in earlier and as late as half past seven in the eastern zone!"

"As you may recall, Ramsay, we've already discussed this." said Leigh-Mallory. "You know perfectly well that the air corps will need at least an hour's daylight to be able to bomb the shore --"

"Still, I think that Ike --."

"Oh, will you bloody well leave Eisenhower out of it once and for all?" Montgomery said sharply, "Keep in mind that none of us has anything to do with the final decisions."

"Monty is right, chaps." added Tedder, "Since there's only a month to go, this is very likely the final plan. They've heard us and considered our opinions. Our chums are experienced and well-trained and we must abide by their decisions. We all know the chain of command must be followed."

"Yes, but Ike's date --"

"Leigh-Mallory, please! Roosevelt and Churchill have known all this since their meeting last August in Quebec. Eisenhower has only been leading operations for five months, German name and all. Now, it's crucial that we go over the details of this operation, and make it work. There are much more important tasks that demand our attention than all of this silly bickering."

There was discrete tap at the office door.

"Come in, Miss Dickford. I think a strong cup of tea is well in order just about now."

"Here's your tea, Air-Marshal." shouted Tedder's elderly, hard-of-hearing secretary, Miss Dickford, and she opened the heavy oak door. The door, a testament to the master craftsman who hung it, created a nearly air-tight seal in the frame when closed. Upon opening, the light spring breeze that had blustered harmlessly into the office through the open windows now became a powerful cross-draught between the windows and door.

Everything in the room seemed to go mad.

Loose pieces of papers flew about, hanging maps flapped against the wall and General Montgomery's coat caught a gust like a huge khaki sail carrying the hat rack over and onto the floor in a heap of coats and officer's caps. Miss Dickford's long skirt blew up over her face, and she shrieked, balancing the sloshing tea tray with one hand while trying to push her skirt down with the other.

Most of the officers raced to her aid, but it was Tedder who'd seen the long, heavy curtains, dancing in the wind, and sweeping the sills like brocaded brooms. He dove with an aggressiveness not seen since his rugby days at Cambridge, but only succeeded in pulling down one of the curtains as the manila folder holding the twelve copies of the most top-secret document in history was blown out into Horseguards Avenue.

The invasion plans floated slowly down towards the street below, a street crowded with buses, cars and a great number of potentially curious people. Tedder lay on the floor in front of the window, his arm still outstretched.

"Bollocks." was all he said.

The other three officers had frozen in various states of attempting to help Miss Dickford, who still flailed at the skirts covering her face. Then, as if obeying a silent signal, all of them leaped simultaneously towards the door, sending Miss Dickford's tea tray crashing to the floor. Tedder followed a moment later, body-checking the old woman into an overstuffed chair. After a moment, she freed herself from her skirt, surveyed the ruins of the tea on the floor, and muttered to herself, "Well, if you didn't want the bloody tea, why did you ask for it?"

"Damn!" shouted Paul Eisenhower a moment before falling from his bicycle and scraping his nose on the ground, sending his spectacles skittering away on the paving stones. His large post satchel had scattered its contents in all directions on impact, and Paul muttered an oath at the black Morris stopped directly in front of his bicycle. The car had suddenly braked to a stop for no apparent reason and the postman, with no time to react, has crashed right into the boot. This was his first accident in twenty-five years.

"Are you hurt?" asked the driver who had immediately jumped from the car. "It's all that bloody cat's fault. You saw it, didn't you? It sprang out all of a sudden and I had to brake so as not to run it over. I've always hated cats, but what could I do? Wait, wait a minute...I'll

give you a hand to get on your feet. Anything broken?"

"I don't think so...My spectacles! They're broken! Oh! My post! It's been spilled everywhere!"

"Wait. I'll take care of it." said the driver. He appeared to Paul to be no more than twenty, and he wore an Army uniform. He quickly gathered up all of the spilled papers, and handed the satchel back to Paul.

"There you are. Awfully sorry about your glasses. Are you sure you're all right? Could I buy you a drink?"

"No, thank you. But I rather think I'll need to have your number plate and your address as well. My bike is all dented and my super is very fussy about these things. I think you might have to pay damages. Not much, but you know these things go..."

"Of course." said the young man quickly scribbling his name and address on a piece of scrap paper he'd pulled from his pocket. He handed the information to Paul.

"Phil W. Davis. 456 Crystal Palace Road. Is that right?" the postman asked.

"Yes, you can write me there. My father will pay for everything. I won't be in London for long. I've just been called up." He leaned in conspiratorially. "I think something big is in the offing."

"Something big?" the postman repeated.

"Haven't you heard the rumors? The invasion! Those damned Krauts will get what they deserve once and for all! We'll blow them to pieces. Sorry, I've got to shove off. Good Bye, Mr....?"

"Eisenhower."

"Are you joking?" asked the bewildered soldier.

"Actually, no. It's the family name. Well, goodbye, Mr. Davis, and thank you on behalf of the cat!"

At this, Paul Eisenhower stepped onto his bicycle and set off again, as best he could without his glasses, along the streets of the City.

"Sorry, Sir. Nothing yet." shouted Security Officer Putchinson, as his men searched the streets surrounding the Old War Office Building.

Tedder jabbed the stem of his pipe at Putchinson. "Turn over every stone, if need be, but find it!" He spun on his heels and strode back into the building, the pipe breaking in his clenched fist.

"Suh!" shouted Putchinson, and ran off calling orders to the soldiers combing the streets.

The two hours following the dramatic jettisoning of the most top-secret document in history into the public streets had been largely chaotic. Tedder and his colleagues had run shouting through the War Office for all things to come to a complete and immediate stop in Whitehall area. They enforced this demand with squads of young troops so happy to escape sentry duty that they grinned as they drew back the bolts on their Sten submachine guns, and whooped as they sprinted into the street.

Within moments, eleven copies of the most top-secret document in history had been recovered, and three elderly ladies had been detained by a particularly zealous corporal who waved his Sten at them. The women were released, and the corporal was sent baying into the streets, sans weapon, to continue the search.

Tedder and his colleagues were apoplectic with frustration.

Montgomery, who had managed to put on his famous coat, walked around Whitehall more than fifteen times, imagining he was competing against the sharp eyes of his most implacable enemy, Rommel, the Desert Fox.

But the effort was in vain. The twelfth copy never reappeared and Tedder was forced to notify MI6 of the security breach. The future of the invasion was now at risk.

"Must we inform the Americans?" Captain Bradford asked.

"Of course not. As Head of the MI6, I will take charge personally. I think that the English can tackle this business perfectly well without interference from outside. Don't you think so, Captain?"

"Of course, Colonel Terry, of course. Where shall we start?"

"Well, what do we know?"

"What do you mean?"

"The details. Weight of the file? Size and number of sheets? Were there any numbers in code?"

"You have a complete report before you, Sir."

"I have already seen it. But watch out, Bradford! I like to keep my men on their toes. Keeps them at the top of their form. You can expect me to challenge you at every opportunity."

"Very good, Sir. I'll do my best to perform to your expectations."

"Right. There's a good lad. Now, I want you to question the Horse Guards on duty in Whitehall today. Have they seen any suspicious characters? Have there been any gatherings, fights or any other sort of accidents? I want to be informed of everything."

"I'll take care of it immediately, Sir."

"Right. Off you go."

The man wrote slowly and meticulously. He paused now and then to carefully check the formation of the letters, the punctuation, and that the spaces between words were all equal. Then he began a new sentence with the same slow deliberation as before.

Paul Eisenhower, who had been standing in front of him for more than thirty minutes, felt his patience draining away.

"Pardon me, but do you have any sort of estimate as to how much longer this might take?" he asked, as politely as was possible through gritted teeth.

The man went on writing without even raising his head. Then, as if he had suddenly been struck by an idea, he dropped the pen on the desk, twisted his handkerchief into his ear, and began an awkward operation of personal hygiene. Upon finishing, he addressed the now-greenish postman.

"What did you say?"

"I was wondering how long this will take. I have still got to deliver more than half of my daily post, and if I don't hurry, I won't be able to complete my round today. I go off duty in 45 minutes."

"Well, I think that you'll have extra work tomorrow then. You see, once I've finished writing this, I have to proofread it to make sure there are no mistakes and then send it to my supervisor for his signature. He'll want to read the report thoroughly before he signs it, and he doesn't like to be hurried. I doubt we'll be able to do all that within three quarters of an hour. I am sorry."

"Very well. I'll wait." said Eisenhower, and he settled onto a wooden bench. "I don't suppose you could spare a cigarette, could you?"

"I'm sorry; I gave up smoking last month. My wife gave me an ultimatum. She forced me to choose between her and cigarettes, and I must admit that I half thought of choosing cigarettes. But it would be too quiet without her. I love to hear the dishes being washed when I read the Times, or seeing her knitting in front of the fire place, listening to a new radio station while I sip my tea. I miss my cigarettes, but I couldn't live without Beryl"

"I think I understand."

"Are you married, Mr. Eisenhower?"

"No."

"Then you don't really understand, do you? A married man's life can be extremely routine sometimes, and we find joy where we can."

"Married men are not the only ones who live dull lives." mumbled Eisenhower.

But the man had gone back to the accident report.

"Let's see... Phil W. Davis, 456 Crystal Palace Road. What does this W stand for? Is it William?"

"I've no idea. The young man only said W. He didn't add anything else."

"I hope my supervisor isn't cross. He's very fussy about this sort of thing."

"I fail to see the significance. We've got the name, the surname, the address. Surely that narrows it down a bit."

"Try to explain that to our supervisor, Mr. Bowers. How long have you been working here, Mr. Eisenhower?"

"It will be twenty five years next month. Why?"

"Mr. Bowers has been working here for forty years. He has been in charge of this section for more than twenty of them and I have never met a more precise and careful man. Do you know that I have never seen him come in late, not even a second? At eight sharp he comes in through that door and at five p.m. he leaves. At lunchtime he has a sandwich without leaving his desk."

"He eats at his desk? That doesn't seem to fit the character of someone who values order above all. What about the crumbs?"

"You have never seen Mr. Bowers eat. I don't think he's dropped a single crumb or spilled a single drop of water in his whole life. There are napkins at the ready. Listen to me: that man is Order personified! That's why the reports we write for him must always be well written. The word "mistake" is like the word "devil" for him. Do I make myself clear?"

"Crystal clear, thank you. Why the hell doesn't anyone smoke in this office?"

WOHLDORF (Hamburg)

Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, head of the German Abwehr, found himself in an uncomfortable position. Gestapo head Heinrich Himmler had relieved Canaris of his duties because he found the Admiral's methods too civilized, and therefore ineffective.

Himmler felt that the Abwehr needed a strong leader in the struggle against the Allies so he installed one of his acolytes, Colonel Alexis Von Roenne, recent head of The Information Department, to replace Canaris. However, Himmler's misgivings were somewhat unfounded, as Canaris had organized a comprehensive network covering the whole of Europe. While some of the men lacked the ruthlessness and ideological fanaticism of Himmler's cadre, they were numerous and had successfully infiltrated key departments in many foreign governments, including the British Ministry of War. As Canaris packed to leave his Abwehr office, the telephone on his desk suddenly rang.

"Ja! Ja, Canaris here. Ja, ja. Read me the text. Once again, slowly this time. 'The twelfth copy of the Invasion Plan has disappeared.' You're sure that was the text? Are you joking? You had better not be joking with me...Oh this is very funny. No, not you. Idiot! Yes, Heil Hitler!"

Canaris hung up the receiver smiling.

"Could really have *lost* a copy of the invasion of Europe? Oh, this is hilarious! The English are winning the war for us!"

"Have you finished packing, Admiral?"

Captain of the Gestapo Von Kroit stood in the office doorway accompanied by an oafish corporal wearing a cruel expression.

"This department is moving to Berlin, and Colonel Von Roenne wants us to get rid of everything not necessary. These armchairs and rugs will have to go. Ordinary chairs are sufficient, and what use do we have for rugs? We are soldiers; efficiency above comfort. Don't you agree, Admiral?"

Canaris did not agree with the Captain, whom he thought a pompous, officious little bully, as he did all Gestapo officers. But, he said, "Bah! What is comfort to officers?" He made a sarcastically dismissive gesture with his hand.

"Was that some sort of joke, Admiral?" The Gestapo officer peered at him with small, mean eyes.

"Of course not. Still, austerity is most appropriate when the situation demands it, ja? A means to an end, rather than an end in itself."

"I'm not sure I –"

"And sometimes, the promise of comfort or reward can be a more effective method of persuasion and maintaining order than simply shouting about severity as a way of life, ja Kaptain?"

Kaptain Von Kroit 's face took on a pink hue, and his hand, resting on the butt of his Luger, began to clench into a fist. The Corporal shifted on his feet and looked nervously from Canaris to Von Kroit .

"Now see here, Admiral –"

"After all, in our line of work, we know that violence often isn't the most effective method of –"

"What are you talking about?" Von Kroit nearly shouted, and squeezed the Luger. A loud retort filled the office, and Von Kroit screamed. The Corporal unshouldered his rifle and drew back the bolt, waving it first at Canaris, then Von Kroit , then the door.

Von Kroit collapsed, cursing and holding his thigh.

"Kaptain, what's happened?" shouted Canaris.

Von Kroit forced a smile.

"Nein, nein. Nothing to worry about, Admiral. Everything is under control. I think I may have just have just shot myself in the leg by mistake. That's all. No problem." And to the Corporal, "Put that damn thing away, you idiot!"

"Von Kroit , you're bleeding. I'll summon a medic immediately."

"Nein!" shouted Von Kroit . "I mean, nein, nein. It's only a small flesh wound. Nothing an officer of the Reich can't deal with." Von Kroit forced a chuckle that sounded a bit like a shriek and lost consciousness, falling to the floor.

Canaris looked at the Corporal and said, "Infirmary."

The sullen oaf threw Von Kroit over his massive shoulders and trundled out of the room.