Dilemma in the Desert

By Dwayne Straw

Published by
Dwayne Straw

Dilemma in the Desert
Copyright © 2013 by Dwayne Straw
Smashwords Edition

Thank you for downloading this free ebook. You are welcome to share it with your friends. This book may be reproduced, copied and distributed for non-commercial purposes, provided the book remains in its complete original form. If you enjoyed this book, please return to Smashwords.com to discover other works by this author. Thank you for your support.

The purpose of the book is to show that the only way to heaven is through Jesus Christ. For that reason feel free to pass it on to family and friends.

This is a work of fiction and, except for historical personages, any resemblance to persons living or dead are purely coincidental.

Acknowledgements
I wish to thank my son, James, and Ann Hayner for encouraging me to publish this book, and to my wife Catherine for her support and my daughter Anna for editing it.

Table of Contents
Historical Background
Prologue
Chapter One January 29
Chapter Two January 30 Morning
Chapter Three January 30 Angelique
Chapter Four January 30 Afternoon
Chapter Five January 31
Chapter Six February 1 Angelique
Chapter Seven February 1 Americans
Chapter Eight February 1 Evening
In 1933 Adolph Hitler and his Nazi Party swept into power in Germany. Two of their ideals were: (1) the Germanic race was by nature the Master Race and entitled to rule the world and enslave all other races, and (2) Hitler would redress the perceived wrongs done to Germany at the end of the last war. He swallowed up the countries of Austria and Czechoslovakia peacefully, and on September 1, 1939, attacked Poland and thus started World War 2.

By September, 1942, the war had been raging for three years and the Axis, as Germany and Italy with their allies called themselves, were at the height of their power. They were the masters of most of mainland Europe and were deep inside Russia, which was where the Battle of Stalingrad was raging. Rommel, the famed Desert Fox, was at a place called El Alamein, just 60 miles from Alexandria, Egypt, the goal of his African campaign.

By the end of December the situation had drastically changed. The Russians had won at Stalingrad, wiping out an entire German army. General Montgomery had beaten Rommel at El Alamein and the Germans were in full retreat. A combined American and British army had landed in northwest Africa and was rushing eastward as fast as they could, trying to capture the Tunisian ports before the Germans got there. They lost the race due to an inadequate supply line and the winter rains that turned the terrain into mud as Hitler poured troops into Tunisia, which lies between Algeria and Libya.

The Allied invasion was diplomatically a very delicate operation, as they were invading
French colonies and France was technically not at war with anyone. Some French units fought hard against the invaders while others gave a half-hearted resistance, recognizing that the Americans and British were fighting to restore freedom to their country. Eventually, they agreed to help fight against the hated Germans.

On January 30, 1943, the Germans attacked French positions at the Faid Pass in Tunisia, North Africa. The French, although they fought valiantly, were defeated, as well as several American units that tried to help. Two weeks later, the Germans launched the attack known as The Battle of Kasserine Pass, the first major battle fought by the Americans, who were soundly defeated and routed. Prior to the battle, American intelligence mysteriously learned that the Germans were planning a major attack in the south of the country. General Anderson, the British commander and, in the muddled command structure at the time, commander of the bulk of the Allied forces, disbelieved the report and insisted the main attack would come in the north.

Prologue

Two people were huddled together in the tiny room, whispering in voices so low that if an eavesdropper were present, he couldn’t identify the voices, or even differentiate if they were male or female.

“You have news?” the older voice queried.

“Yes, they are gathering forces for a major attack,” responded the younger voice.

“Do you know when and where?”

“Not yet, but it will be soon. I will know more in a few days.

The older one pondered for a moment. “I can send word for an agent to come here and give the information to him. By the time he gets here, will you have the rest of the information? I don’t trust the normal channels any more, especially with something this important.”

“Yes, I will have it by then.” The younger one prepared to leave.

“Be careful,” the elder hissed. “It is passed the curfew.”

“Don’t worry, I have my pass.” So saying, the shadowy figure opened the door and disappeared into the streets of Sfax.

Chapter One
January 29

Angelique DuBois hurried down the street towards the stone hut that she had inhabited for the past month. It was almost curfew time, and the sun was sinking in the west. She was coming from the bazaar, clutching in her arms the meager amount of food she had managed to purchase. She had learned from experience to wait until late in the day to go food shopping. The selection was poor and the best food was gone, but the vendors were eager to get anything for their produce rather than having it go rotten and then throwing it away. She had been able to purchase enough for two meals, tonight’s and tomorrow night’s, and then she would have to find more. She was down to her last few francs and had bartered away most of the possessions that she had been able to carry with her when she had fled from Gafsa.

She had been a schoolteacher at Gafsa until last November, when the world had turned upside down. The English had won a great battle far to the east at someplace called El Alamein and were pushing the Germans out of Egypt and now Libya. Far to the west, the Americans had landed in Morocco and Algeria and advanced into Tunisia. Then, as her lip curled in mingled anger and fear, the hated Boche swarmed into the country, followed by the Gestapo. The school was disbanded and she was out of a job. She had not earned any money since mid-November. It
was known for a fact that the Jews in Gafsa had been rounded up and their homes and businesses looted, and it was whispered that they were no longer among the living; that the local Gestapo commander, Major Lindisfl, had personally seen to their liquidation. She had seen Major Lindisfl once, his blond hair proclaiming him as one of the so-called superior Master race, his square, blocky build frightening her even at a distance. Because of the fluid battles and hit and run attacks by the French and Americans on the one side and the Germans and Italians on the other side, she had run from Gafsa seeking safety, finally coming to Faid.

The sound of vehicles interrupted her musings, and she looked up to see another line of German vehicles moving west. Many vehicles and Boche had been moving west all day; there must be a battle brewing in that direction. She shuddered at the thought and wondered if she would need to flee eastward to Sfax to escape from the fighting. She hurried even faster towards the abandoned hut that she had appropriated. All the buildings in the town were the same yellowish sand color as the stony ground, somehow emphasizing the overall gloom of the town gripped in the iron fist of its German masters. The few Arabs in the street were hurrying to their own homes, and spared her no more than a curious glance. She knew what they saw: a woman over average height, 21 years old, with black hair falling down her shoulders, black eyes, the typical French elegant bone structure, and a normally willowy figure, now thinned down to bones protruding from her skin because of her enforced skimpy diet. She wasn’t beautiful, but she had a very pretty face, which combined with her elegance gave her a charm that was all her own.

She reached her one room hut safely and shut the door behind her, leaning her back against it and breathing deeply in relief. Then she laid her meager supplies on the table: a few scraps of smelly goat meat, a handful of overripe dates, a pomegranate past its prime, and a small sack of barley. She tried to use the same merchants for her purchases, and she had a sneaking suspicion that the proprietress of the barley stand had held some back for her, for which she was profoundly thankful.

She started her fire and fried the meat, carefully dividing it into two equal portions, and then cooked exactly half the barley. She ate one half of the meat and the barley she had cooked, half the dates and half of the pomegranate, the whole consisting of the only meal she would eat this day. By then darkness was falling, and since she had no candles or anything else except the fire to provide light, and no reason to stay up for anyway, she stoked up the fire to provide some warmth against the cold night and then laid down to an exhausted sleep, still hungry.

Captain Drew Matthews of the Army Intelligence Branch entered the briefing room at Constantine and saluted his superior, Colonel Nuckells, who returned the salute and motioned to a chair, “Have a seat, Captain.” Drew sat down, wondering why he had been summoned; he didn’t have long to wait to find out. Colonel Nuckells studied the man sitting opposite him; the captain was 26, stood some two inches shy of six feet, rather thin, with brown hair and bright, intelligent brown eyes, a good looking face and a square jaw. For some reason the colonel put a lot of stock in square jaws.

“I have a job for you,” Colonel Nuckells intoned rather pompously. Drew gave an interested look. “We have received word that an informant has important information to pass on to us. We need to send a courier to meet with him and bring the information back.” The colonel beamed like he had just given him a Christmas present and Drew looked back blankly. “I have chosen
you to go because you speak French, fluently I hear. I have arranged for an Arab to guide you to your destination, his name is,” Colonel Nuckells looked down at his report, “Abu Mehouf. He will lead you to Sfax,” again he looked at his report, “to a restaurant called, uh, Le Belle Francaise,” butchering the name. Drew winced. “The informant, a Monsieur Gascoigne, will meet you there. He will identify himself by the phrase ‘The lilies are beautiful by the Loire.’ The countersign is ‘I prefer the lilies of Garonne.’ He will give you the information and you will bring it back.” The colonel beamed again while Drew looked blank again.

“But Sfax is behind the German lines!” Drew exclaimed.

“Of course it is, an informant behind our own lines wouldn’t do us much good, would it?” Colonel Nuckells laughed at his own joke.

“How am I supposed to get there? How do I get through the German lines? How long do I wait to be contacted? How do I get back?” To Drew these were all very important questions that seemed to have been overlooked, especially the last one.

Colonel Nuckells looked at him sternly, “You will check out a vehicle from the motor pool and drive to the front lines, after that you will have to use your own initiative. Undoubtedly you can find out from the front line commander the most likely places to cross over into enemy territory, and your guide knows the area and can lead you to, uh, Sfax.”

“How much does this Abu whatshisname know about the operation?”

“Only that he is to take you to that café,” the colonel didn’t try to pronounce it this time, “at Sfax and lead you back.” He sounded very sure of himself. A few minutes later when Drew met Abu Mehouf and saw his sly face, he wasn’t at all sure that the Arab didn’t know much more than he should have. But when he left the headquarters building after his briefing he was feeling a little better about the operation. He had a suitcase of civilian clothes, a large amount of francs in his pocket, and an id proclaiming him as Etienne Pinochet, a freelance exporter of produce. But he felt less sanguine when he got to the motor pool.

“What is this?” Drew demanded of the sergeant at the motor pool, staring at the olive drab painted staff car with white stars on it. “I need a civilian vehicle, not an official Army car.”

“Sorry Cap’n, but your requisition is for a staff car.” The sergeant didn’t sound all that sorry.

“This is outrageous! I can’t fulfill …” Drew bit his tongue. That would be telling everyone within hearing that he was going on an undercover mission. “I don’t understand why I am being issued a staff car. Why can’t I get a civvie car?” He tried to be reasonable.

“Because we don’t have any. All we have are jeeps and staff cars, unless you want a truck?” The sergeant could be reasonable too. Captain Matthews gave the car, the sergeant and the clipboard he was holding the same fulminating glare before he gave up and signed the form and grabbed the keys proffered by the too solemn sergeant. He slung his bags in the trunk and snapped at Abu in French, “Stick your baggage in here too.” Abu tossed in his dirty and smelly bag, Drew shut the trunk and both of them moved to the passenger door to try to open it.

“Here now,” Drew remonstrated, “you drive and I ride.”

“Drive, effendi? I don’t know how to drive a car, effendi. Camels, horses, and donkeys, yes; vehicles, no.” Abu sadly shook his head. Drew stifled a curse and got in under the wheel. Under the open laughter of the men watching he drove off, an American captain chauffeuring an Arab. They started off on the hundred mile trip to Tebessa, the main Allied base for central Tunisia, in the late afternoon. The open windows allowed air to blow over their sweating bodies, but the hot sun burned down out of the clear blue sky heating up the interior of the car and the air around...
drew didn’t know which was worse, the hot sun or the weeks of cold drenching rain he had experienced here in North Africa.

As they bounced and jolted over the overused road, in the midst of vehicles rolling both ways all around them, Drew glanced at the barren landscape, dotted here and there with an occasional cactus or thorn bush. Every so often he could see a splotch of green: date trees or other vegetation marking a water source.

Drew tried to draw Abu into conversation, reasoning that since they were going to be companions for an undetermined amount of time they should at least be friendly. But whenever he tried to ask about the kinds of plants he saw, or about the Arab’s life, Abu tried to change the subject to the mission they were on. Since Drew had no intention of sharing the meager information he had, conversation soon languished between them.

When the fiery red sun disappeared behind them and night fell, the thin desert air started shedding the heat and the temperature started plummeting. They rolled up the windows and soon after turned on the car heater, grateful for its warmth, or at least Drew was. Abu was inured to the desert’s wild temperature swings. When they reached the base late that night, Drew was able to secure a late supper from the still open mess hall and a place to sleep for the two of them.

Corporal Dane Shaw of the 26th Regiment, 1st Infantry Division, was not in a cheerful mood. He had participated in the landings at Oran on November 8th, and seen for himself the confusion and muddled action that took place. He reflected on the happenings of the last few months. If the French had resolutely defended the beaches, the whole invasion could have been thrown back into the sea. Instead, although the French units had fought, they had been of two minds whether to fight the Americans as invaders or welcome them as liberators.

Then Admiral Darlan, the supreme French commander in French North Africa, even though he hated the British because they had beaten the French at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805 during the Napoleonic Wars, agreed to fight alongside the Allies. The French commanders in northern Tunisia, at the capital city and main port of Tunis, were bombarded with conflicting orders. The Petain government at Vichy, France, ordered them to give all possible aid to the Germans and fight the invading Allies. Admiral Darlan ordered them to fight the Germans. Bewildered, they did neither and then German forces landed at the airports and disarmed them.

In central Tunisia the French General Welvert acted decisively and turned on the German and Italian units there. Under-equipped and under-armed, he nevertheless put up a spirited defense. Aided by an American parachute battalion dropped by air on General Eisenhower’s orders, for several months they engaged in hit and run tactics against the superior German forces.

Then had come the main Allied advance into Tunisia, the cold rains that had turned the ground to mud, the arrival of substantial German forces, and now here his regiment was in central Tunisia at the end of an inadequate supply line. The regiment was short of everything: spare parts, ammo, clothes, food, and, in his opinion, leadership. The divisional commander, Major General Terry Allen was, by all accounts, a good general, but the regimental commander, Colonel Andrew “Old” Stark, left much to be desired, in his opinion. In contrast to the euphoria of most of the American soldiers who believed that all they had to do was show up and the Germans would slink away in defeat, he was very wary of the German fighting prowess. After all, they had been fighting for over three years, and the Americans here in Africa had yet to fight a real battle.
The land itself was depressing to him. The Tunisian desert was barren and desolate with virtually no vegetation growing anywhere except near water. The ground was rocky when dry but turned to mud that was impassible when wet, at least to vehicles. In the daytime it was hot and at night it was cold. It was altogether an unpleasant place to visit.

He stood up and stretched. He was a little on the short side, standing 5’6” tall, weighing a solid 160 pounds, with broad shoulders and narrow hips. He was good enough looking to have been called handsome a time or two in his life with hair that was dark brown, nearly black, normally brown eyes and a quiet voice and was 22 years old. However, when angry or in the grip of deep emotion, green flecks in his eyes would glow and whirl, and his voice crackled with authority. He had a curious, graceful catlike walk, and once his men got to know him, he rarely had to raise his voice for instant obedience to orders.

Before seeking his own tent and bed, he checked on the men in the squad he belonged to. He knew some of them were homesick, and he gave quiet words of comfort to them. He could tell some were scared but trying to hide it, and so he gave encouraging words to them.

By then the sun had sunk and the western sky was becoming dark purple. Dane looked to the east to where the dark bulk of the Eastern Dorsale Mountains loomed up into the black sky where the stars were starting to appear. Already the temperature was dropping and he gave a grimace. At least it didn’t look like rain, he comforted himself. For the last several weeks the gray, depressing sky had shed its load of water, sometimes in a drizzle, sometimes in a hard, driving storm, but always cold and chilling to the bone. And then there was the ever-present mud. Mud on the uniforms, mud in the food, great globs of mud sticking to the boots as you squelched through it. But by now the ground was dried out, and there was only an occasional shower. What he needed was a hot cup of coffee he decided and headed over to the mess tent.

He poured himself a cup, saw his sergeant and went over to join him. Sergeant Andersson was a big man with a booming voice. He glanced at Dane as Dane squatted on his haunches next to him. Andersson was capable in combat, but the preparation for fighting made him impatient, and he increasingly relied on his quiet and very capable corporal. “You mollycoddle them too much, especially Woolson,” he rumbled, having noticed the time Dane had just spent with him.

“Woolson is coming along,” Dane quietly answered, unconcerned, as he sipped his coffee. He made a face at the warm, not hot, liquid. “He’s young and scared and has been bullied to the point that he thinks he’s worthless. But he is gaining confidence and eventually will be okay.”

Andersson shook his head in amazement. How did the corporal find out these things? He didn’t realize that Dane had discovered all about Woolson, indeed all the men in the squad, by talking to them in a friendly fashion, asking questions, and observation.

“Any news?” Dane asked.
“Nah, seems pretty quiet from what the lieutenant said,” Andersson replied.
“Maybe too quiet,” Dane commented with a faint frown.

Andersson gave a derisive bark of laughter. “The Limeys licked the Krauts at El Alamein, they’re done for.”

Dane shook his head, “I don’t think so. Rommel and his army have arrived in Tunisia. He’s not going to tamely surrender or go back to Germany; he’s going to hit somebody hard.”

Andersson stared at Dane as a shudder went down his spine; it felt like someone had walked over his grave. Dane emptied his coffee cup and went to his tent amid the sounds of hundreds of men all around him also getting ready for bed. As was his custom, when he was able to, he read for a
little while from his Bible and had a time of prayer before going to sleep.

**Back to Table of Contents**

**Chapter Two**

January 30 Morning

Even though it had been late the previous night before they had gotten to sleep, Drew and Abu were up early the next morning. When they tried to enter the mess hall an MP, or Military Policeman, stopped them. “No Arabs allowed inside,” the nattily dressed soldier stated firmly. Drew drew himself up to his full height, “Private, this man is with me.”

“I’m sorry sir, but I have orders to keep all Arabs out.” He didn’t sound very sorry.

Drew gave him a haughty stare, “I’ll have you know that Major General Fredendall himself ordered us to work together on a very important mission. I don’t think you want me to report to him that you kept us from eating breakfast.”

The MP wilted at the mention of the corps commander but gamely rattled on, “I would have to have orders from my superior, sir.”

“Fine,” Drew soothed, “you go ask him while we eat.” Drew brushed past him and went inside where the two of them enjoyed a rather frugal breakfast, food supplies being rather lean. When they left the mess hall, the MP stared straight ahead, pretending not to see them.

Drew left Abu at the car while he went exploring for information. He visited several command centers and tried to get some answers from the commanders at Tebessa, but they seemed to be woefully ignorant of conditions at the front. “The situation is very fluid,” he was told. “The main problem is getting through the Eastern Dorsale, the range of mountains between Kassarine and Sfax. There are only a few passes but the French are holding most of them. Your best bet would be to take the Faid Pass.”

“Can I draw a civilian vehicle from the motor pool?” He asked. He drew amazed looks. “Civilian vehicle? Here? They all disappeared years ago. They were either confiscated by the French or torn down for their spare parts,” was his answer.

“Do you have any idea where I could obtain one?” he asked exasperatedly.

“Well,” the captain that Drew was conversing with scratched his nose thoughtfully, “off the record, when you get to the Frenchies you could see if you could swap vehicles with them, sorta temporary like. I don’t think too many of their vehicles are marked.”

“But, I signed for this vehicle, I have to return it to the pool,” Drew was confused.

“Uh huh, but things happen at the front lines, you know, breakdowns and suchlike,” the captain said vaguely.

“Oh, I see,” Drew was rather nonplussed at the way things worked up at the front. He was used to a tidier system.

He returned to the vehicle and to Abu Mehouf, who was patiently waiting. “It sounds like the Faid Pass is the best route for us, what do you think?” Drew politely asked in French.

“That is what I have learned also, effendi,” Abu replied in the same language.

Drew stared at him in amazement, “How did you learn that?”

Abu waved his arm vaguely in the air, “I asked around, the Arabs know much.” I’ll bet, thought Drew grimly to himself. “What do we do when we reach Faid?” Abu asked, ingratiatingly. “We’ll find out when we get there,” Drew could be vague also. They gassed up
the vehicle and drove towards the Faid Pass, unknowingly driving straight into a battle.

That morning the Germans struck the French at Faid Pass. Although the French stopped the main assault on the pass, the Germans swept through a pass south of their position and encircled them. It was this arm that Drew ran into. When he saw the dust up ahead, he thought nothing of it, “Must be troops moving up into line,” he mused to Abu. His first inclination of trouble was when they topped a little rise and ran smack dab into a column of German tanks, who were just as surprised.

“Look out!” screamed Drew as he yanked the steering wheel around. Out of the dust a German tank loomed right in front of them. The sound of machine gun bullets screamed as they tore through the U.S. marked vehicle, then came the explosion as the tank fired a round at point blank distance into them. The staff car exploded in a burst of fire and dust, but Drew had bailed out when he saw the tank right in front of his car and was already running away, zigzagging through the tank column, hidden by the dust cloud. When he reached cover on the far side of the column, he flung himself to the ground, gasping for breath, in shock that he had made it safe this far. He cautiously raised his head, looking back towards the way he had just come. He saw the glow of his burning vehicle through the dust, and he caught a momentary glimpse through a break in the dust of some German vehicles near it, but to his utter amazement the column of German armored vehicles kept moving on. He took another look but couldn’t see anybody running around looking for him. “What incredible luck,” he thought to himself, “they must not have seen me running away because of all the dust and fire.” He risked another look around, trying to see if Abu had made it also, but couldn’t see anything, “Poor guy, the machine gun must have got him, or maybe the tank shell.” He hadn’t really liked him, but he still felt sorrow at the death of someone that he had known, however briefly. He slithered away taking advantage of every bit of cover.

When he had covered enough distance to feel relatively safe, he sat down and took stock of his situation. It was definitely not encouraging. He had lost his transportation, his civilian clothes, and his guide; he was trapped behind enemy lines with no food or water and armed with only a .45 pistol, and by all appearances a battle either raging or about to rage between him and friendly forces. As he sat there, his shoulders slumped in defeat as he thought about his ignominious return to headquarters and explaining to Colonel Nuckells how he hadn’t even made it to the Allied front lines. This was his first clandestine mission and now undoubtedly his last. As he felt his pockets to see if he had missed anything, he felt his false id and then the wad of francs. He still had those, at least. His head rose as he thought of the possibility of continuing the mission. It would mean traveling the seventy odd miles to Sfax, dodging the enemy all the way, finding civilian clothes, finding the café, making contact with the mysterious Monsieur Gascoigne, and then returning again. His shoulders straightened and his jaw squared: the colonel had told him to use his own initiative, and he would! The first order of business would be to find food and water, and then start the trek eastward. He took a long look around and then started walking.
All morning long, Angelique had heard the rumbling sound of artillery fire to the west. She would stand at her doorway, listening and watching, but never seeing anything until midafternoon, when she saw a dust cloud approaching the town. The cloud resolved itself into a caravan of German vehicles with red crosses on them. The lead vehicle slowed and stopped in front of her hut, and a German hopped out, looked around, and then walked up to her door. She backed up fearfully into the hut, looking at him with terrified eyes, as he entered the hut and looked around. He said something to her in German, but when she just continued to stare at him, uncomprehendingly, he shook his head and pointed to the door, “Verlassen, schnell.” A stretcher party came in, bearing a wounded man, and the first man motioned for them to put him on the table, and then started examining the patient. She realized that her home was being taken over for use as a medical station to treat the wounded from the battle, and she rushed around the room, gathering her belongings, and then ran outside, almost running into a soldier limping into the hut.

She stood there, looking around wildly, wondering what to do or where to go, while more doctors and wounded arrived. Some men started erecting tents around the hut, and she saw Germans rousting out the legal owners of other nearby houses and taking them over also. Then she saw a German canteen lying on an opened tailgate. She sidled over to it and looked around; nobody seemed to be paying any attention to her. She picked it up, it was heavy and gave a reassuring sloshing sound, and then she saw a field ration box. She picked that up too, looked up, and froze. The first German was standing in her doorway, looking at her. For a long minute they just stared at each other, but then he looked away and started helping another wounded soldier into the hut. She scurried away.

She found a hiding place just outside of town and spread out her possessions: one change of clothes, a jacket, a thin wool blanket, a pot, a pan, a plate, a cup, eating utensils, matches, the rest of the food she had bought yesterday, the canteen and the field rations she had just purloined, and a few personal items. She ate a few bites of food, packed everything up into her blanket, sat back on her heels and rocked back and forth. Where should she go? She couldn’t stay in Faid, but she didn’t know anywhere to stay and knew nobody in the town. Should she go back to Gafsa? But that was close to the front, there could be fighting there even now. How about Sfax? She had been there a few times in the past two years and it was safely behind the fighting lines. “Mother Mary,” she murmured to herself, “where should I go? Please show me.” Then she remembered some acquaintances she had met at Sfax, maybe one of them would take her in, perhaps the Conards, or the Dupleixs, or possibly even the Fauncets. That was where she should go.

She picked up her pack, slung it over her shoulder, walked to the highway going from Faid to Sfax, and started walking alongside it. A truck sped past her, the German driver calling something out to her as he passed. She stopped, “The Boche take everything,” she said to herself. “They took my country, they took my home, if I stay on the road they may take me,” she shuddered and looked wildly around in fear. “Mon Dieu, if I am near the road tonight, what may happen to me? Think Angelique, think. Let’s see, the road curves from Faid to Sfax, so if I cut across, that will save distance. The walking will be harder, but there is less chance of meeting Boche, and there should be places where I can find water. That is what I will do.”

So saying, she took her bearings and headed off cross-country. Because of her weakened condition from too many missed meals, she would walk for what she thought was about an hour and then rest for about ten minutes. Nearing sundown, she spotted some green off to the side.
She turned in that direction and found a seep with some trees, bushes, and grass growing around it. She dropped her pack and lay down and rested for a little bit, and then started the food preparation. She carefully built a pile of dry leaves, twigs and branches, breathed a prayer to Mother Mary, and struck one of her precious matches. It flared and died down, and then some leaves caught. She gently breathed on them, some twigs caught fire, and then when a branch ignited, she carefully added more fuel. She was hungry enough to bolt all the food, but limited herself to the rest of the food that she had bought in Faid and a few bites from the rations, knowing that she must make it last until she reached Sfax. She put on her other set of clothes over the ones she was wearing, added her jacket, wrapped herself in her blanket to protect herself from the cold, curled up next to the fire and dropped off to sleep.

Chapter Four
January 30 Afternoon

Captain Matthews cautiously lifted his head. The afternoon sun beat down on him, and he tried to wet his dry and chapped lips, but his mouth was too dry. After leaving the German armored column, he had almost stumbled into a German infantry platoon hurrying towards the sound of firing. Luckily for him, their attention was directed forward and they missed seeing him dive to the ground behind some rocks. Now he was peeking out to see if the way was clear. Not seeing anyone, he got to his feet and climbed the slope, taking his bearings from the sun and trying to work his way eastward.

He reached the top and cautiously peered over. More German infantry were wending their way along the bottom slope, heading generally northeast. He heard a noise behind him and turned and saw some German halftracks hauling an artillery battery, following the infantry platoon he had just avoided. Caught between the two groups, he tried to pretend that he was a mole and burrowed as deep into the ground as he could. He held his breath as the two groups passed by, separated by the ridge with him on top of it.

After they passed, he breathed a sigh of relief that he had again remained unnoticed and slithered down the slope. He took a quick glance around but none of the Krauts had been so thoughtful as to drop a canteen for him. He started walking again, his sweaty shirt sticking to him.

After about half an hour of trudging, he was startled by sudden firing ahead of him and close by. He climbed a vantage point from where he could see a firefight raging no more than a mile away from him. It looked like the Germans that had passed by him were tangling with some French soldiers. He hesitated, wondering if he could sneak close enough to get some water from a dead body, but more Germans started appearing and he dismissed that idea. Forced to go around the fighting, he slipped to his right, but heard in time the noise of an approaching vehicle. Again he imitated his favorite animal and planted himself in the ground. More Germans passed by, hurrying into the fray.

He sat up and wiped his face. “Drew, old boy,” he said to himself, “you have had more lucky breaks today than any one has a right to. You had better mind your p’s and q’s before you run out of luck.” He made a sudden move to get to his feet when a bullet splatted by his head. Shocked, he spun around to see an Arab mounted on a camel not a hundred yards away drawing
another bead on him. Only his unexpected move had saved him from being killed. He feverishly pulled out his .45 and snapped a shot just a split second before the Arab pulled his trigger. It was not because of his deadly skill with a pistol that he hit the Arab, spoiling his aim and knocking him sideways in his saddle. The camel took off with the wounded man hanging on. Drew stared after him, wondering why he had shot at an American uniform for, and then remembered that at a recent briefing they had been told that the Bedouin tribesmen hated the French and were aiding the Germans in hope of becoming independent. Undoubtedly he had been equated with the French.

Being that as it may, he had just lost an opportunity to get a water bottle, although that was the best shot he had ever made in his life. But now he had to hightail it out of there before someone else came along. After another half hour or so, he stopped to take a breather, the heat and rugged terrain tiring him out. As he rested, he could hear the distant rumble of firing coming from three different directions. He grimaced, somebody was taking a pounding and he didn’t think it was the Germans.

Marking where the sounds of battle were coming from, he headed off, trying to pick his way around them. As the sun sank down behind him, giving the promise of welcome relief from the heat, he was forced to duck and hide from two more close encounters with passing Germans, but both times he heard them coming in plenty of time. With all the fighting going on all around him, he was surprised not to find any bodies lying around to rifle for supplies, and he softly and fluently cursed his bad luck. By sundown, the sound of firing was dying down, his stomach was growling and his throat was parched. He found a place to hole up in some rocks and spent a miserable night, shivering in the cold and frustrated by his lack of progress, both of finding supplies and making his way to the Faid Pass, although he was closer to the pass than he realized.

General Welvert, the French division commander, had spent an equally frustrating day. When he learned about the attack on his position at the Faid Pass, he had telephoned General McQuillin, commanding Combat Command A of the First Armored Division, begging for help. However, McQuillin was hesitant to move without orders, so he called his superior, General Ward of the First Armored Division, who passed the request to General Fredendall, the corps commander, who in turn passed it on to General Anderson, the army commander. Anderson approved the request and sent it back to Fredendall, who rarely left his underground bunker and only pushed counters around on his maps. He ordered McQuillin to launch an attack, but by the time he got the order, there were mix-ups and delays, and McQuillin delayed the attack until the next day. General Welvert could only beg and fume, as he heard of his units being destroyed while the Americans delayed.

While all this delay was going on, American troops waited all afternoon and late into the night for orders to move out. Some of them waited in trucks for hours that night, shivering in the cold air, before being ordered to stand down and go back to their camps for a few hours rest.
Angelique woke in the morning, shivering from the cold. She hurriedly performed her morning ablutions, ate a little breakfast, filled her canteen, broke camp and started walking eastward. All day long she staggered up and down the stony hills and crossed dry wadis, the heat and dust drying out her throat, perspiration running down her dusty face. When the wind blew, it picked up pieces of grit which stung her face. At every break she took one swallow of water and held it in her mouth, letting the liquid soak into the tissues. That night she made a dry camp, ate her meal and tumbled into an exhausted sleep. But just before falling asleep, she remembered that it was January 31, and wondered what the new month would bring, if it could be any worse than the last three months had been.

Early that morning the American troops were awakened, ate their breakfast, and then waited for orders to attack. It took hours to move the tired troops into place for the attack, and the American commanders underestimated the force it would take to defeat the Germans and therefore did not use their full strength. Corporal Shaw busied himself making sure the men were outfitted and ready for battle, his calm demeanor masking his growing unease. He also got a feel for the size of the attacking force by walking around and visiting with other non-coms (non-commissioned officers, i.e. sergeants and corporals). His unease mounted as he learned how small the attacking force was.

At last the orders to attack were given. “Too little and too late,” Corporal Shaw muttered to himself as he followed his sergeant into battle. The attack soon fell apart and the German counterattack overpowered the Americans, smashing the formations and scattering men in all directions.

“Set up the BAR here,” Sergeant Andersson bellowed over the noise of exploding shells and gunfire, dust filling the air and obscuring the men running around. Obediently the team with the Browning Automatic Rifle plopped down and started to position the rifle which Andersson was trying to use to cover his squad’s retreat. Dane was trying to gather the rest of the squad into a cohesive group when shadowy figures loomed up, shouting German words and swamped the group around the rifle. Dane heard yells and screams, but knowing there was nothing he could do screamed at his squad, “Follow me!” and started running away from the overwhelming force.

Shells started exploding around them, whether American or German Dane couldn’t tell but he rather figured it was the latter. “Hit the dirt!” he yelled and tried to bury himself into the rocky soil, explosions going on all around him. A shell lit only a few yards away, showering him with rock fragments, and one sharp fragment sliced his sleeve, leaving half of his corporal stripes flopping but missing his skin. He ignored the pain from the flying fragments and jumped to his feet, “Fall back,” he roared to his squad, but then hesitated. Which way was back? It was noon and the sun was overhead, giving him no direction, and the dust and smoke obscured the surroundings. The constant shell bursts and noise of unseen vehicles drowned out normal conversation and added to the confusion. He started in what he thought was the right direction but halted when two yellowish monsters became visible in the murky air. German tanks! And he was looking at their rear ends as they moved away from him, which meant that the American position had been overrun. More shapes were appearing around them, some were vehicles and some were men. “This way,” he called to his men as he led the half dozen survivors in a new direction, southeast, he thought. They ran, zigzagging, trading gunfire with half-seen figures, flopping to the ground and gasping for breath, and then rising up and running again.
Suddenly figures materialized in the dust ahead of them. Both groups to their shock realized the other group was the enemy! Too close to fire their rifles, Dane with his quick reflexes was the first to attack, smashing the nearest German’s head with his Thompson submachine gun, pirouetting with the grace of a ballet dancer as he spun and thrust the barrel like a spear into the midsection of a second German, who doubled up and fell. A third German appeared out of the haze and thrust at him with a bayonet on his rifle. Dane instinctively dodged, slapping the rifle aside with his submachine gun and hitting him in the front of the throat with a savage karate blow that crushed the German’s larynx. That stopped the German in his tracks and Dane smashed him in the head with the butt of his submachine gun and the German fell, never to rise again. By then the first two Germans were getting up. The one with the bloody head was on his knees pulling out his sidearm and the other was getting to his feet, his face rather green from the blow to his midsection. Dane leveled his submachine gun and shot them both with short bursts. His gun clicked on an empty chamber.

He could hear the sounds of fighting all around him, curses and screams of pain in both English and German. He saw a German stab one of his men who collapsed. Whipping out his own knife, Dane plunged towards him. The German slashed at him and Dane ducked under the blade, smashing a fist into his solar plexus with a blow so terrific it lifted the German off of his feet, and then with a slash of his knife cut the throat of his antagonist wide open.

He spun and took a quick glance around. All the Germans were down but so were three of his own men. It took only a quick check to see all three were dead. A break in the dust showed more Germans close by. “Run!” Dane shouted to his men.

Private Andy Woolson looked down in shock at the crumpled German form at his feet. The man had come at him out of the dust suddenly, catching him by surprise. Andy had had no time to be scared, his training had taken over and he reacted without thinking. Now he had killed a man face to face for the first time ever. Frozen, he could only stare down at the body when Tielson, another private, grabbed his arm and yelled, “Let’s go!” Andy started running after the others, his mind in turmoil. He was only nineteen.

At last Dane and the three surviving privates were out of the battle proper, and Dane saw a heap of rocks behind which could be shelter. “Over there,” he directed, and they pounded their way around them and stopped in surprise, it was already inhabited by three Americans: two privates and a captain.

“Sir!” Dane saluted, glad to see an officer, and dropped to the ground, followed by his men, all of them panting. Captain Matthews returned the salute and croaked, “Corporal.” He saw Dane’s canteen, “Water, please,” in his husky voice. “Uh, yes sir,” and Dane handed over his canteen. Drew started guzzling the water and Dane yelled, “Stop!” and grabbed the canteen. “Only take a swallow and hold it in your mouth,” he snapped. Drew looked at him, “That’s the first water I’ve had since yesterday morning,” he croaked.

The seven of them sat down and looked at each other and Drew took another sip. “I’m Captain Matthews, and these are Privates Zabronski,” pointing to a bear of a man with thick, bushy black hair, “and Webster,” a smaller nineteen year old. “They arrived here only a few minutes ago.”

“I’m Corporal Shaw of the 26th and these are Privates Woolson, Fredericks and Tielson, what’s left of my squad,” he added bitterly. Tielson was 21 and a country boy from upper New York, well used to the outdoors and roughing it. Fredericks was a brash 20 year old city boy
from Baltimore. Woolson was a shy, plump 19 year old, from a Kansas farm.

“What happened?” Drew asked, pointing to the battlefield, and as Dane explained, Drew thought about revising his plans. Trying to make it to Sfax all by himself would run the risk of a single, solitary, German soldier destroying the mission; he could not keep watch at night while he slept, anyone coming along could capture or kill him. It would increase his odds of fulfilling the mission if a squad accompanied him. He made up his mind. Dane finished talking and looked at the captain interrogatively; he had noticed that the captain had not identified his unit.

“I’m on an intelligence mission,” Drew announced, “and I am ordering you to accompany me. I have to secure vital information and return it to headquarters.” He looked at their startled faces; the corporal gulped and finally said, “Yes sir.” His three privates looked at each other, but if the corporal was going along then they had no choice.

“What are your orders, sir?” Dane asked.

Drew hesitated, rather at a loss for specifics. “We need to get through these mountains.”

“To the other side?” Dane yelped. “That’s the German side!”

“Yes,” Drew nodded firmly. Dane gulped again.

“Now wait a minute,” Zabronski’s deep voice interrupted. “I signed up as a soldier, not to be a spy behind enemy lines. I am not going!” and he glared at the captain from beneath shaggy black eyebrows. Captain Matthews hesitated, trying to think of a response. Corporal Shaw whirled around to face Zabronski, “You signed on to obey orders, and you will obey this one!” his voice cracked with authority. Zabronski stared into Dane’s face, and something he saw there made him shut his mouth and subside.

After making sure that Zabronski was cowed, at least for the moment, Dane took a careful look around but saw nobody in the vicinity. “Let’s pool our resources,” he suggested. The captain explained how he had lost all of his gear and how he had been wandering around yesterday and today, avoiding German troops.

After everyone had inventoried their gear, both of them looked distressed. There were four rifles, Webster had ‘lost’ his, with 100 rounds of ammo, a submachine gun, three .45’s, six canteens (two of them empty), enough food for a day or two, and other miscellaneous supplies. “If I may make a suggestion sir?” Dane asked. “We are all tired out. We spent three hours last night in the cold sitting in trucks waiting to move out,” he added bitterly, “and fought a battle today. If we rest now until evening and then spend an hour or two scavenging supplies from out there,” pointing to the battlefield, “we would stand a much better chance of making it through the pass in the dead of night.”

“Good suggestion, corporal,” the captain agreed.

During the few remaining hours of late afternoon and dusk, they laid there. Tired out, some slept and some dozed, then they ate some cold rations while they waited for darkness.

When night came, Dane passed out instructions, “We need food, water, and ammo for our guns. Webster, you get a rifle, everyone get a German greatcoat and helmet, that may help us get through the pass. We’ll divide up into three groups and meet back here in an hour, sooner if possible. Zabronski, you come with me.” Dane had his doubts about the big Russian and wanted to keep his eye on him. Soon all seven of them were out scavenging.

The moon was only a crescent, and waning, but the stars were bright in the thin desert air. However, it was still not easy to make out the details of the landscape and pick out suitable targets for their scavenging. Drew and Woolson found a jackpot right off the bat. A German
Halftrack had taken a direct hit, and half a-dozen bodies were lying around. They loaded up with coats, helmets, and a five gallon can of water. Wisely, Drew also grabbed their backpacks so the Americans could carry their supplies. Webster, Fredericks, and Tielson had a little harder time of it; they came back with an American rifle, ammo and some food. Dane and Zabronski headed off in a different direction. Seeing a few lights bobbing about, they took a wide detour around them and stumbled across a dead American sergeant. Dane searched the body for ammo for his submachine gun. Some sixth sense made him look up to see Zabronski easing out of sight.

“Zabronski,” Dane said conversationally, his submachine gun pointed in his direction. Zabronski stopped, “I thought I saw some bodies over there,” he excused himself. “We’ll look over there in a minute,” Dane answered, and then continued pulling ammunition from the body. A search in the area produced no more bodies. Zabronski just shrugged, “I must have been mistaken.” It took another half an hour to find some food, two canteens, four German hand grenades, and two German coats and helmets, and then they started to return to the others.

A whisper of the sound of running feet was their only warning. As both men whirled around they saw three Arabs coming at them. Scavengers, they had also been looting the dead and wounded, robbing them of their valuables, and they thought these two Americans would be easy targets. They were wrong.

Two of them rushed at Zabronski, while one lunged at Dane with his knife. Burdened with the coat and helmet, Dane flung them away before grabbing his foe’s knife hand and falling on his back from the rush put on by the Arab. He was able to double his feet up and kick him in the abdomen, using the momentum to somersault the hapless Arab over his head. Rolling to his feet as quick as a cat, Dane spared a glance for his companion. Zabronski had smashed in the head of one of his assailants with his rifle. By then, Dane’s opponent was on him again.

Dane made another grab for his knife arm but missed, grabbing a handful of sleeve instead. He yanked on it as the Arab tried to plunge the blade into Dane, deflecting his aim. The Arab was lithe and strong and wrenched his sleeve out of Dane’s grasp. The battle was almost soundless, as none of the antagonists wished to draw attention to themselves by yelling or shooting. Dane made a grab for his own knife but the Arab lunged at him again. Dane avoided the attack by a surprisingly agile twist of his body, surprising to the Arab anyway, and hooked a right jab to his jaw, a blow that stunned the Arab momentarily. Now Dane was able to pull his knife out.

They circled each other, and then Dane made a feint which was ignored. Again the Arab plunged in, and Dane caught the knife blade with his own and smashed his left hand into the Arab’s face, breaking his nose. The Arab stumbled back and Dane leapt forward, burying his knife into him. The Arab collapsed, dead.

Dane whirled around to see Zabronski grab his foe, wrap a massive arm around his head, and with a fiendish look on his face snap his neck. Zabronski looked with satisfaction at the two he had killed, mentally comparing himself with that little corporal who had barely beat out one attacker. Once again he had proved himself the better man, and his chest puffed out with pride. Zabronski hadn’t seen how agile and powerful the ‘little corporal’ was, as he had been too busy with his own fight.

They made it back to the rendezvous just in time. Nobody had found any working vehicles, and nobody else had had any run-ins with any other scavengers. They divided up the loot and started making their way towards the pass.
As Andy Woolson fell into line and started walking, he stumbled. Webster gave a tittering laugh and Zabronski sneered, “Learned to walk lately?” Dane turned and snapped, “Stow the chatter.” Andy hung his head in mortification, his cheeks flushed. For years, his hands and feet had seemed too big for him, and he was forever tripping over something. His father, big and bluff, had ridiculed him for his clumsiness, which had only made it worse. When he had gotten his draft notice his father had only snorted, “Maybe they can make a man out of you.”

Young and scared, he had made his way to boot camp, which was a nightmare for him. The harder he tried, the more inept he had become, and the more the instructors had yelled at him. He was also a natural target for the bullies, and he had cried more than once at night, using his pillow to muffle his sobs.

Then he had been shipped out and sent overseas and, of course, he was seasick, which made him the butt of more ridicule. When he had arrived at Tunisia, the squad he had been assigned to had not included any of the bullies he had trained with, but he had been scared stiff of the big sergeant with the loud voice who reminded him of his father. It was the corporal who, one day, had taken him aside and quietly and gently talked to him, telling him that he was part of a team and that they were all relying on him, and that he could rely on everyone in the squad.

After that, Corporal Shaw had been quick to offer praise, using his soft voice whenever correction was needed, never yelling at mistakes he had made. For once in his life he was getting encouragement, and life started to improve; he became less clumsy as he became less self-conscious and slightly surer of himself. He believed he owed it all to the corporal, and felt hero worship for the kind man with the ready, but somewhat shy, smile.

He still had his clumsy moments though, he reflected as he reached up and touched the dent in his helmet. This afternoon, as he had followed Corporal Shaw as they ran from the battle, he had tripped. As he fell a bullet had clipped his helmet; if he hadn’t tripped he would have been hit and maybe killed. He shivered at the thought and hurried to take his place in line. He did not want to let Corporal Shaw down.

It was past midnight when they reached the western edge of Faid Pass. They watched for a few minutes, but saw no traffic. They shrugged into the German coats (and were glad of the warmth), put on the German helmets, and then started walking into the pass, grateful for the dim moonlight.

The pass was about five miles long. For a while it went well, the traffic was very light and they had plenty of time to hide among the rocks when a vehicle went past. But then about three-fourths of the way through, they heard a vehicle coming up behind them. The pass was very narrow here, and there was no place to hide. Dane hissed, “Keep your heads down and keep walking!” They walked in single file as the headlights of a staff car illuminated them and then they heard it slow down. Dane gripped his submachine gun under his coat, prepared to swing it out and open fire if they were questioned, but once it had passed them it sped up again. They all stopped and looked at each other and heaved big sighs of relief. They resumed their march and reached the eastern end of the pass without further incident.

They could see the buildings of a town ahead of them, which Dane assumed was Faid. Captain Matthews stopped, “Let’s ditch the German helmets here.” They found a likely crevasse and poked them into it, keeping the coats for warmth and to use as blankets at night, and then, circling a building with tents around it that looked like it was being used as a first aid station, they avoided the town and came to the other side. They could see the road to Sfax, and Drew
stopped. “The road makes a shallow curve before it heads southeast towards Sfax,” he remembered from his long lost map, “if we cut across country it should be safer and shorter.” He led the way, and unconsciously following Angelique’s path, they traversed a short distance before stopping to make camp. They ate a meal and slept for a few hours, while Dane kept a guard posted.

Chapter Six
February 1 Angelique

A few miles ahead of them, Angelique woke up. At first she stared around her, not understanding where she was, the mists of a dream of a happier time fading from her mind. Dry sobs broke from her as she tried to reach out to her Mama and Papa, but to no avail.

She squatted on her heels and rocked back and forth with her arms wrapped around her, wailing her dead parents, who had been killed in a German air raid in France, and her shattered life. “Why keep struggling?” she asked herself. “Why not just lie down and die?” She was so tired, tired of living, tired from walking, tired of living from hand to mouth. But she shuddered at the thought of wild animals gnawing on her bones and straightened up. She wiped her eyes and composed herself, ate some breakfast, took off her outer set of clothes, shouldered her bag and set off again, walking towards the rising sun.

The day turned hot again, and she had to take shorter walks and longer breaks today, the previous day’s trip taking more of a toll on her weakened strength than she realized. She stumbled up and down the slopes, trying to keep herself oriented by the sun. Once she fell on her hands and knees. She stayed there for several minutes, her head hanging down, the merciless sun beating down on her. She listened to the siren call of her weakened body: just lie down, just rest, just sleep. But from somewhere inside of her came the determination that she would not let the hated Boche defeat her. She needed to get up and keep moving. If she kept moving, she would win, and they would lose. She struggled to her feet and started putting one foot in front of the other, her scraped knees adding to her misery.

The sun was high when she topped a rise and saw below her two buildings. At first her numbed mind couldn’t comprehend what she was seeing, and then she saw the front end of a German halftrack sticking out from behind one of the buildings. Terrified, she spun around and looked into the cruel face of an Arab standing behind her. She screamed and fainted.

Her faint must have lasted only a few moments, because when she came to she was still lying where she had fallen and was surrounded by five men, three Arabs and two Germans. One of the Germans was speaking in French to the Arabs, “Check and see if there is anyone with her.” Two of the Arabs obediently scampered off, but the one who had captured her stood his ground.

“She is mine,” he stated with his jaw thrust forward. Before anything more could be said, the other German noticed Angelique’s open eyes, said something in German and yanked her to her feet. She stood there swaying while the first German, a sergeant, glared at her and asked in French, “Who is with you?” He shook her slightly to give added force to his question.

“No one, I am alone,” she answered confusedly, wondering what she had stumbled into.

The two Arabs returned and reported, “She is alone, no one is traveling with her.”
She tried to shrink away from the Arabs’ wolﬁsh looks at her while the German in charge chewed his lip in worry. “Major Lindisl is not going to like this,” he muttered in German to his companion, who shrugged, trying to appear unconcerned and replied, “The question is, what happens to her now?”

“We should hold her for the major,” the sergeant replied, albeit with an uncertain look at his Arab allies. They had gathered around her, their meaning plain on their cruel faces and lustful eyes. She stifled a scream as she tried to pull away from them, her desperate eyes searching for an escape.

The sergeant stepped forward and ordered authoritatively, “Leave her alone, the major will want to question her.”

That brought howling protests from the three Arabs but the sergeant snapped back, “You were hired to be guards, now attend to your duties!”

One of the Arabs snapped back, “If we don’t get her, we will leave!”

The sergeant was in a quandary, Major Lindisl would undoubtedly want to know why she was here, but if he were to ﬁnd the Arabs gone, possibly telling other Arabs what was here, well, he shuddered to think of the consequences to himself. He hesitated and then shrugged, comforting himself with the fact that the major could interrogate her afterwards. “Ja, you can keep her tonight, but you will be on guard now in case anyone followed her.”

Angelique, horror-stricken at what she was hearing and overcome by all that had happened to her, fainted again. After some more discussion, one of the Arabs carried her into the smaller of the two buildings, roughly tied her up and left.

She struggled to consciousness some hours later, at ﬁrst not knowing where she was at. Her exhausted body had taken over and she had slept. Her throat was parched, and when she looked around, she saw her canteen hanging on the back of a chair. The Arab had tied her hands in front of her, so she was able to squirm over and get the canteen. She sat on the floor and held the canteen between her knees while she unscrewed the top, and then carefully took sips of water, letting the moisture penetrate the tissues in her mouth and throat.

After satisfying her thirst, she listened carefully, but all was quiet. She examined the knot on her wrists and then used her teeth to loosen and then untie her hands. She made short work of the rope around her ankles and stood, swaying until she regained her equilibrium. Softly, she made her way to the closed door and cautiously cracked it open and peeped out. Nothing. She pulled the door open further; still, all was quiet and not a sign of anybody.

She slipped out and made her way to the side of the building, which could not be seen from the larger building. Again she scanned the countryside, still all was silent. She started to scramble up the slope, but heard a surprised yell from her right. Abandoning all efforts at being quiet, she started running as fast as she could. From the corners of her eyes she saw the motion as two Arabs ran to intercept her, one from each side of her.

She didn’t stand a chance as they ran her down, her weakened body unable to run fast enough to get away from the desert-hardened warriors. She screamed as they grabbed her and dragged her back down the hill, struggling all the way. She was still screaming as they hustled her into the building she had just left and tied her securely to the chair. Tired of her screams, one of them tied a gag on her and then they left her, helpless tears running down her face.

Sometime later she was startled when the door was opened and an Arab entered, the door closing behind him. Rigid with fear she stared at him as he examined her ropes, making sure they
were tight, all the while making comments about what the night was going to hold. He grinned evilly at her white, shocked face, and then went over to a corner of the room and took down a canteen and was taking a drink when both of them were startled by gunshots outside.

**Back to Table of Contents**

**Chapter Seven**

February 1 Americans

It was about eight o’clock that morning when Dane roused up and got the camp stirring, and they were on the trail by nine. Woolson kept his distance from Zabronski. Having been bullied all his life, he had learned to spot bullies and he recognized Zabronski as one. All morning long Dane kept an eye peeled for aircraft. Because of the proximity of the Axis all weather airfields and the distance from the Allied airbases, which were under-supplied and many had dirt fields, the Axis enjoyed air superiority here in central Tunisia.

At midmorning they came to a seep. “Hey, look here,” shouted Woolson, pointing to the dead fire. The rest of them looked at it and Tielson, who had done a lot of camping, gave his opinion that it was a day or two old. As they refilled the canteens, Tielson examined the tracks left by whoever had camped there. He was no expert tracker, but it looked to him like there was only one person and it wasn’t a man. “Now why would a child or a woman be here by themself,” he mused to himself. The others started off and he joined them, leaving the mystery unsolved.

It was only a short time later a pair of planes appeared overhead. “Duck!” Dane yelled. Luckily there was a bank close by that they took shelter under, except for Drew who was looking up at the aircraft. Dane grabbed his arm and pulled him into the shelter of the bank.

Drew shook his arm free and glared at him. “Why did you do that for? I think they were American planes.”

“Captain, even if they are American planes, we are behind the German lines and they are likely to shoot at us. Most likely they are Axis, and if they identify us, they will also shoot at us and radio our position.”

Drew’s face flushed with embarrassment. “Oh,” was all he could say. The planes kept flying on their route and disappeared in the distance, and then the men resumed their march.

At noon they stopped for a quick bite to eat. There was no wood around so they had a cold meal and several of the men grumbled at having no coffee. Tielson came to Drew and Dane with a long face, “We are getting low on food, we’ve only got enough for about another day.” The two men looked at each other, and the captain answered, “Thanks for telling us.”

Quickly they were on their way again. Being fresher and stronger, they were making much better time than Angelique had made, and unknowingly passed by her dry camp in the middle of the afternoon. The sun was sinking in the west when Captain Matthews, who was in the lead, came to a rise and saw two buildings. Immediately he hit the ground, everyone else following suit. Dane squirmed up next to him and cautiously peered out. Below him, he saw the two buildings, and three camels chewing their cuds. Then a door opened, and two Germans walked out. One of them called out and was answered by two voices, one of them frighteningly close to the Americans. Unknown to the Americans, the Arab who should have been watching in the direction they came from had his eye on the building holding Angelique, wondering what his companion was up to in there. Two Arabs appeared and walked over to the Germans. The
German that was talking spoke in French, and Drew caught enough to realize that they were probably the only two Germans there. Then Dane saw the front of the halftrack, and silently pointed it out to the captain, who nodded. They slithered back down and joined the rest of the squad.

“It sounded like there could only be two Germans, what do you think?” asked Drew.

Dane considered, “Undoubtedly they have food there, and then there’s the vehicle. We could drive close to Sfax, hide it out, and then have transportation back to our lines. That would shave days off of the trip. It’s a small group out here in the middle of nowhere; they might not be missed for days.”

Drew nodded, “That’s what I was thinking too. The buildings are made of stone, we can’t let them hole up in them and turn it into a fire fight. We need to take out the men outside and get into those buildings fast. Shaw, you take Woolson and break into the building on the left. I’ll take Zabronska and take the building on the right. Tielson, Fredericks and Webster give covering fire and shoot at the people outside.”

Dane hesitated and looked over at Woolson. Andy looked back at him with a determined look on his face and a hopeful look in his eyes. Dane could tell that he wanted to try. To refuse him could destroy what little confidence the boy had gained in the last few months. Dane nodded his agreement, and in a couple of minutes the plan was put into operation. The four enemies were still outside when the four Americans started slipping closer to the buildings. Andy gripped his rifle hard and gulped. He watched as Dane silently, like a cat, sprinted downhill to a boulder. It was only big enough for one to hide behind. After a careful look, Dane advanced to another boulder. Still the enemy hadn’t noticed anything. Dane gestured to Andy, who took a deep breath, rose to his feet and hunched over and moved as quietly as possible to the first boulder. He had done it! His heart was in his mouth. He could do this; he could do something without being clumsy and tripping! With new found confidence he watched as Dane made a rush to some boulders near the target.

Dane peered out, nobody had seen him yet. He caught a glimpse of the captain creeping closer to the other building. He motioned for Woolson to advance again. Andy started a run to join Dane. He tripped and fell.

Instantly, the Arabs and Germans heard him and turned and stared at the fallen figure for a second. Recognizing the uniform, they raised their guns and gunfire erupted. Dane saw Woolson start to rise and then fall back down. He saw one of the Germans throw up his hands and collapse, the Arabs running towards the other building, with the captain rushing to head them off. Dane ran to his building and kicked the door open. He stared into the terrified eyes of a woman, bound and gagged in a chair across the room from him. For a split second he stopped in shock, and then threw himself violently backwards out the door, a bullet fired from inside just missing him and splattering him with bits of stone from where it smashed into the stone doorway. Frantically, he wriggled his way around the corner of the building, away from the firefight raging in front.

He paused, wondering how he was going to get in. The walls were made of stone and the little windows were shuttered. Suddenly he remembered that the woman hadn’t been in darkness, sunlight was shining on her. The roof! That had to be it; there must be a hole in the roof. He silently slipped behind the building. About in the middle of the length of the building and opposite the door on the other side, he laid down his submachine gun, bent his knees, and
jumped for the roof only about a foot and a half above his head. His hands caught the edge, and using his powerful shoulder muscles, he silently pulled his head up. He was looking down into the room through the hole, the woman just below him, her gaze fixed on the door. He located the spot from where the bullet had come from, and saw an Arab barricaded in the corner. From here Dane had a clear shot at him. He carefully pulled his .45 out, aimed, and shot. The Arab fell. Dane kept looking to see if there were any others in the room or if the Arab moved, but the only movement was from the woman, who was staring up at him wide-eyed. Dane dropped back down to the ground, picked up his submachine gun, and went around the corner. The firing was over; he saw the other German down, and that the Arabs had surrendered. He walked into the building and removed her gag. Immediately she started jabbering in a language he thought sounded French.

“Ma’am, if you don’t speak English, we are going to have a communication problem,” he said as he cut her ropes binding her.

“Oui, I speak English,” she quivered, and then threw her arms around him and started crying. Startled, Dane stood there for a moment, and then tenderly put his arms around her. Angelique felt a tender touch for the first time since she could hardly remember when, and sobbed even harder, while Dane’s heart softened and reached out to this poor woman.

“What’s going on?” asked a startled voice from the doorway. Dane turned his head to see Captain Matthews standing there, “Rescuing a damsel in distress, sir,” he quipped. Drew shook his head in wonderment, and when she raised her head from Dane’s shoulder, Drew caught his breath at her elegant beauty and tearstained face.

Dane looked at her, “What is your name?” he asked softly.

“Angelique, Angelique DuBois,” she answered her rescuer, giving him a wide-eyed look from her dark eyes. Dane felt his heart thud from the look and her nearness, “I am Dane Shaw.” She gave a tremulous heartfelt smile, “Merci, Monsieur.” Drew cleared his throat, drawing their attention, “I am Captain Drew Matthews,” and added something in French. At once Angelique started babbling away, and Dane looked in confusion from one to the other. “Sir,” he snapped, the victim of a strange emotion, “wouldn’t it be better to speak in English so then we will all know what is going on?” forgetting that he was the only one not able to understand. “Of course, corporal,” Drew said loftily, assuaging his own jealousy.

When the three of them emerged from the building, all eyes glued onto Angelique. Fredericks gave a wolf whistle, “Look what the corporal found!” Dane shut him up with a look. He cast a quick glance around, Tielson and Fredericks were holding guns on the two prisoners, and the camels had run off, obviously scared off by the gunfire. Dane tightened his lips at that. He walked over to Woolson and looked down at him, he was obviously dead. Dane tightened his lips again, but in sorrow. The poor kid, he had tried so hard, maybe he should have insisted that another take Woolson’s place. Dane sighed, no; he couldn’t have taken Woolson’s manhood away like that. The others would have known why Woolson was replaced and Woolson wouldn’t have been able to hold his head up among them. Then Zabronski caught his attention, he was staring at Angelique with a hot burning look in his black eyes. Dane instinctively moved protectively closer to her, then became all business.

“Has anyone searched the prisoners?” he asked. By the blank looks he received, he knew no one had. He handed his submachine gun to Drew, approached the first Arab and started searching, Angelique stopping just short of the two Arabs. He saw out of the corner of his eye
that Fredericks’ attention was on Angelique, and was about to reprimand him when he noticed the second Arab’s upraised hand start to move to the back of his neck.

Dane shot him.

His flashing speed as he drew and fired his gun caught everyone by surprise and for a second there was silence. Then Angelique screamed and Drew started forward, his face becoming red, “What are you doing? We don’t shoot unarmed prisoners!” he yelled. Dane pointed to the Arab he had started to search, “Tielson, if he twitches, kill him,” he commanded. He strode over to the fallen body and pulled down the back of the robe. In a sheath hanging between the dead man’s shoulder blades was a knife. “Handy place for a knife if your hands are up in the air,” he said conversationally. He looked critically at the harness and then removed it and stood up. Everyone was staring at him as he looked around, “Finish searching the prisoner,” he ordered. Tielson and Webster complied, but did not find any weapons, especially not a knife hanging down his back.

Dane went and looked at the dead Germans, “I wonder why they were here for?” he asked out loud. Angelique spat on one, her face a mask of hate and fear, “Gestapo!”

“Gestapo?” Drew queried, “Are you sure?”

“Bien sûr, I am sure.”

“Why would Gestapo be holed up here for?” The three of them looked at each other in perplexity.

“Hey captain,” Fredericks came out of the building where the Germans had been, “plenty of food in here.”

“Good,” Drew answered, and then, “Let’s check out that halftrack.”

---

Chapter Eight
February 1 Evening

Drew, Dane, and Angelique walked around the building and looked at the halftrack. It was set up to haul troops, with a canopy over its bed. Drew checked out the cab while Dane and Angelique looked at the bed. There were three cases sitting there. Curious, Dane opened one of them. The box was full of silverware, jewelry, wedding rings, gilded picture frames, and other valuables. Surprised, Dane and Angelique stared at it. Dane quickly opened up the other two cases. The second was just like the first, but in the third one there were also a number of cloth bags. When Dane opened one of the bags, money spilled out.

“Well, won’tcha look at that?” said a voice behind them. They whirled around to see Zabronski and Webster looking at the wealth. The captain hurried from the cab and gaped at the open boxes, “Where did that come from?”

Angelique swayed, her face white. “Oh, those poor people!”

The others looked at her. “What do you mean?” asked Dane.

“This must be the loot from the Jews. The Gestapo rounded them up, and the rumor is that they were all killed.”

The others were stunned. “You mean they killed all of them, men, women and children?” Drew was incredulous.

“But yes,” Angelique nodded vehemently.
“So that’s why they are here, someone’s trying to make off with the loot,” Dane said slowly.

“Major Lindisl,” Angelique breathed and shivered. At their questioning looks she went on, “He is in charge of the Gestapo in this part of Tunisia. It is rumored that he personally oversaw the looting and murders,” she shivered again. “Oh,” she was startled as remembered something. “I heard one of the Germans mention Major Lindisl’s name.” She shivered for the third time.

Dane drew Drew aside, “Captain, I don’t like this. I would feel better if we left here now.”

Drew bit his lip indecisively, “I don’t know, Shaw. Angelique is on her last legs, we have shelter here and it is practically dusk. How much further could we go? I think we would be better off staying here for the night.”

Dane looked around, not liking the answer but not seeing an alternative either, “Yes, sir.” Then seeing a pick and shovel, he took them and handed them to Zabronski, “Here, have that Arab start digging graves, and I don’t want shallow ones!” He shut the cases and walked back and into the building, Angelique following him. Drew stared after them, he had noticed that everywhere the corporal went, Angelique was with him. “She sure is a good looker, isn’t she Captain?” Zabronski gave a sly grin. Drew cursed, “Get those graves dug!” and stalked off.

Inside the hut, Dane looked around. There was a kitchen area with a table in the main room, and a smaller room off of it with a door. He nodded to himself and motioned for Angelique to sit down. She collapsed onto a chair at the table. He gave her a critical look. The captain was right, she couldn’t go any farther. Captain Matthews came in just then and Dane nodded to him. He turned and saw a coffeepot on the fire and checked the contents. “Would you like some coffee?” he asked Angelique.

“Oui, Monsieur Shaw.”

“Dane, please,” he smiled encouragingly at her.

“Oui, Dane,” she gave a trembling smile back.

He poured her a cup and then held the pot up questioningly to the captain. Drew nodded and Dane poured him a cup also, and placed the cups on the table and they all sat down.

Drew cleared his throat, “How did you wind up here?”

Angelique shuddered, “I left Faid because the Boche took my house and was on my way to Sfax to see if I could stay with some acquaintances.”

“To Sfax?” Drew sat up straight. “Do you know Sfax?”

She gave him a puzzled glance, “I have been there a few times. Why, Monsieur Matthews?”

“Call me Drew,” after all if he can do it, so can I, Drew thought to himself. Angelique gave him a shy smile. Drew went on, “Have you heard of a café called Le Belle Francais?”

“Le Belle Francais?” she repeated, and then, “Oh, oh yes, I have been there once or twice. Why, mons…Drew?”

Drew leaned forward in his intensity, “I need to go to that café, could you take me there?”

Angelique drew back in horror, “Non, non, how could I lead you Americans into there? We would all be killed!” Her nerves were shot and she started shaking. Dane reached out and took her hand, which she grasped like a lifeline, “Captain, let’s wait until she’s rested before asking her any more, she’s had a bad day. Let her get a good rest tonight and talk to her in the morning.”

“Tonight,” she repeated, and then her eyes opened wide in terror, “They were, they were going to take turns at me tonight!” She howled and threw herself into Dane’s arms, sobbing hysterically. He wrapped his arms tenderly around her and murmured comforting sounds until her sobs quieted into hiccups. He raised her head and tenderly wiped her eyes with his
“Is that why they had you tied up,” Dane asked gently.

Angelique shuddered and nodded, “The one you killed, he was telling me what they were going to do to me. I tried to run away and they tied me up. They gagged me because they were tired of my screaming.” She explained how she had been captured.

Tielson came in just then, wiping his face, “It sure is hard work digging those holes in the stony soil.” Drew cleared his throat, “I’ll go take care of the bodies. Shaw, you and Tielson prepare supper,” and he left.

As Dane and Tielson bustled around preparing supper, Angelique drooped at the table, holding her cup of coffee in both hands. Dane had held her so tenderly both times she had flung herself into his arms, and yet she had felt the latent strength in his arms that made her feel so safe and secure. It had been a long time since she had felt that way. It also had not escaped her notice that Dane, and not the captain, that had issued most of the orders. He had such an air of command about him that she had been shocked to discover that she was actually a little taller than he was. On the other hand, it had been so nice to converse in French with the good looking captain and not have to think up the English words when she was so tired. She closed her eyes and drooped some more.

When supper was ready the others were called in. Fredericks and Zabronski started for the same chair. Zabronski glared at Fredericks, and Fredericks chose another chair. They started to eat, but no one noticed that Dane briefly bowed his head before he started eating. When they were done, Dane indicated the Arab with his thumb, “What do we do with him?” he asked the captain. Drew looked at him blankly, “What do you mean, ‘what do we do with him?’”

“Do we take him with us, set him free, or what?”

Drew continued to look blank, “I, I don’t know.”

Dane looked at Angelique, “Do you know anything about these Arabs?”

“Jackals! They are jackals of the desert,” she spat. “They would sell their own mothers for a franc.”

Dane looked at the captain, “We can’t take him with us, can we?” Drew shook his head. Dane went on, “I know I can’t kill an unarmed prisoner.” Drew looked up with a startled expression, “Of course not!” he exclaimed, and then went on hesitantly, “I guess we’ll have to let him go. He can’t keep up with us on foot.”

Dane gave him an enigmatic look, and then asked, “Has anyone seen the camels?” Drew was puzzled by the question, but Fredericks said, “I’ve caught glimpses of them, but they are keeping their distance. I guess they don’t like our smell.” He laughed at his own joke.

Dane looked back at Drew, “Once we have gone he won’t have any trouble catching those camels and following us. I for one don’t fancy getting my throat slit in the middle of the night.”

He gave a surreptitious wink to Drew. “Maybe we can leave him tied up when we leave in the morning for,” he paused, trying to think of a place not in the direction they were heading. “Kairouan,” Drew supplied, divining what Dane was getting at and naming a town to the north. They both noticed with satisfaction the Arab’s response while the others look puzzled and Angelique started to say, “But aren’t we…” Dane halted her with a glance, “We’re keeping that a secret for now. Tielson,” Dane addressed him, “take the prisoner to the other building and tie him up tight. Angelique, you can sleep in the other room, we’ll all sleep out here.”

Drew started to get angry at the orders being cast around and opened his mouth, but then he
shut it. The corporal’s orders were logical, and to argue would only seem to make him look small. Still, he determined to have a private talk with him about who was in charge.

Angelique caught Dane’s arm, “Please, I am so scared,” she whispered. Dane patted her hand reassuringly, “I’ll sleep outside your door.” She smiled at him, rose and went into the room and closed the door.

Dane started to say something, stopped, and looked at the captain. He had noticed the look on his face when he had given out the last batch of orders. “Shall I set the guard, sir?” Drew shot him a look from narrowed eyes, but could see no evidence of mockery. “Go ahead, corporal.”

“Zabronski, you take the first watch, Webster the second, Fredericks the third and Tielson the fourth. Two hour watches, check the prisoner every half hour, stay outside and stay alert.”

When everything was done and the men were getting starting to bunk down, Dane pulled a Bible out of his pocket and started reading. Webster tittered, “Are you going to read us a sermon?” Dane gave him a level look, “Why, do you want one?” he asked calmly. Webster’s laugh died away as he looked at the others and saw no support. Fredericks and Tielson were used to their corporal’s habit, and Drew was surprised to see someone actually reading a GI issued Bible. Dane read for a few minutes, and then went and lay down in front of the Angelique’s door.

Before they fell asleep, four people had busy minds. Angelique thought of her hero, the man who had rescued her and of his tenderness. Dane thought of how she felt in his arms and how protective he felt towards her. Drew thought of how elegant and pretty she looked, and how he wished he chosen that building and rescued her instead of the corporal. Zabronski’s mind was full of the lust he had felt since he had first laid eyes on her, and he also thought of all that loot, and how it might wind up in his hands and far away from any retribution.

Georgi Zabronski was the son of Russian emigrants who had fled the turmoil in Russia after World War 1 had ended. His father would beat his wife and children when he was drunk, and he liked to drink. One night when Georgi was sixteen, his father came home drunk and started to hit him. Georgi, already big and strong for his age, suddenly had had enough. In a fit of rage he beat his father into a bloody pulp. Georgi took all the money in the house and left, never looking back.

He spent the next few years roaming about, stealing things and beating people up. Usually his large size would intimidate his victims, but if not his crushing blows would swiftly win any fistfight. But he was not all brawn and no brain, more often than not his cunning stratagems were successful, although he did suffer from the same failing that most crooks have; namely that they think they are smarter than honest people. If a woman caught his eye he wouldn’t rest until he had her; few were the women who escaped him.

This night Zabronski went outside to stand the first watch. He checked the prisoner and made sure his bonds were tight, and then made his way to the halftrack. He felt his way into the dark bed and fumbled with the case that held the money. With a ‘creak’ the lid lifted. By touch he found a bag and thrust his hand inside, taking a handful of paper notes and shoving them into his pocket.

He stopped. This was a pittance of what was here. He would need a plan to take the whole vehicle and what was in it. He put the money back and shut the lid and climbed back out. He tried to think of a way to hijack the halftrack. The captain he dismissed as rather weak and inept, the corporal could be handled, but he hesitated, there was something in Shaw’s eyes …nah, he
shook his head, he could break the smaller man in half like a twig. But just to be on the safe side, maybe he should see if he could get some of the other men on his side. Afterwards, well, he had double-crossed others before. He spent the rest of his watch thinking about Angelique and how to get her into his power.

Chapter Nine
February 2, Morning

Angelique woke up the next morning and stretched. She had not slept so well in months. The shocking events of the previous day had totally exhausted her, and with a full stomach and the knowledge that her hero was protecting her all night long, she had passed a restful night. “What a wonderful man he is,” she thought to herself with a tender smile, as she pictured Dane’s face. So strong, so tender, but then, inexplicably, the face of the captain appeared in her mind, with his rather nice smile. Suddenly she was confused, “Why was she thinking of him also? But it was rather nice to have two men…” She smiled to herself and got up, as she could hear the men moving around in the next room.

She brushed her black hair until it shone and then looked at her two changes of clothes with a moue of disappointment; they were neat, but not all that clean and rather wrinkled. With a sigh, she put on the cleaner outfit and made a mental note to wash her things the first chance she got.

When she opened her door, she saw the blanket and backpack in front of her door. She looked up and saw Dane and they exchanged smiles. She realized he had left them there so she could see he had kept his word, and she felt her heart swell at his thoughtfulness. Then she felt other eyes on her, and turned her head to see Zabronski staring at her. His black eyes made her shiver and instantly Dane was between them. He spoke over his shoulder, “Zabronski, since you are done eating go relieve the captain so he can come and eat.”

Zabronski leaned back in his chair, “Just as soon as I finish my coffee.”

Dane whirled around, “I said now! You can finish your coffee outside.” The two men stared at each other, and then Zabronski got up and stamped off. Dane stared after him with a frown between his eyes, knowing that he was going to have trouble with him in the future.

When Drew came in, the three of them sat down to eat, Angelique sitting between him and Dane and savoring the breakfast. This time they noticed that Dane bowed his head before he started eating, but they politely ignored it.

“Oh, Mon Dieu, you have no idea how good this tastes,” she beamed at both of them. “The meals I have been eating lately,” and she rolled her eyes. Drew reached out and touched her hand in sympathy, and she turned her hand and gripped his, and then reached out and held Dane’s hand. “Merci, thank you both, so much,” she choked, “when I think of what this morning would be like if you hadn’t come.” She couldn’t go on. The two men, embarrassed at her thanks, couldn’t answer either.

Drew cleared his throat (Angelique thought to herself that he seems to do that a lot), “I was wondering, you said you knew the café Le Belle Francais. I need a guide to take me there, could you lead me there?”

“But how could you go there? You are an American soldier?” she asked wide-eyed.

“I have, did have, “he corrected himself bitterly, “civilian clothes and I do have an id
naming me as one Etienne Pinochet, an exporter of fruit. Would you take me to the café?”

Angelique slowly nodded, “I, I guess I could, but what would you wear?” indicating his clothes.

Drew frowned in concentration, “Do you know of a shop where you could buy me a suit of clothes?”

“Oui, but that takes money and I have none.”

“I have francs, more than enough.”

“Well,” she gave a Gallic shrug, “oui, I can do that.”

“Good girl!” and he squeezed her hand in relief.

Dane stood up, “In that case, we had better get moving. With your permission sir, I’ll start loading up.”

Just before they left, Dane made sure the ropes holding the Arab were slightly loose, so he could free himself in a few hours, and then ordered the men into the back of the halftrack. Zabronski very leisurely stood up, stretched, and slowly made his way over. When he finally climbed into the vehicle, he gave the corporal an insolent look. Dane stared back at him, “Zabronski,” he warned quietly, “next time I’ll leave you.” He shut the door and got into the cab.

Dane drove the halftrack, with Angelique sitting between him and Drew. As they started driving cross country, going up and down the ridges and across the rough terrain, Angelique was being thrown from side to side. Drew put his arm around her to steady her, and she relaxed against him. He saw Dane look over at him and could tell that he didn’t like it; he couldn’t resist giving a superior smile to the corporal. He was the one holding her this time. Then he saw Dane glance at her, and saw his eyes soften and the ends of his lips quirk up in a smile and then switch his gaze back to him. Intuitively, Drew realized that Dane was concerned only about Angelique’s wellbeing, and since she needed help that only Drew could give, he was glad of it. Drew’s smile twisted as he wondered if he could be so magnanimous if the positions were reversed.

Drew thought of something, “Angelique, I need some practice with my French, could I converse with you?” He gave an apologetic look to Dane, realizing how left out he would feel not understanding what was being said, but he felt it was needful, and he saw in Dane’s face that he realized it too.

“Mais bien sûr,” she replied, and then translated for Dane, “but of course.” Drew hesitated, wondering what to say. She gave him a hint, “Tell me about the United States.” He started in talking, and as the hours went by he found it easier to speak, and Angelique helped him out whenever he got stuck on a phrase. Her eyes got round as he told about his country. He talked of the vast Texas prairie, of wheat fields in Kansas that extended for mile after mile, of the tree covered and beautiful Smokey Mountains, of the soaring majesty of the Rocky Mountains. He mentioned the Grand Canyon, the Statute of Liberty, and eating oranges plucked from trees in Florida.

“I would like to see your country sometime,” she exclaimed. “Perhaps one day you will,” Drew replied. Angelique smiled shyly and dropped her head, and then glanced over at Dane.

In the back of the halftrack, Zabronski kept his mind on the boxes and the girl, trying to come up with ideas on how to possess both. “Whatcha think of the captain?” he asked in the age old grousing voice of the privates discussing the shortcomings of their officers. Webster tittered, “I don’t think he has much of a plan for getting in, much less for getting us out.”

“No,” Zabronski agreed. “You know, this spying business is supposed to be done by
volunteers. We didn’t volunteer. If we all get together and refuse to go any further, what could he do?”

Tielson almost bounced out of his seat as the halftrack hit a hole. “We were ordered to help the captain. I’m relying on Corporal Shaw, he’ll see us through,” he said confidently.

“What makes you think that?” Zabronski queried.

“He’s GOOD. He’s tough and he’s smart and he plans ahead. If we get out of this with all our hides, it will be because of him.”

Zabronski subsided. Evidently when he made his plans, he would have to make allowances for the corporal.

The sun climbed higher in the sky, the day got hotter, and the constant shaking and tossing as they went up, down, and sometimes sideways, was giving them a beating. At last, with the sun high in the sky, Dane asked Drew, “I’m thinking it’s time to break for lunch, what do you think, sir?”

“Yes,” Drew looked ahead, “that looks like as good a spot as any.” Dane pulled into the spot and stopped. The three of them crawled painfully out of the cab and walked to the front of the halftrack. The four privates crawled even more painfully out from the back of the vehicle.

“Corp,” Tielson asked half joking, “Did you miss any bumps?” Dane shook his head sorrowfully, “I think I did a few miles back, maybe we should go back and hit it. What do you think?” Fredericks groaned, “If you do, I think I would rather walk the rest of the way.” Everyone laughed.

As the meal was being prepared, Dane asked Drew, “How much further do you think?” Drew shook his head, “I’m not sure. According to the compass we’ve been heading east-south-east. We should either run into the Faid-Sfax Road, or Sfax itself. If we go too far south we’ll run into the Mediterranean, but I really think we aren’t heading that far south. I think by evening we’ll be pretty close.”

After they ate, they rested for an hour. Fredericks sat by Angelique, trying to make an impression on her. She thought he was a nice boy, which wasn’t the impression he was trying to make.

Eugene Fredericks was a natural born follower. As a youth he had joined a gang in Baltimore, and he equated leadership with size. The gang leader had been a large kid, and when he had joined the squad he transferred his loyalty to the big sergeant. He had always underestimated the corporal because of his small stature. Now he was more impressed by Zabronski and inclined to follow his leading.

Bob Tielson, on the other hand, did not underestimate Shaw. He had recognized early on the ability of the corporal, and realized the better decisions the sergeant had made had actually been suggested by the smaller man.

Bob had grown up in upstate New York. Since he was a boy he had hunted, fished, and camped in the woods surrounding his home. His parents’ main source of income was an orchard of apple trees. A large garden and the game he brought in subsidized their dinner table. His father had gripped his hand hard, and his mother had held back the tears when they said goodbye to him when he left for the war. He thought of them now, wondering how they were doing. He surely missed the cool green forest and his home. He also thought of Mary Schubert. They were never an item or anything, but he had always liked her, liked talking to her. Several of the other boys in the area were sweet on her, but she never seemed to favor one over another. Maybe he
would write a letter to her the next chance he had, just a newsy letter, just to see how she was doing.

After a bit, Angelique rose to her feet, “Monsieurs, I need to take a walk.” As she gracefully swayed out of sight, Fredericks gave another wolf whistle. Twin voices snapped, “Fredericks!” and twin glares from the captain and corporal momentarily deflated him. When she returned, Drew announced, “Okay everyone, mount up.” Amid a series of groans, the others rose stiffly to their feet and hobbled to the halftrack, everyone but Zabronski, who continued to lie there. Dane shot him a look, and when everyone else was in, got in the cab and started it. Zabronski sat up, Dane put it in gear and started moving, and Zabronski jumped up and started running and dove into the vehicle. Dane gave a self-satisfied smile. His smile froze as he saw a group of Arabs on camels on a not-to-distant ridge, watching them. The others in the cab saw them too and Drew moved uneasily, “This is a German vehicle.”

Dane shot him a look, “Yeah, but the uniform wasn’t.”

“Did they see him?” this from Angelique as she stared at the Arabs with a white face.

“Unless they are all blind, they couldn’t help but see,” Dane said bitterly.

As the nine Arabs sat on their camels and watched the halftrack disappear in the distance, the leader squinted his sharp eyes. “That was a German vehicle,” one of the Arabs stated in Derja, their native dialect of Arabic. “But that wasn’t a German uniform that jumped into it,” the leader replied. “It was an American uniform.”

“Maybe he is a prisoner?” another opined.

“Son of a donkey,” the leader snapped, “since when would a prisoner jump into his captor’s vehicle, he would jump out of it.” He gave a long look after it. “Apparently those are Americans driving a German vehicle behind German lines. I smell profit here, my children. Let us follow them and see what we discover tonight.” With an evil grin he led his men after them.

Back to Table of Contents

Chapter Ten
February 2 Lindisl

SS Major Lindisl, on detached duty as head of security in southern Tunisia, was riding in his kubelwagon, the German equivalent of the American jeep, when it topped the rise and he saw the two buildings. “Stop!” he yelled at his driver. As the vehicle sat and idled, he gave the area a piercing look. There was no sign of life and no halftrack. He caught movement from the corner of his eye, turned his head and saw the three camels standing on another ridge, sniffing up the wind. He knew then that something terrible had happened; the Arabs would never have willingly left their camels behind if they had left in the halftrack. “Go,” he ordered his driver.

As they stopped in front of the buildings, the Arab came out of the smaller one, shedding a rope as he came out, a frightened look on his face as he caught sight of the major. “What happened?” Major Lindisl commanded.

“Master, they came in shooting, they caught us by surprise, we had no chance,” he stuttered. Lindisl grabbed and shook him like a rag doll, “Who, who shot you, who took the halftrack?”

“Amercians, Master,” he whined.

At first stunned by the answer, Lindisl recovered and lifted the Arab off of his feet by his grip on the front of his robe, “How do you know they were Americans?” he thundered.
“By their uniforms, master,” he gasped. Lindisl threw him to the ground. “Where are the others? Where are the cases that were in the halftrack? Talk, you dog, or you will never speak again!”

“Oh Master, the others are all dead,” he groveled. He swiveled an eye around the area, “I don’t know about the cases, the last time I saw them, they were in the vehicle.”

“Why are you not dead?”

“Allah was merciful to me, I fought hard, but I was overpowered and they captured me. I only just now escaped from the bonds. See, the rope is lying just over there. Oh, have mercy on me, oh Great Master, I am your loyal servant.”

Lindisl was trying to control his mighty anger at having his loot stolen; there was a mystery here that he needed to get to the bottom of. “Sergeant,” he bellowed at his driver, “go search the buildings, see what you can find.” The driver had been trying to make himself invisible because when the major was angry, he wasn’t particular about whom he lashed at, and was only too glad to make himself scarce. Lindisl regarded the Arab narrowly, “So why didn’t they kill you?” The Arab just shrugged, “I don’t know, Master.”

“Soft Americans,” Lindisl grunted in disgust. ‘And why were they here?’ he thought to himself.

The sergeant came out, “Nothing, Major.” Dane had done a good job of cleaning out all evidence that they had ever been there. The sergeant disappeared around the buildings. “Do you know where they were going or what direction they went?” Lindisl asked the frightened Arab.

“No Master,” he brightened, “but I did hear them say Kairouan.”

The sergeant returned, “It looks like there was some digging behind that building,” he pointed.

Lindisl grunted, “Dog, go dig up what is buried, Sergeant, go with him.” He went to where the halftrack had been parked, and laboriously followed the faint tracks in the stony soil up to the ridge and looked in the direction the tracks went. “Southeast, not north,” he muttered to himself, “that’s why they let the dog live. Now why southeast? Are they fugitives from the battle and trying to circle around and make it to their own lines, or are they on a mission? And if on a mission, where to? Sfax is in that direction, or are they heading towards Gabes and the British lines? No, Sfax, they must be heading for Sfax. Why, I wonder?” He turned and tramped back to where the other two were digging. The Arab had helped to dig the grave, but he had not seen what was put into it. The sergeant looked up, “They buried whatever is here deep, Major.” After about ten more minutes the shovel struck something soft. They brushed back some dirt and saw some white clothing. In a few more minutes they pulled out an Arab body. After another half hour they had all five bodies, but no sign of buried treasure. Lindisl searched the body of the American but found only empty pockets and scowled down at it. Finally he stood up, “Throw the bodies back in and fill the hole up,” he ordered. As the Arab dropped the last body in the hole, Lindisl drew his gun and shot him. “He knew too much,” he told the startled sergeant. “Throw him in and fill the hole.” As the sergeant started to cover the bodies, he waited to feel a bullet in his back, but the major just stared off into space, anger simmering in him for whoever it was that had stolen the loot he had stolen.

Back to Table of Contents
Chapter Eleven
February 2, Afternoon

As Zabronski sprawled into the bed of the moving halftrack, he turned the air blue with his cursing. Tielson remarked calmly, “He warned you.” Zabronski scrambled into his seat, “I’ll get even with that little,” and again he used several words not used in polite company. Fredericks piped up, “I don’t know if you could, he’s one tough cookie.” Zabronski glared both of them into silence. After a while he kicked one of the cases, “Makes a fellow think, doesn’t it?”

Tielson looked at him, “What do you mean?”

“I mean all this stuff here, just waiting to be picked up.”

Tielson shrugged, “It doesn’t belong to us.”

“You know what she said, the owners were all killed. That means it’s finders keepers.”

“It means that this stuff belongs to the heirs. It’s not ours.”

Zabronski turned to the others, “What do you think? If all the kids were killed too, then there are no heirs. We have just as much right to this as anybody else.” Webster didn’t say anything, but Zabronski could tell his words had a powerful effect on him; he was sure that he could talk him around. Fredericks shrugged nervously, “The corporal would never stand for it, and I doubt the captain will either.”

“They are probably planning on keeping it themselves,” Zabronski was quick to plant a seed of doubt in their minds.

Webster gaped at him with wide eyes, “You really think so?” The other two looked at each other and shook their heads. “Not the corporal,” Tielson stated, “and you had better stop talking about it.”

Zabronski shut his mouth; he knew that what he had said would start working on the others’ minds, except maybe Tielson’s. He might have to get rid of him. That should be easy to do in the middle of a war.

Up in the cab, Angelique was once more being steadied by the captain. She looked over to Dane and asked curiously, “Why do you bow your head before you eat?”

“I am thanking God for the food,” he answered calmly, dodging a hump as he did so.

“But why do you do that for?” she asked again.

“It is God who brought the sunshine and the rain and caused the grain to sprout and grow. It is God that has the animals that supplied the meat to reproduce and grow. It is because of his goodness towards us that he meets our needs, so therefore I thank Him and praise Him for it.”

Drew cleared his throat, “I don’t think that I have seen anybody reading their Bible like I have seen you read yours, why do you do it?”

Dane swerved to avoid a nasty bump and at the same time silently asked God for wisdom in witnessing to these two precious souls. “The Bible is God’s Word to us, He tells us how to act towards other people, how to live our lives, and most of all, it explains about Jesus Christ.”

“But not just everyone can read the Bible,” Angelique interjected, “one must have special training to interpret and understand it.”

“Why?”

She looked at Dane in perplexity, “Because it is too hard to comprendre.”

“Is it? Have you ever tried to read it for yourself?”

“Non, of course not!” She was shocked at the suggestion. Dane pulled his Bible out of his
pocket and handed it to her, “Here, you can read this one.” Just then they hit a dip and their heads almost hit the roof. They all laughed, “Well, maybe after we stop you can read it.”

The hot afternoon passed as they bounced and jostled their way closer and closer to their destination. Suddenly Drew shouted and pointed to their left, “Look out! There’s the highway!” Dane shot a look in that direction and saw the road through a break in the hills, about a mile away, with traffic on it. He twisted the wheel and drove into a ravine and stopped. “That was close,” he breathed.

Drew scowled, trying to remember the map. “The road is heading southeast, straight to Sfax. We’ll need to stay south of it from here on.”

Dane tapped the fuel gauge, “We are also getting low on fuel, I’ll get a fuel can out and put some in.”

“Good idea,” Drew agreed. “We all can get out and stretch our legs.” They clambered out and walked to the back of the halftrack to let the men out. Suddenly Dane stopped and a look of horror spread across his face. Startled, the others look around, but could see no danger. “Of all the stupid, stupid, idiotic idiots!” Dane shouted, absolutely furiously angry. “How could I have been so stupid!” He was so mad he snatched his helmet from off his head and dashed it to the ground; it bounced up and almost hit him. The others gaped at him, “What’s wrong?” Drew asked.

“Look at that!” the corporal pointed to the ground behind the vehicle. Now that he had pointed them out, they could see the faint and sporadic tracks of the halftrack in the rocky soil. Tielson whistled softly while Dane raged on. “And I drove straight from the buildings to here, anybody seeing those tracks will know exactly where we are heading!”

“Corporal!” the captain thundered, “Get a hold of yourself!” The two men glared at each other while Dane gradually calmed down. Finally he reached down, picked up his helmet and jammed it on his head. “Yes, sir.”

“Now, it might not be that bad. The tracks are hard to see and they might be missed,” Drew reasoned.

Dane shook his head, “If I can see them just a little, it would be just like a road map to those Arabs.” Drew looked skeptical, but Tielson agreed, “Corporal Shaw is right, sir.” Dane went on bitterly, “If only I had driven north when we left, that might have thrown them a little, but I didn’t think of it.”

“Corporal Shaw,” the captain squared his jaw, “I am the one in command, not you. It is just as much, if not more, my fault as yours. Now, stop blaming yourself and let’s come up with a plan.” The two of them moved away from the others. “But sir, if anything should happen to Angelique because of my stupidity…” his voice trailed away as the shorter man turned agonized eyes to his superior. The captain gripped the other man’s arm, “We’ll just have to do our best to see that nothing does.” Dane looked up at Drew and regained his composure, “Yes sir, we will.” Drew was amazed at the look of sheer determination that was on Dane’s face. He also gave a wry smile at Dane’s words. His first thought was for Angelique; apparently, Dane was falling in love with her. Drew squared his jaw; he would just have to give the corporal a run for his money.

Dane took a deep breath and looked around, trying desperately to come up with a plan. He silently asked God for help. An idea came to him. “I think we had better ditch the halftrack, sir. If I turn and drive it north and the rest of you start walking towards Sfax,” he pointed southeast, “that should throw anyone off the trail, at least for a while.” He was in command of himself now.
The captain slowly nodded his head, “Sounds good to me. We can’t be too far away from Sfax now, but I think I should go with you. There should be two of us who knows where the halftrack is in case we need it and something happens to you.”

They went back and told the others the plan. While the men got back into the vehicle, Drew made sure he helped Angelique into the cab and received her smile as a reward. Dane slowly drove it to a place where the rocks would not show footprints. He stopped the halftrack and all the supplies were unloaded. Drew walked up the ridge and carefully looked all around with binoculars, and then called Tielson up. “See that hill over there? The one with some green showing, there might be water there. It’s a couple of miles away, head for it but be careful. Shaw and I will meet you there. I thought I saw some movement back behind us, but quite a ways off, so watch your back also.” They rejoined the others and the captain continued, “Tielson, you are in charge. Take the party to the hill I showed you.” Dane added, “And Tielson, if you have any trouble, I will back you up in whatever action you take,” with a meaningful look at Zabronski’s back. “I understand,” Tielson nodded.

As the two men drove off, Drew recounted to Dane everything he had told Tielson, “I might have been mistaken about seeing something behind us, though.” Dane shook his head, “I have a hunch that you did see those Arabs behind us. I would expect them to follow us at a distance and attack our camp tonight. I am praying that this ruse will throw them off the scent, at least for a day or two.”

Drew looked at him quizzically, “Do you pray often?”

“Not as much as I should. Since He is the source of all wisdom and is all-knowing, it just makes sense to ask Him for direction and wisdom. James 1:5 says ‘If any one lack wisdom, let him ask of God’, and I know that I lack wisdom.”

Drew digested the fact that someone actually seemed to like to pray. They cautiously approached the road. After watching for a break in the traffic they sped across, leaving telltale tracks in the ground. After traveling about five miles, Dane pulled to a stop. “You know,” he said conversationally, “I would hate for anyone to stumble over this halftrack and find all that loot. How about if we hide it separate from the vehicle, like in one of those crevasses over there?”

Drew looked the side of the hill which had several such hiding places, “Hey, that sounds good to me. Did God tell you that idea?” he added a trifle sarcastically.

Dane shrugged, “I don’t know, it just came to me when I saw that hill.” Drew stared at him. He knew that no such idea had come to him when he looked at that hill, and he doubted that it ever would have. Maybe there was something to this praying after all. Again, the ground was stony and didn’t show their footprints as moved the three cases and hid them in the crevasses. It took them only a few minutes, and they were on their way again.

The draw they were in turned northeast at the place where they hid the cases, and they followed it. A few minutes later, they came to the road that went between Sfax and the Kairouan-Sousse road. They carefully reconnoitered and found a draw on the other side, and when there was no traffic drove across and into the draw. After about a quarter of a mile, they found a ravine just wide enough to drive the halftrack into. They looked at each other and nodded. Dane backed the vehicle in as far as it would go and checked to see if the front end protruded out. It didn’t. Dane cut a couple of dead bushes and planted them to hide the vehicle, and then cut two more and the two of them carefully brushed out the tracks all the way to the road. By then the sun was low in the west, and they started walking towards the rendezvous with the others.
Meanwhile, Tielson led the party towards the hill. As they walked along Zabronski placed himself beside Angelique. All of them were carrying a backpack, the men had the supplies and Angelique had her clothes and personal items.

“I could carry your pack for you,” Zabronski offered.

“Non, thank you monsieur,” was Angelique’s reply as she looked away from his intense black eyes.

“But I am strong, it would be nothing for me to carry it,” he boasted. He doubled up his arm, expanding his bicep. “I bet you haven’t seen anybody as strong as I am. Just two days ago I snapped an Arab’s neck with my bare hands.” He looked her up and down, his black eyes glittering. “I could just as easy carry you, and then you wouldn’t be so tired out.”

Angelique shuddered, both at the reference to the dead Arab and the suggestion. She definitely did not want him touching her. “Non, I can walk.” She walked faster to catch up with Tielson, but Zabronski easily kept pace.

“You shouldn’t be so standoffish,” Zabronski remonstrated. “We are all in this together and we will all need to work together if we are going to survive this mission. You may be glad that I am so strong and can take care of you,” he added meaningfully.

“Zabronski!” Tielson snapped at the bigger man. “Leave her alone.”

“Says who?” Zabronski sneered.

“I do.” Tielson glared at him with glacial blue eyes. “The captain put me in charge, and the corporal gave me full authority.”

Zabronski hesitated and looked at the others. Judging by the looks he was getting it would be him against three. It wasn’t time yet, he also didn’t care for that ‘full authority’ phrase. He smiled ingratiatingly and backed off. “I was just trying to be friendly,” he excused himself and fell back into line.

Angelique gave Tielson a grateful glance. She only felt secure when Dane or Drew were close by, and she felt the warmth that came from the knowledge that even now Dane was doing his best to protect her. She had an idea what Tielson meant, but she would make very sure not to be alone with the big Russian.

When they got to the hill, Tielson left them at the foot while he carefully scouted around, but found no sign of life. On the west side of the hill, there was an open, level place, large enough for them to camp in, backed by a sheer face. On the east side of the hill, a stream of water came out and tumbled down into a pool, the outflow running on down the hill. On that side were some trees, bushes and grass. Tielson knelt and plunged his hand into the water, and was surprised to find that it was warm. He took a mouthful of water and spat it out, “Well, it’s wet,” as he tasted the mineral rich water. From the top of the hill, he could see the buildings of Sfax in the distance, and he estimated they were about two miles away. He went back to the others and told them what he had found. “We’ll camp on the west face,” he announced, “and wait for the captain and corporal.”

“Did you say ‘warm’ water?” asked Fredericks. Tielson nodded. “Like as in bath water?”

Tielson smiled and nodded again. “Good, I haven’t had a bath for days, and with a beautiful girl around I need to make the best impression I can.”

Tielson laughed, ‘Okay, we all can use a good cleaning up. Fredericks, you and Webster go first. Ma’am,” he suggested diffidently, “you should remain here until we are done.”

“Oui,” she answered wearily, “I’ll start supper after I rest, if that’s acceptable to you,
monsieur?”

“Yes, yes of course,” and he hastily retreated.

After Webster and Fredericks had bathed, Tielson and Zabronski took their turn, and then the four men cleaned their uniforms. While they were doing so, Angelique took the opportunity to wash one set of clothes and left them hanging on some bushes to dry. By then it was full dark and they started eating. In a few minutes they heard a whistle, and Drew and Dane joined them.

Back to Table of Contents

Chapter Twelve
February 2, Night

Major Lindisl reached Sfax late that night, went straight to his headquarters, called up the Luftwaffe (German air force) headquarters, and talked to the on-duty officer. “Have there been any sightings of American soldiers on this side of the Eastern Dorsale Mountains?” he asked.

“Nein, Herr Major,” was the response.

He hung up the phone and called for his own on-duty officer. “Any reports from the Arabs about an American patrol in this area?” He received the same response. He dismissed the officer with a wave of his hand and sat drumming his fingers on his desk. After a few minutes he gave up and went to his quarters. He would have to consider long and hard over the events of this day, and he thought he could do it better here than at his headquarters. He fixed himself a bite to eat and then sat in his chair for a while, carefully going over in his mind everything he knew.

While the Americans were eating their supper, Tielson filled them in on what he had seen and discovered here, leaving out the confrontation with Zabronski.

“If I’m going to mingle with the townspeople tomorrow, I’d better have a bath too. How about you, Shaw?” Drew asked.

“No, I’ll wait until the morning,” Dane decided. “I’d better set the guard,” he went on. “I’ll take the first watch, Zabronski the second, Webster is third, and Fredericks the fourth. Tielson, you get the night off,” he grinned. Tielson grinned back.

Drew took off towards the pool, and the others lay down for the night, Angelique apart from the men, and Dane disappeared into the night. When Drew returned, he was shivering from the cold air but he felt good and clean and the water had retained its warmth. Webster sat up, “Captain, it’s getting chilly, can we get a fire going to warm us up?” Drew looked around, “If we pile up those rocks so the flames won’t be visible out there, I don’t see why not.” And in a few minutes they had a fire going and almost everyone was asleep.

The lone exception was Angelique. She also desperately wanted a bath, but there was no way she was taking one with the remotest chance that Zabronski would be around. She waited until she thought the others were asleep, and then stealthily got to her feet, and with the clean spare clothes and soap made her way to the pool. She quickly undressed, shivering in the cool night air, and slipped into the water. Aah, it was so nice and warm! And it felt so good to be able to submerge her whole body under the water! The warm water soothed her aching muscles and she started feeling sleepy. She scrubbed her skin and submerged her body again. It felt so good to be clean. She reluctantly left the water, the cold air a shock to her body. She quickly dried and slipped on her clothes. Suddenly a sixth sense warned her of a presence.
“Who’s there?” she whispered. A dark shape in the dark moved, “It’s me,” came Dane’s voice. “You!” squeaked Angelique, “You were watching me take a bath?” She felt outraged and betrayed and an unbelievable amount of hurt that he would do such a thing.

“No! I heard a noise and when I came to check it out, I realized you were in the pool. I didn’t watch you take your bath; I was looking all around to make sure you were safe. I didn’t see anything, I swear,” he said earnestly.

She relaxed, hearing the truth in his voice. They stood there, two blobs in the night. “Tell me about yourself, your family,” she suddenly demanded.

He shifted, “There’s not much to tell. There is only my sister and myself. Four years ago, our parents were killed in a car accident. I was eighteen and Amy was fourteen. Both of our parents were only children, so there aren’t any uncles, aunts or cousins, and our grandparents had died by then. Since I was eighteen, the judge didn’t put Amy into the orphanage and allowed me to become her legal guardian. She married early last year, and they are expecting their first baby.” His voice changed in some undefinable way, “I always wanted to go to West Point and become an army officer. I had the grades and had written to my congressmen about an appointment, and things were looking good, but then the accident happened. I had to take care of Amy and I couldn’t if I went to school, so I had to drop the request and find work. When Amy married, I volunteered.” She could hear the emotion in his voice. He stirred again, “I’ve never told anyone else about my dream since…” He stopped, unable to continue.

“I am glad you told me, mon Dane,” she replied softly. “I am glad too,” he replied just as softly. “I could fall in love with you, maybe I already am, I don’t know. I just know that you are incredibly dear to me, Angelique.”

“I could fall in love with you also, mon chéri.” The night became charged with emotion; unconscientiously she slightly swayed towards him.

“Why are you in Tunisia?” came his soft voice out of the darkness. She didn’t know if she was glad or sad that he hadn’t tried to kiss her. Harshness came into her voice, “My family is from a town near Sedan. A Boche air raid killed Mama and Papa. We ran to Paris, and when the surrender came we fled to Marseilles. My brother had his wife and children to care for, and not enough money. I heard about a teaching opening here in Tunisia, and I applied and got it. I have been here for two years, teaching French and English to school children in Gafsa. When the Boche took over the country, the school was closed and I have been trying to live ever since.” Silence descended over the night again.

“Your religion is important to you,” her voice was soft again.

“Not religion, my God is important to me,” he disagreed. “I have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, He is my Savior. He died on the cross and paid for my sins. He is the most important person in my life, and the One that I want to obey and serve.”

“I also believe in the Christ Child, but it is the Virgin Mary that I must pray to. She is the Mother and Jesus must obey her.”

“Why? Why do you say that, and why must He obey her?”

“It is what is taught to us, the priests tell us what the Bible says and we obey.”

“Angelique, please read the Bible I gave you. All I ask is that you read it. Please say yes.”

“If you want me to, I will try, I won’t be able to understand, but I promise that I will try to read it. But it is a large book, where should I start?”

“Genesis, at the beginning of the Bible, is a good place to start, but you can try the Book of
They stood there a little longer. “Monsieur Drew wants me to go to Sfax, but I am so scared.” she shivered. “I am always so scared; sometimes I am frightened of my own shadow. I wish I could be brave like you and him.”

“We are scared too, Angelique. Anyone who isn’t scared by what is going on is a fool. But,” he groped for the words, “it’s something that has to be done. I rely on the Lord for help and guidance and the strength to face each challenge, and then I do the best I can. But the fear is always there. You can’t let it master you, you have to master it, and sometimes you have to do it a minute at a time. Just get through this minute, and don’t worry about the next minute.”

“Thank you, mon chéri, I will try to do what you suggest.” She shivered again, from the cold this time. “It is getting cold now, isn’t it?” she asked. Instantly Dane was all solicitous care for her and slung his coat over her shoulders, “Here, let’s go back to the camp before you freeze.” She reached out and took his hand and they walked back up and around the hill.

As they walked, Dane was acutely aware of her hand in his, and he thought about what had just happened. He had a feeling that he could have reached out and taken her in his arms and kissed her, and she would not have objected. But he couldn’t. To him, kisses were for a husband and wife, and they weren’t married. He could not ask her to marry him because he had a deep-seated conviction that as a born again Christian, he could not marry someone who hadn’t accepted Jesus as their savior, and obviously Angelique hadn’t. He had never been in love before, but he was pretty sure he was falling head-over-heels for Angelique, and if Angelique wanted him to kiss her, didn’t that mean she was falling in love with him? If two people fell in love, shouldn’t they get married? He felt very mixed up.

Suddenly Dane stopped; they could see the glow of the fire reflecting off the wall behind the camp. “What in the blazes?” He took off running to the camp, and since she was still attached to her hand, she perforce had to run too. “What is going on here?” he roared and started stamping out the fire.

“What?” voices were heard as startled heads popped up. “Corporal Shaw, what is the meaning of this?” Captain Matthews jumped up. When Dane swung around to face him, the captain recoiled from the savage look on the other man’s face, and surely it must have been a trick of the firelight, but it seemed to the captain that his eyes reflected green.

“The firelight, it could be seen for miles,” Dane stormed at him.

Drew looked at the fire, “Nonsense, the flames are well below the top of the rocks, they couldn’t be seen out there.”

Dane pointed to the wall behind them, “The reflection, it can be seen out there.”

“Oh,” Drew’s face fell. “Maybe no one saw it.” Even to him that sounded weak.

“Captain, sir, this fire has just undone the false trail we laid down. Those Arabs must have seen the glow and they are coming. We have to leave here now!” Dane’s voice was adamant.

“Shaw, let’s not be hasty, let’s think this through before we act,” the captain soothed.

“Sir, if we leave here now and I am wrong about the Arabs, we’ll only lose an hour or two of sleep. But if I am right, it will save our lives. I made one mistake that might sign our death warrants; I am not going to make a second!”

For the second time Drew saw a look of total determination on the corporal’s face. He realized then that Shaw had a streak in his nature that would never surrender, that would never give up, that would fight on to his last gasp and his last ounce of strength. Drew wavered, he
wanted to assert his authority, but the corporal’s arguments were too logical and sound. He squared his jaw; he would refuse to jeopardize the mission over a petty argument over authority. “Everybody, pack up, we leave in five minutes,” he ordered, with a newfound air of authority. With muttered grumbles and oaths, the men got up and started packing.

Nobody had noticed Angelique’s reaction. During the confrontation she had shrunk away, her eyes glued on Dane with a look of shock. How could a man be so kind, so tender, so gentle one minute, and the next be so raging, so savage, so …so…so untamed! She remembered the Arab with the knife; he had killed so easily and so swiftly. She began to perceive the hidden depths in the man, depths that…frightened her.

In five minutes they were all packed up and ready to go. Dane took a last look around and smothered the fire. Drew opened his mouth to make a suggestion, realized the reason for Shaw’s action, and shut his mouth. As they started walking, Webster asked Tielson, “Why don’t we leave the fire burning? If the Arabs are on the way, won’t it draw them there?” Tielson shot him a look, “It will take them longer to find the camp, which gives us more time to make our escape.”

About an hour later shapes flitted in the darkness, silently making their way towards the place where the Americans had encamped. Hearing and seeing nothing, the Arabs realized that their prey had flown. As they stood and looked around at the abandoned camp, the bearded leader grunted, “One of them is as sly as the fox.” “Shall we follow them?” the youngest and least experienced one eagerly asked. “How, son of a donkey?” asked the leader, indicating the clouds that had been forming for the past half hour. Just then it started sprinkling, and in a few minutes the pouring rain had washed out all sign of the party’s passing.

The American’s had just made a new camp, and the cold rain made them all miserable. Dane counted it a blessing.

Back to Table of Contents

Chapter Thirteen
February 3, Morning

Major Lindisl woke up in the morning, had his usual leisurely but substantial breakfast, and went to his office. There was a furrow between his brows, which his underlings knew meant trouble for someone. When he entered the office, there were the normal standing-at-attention, heel-clicking, Heil Hitler salutes, to which he responded with his usual Heil Hitler and salute. He went to his office, and a few minutes later Captain Heidelstrauuss, his second-in-command, knocked on the door with a fistful of reports. The major had been gone for a week, and there were several items to be gone over. A handful of Jews had been picked up, and he signed their death warrants. “Stinking Jews, did they have any belongings?” “No, Herr Major, only the clothes on their backs.” A suspected Allied sympathizer had been detained and questioned. “Herr Major, either he was too stubborn to talk, or he actually knew nothing.” Lindisl noticed the past tense. “Was the body disposed of?” “Jawohl, Herr Major.” There were several reports along these lines.

“Here is a report about the battle at Faid, Herr Major.” Lindisl glanced at it, and then turned a penetrating eye to his subordinate, “And why would I be interested in this?” in a threatening tone. The captain was quick to answer, “An Arab was captured while fleeing from a destroyed American vehicle. He invoked your name and was sent here.” Lindisl scanned the report more
carefully and saw the Arab’s name. “Send him here at once!” “Jawohl, Herr Major,” the captain scurried away. A few minutes later, he led the Arab into the room, who bowed to the major, “Your servant, effendi,” and the major looked into the sly face of Abu Mehouf.

The American party woke up and ate breakfast. Normally Angelique ate sitting between Drew and Dane, but this morning she chose to sit between Drew and Fredericks, much to the latter’s pleasure and Dane’s hurt and puzzlement. Drew couldn’t resist a gloating look at his rival. During the meal, Zabronski asked, “Where did you ditch the halftrack?” Dane waved vaguely northward, his wave encompassing over a ninety degree arc, “Up there.” He did not trust the Russian.

“Where are the three cases?” Zabronski cast a meaningful look to the others.

Dane looked surprised, “We ditched them too. After all, we can’t carry them, can we?” The others saw the sense of it, but Zabronski was frustrated.

After the meal, Drew turned to Angelique, “I thought that you and I can walk over to Sfax. I would hide on the outskirts, while you go into the city and buy me a suit and bring it to me. Then you could lead me to the café. Do you think you could do this?”

Angelique grew frightened. Now that the time had actually come for her to do what she had agreed, she wasn’t sure that she could go through with it. She glanced up at Drew, and then, almost against her will, to Dane, who gave her a reassuring smile. “I know you can do it,” Dane said confidently, “I will pray for you, both of you,” with a smile to Drew. Somehow, Angelique drew strength from Dane’s confidence, and with a brave, but wobbly smile, nodded to Drew.

Drew spoke privately to Dane, and then Drew and Angelique started walking the two miles to Sfax. Dane gave a critical look at their campsite, “I don’t like this spot, it’s too hard to defend. Let’s see if we can find a better spot.” Within half an hour they had found a spot where sometime in the past a flood had washed out an overhang. It was barely big enough for them all to lie down but they could stay dry from the rain, and was easily defended. Water was found less than a quarter mile away, and Dane had all the water containers filled, and posted a guard on the top of the hill. From there, they could observe anybody approaching, and see Drew and Angelique coming back from Sfax and direct them there.

Back in Sfax, the major slapped a meaty hand on the table, “I paid you money to offer to work with the Americans, and much more when you brought important information to me, yet all you have is that you were to lead this American captain to this café to meet this Monsieur Gascoigne. Have you nothing else to add?”

“No, effendi, but I did convince the German commander to let the American flee and not pursue him,” Abu groveled.

“Yes,” the major nodded slowly, “that was wise of you, and wise of the commander to listen.” He made a note to commend the commander. His brow furrowed in thought, “Did he have any other contacts, anybody he knows in Sfax?”

“No, effendi, there is no one else.” Abu was firm on that point. “I learned that when I was hired to bring him here.”

“I wonder,” Lindisl mused out loud as a thought came to him, “I think I might have seen evidence of the good captain, but he wasn’t alone; there were half a dozen men with him.” He glared at the Arab, “How do you account for that?”
Abu raised helpless arms, “I don’t know, effendi, maybe he picked up some stragglers from the battle?”

Major Lindisl slowly nodded, “That could very well be.” He felt excitement mount up in him; this could be the break he was looking for. Surely there couldn’t be two parties of American soldiers wandering around Sfax; surely they must have his money, somewhere. He must find out where it was. He made a decision and pushed the buzzer on his desk. When Captain Heidelstrauss back came in, he was issued orders in German, “Establish an observation post to watch the Le Belle Francais Café. This dog can identify an American spy who is to meet a Frenchman named Gascoigne there. When they are identified, have them arrested, but they must not be killed. I must personally interrogate them. Make sure you get both of them.”

“Jawohl, Herr Major.”

Abu lowered his eyes; he understood more German than the others suspected.

Back to Table of Contents

Chapter Fourteen

February 3 Sfax

As Angelique and Drew made their way towards the city, they conversed in French. “Why are you in the army?” Angelique asked. Drew shrugged his shoulders. “My father was an officer and fought in the Great War. He wanted me to follow in his footsteps and become an officer too. I just went along with him and was able to get into West Point and graduate, not too high in my class, though” with a rueful look. He became animated, “I enjoyed learning Spanish and French, and once I spent an entire leave in France. I liked being in a foreign country and learning about the people and their customs.” He looked at Angelique, “Your country has such a long and beautiful history, I really enjoyed it.” He went on with his story, “After we entered the war, my fluency in French became in demand, and I was assigned to intelligence.”

“Merci, I am glad that you like my country.” Her mind went off on a sudden tangent, “I wonder if Dane has ever visited France?”

“Humph,” he grunted huffily, “since he doesn’t speak French, I highly doubt it.”

Angelique thought of the difference in the two men, one who so wanted to become an officer but circumstances made it impossible, and the other who just drifted along with his father’s wishes and became one. And yet it was the one who wasn’t an officer who was making most of the decisions and the other who seemed jealous.

“Have you really seen all those places in your country that you told me about yesterday?” she tried to cajole him out of his bad humor.

“Yes, my father was a career officer and we moved around a lot. He was assigned to most of the bases in the U.S. but was only overseas during the war.” They continued talking until they reached Sfax after mid-morning. When they were as close as they dared, Drew found a hiding place. “Now remember, find a shop that sells suits. I wear a size 38. Here is some money. When you walk towards the city be sure to look behind you so that you can see the way back here. The land features look different when you are looking in the opposite direction, so be careful you don’t get lost. Do you have any questions?”

“But mon ami,” she was confused, “size 38 is a child’s size. You are much bigger than that.”

“What? You mean the French have different sized clothing than we do? Great! What size
would you guess I am?” He looked helplessly at her. For some reason, his look of male ineptitude made her start giggling, and then break out in laughter, and then he started laughing, too. When they were able to stop and catch their breath, Angelique said, “I can’t remember the last time I laughed like that.”

“You should laugh every day,” Drew said tenderly. They looked at each other, and then embarrassed, looked away. “I still don’t know what size I wear,” Drew said plaintively. Angelique giggled again, and then composed herself. She looked critically at him, “My brother wears a size 44, and Papa,” her voice broke and then she bravely continued, “Papa wore a 46. You are a little taller than them, so maybe a 48.”

“Oh okay then,” he squeezed her hand, “go, and be careful.”

“You too, mon ami,” she took a deep breath and started walking. She walked into town and mingled with the pedestrians. She remembered where some shops were, and not wanting to draw attention to herself by asking a passerby where the nearest men’s shop was, she made her way to the area she knew. When she got there, she slowly walked up the street, and spotted a likely shop. She halted outside the door, fear overtaking her. Up until now, she could have walked away and no one would know she was here. But when she walked into the shop, she was committing herself to the operation, for better or for worse. “Oh Mother Mary, help me,” she breathed, opened the door and walked in.

Once inside, her eyes had to become accustomed to the dark. She became aware of shelves and piles of clothes about her. “May I assist you?” came a polite voice in French from the gloom. A little old man came into view, peering at her in surprise.

“Oui, I need a suit, please.”

“I am sorry, mademoiselle, but I only sell men’s clothes.”

She blushed, “I need a man’s suit, monsieur.” At his continued look of surprise, she hurried on, “It, it is for my grandfather, to be buried in.” At once he became very solicitous, and clucking sympathetically directed her to the suits and asked her what size. “48,” she replied, hoping that it would be the right size. “And for the funeral, it must be black,” the little shopkeeper stated, and with the air of a magician pulling a rabbit out of his hat, produced a suit from a stack of clothes. She held them up, and they seemed the right size and agreed to purchase them.

“How about a shirt? We have some nice ones here.” He mentioned. Her heart froze, they had forgotten all about a shirt, and what about shoes and socks? He couldn’t wear his army boots into town! ‘Oh what should I do?’ she thought to herself. Suddenly she felt a calmness, almost a presence about her. She remembered that Dane had said that he would pray for her, and it seemed to her that she could almost hear his voice. She straightened her back, “Oui, I had almost forgotten, a shirt and a pair of socks, all of his has holes in them. One cannot be buried with holes in his socks.” The old man chuckled and busied himself gathering the items. “A handkerchief, to be folded in his pocket, and a pair of shoes.” She remembered their footprints in the sand and how much longer his were than hers. “His shoes are this long,” she held up her hands, showing the length. The shopkeeper frowned at that, and then dove down and produced a pair of used, but clean shoes. She made her purchases, and with the old man’s condolences in her ears, made her way back to where Drew waited for her.

Drew whistled when he saw her packages, “What did you do, buy out the store?” he teased. But he grew serious when she started to pull out her purchases. “I never thought about those things,” he groaned. “You make a better undercover agent than I do,” he said, partly bitter at his
shortcomings, and partly in praise at her foresight.

“I’m not sure that it was me,” she said slowly, and recounted her feeling in the store about a presence. “Do you think there is really something to this God of Dane’s?”

Drew stopped looking at the clothes, “I am not sure. I have heard things that he has said, either he is one of the wisest people that I have ever met, or he really does have Divine help.”

“How long have you known him?”

He gave her a crooked grin, “One day longer than I have known you.”

“Oh,” she was surprised, then, “What do you think about him?”

He paused and said slowly, “I think it would be an honor to call him ‘friend’, but he would make a very deadly enemy.” He was surprised at his answer because he hadn’t thought about the corporal like that before; he had been more concerned about the impressions they had been making on Angelique and worrying about his mission. But when he considered the other man, he was convinced his answer was the correct one.

She shivered, “I think I know what you mean.”

He gave her a penetrating look, wondering how deep her feelings were for Dane, and then looked shamefaced, “I should never have said what I did about him never being in France. That was petty of me. Please forget what I said.”

She looked up into his face and thought to herself, ‘He is a big enough man to admit when he did something wrong’, and the thought pleased her. She smiled at him and said, “I have.”

He smiled back at her and made a circling motion with his finger, “Turn around so I can get dressed.”

“Oh,” she said and blushed and turned her back to him.

When he had changed his clothes, he offered her the crook of his arm, “May I take you out to lunch, mademoiselle?” She linked her arm with his and giggled, “Oui, monsieur.” They started walking back to town.

Back to Table of Contents

Chapter Fifteen
February 3 Camp

Back at the camp, Dane was squatting by the fire holding a cup of coffee in his hands. Zabronski ambled up to the fire and Dane looked up at him, “Tielson needs relieved, go take his place on guard duty.”

“No.”

Dane froze and softly said, ‘What did you say?’

“I said no. Someone else can take my shift, I’m not feeling good,” and he grinned insolently at Dane.

As Dane rose slowly to his feet, his mouth went dry. The Russian had chosen an excellent time to challenge his authority; the captain was gone; Tielson, whom Dane knew would have backed him, was away on guard duty; he could expect no help from Webster; and Fredericks was awed by the big man. Dane looked the other man over. He was the biggest man that Dane had ever faced down before; he was about six feet tall and around 220 pounds. He had given Dane an out to back down, but Dane instantly rejected it; if he accepted that flimsy excuse, he would not be able to command any of the men again.
Dane felt that feeling coming up from deep inside him, that determination that he would never give up, that he would never surrender, that he would keep fighting to his dying breath, and with it came that other feeling, the one that frightened him to the core of his being: that rage, that killing rage, that he was afraid that if it ever completely escaped the iron hold that was on it, he would kill, and kill, and keep on killing until there was no one left alive around him.

Zabronski’s sneer left his face as he saw the corporal’s face change. He saw his face harden and a savage look come over it, and he saw green flecks in the other man’s eyes start to glow and burn and whirl. As Dane glided towards him, Zabronski felt a wave of deadly menace emanate from the smaller man that seemed to strike him like a blow, and he inadvertently backed up a step from the force of it. Dane came up close to him and glared at him, trying by force of will alone to make the bigger man obey him, “You will obey my orders, and you will go on guard duty now!”

Fredericks and Webster watched the contest of wills going on. Zabronski hesitated, started to turn away, then planted his left foot, and with a speed remarkable in such a big man, swung a huge fist at the corporal. Zabronski knew the power behind that blow and when it landed on the other man’s chin, the fight would be over; either he would be knocked unconscious or knocked to the ground, and Zabronski knew what to do with an opponent on the ground.

He missed.

With blinding speed Dane ducked under the blow, and with the blazing quickness of a striking cobra he smashed two powerful blows into his midsection. The first started a grunt from the big man; the second knocked the wind out of him. Dane spun and kicked the back of the knee of Zabronshki’s planted foot, and as it buckled and the big man started going down, Dane smashed a karate chop into his throat. Zabronski hit the ground on his hands and knees, gagging. The fight had lasted maybe three seconds.

The onlookers gaped at the speed and savagery of the onslaught, and as Zabronski tried to suck air back into his lungs, he felt fear of a man for the first time since he was sixteen. He had never been put to the ground so fast and so easily in his life, and he had never seen anyone as fast as this corporal. The power in those blows shocked him. As he struggled to his feet, he saw the other man looking just as determined and just as deadly as before.

“Now, get on guard duty.” Dane ordered, fire coming from his green eyes.

Zabronski bent over and picked up his rifle. For a second he toyed with an idea, but one look at the figure before him and he knew, without a shadow of a doubt, he would never get the round off, and then he would die. He walked up the hill with black hatred in his heart.

As the Russian walked away, Dane could feel the adrenalin leaving him, and as usual felt shaken. He half squatted, half fell, back down by the fire and picked up his coffee cup. To the others it looked like he was unaffected by what had just happened, and they looked at him with even more awe.

It wasn’t very many minutes later that Dane remembered that he had promised to pray for Angelique, and he felt an urgent, pressing, need to pray now. He got on his knees, “Oh Lord, I don’t know what is going on right now, but I beg of you to protect her, give her wisdom if she needs to make a decision, or what she needs to do.” He poured out his heart to God, and after a few minutes the need left him, for a while anyway.
Chapter Sixteen
February 3, Afternoon

Just before noon Major Lindisl eased himself into the room from where the café was being watched. The three Germans saluted and Abu bowed to the major. “Well, any luck?” he demanded.

“Nein, Herr Major,” reported the senior member of the party. “Do you know what description this dumkopff has given us?” He went on, parroting the Arab, “Tall, but not too tall, slim, and with brown hair. We have seen twenty men fit that description!”

The major motioned to the Arab, who left the window to approach him. “Don’t you have any better description than what you have told them?” Major Lindisl questioned in French.

“No, effendi, he was a most unassuming person.”

The major was lost in thought; the Americans had left with his belongings yesterday morning, they might not have arrived yet, but they should have. “Does the café have a back door?” he queried in German. The three Germans looked at him blankly, “I don’t know, Herr Major,” one of them said. “But if he does try to enter that way, wouldn’t it draw attention to him?”

“No if nobody is watching, dumkopff,” he roared angrily. “Go and check if there is a back door!” The German scurried out the door. The major glared after him, wishing he had his Gestapo men with him instead of having to rely on stupid German soldiers to do his work.

Meanwhile, one of the Germans had been keeping an eye on the street. He saw a couple, an attractive woman with black hair, and a somewhat taller man, slim, and with brown hair, come around the corner and walk down the street. He was about to call to Abu to come and see if this was the man, and then realized that the spy could not possibly be with a woman. The couple came to the café, and seeing that all the outside tables were filled, walked into the café.

Once inside, Drew and Angelique saw a few vacant tables and sat down at one. Drew let his gaze wander around the room, and saw to his dismay three Germans at another table. There were a number of diners, mostly French, and a middle aged waitress who seemed to handle all the serving. He turned his gaze back to Angelique, who looking uncomfortable. “Relax, and enjoy the company of a handsome man and food you didn’t prepare yourself,” he said with a smile. She gave a trembling smile back, but did relax a little. “I am surprised that I remembered the way here so well,” Angelique announced. “I only came here twice with some acquaintances”.

“Anyone special?” Drew asked with a smile.

“No,” Angelique smiled back, and then added more seriously, “I was coming to see if I could stay with them when you found me.”

Drew reached out and squeezed her hand sympathetically. “What kind of food do they serve here?” he asked prosaically.

“They are known for their fresh fish.”

Just then the waitress came to their table with a large plate of different kinds of fish. “Welcome to Le Belle Francis, what kind of fish do you desire?” she asked. They made their choices and she hurried back to the kitchen to have them grilled.

“Now what should we talk about?” Drew leaned forward.

“How about your home in France?” teased Angelique.

“Gefosse-Fontenay? It is a small village on the Normandy coast, a nice place to visit,” he
answered.

“Did you make that up?” she asked, laughing.

“Oh, no, it is a real place. As a matter of fact, I became friendly with some fishermen who lived near there and they took me out with them once.” He gave a soft laugh. “We went out and fished all night. I was soaked and it was hard work and I would hate to do it all my life, but it was a blast.” He looked pensively at his glass of wine. “I wonder what became of them,” he added softly.

He gave himself a surreptitious shake and brought himself back at the matter at hand; how to meet Monsieur Gascoigne. He glanced around the room, but nobody seemed to be paying any attention to them.

Just then the waitress brought their food, and they started to eat. There was a stir at the doorway and Angelique glanced up. Suddenly, she went white: Major Lindisl had entered the café.

When the German soldier returned to the lookout room, he did not look happy, “Jawohl, Herr Major, there is a back way.” Lindisl glared at the unhappy soldier, “Get on the radio and call for another team to watch the rear exit and then go back and keep an eye on it until they arrive.” He thought for a moment, “You three keep watch here; I’ll go and have a look in the café.” He left the room, walked across the street and into the building.

When he walked in, he looked around at the diners, and started to sit at a vacant table. Suddenly his attention was caught by a white-faced woman staring at him. He stared back at her, and then looked at her companion. His pulse started beating faster; the companion was a slim, brown-haired man. He got up and marched over to their table and watched her eyes get bigger.

“What is it?” Drew asked softly when he saw the frightened look. “It’s Major Lindisl of the Gestapo and he’s coming this way,” she whispered back.

Realizing that because of her reaction, he needed to have one also, he turned and looked at the blocky figure advancing towards them.

“Your papers,” Lindisl held out his hand to them. Trembling, Angelique handed hers over, while Drew fished his out of a pocket and gave them to the major.

Lindisl barely glanced at hers, but scrutinized the man’s. “What is your name?” he asked in French.

“Etienne Pinochet.”

“Where are you from?”

“Gefosse-Fontenay.”

“Gefosse-Fontenay? I have been there. A little village with a church that has a beautiful stained glass window. The church sets in the middle of the town.” When Lindisl had been in northern France, he had passed by that particular village several times.

Drew looked up at him. His face was calm, but his heart was pounding away, and poor Angelique looked like she was going to faint. “The major must be mistaken, Gefosse-Fontenay does not have a church in the middle of town, and the one it does have does not have a stained glass window.”

“You know who I am?” Lindisl pounced on that. The man had been right about the church; Lindisl had tried to trick him.

Drew gestured towards Angelique, “My…companion…has seen you before.” Drew allowed
some of the stress he was feeling to show, it would not do to act unafraid of the Gestapo.

Lindisl stood there, slapping the credentials into his free hand. He was suspicious, but he didn’t quite know what of. “Your French is very good,” he suddenly announced in English.

By a supreme effort, Drew kept his eyes blank, “Monsieur?” Drew asked questioningly, but Angelique gasped.

Lindisl whirled to face Angelique, “You understood me?” he demanded.


Lindisl scrutinized their identifications. “What is your…companion’s…occupation?” he asked her in English.

Angelique’s mind went blank. She couldn’t think! “Mother Mary, help me!” she thought to herself. She couldn’t remember! She saw the major’s face harden in suspicion. Any second now he was going to haul them off for questioning! Drew could only stare blankly at what was going on, pretending not to understand. “Oh, the God of Dane, if you are real, help me!” she prayed fervently. She opened her mouth, “He is a produce exporter.”

Lindisl stared at both of them for a long minute, handed their id’s back, and went and sat down at his table.

Drew reached across the table and held her shaking hands. “Magnifique,” he whispered. She started to get up but he stopped her, “We can’t leave now or he will get even more suspicious. We have to eat our meal.”

“But how can I eat now, after this?” she entreated, with huge frightened eyes.

Drew searched his mind for ways to relax her. “Let me tell you about my vacation a few years ago. After I graduated, I took a leave of absence and went to France for a holiday for a whole month. I landed at the port city of Brest and spent a couple of days there, and then took the train to the city of Isigny in Normandy and spent a week there. I rented a bicycle and pedaled around to several of the villages nearby, including Gefosse-Fontenay. That’s where I met some fishermen and got acquainted with them. Then I took another train to Saint Mihiel where Dad fought. I stayed there for a while, biking around and visiting the places he was at.” He didn’t think it necessary to mention the flirty and very vivacious mademoiselle he met there and spent quite a lot of time with. “Then I stayed in Paris for a few days and went back to Brest where I caught the ship back home.”

She was looking better so he asked her, “Now tell me about your home.” She gathered her thoughts and started talking about a happier time, “I grew up in the town of La Budille outside of Sedan. There was Mama and Papa and my brother Louis. Papa was the school teacher, that’s how I learned English. Louis is two years older than me. He hated school but I loved it, I loved the learning about new things, the mental challenges.” Her black eyes glowed with remembering the happiness of her childhood. Then she shook her with a look of self-disgust, “But I was always too scared to actually go out and learn, I wanted only the safety of the schoolroom.”

“But you did leave and come to Tunisia,” Drew interrupted.

“Oh, but it was the only time I ever did anything brave like that,” she confessed. “Louis married the belle of La Budille, and he and Suzanne have two children. When we moved to Marseille, Louis could only find a job as a common laborer. There were too many displaced people looking for too few jobs. So,” she shrugged her shoulders fatalistically, “I had to find some income. The man doing hiring for the job at Gafsa knew something of my father’s academic standing and hired me. And now here I am, for better or worse.” She gave a shudder
and Drew quickly reached for her hand.

“It was very brave of you to come all this way,” he said encouragingly, squeezing her hand. She gave a wry smile, wondering what would become of her after these Americans left Sfax. Her mind took a new bent. “I wonder if Dane is safe?” she asked with a worried look.

Drew felt the jab of jealousy, must she always be thinking of him? He pushed the feeling away and concentrated on cheering her up. “I am sure he is, they are safely hidden.” He forbore to mention that they were in much greater danger than he was. He concentrated on cheering her up, and succeeded in sidetracking her mind with some funny recollections from his visit to France, mostly gaffes he had made which were thoroughly embarrassing to him at the time.

The time passed quickly as they talked and laughed. Lindisl kept his eye on them for a while, but it looked to him that there was a romance going on, and he concentrated on the other diners. There were at least three that answered to Abu’s description, but there was nobody meeting any of them. When the last of the three had left, Lindisl gave up and left too. He would make sure that there were no Germans in the café the next day, maybe that would bring the spy out of his hole.

Late in the afternoon Drew looked at his watch, “I don’t think we can stay here any longer, we are getting pretty suspicious as it is. We had better leave.” He paid the bill and they walked outside. A horse drawn wagon was passing by just then, heading in the direction they were going, and they walked along beside it to the corner, both they and Abu Mehouf unaware of each other’s presence.

**Back to Table of Contents**

**Chapter Seventeen**

**February 3, Evening**

While they were approaching the camp, Fredericks, who was on guard duty, spotted them and went to meet them. “We’ve moved to another campsite,” he reported and started to lead them there. “You missed a dustup this morning,” he eagerly told the captain.

“What happened?” snapped Drew anxiously.

“Shaw and Zabronski had a fight. Well, it wasn’t much of a fight, Shaw knocked Zabronski down and Zabronski had enough.” He shook his head in wonder, “I knew the corporal was tough, but I didn’t realize how tough.” Drew went to the camp with a worried furrow between his brows. When they reached the camp, Dane hurried to meet them, “Are you all right?” he asked anxiously, and if he looked at Angelique first, well, that was understandable. “I had this intense feeling a couple of times that I needed to pray for you,” as he searched their faces. Drew looked at Dane’s face, but saw only concern. He glanced over at Zabronski and saw nothing there either.

“We met the local Gestapo chief but not our contact. I’ll have to go back tomorrow,” Drew answered easily, and then added, “I need to talk to you.” The two men moved off. “What happened between you and Zabronski?” the captain demanded. The corporal looked at him, “Fredericks told you.” He took a deep breath, “Zabronski refused a direct order, I convinced him to obey it.” Dane frowned and mused out loud, “I don’t know if I’m going to have trouble with him in the future or not.” Drew still wasn’t satisfied, “Who threw the first punch?”

“He did.”
Drew studied the smaller man, but saw no marks. “Where did he hit you at?”
“He didn’t.” Drew looked surprised, but said nothing more.
Dane waited a second, “Are both of you going back tomorrow?”
Drew looked over at Angelique, “I don’t think so; she had quite a shock today.”
They wandered back to the group, and Drew told them about the encounter in the café. He looked at Dane, “You said you had an intense desire to pray for us a couple of times, when were they?”
Dane thought a minute, “The first time was late in the morning.” Everyone heard Angelique draw in her breath. She leaned forward, “When did you say?”
Dane frowned in concentration, “Late morning, must have been about eleven.”
Angelique leaned backward, wonder showing on her face. “That was about the time I was in the shop,” and she told about her experience. The other listeners stirred uneasily at her story.
It was Drew’s turn to lean forward. “When was the second time?”
“It was at lunch time.”
Dane and Angelique looked at each other in amazement. Drew said, “That was when Major Lindisl was questioning us.” Angelique added, “And that was when I prayed to your God, and I was able to answer the Boche’s question.” They all looked at each other.
Tielson moved uncomfortably, “I’ll start fixing supper if someone will round up some firewood.”
“I’ll get it,” Dane volunteered, and gracefully rose to his feet. Angelique remembered her promise, and with the strange happenings of the day in her mind, went and got the Bible and started thumbing through it. Drew reached over and turned the pages to John, and both of their heads bent over the book. Dane smiled to himself when he brought some wood in and saw them.
When Tielson called, “Come and get it,” the others joined him at the fire. Angelique hesitated only a second before resuming her place between Drew and Dane. Dane smiled at her. When they were finished eating, Dane glanced at Zabronski, “Go relieve Fredericks so he can eat.” Zabronski looked at the corporal from under his bushy eyebrows, but obediently picked up his rifle and left. When he turned his head, Drew saw the bruise on the other man’s throat.
Angelique cleaned up from the meal, and while Fredericks was eating she retrieved the Bible, “Dane, I don’t understand this.” She pointed to John chapter three. “What is this being born again?”
Dane took the Bible, “Everyone is born into a physical family, right? Everyone has an earthly mother and father.”
“Oui,” Angelique agreed and Drew nodded.
“To be born into God’s spiritual family, you need to be born spiritually. That is the second birth. Here in verse 14: ‘And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up.’ The Son of man is Jesus Christ, and the lifting up is His death on the cross. Verse 15 says ‘That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’ This is not talking about physical death, but spiritual death, or eternal separation from God. Every single person that believes in the Lord Jesus Christ will have eternal life. Verses 16 through 18 explain how this happens. ‘For God so loved the world’, this is talking about everyone: you, me, Drew, even Major Lindisl. God loves each one of us so much, and equally.”
At this Angelique’s eyes grew big. “‘That he gave his only begotten Son’. God the Father sent God the Son to die on the cross. ‘That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have
everlasting life.’ Everyone who believes in Jesus Christ will not die spiritually but live forever with him.

‘For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.’ God didn’t send Jesus to send people to hell, but to save people from going to hell. Verse 18 ‘He that believeth on him is not condemned.’ Anyone that believes in Jesus is not condemned to go to hell when they physically die. ‘He that believeth not is condemned already.’ Everyone that does not believe is already condemned to spend eternity in hell. ‘Because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.’ They are condemned because they don’t believe in Jesus Christ.” Dane looked at them beseechingly, “Can’t you see how simple this is?”

Drew and Angelique looked confused. Drew answered, “But we believe there was such a person. Doesn’t that mean that we are one of the ‘born again’?”

Dane shook his head, “The Bible says the demons know and tremble. Do you think demons are going to heaven?” They shook their heads. “The demons know there is a Jesus, they have seen Him. The difference is sin. Romans 3:23 says ‘For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.’ That means each one of us, me included, have sinned, and because we are sinners, we cannot come to God. God hates sin. Sin must be punished by death. When Jesus died on the cross, because he was the sinless God, he paid for the sins of every single man, woman and child that has ever lived or ever will. When Jesus was raised from the dead, he took His sacrifice to God the Father to pay for all sin. The blood he shed washes away all sin, but only if you accept it. He is alive right now, sitting at the right hand of the Father, making intercession for His people, those who have accepted His sacrifice for atonement for their sins. To accept the offer of salvation, you must accept the fact that you are a sinner, there is nothing you can do of your own merit to warrant salvation, and ask Jesus to forgive your sins and come into your heart.”

Dane searched for words as he prayed silently in his heart. “You see, Jesus is alive, his grave is empty. He physically rose from the dead. That is what makes all the difference in the world. When I got saved and ask Jesus to come into my heart, he did. I feel Him, I commune with Him, we communicate.” Dane clasped his hands over his heart and looked earnestly at his hearers.

Tielson, Webster, and Fredericks wore blank looks; they had not understood at all what he had just said. Drew and Angelique were plainly struggling, but they were not rejecting, just not understanding. Judging that he had said enough for now, he straightened up, “You can go ahead and read some more; I’ll get some more firewood.”

Later, as Dane dropped an armful of wood, he noticed Angelique staring into the fire, her eyes wide and her face rather white. Divining that she was remembering the frightening experiences she had had that day, he squatted down beside her. Searching his mind for some way to divert her, he gently asked, “What is your brother like?”

“Oh, Louis?” she was startled out of her thoughts. “He is very handsome, very charming, very funny. When he was a boy, if there was any mischief going on you could be sure he was in the middle of it.” She chuckled, “His son, Philippe, is just like him. He’ll get into mischief and then charm his way out of it. He keeps Louis and Suzanne on their toes.” She smiled again in remembrance of past misdeeds. Dane was relieved to see the strain leave her face.

“And you, mon chéri, what is your sister like?” Angelique asked with interest.

“Not much like me in temperament,” Dane chuckled. “She is a talker and will talk your arm and leg off.” Angelique frowned, not understanding the colloquialism. “It means she talks almost
“non-stop,” Dane explained.

“Oh, I see,” she nodded.

“She is also headstrong, but very kind hearted. Her husband, Bill, keeps her in line.” Dane smiled, thinking of them, and Angelique could hear the affection in his voice.

“Is he not in the army then?” Angelique queried.

“No, he was born with a club foot. Not terribly bad, but enough that he is ineligible for the draft, much to Amy’s relief.”

Just then Drew came up to the fire, and seeing them conversing and enjoying themselves, felt a jab of jealousy. “Corporal, the guard rotation needs to be set.” His voice came out sharper than he desired, and Dane saw the strain come back into Angelique’s face at his tone. He felt a stab of anger at the captain for causing it and, characteristically, resolved to settle the issue before it got worse. But getting into an argument would solve nothing, he realized. He was a corporal and the other was a captain and there could only be one result of that passage of arms, and besides, it would only cause Angelique more stress. “Yes, sir,” answered Dane as he rose to his feet and moved away, trying to marshal his thoughts.

Drew followed him and said in a quieter tone, “I haven’t had guard duty today; I’ll take the first watch.

Dane realized from the half ashamed look on his face that Drew was regretting his sharp tone. “Yes, sir. I’ll take the second watch, Zabronski the third, and Fredericks the last one.” Dane looked back at Angelique, who was drooping by the fire, a sad, pensive look on her face. “She had a bad time today, didn’t she?” Dane asked softly.

“Yes, yes she did.” Drew looked at her. “She was a trooper though, handled herself like… like,” words failed him.

“We need to make sure she has no more stress than is absolutely necessary, that her welfare is the most important thing, other than the mission.” Dane stared at the taller man meaningfully.

Drew caught the inflection in the look and started to feel his temper rise. But then he looked at Angelique’s slumping figure and squared his jaw. “You’re right,” he said softly, “Angelique’s wellbeing is more important than ours.” He turned and walked away.

Angelique woke early the next morning and lay there thinking. Her bed was at the very back of the overhang, and Drew and Dane slept between her and the opening. She had felt the slight bristling between the two men ever since she had met them, more so on Drew’s part than Dane’s, and knew that it was because of her, but last night when they had made their beds it was missing. She had seen a look pass between them, and somehow felt that they were more concerned with her safety and peace of mind than with male dominance.

She also thought of what Dane had talked about last evening, about the Bible. Sometimes it felt like she was just on the verge of understanding something incredible, but each time it slipped away. She remembered a dream she had had, soon after her parents’ deaths. She had been somewhere with dark corridors and somewhere ahead of her was a light. But no matter how fast she went, the light always stayed somewhere ahead of her as she went up and down those dark,
twisting corridors. Listening to Dane talk about being born again was just like her dream, running and trying to catch the meaning, but never quite achieving it.

It was getting light and she went to get up. She saw Dane’s eyes open and she couldn’t resist the tender smile she gave him, and saw the response in his eyes that made her feel warm inside. She did some necessary things and then started fixing breakfast for the group. By then everyone was up and they ate together except for Fredericks, who was on guard duty. She and Tielson looked over the food supply and reported to the captain that if contact wasn’t made that day, they would have to somehow get more food.

Then the three of them sat down together, “Should I go with you again?” Angelique asked. “There is no need, you can stay here and rest,” Drew answered. It was the answer she preferred, but when she heard it, instead of relief she felt a pricking of unease. Dane moved uncomfortably, with a worried look on his face. “I agree with you, it is the logical answer, but,” he paused, “it doesn’t feel…right.” He looked at both of them with a puzzled look on his face. Drew also felt something, but he didn’t know if it was being caused by the uneasiness of the other two. He reexamined the question and answer and saw no fault in the logic, but….

Dane said, “Let’s pray about it.” He closed his eyes and said out loud, “Dear Lord, we are facing a dilemma and we need your wisdom. Drew needs to go back to the café and it could be dangerous, Major Lindisl might be there again, or some other Germans. Should Angelique go with him? Or should she stay here? It makes more since for her to stay, but... Just a minute Lord, you just answered our question. Thank you, my Lord and Savior.” Dane opened his eyes and looked at them. “She has to go with you. From what you told me about when Lindisl questioned you, if he sees you and not her, he could get suspicious.” The other two looked at him and then each other, both realizing that he was correct, and that must have been why they were uneasy about her staying. They also realized again that something, or someone, was so obviously directing this man.

Suddenly Fredericks yelled from the hilltop, “Planes!”

Everyone’s heads snapped up, searching the heavens and Dane yelled “Where, which direction?”

“Northwest,” Fredericks called back.

“Into the overhang, everybody,” Dane commanded. He took only enough time to yell up to Fredericks, “Hide!” and then dove into cover with the others. They all held their breaths.

Flight Sergeant Steutsel was leading the flight of four Messerschmitt 109’s when he saw some movement on the ground near Sfax. A second look netted him nothing. Intrigued he circled back to take a closer look. Again he saw nothing. Mentally he shrugged. Must have been some skulking Arab, there was no way there could be any enemy this far behind the lines. He kept flying south towards Gabes and the British lines where he was to patrol and forgot the incident.

After the planes left the American party rose from their hiding place and stared at the disappearing planes. “Are we safe?” Angelique asked fearfully.

Dane stared up and thoughtfully said, “They circled around so they noticed something. They didn’t fire so they didn’t see us. They are continuing their flight so I don’t think they called for ground back up, otherwise they would circle to mark our position. I think we’re safe.” Angelique heaved a sigh of relief.

While they waited for the time to leave, Angelique pulled out the Bible and Drew moved over to sit beside her. She started to read out loud when Zabronski suddenly let out a loud curse,
stood up and stomped away. Webster tittered and followed him while Tielson looked uncomfortable but stayed. Dane looked sorrowfully after them, and then Angelique started reading again. She and Drew talked over the passages with Dane, asking questions. The both of them felt a drawing and a curiosity about the Word of God that neither one had ever felt before. It was nearing eleven when they left for Sfax.

As they walked she looked at him curiously, “You said that you had only just met Dane, how did you meet?” Drew explained about being assigned to meet someone at the café, his guide Abu Mehouf being killed when they ran into the tank column and his escaping from his burning vehicle, meeting up with Zabronski (she shivered at the name) and Webster, and then with Shaw and his three men. Soon they arrived at Sfax and mingled with the other pedestrians.

**Back to Table of Contents**

**Chapter Nineteen**

*February 4 Morning in Sfax*

All morning long, the same four men from the previous day were in the same room watching the comings and goings from the café across the street. The Germans were bored, and as they assumed Abu didn’t understand German, started gossiping among themselves.

“I heard that the money from the Jews never made it to the airport to be flown back to Germany,” one of them said. The other two looked at him expectedly. Abu’s ears twitched, but he kept his eyes glued to the street. “I hear that the major took a halftrack and some men out of town, and he returned without them,” the first man went on with a knowing wink.

“Shush,” one of the others looked worried. “If he hears that being bandied about, that’s not all that’s going to disappear.” The other two men got equally worried looks and shut up. Abu’s brain was thinking furiously about this information, as a halftrack and a fortune out in the desert, guarded by a handful of men, might be ripe for a plucking.

About an hour later, Abu was watching a man down at the end of the street who had the right build and brown hair of Captain Matthews, but Abu couldn’t see his face. Abu pressed his own face against the window, trying to see. Just then, Angelique and Drew were walking from the opposite direction towards the café. Drew glanced around and saw an Arab’s face in the window across from the café. As the Arab’s head turned, Drew could see…Abu! He froze for an instant, then as the possibilities raced through his mind, he turned his face towards Angelique and whispered, “Look at me and laugh.” She instantly complied, but with a worried look in her eyes whispered back, “What’s wrong?”

“We are being watched.” As her eyes involuntarily started to look around he hissed at her, “Keep your eyes on me! Now keep smiling at me until we get into the restaurant.” He kept his face averted, facing her, until they entered the café. At the entrance they stopped with their backs to the street, and Drew checked the café out. There were no German uniforms in sight, and the café was busier today than yesterday. He looked suspiciously at the diners and tried to pick out possible undercover German agents. Although there were a handful of men who might fit the bill, they were all sitting with a family or elderly men, and Drew felt fairly sure, or as much as he could be, that there were no Gestapo agents in the café.

Across the street the French speaking German roughly grabbed Abu and yanked him from the window, “Dumkopff, do you want to be spotted? Stay back from the window!” Abu
swallowed his anger and looked out the window. Just disappearing into the café was a couple. Abu narrowed his eyes, he had caught only a glimpse of the back of the male figure, but there was something about him. But no, how could the captain be with a woman? He went back to studying the street.

There was one open table and Drew led Angelique to it and they sat down. Angelique whispered again, “Who is watching us?” Drew smiled back at her, “Remember the guide I told you about, Abu Mehouf? He is watching from across the street.”

Angelique looked at him with horrified eyes, “But you said he had been killed!”

“Apparently he wasn’t,” Drew answered dryly. “Now the question is, why is he sitting across the street watching this café?”

“He could be waiting for you to show up?” Angelique suggested.

“He could, but why not just sit out by the street? How many Arabs did we see just standing or sitting around? No, he has to be trying to hide out, but who is he hiding from, the Germans or me?” Suddenly an arrested look came across his face. “If Abu had sold me out to the Germans, that would explain why I was able to escape and why I wasn’t chased when we ran into that tank column. Abu is watching the front door of the café to point me out.”

“Why are they just watching and waiting? Why not just raid?” Angelique asked nervously.

“Because they want to catch the informant, they don’t know who it is, and they want me to lead them to him.” Drew answered bitterly.

“Do you think Major Lindisli being here yesterday is a part of it?”

“Probably.” Drew thought about it, “They must not have had the surveillance set up yet, so he was checking the place out. Remember how he came straight over to me? He must have been going by my description.”

Just then the waitress came over, “Ah, Monsieur and Mademoiselle, you have returned. You enjoyed our cuisine, yes?”

“Indeed we did,” Drew answered pleasantly. “And what delicacies do you have for us today?”

“Alas, only the same choices as yesterday,” she answered sadly. “But it is all fresh caught from last night. What would you desire?” Angelique and Drew made their choices and she hurried away.

“If he recognized you, then they are watching us to see who the contact is. It is better for us to leave and never to come back,” Angelique returned to their conversation.

“I don’t think he did,” Drew answered slowly. “If he did know who I was, then he never would have approached me. After he returned to his table I noticed he had his eye on some other men, and now that I think of it, they fit my general description. Also, we can’t leave just yet, we haven’t got the information.” He looked over the room in irritation. “I wish we had a better organized way of making contact. We and the informant could be just sitting around and waiting for the other one to initiate the contact.”

“And we could be all wrong in our suppositions, and Abu could just be waiting for you,” Angelique sighed.

Back at the camp, while Dane and Tielson were busy and Fredericks was on guard, Zabronski cornered Webster. “I’ve been thinking about all that money,” he began.

Webster looked around to make sure they couldn’t be overheard. “Well, it’s not going to do
us any good, now is it? Only the corporal and captain know where it’s at. And if we do get our hands on it, where would we go with it?”

“I’ve got it all planned out. When we pick up the halftrack, we take over. We drive to Algiers and hire one of those Arab boats to take us to Portugal, and then fly back to the States. Easy as pie.”

Webster grimaced, “Easy as pie, huh? After what Shaw did to you without half trying, what makes you think you can get away with it?”

Zabronski’s face turned ugly, “I’ve got plans for him too, and he won’t get close enough to touch me either. I’ll shoot him down when he won’t be expecting it and I’ll leave him to die. Are you with me or not?”

Webster chewed on that. The sight of all that money was so very tempting, but…”What about Angelique and the captain?”

“Oh, we’ll turn them loose when we leave Algiers,” Zabronski lied easily. He had no intention of leaving witnesses. How long Angelique lived would depend entirely on how well she pleased him.

“Well, if you’re sure it will work. It would be real nice to have money for once in my life.”

Back to Table of Contents

Chapter Twenty
February 4, Afternoon at the Cafe

As Drew and Angelique ate their lunch, they avoided the subject uppermost in their minds—meeting the informant. Instead, Drew talked about his family: his parents and younger brother and sister. “Dad is a crusty career officer. He must be, oh, 58 now. My mother is his second wife, his first wife died in childbirth, her and the baby both. It took him a while to recover from it. When he met my mother he thought he was too old for her. When he told her that, she looked him right in the eye and said ‘you are the right age for me.’” He and Angelique chuckled. “He was a lieutenant for 16 years and a captain for 14. Now he is a major and training troops back home.”

“Mom is the organizer, she’s had to be with so many moves in her lifetime. She keeps the home fires burning and all of us in line. Dad acts tough, but he would be lost without her.” Angelique could tell that he was deeply attached to his mother, and there was an ache in her heart and a lump in her throat thinking about her Mama and Papa.

“I am the oldest. David is three years younger and a lot like Dad, they bump heads a lot. It used to drive Mom nuts, but then she got so that she would tell them to go outside and fight it out and not come in until they were ready to be peaceable.” Drew shook his head in wonder, “That got their attention, neither of them wanted to upset her. Now that they aren’t living in the same house, they seem to get along better. Betty is the youngest and the apple of Dad’s eye.” He chuckled again, “You ought to hear the third degree Dad gives her young men when they come to call. That used to make her upset until Dad told her that he was waiting for the man that would look him in the eye and stand up to him. That would be the man that would be worthy of her. That caught her attention and the last letter I had from home sounds like she might have found one.”

The time flew past as they conversed, and they looked up in surprise at the nearly empty
café when the waitress stopped at their table. “Well, it is so nice to see young people enjoy
themselves again,” she heaved a big sigh. “Do you mind if I set down and rest my feet?” “Of
course not,” they both answered and she pulled up a chair. “Nowadays young men and women
have no time to sit and be romantic with each other. It is all rushing about and looking behind
them in fear lest they get clapped on their shoulders and arrested.” She sighed and beamed at
them. They moved uncomfortably in their chairs. “Oh, to be back in the old days, sitting on the
Left Bank, sipping wine, and flirting with all the young men. How long has it been since you
have been in France?”

“Two years,” Angelique answered. Drew-diplomatically-didn’t reply.

“I have been here in Tunisia for twenty years. My husband brought us here, and we opened
this café. He named it after me, and we ran it together until he died two years ago. France’s
surrender crushed him; he was never the same afterwards.” She sighed again, “Do you know
what I miss the most about France?” she asked dreamily, and then went on without waiting for
an answer. “The lilies. The lilies are beautiful by the Loire.”

Drew froze.

He gulped, and then answered, “I prefer the lilies of Garonne.”

She bent forward and Drew suddenly noticed the shrewd brown eyes boring into his, “Who
is she?” indicating Angelique.

“She is a long story, and the only way that I was able to get here. But,” Drew looked
confused, “I thought that I was to meet a Monsieur Gascoigne?”

She chuckled, “It puts a lot of people off.” Then she grew serious. “You must get this
information back to your general. General Arnim is going to attack near Sbeitla with the 10th
and 21st Panzer Divisions within a few days.”

“How do you know?” gasped Drew.

The woman’s face grew cold, “My daughter’s lover is a German officer. Sometimes he is
indiscreet.” At their looks of horror, she shrugged her shoulders. “One does what one is able,”
she said obscurely.

Drew became all business, “The café is being watched from across the street, but I am not
sure if the Germans are involved or not. Is there a back way out?”

The woman looked frightened, “If the Germans are watching the front, then they are
watching the back also. What makes you think they are out there?”

Drew rapidly explained. “So,” she nodded, “you think they are searching for you so that you
will lead them to the informant. If you try leaving by the back door, the Germans will certainly
be on to you and it will cause suspicion to fall on me. But if you leave by the front door like any
other customer, you may get away if this Abu can’t see your face. But how can that be done?”

They all three thought, and then Drew got an idea. “Maybe if I use this handkerchief to wipe
my face as I walk out, until I can turn away, maybe that will work?”

The woman nodded, “Yes, that might work, and you can pretend to shade your face from the
sun also.” Angelique sucked in her breath, remembering her conversation with the shopkeeper.
On such a little thing like purchasing the handkerchief might decide whether or not they would
escape. What had made her blurt out the request to purchase the handkerchief? Or who? She
gave a shudder.

“No time like the present, let’s go,” and Drew stood up and pulled Angelique up too. “Thank
you for the delicious meal, we shall certainly return,” he announced in a louder tone and paid the
They walked to the door and he pulled out the handkerchief. As they walked outside, he mopped his face and they turned and walked down the street.

Abu watched them leave, but could not see the man’s face. There was something about him, though. Abu kept watching him while he worried at it. Suddenly he got it, the man had a military bearing, his shoulders were straight and he walked like a soldier! “That’s him!” Abu shouted, “That’s Captain Matthews!” Instantly two of the Germans rushed to the window and spotted him, while the third got on the radio and called headquarters.

“We spotted the American,” the radio man reported. “He and a woman companion have left the café and are walking down the street. What are your instructions?”

“Has he made contact with the spy?” asked the man on the other end.

“We don’t know.”

Back at headquarters Major Lindisl had charged out of office when he heard the call and was listening. “What are your orders, Herr Major?” he was asked.

Lindisl thought for a second. He weighed in the balance the possibility of capturing the spy versus the certainty of regaining his lost money. “Raid the café with one man from the rear and two from the front. Send two men each from the front and rear to pick up the Americans. Bring them here immediately.” The man on the radio passed on the orders, and then called the watchers at the rear and gave them their orders and the description of the two.

Back to Table of Contents

Chapter Twenty-One
February 4 Afternoon in Sfax

The first hint that Drew and Angelique had that things were going wrong was when, after they passed the mouth of the alley that ran behind the café, two men in civilian clothes emerged from the alley and rapidly closed the distance between them. “Halt!” called one, and then in laborious French, “Come with us.” Both Germans pulled pistols from their pockets. Drew turned and faced them, “Monsieurs?” he asked questioningly. The Germans waved their pistols for the two of them to proceed back the way they had come. The street was suddenly empty of passersby.

Drew took a couple of steps so that one German was standing in front of the other, and then burst into action, slapping the nearest German’s gun hand out of the way and landing a haymaker on his chin. He fell backward and knocked the second German’s head into the wall, who slumped down, unconscious. The first German started to get up and Drew kicked him in the jaw, and he also lost interest in the proceedings. Drew snatched up a pistol and looked around. Just down the street was a corner where another winding street intersected this one. Because of the angle it offered hope for an escape. He could hear feet running towards them, but they were on the same street as the café.

Acting on a sudden urge, he grabbed Angelique’s hand and sprinted towards the running feet. They ducked into the narrow, winding alley and slowed to a walk, so as not to make noise. A twist in the alley took them out of sight of the street they had just left. Drew pulled Angelique to a stop, and they plastered themselves against the wall and listened to the running feet pass by, and the voices when Abu and the German with him reached the two Germans that Drew had knocked out. By then they were struggling to their feet. Looking wildly around at the vacant
street, one of them pointed further on down the street saying, “They must have gone that way!” Drew and Angelique heard the voices and feet recede as their pursuers continued on down the street. Drew pulled Angelique by the hand and continued on down the alley. When they reached the back door to the café, it was open and they could hear confused voices from within as the three Germans were rounding up everyone inside and questioning them, looking for the mysterious ‘Monsieur Gascoigne.’ Fortunately for them, no one was looking as they hurried on past. When they reached the other end of the alley, they turned and hurried on down that street.

Behind them, Abu and the Germans had run down to the intersection. Two Germans ran on down the street, while Abu and the other German turned onto the side street. However, the side street became a dead end and they retreated back to the intersection, where they met the other two. Bewildered by the disappearance of the fugitives, they hurried back to the surveillance room to report in.

The Germans raiding the café had no better luck. They could not find hide or hair of any ‘Monsieur Gascoigne’ and also reported in.

Major Lindisl was furious, “What do you mean you lost them, dumkopff?”

The lieutenant in charge at the surveillance was apologetic, “Herr Major, he knocked out the two men trying to arrest him, and then they just disappeared.”

“What about the spy? Was he apprehended?” Lindisl asked.

“No, Herr Major. There was no one in the café named Monsieur Gascoigne,” replied the lieutenant even more apologetically.

Lindisl drummed his fingers on the table, “You have questioned everyone, I assume?”

“Ja, Herr Major. I have all the suspects. Do you want to see them?”

“Ja, bring all of them here, I will personally interrogate them. Meanwhile, and more importantly, catch that American!” Lindisl slammed down the phone. Within minutes, the well-oiled German machine started sealing off that section of the city. Trucks roared out, dropping soldiers at key points to form a blockade. Teams of soldiers started working up and down the streets, looking for the pair. Abu Mehouf was a part of one of the teams.

After Drew and Angelique had made their escape, they started working their way west, going by the sun. But the streets were crooked and winding and they were on streets unfamiliar to Angelique, and they were soon lost. The street they were on turned and wound more or less northward.

Up ahead of them they saw some kind of disturbance. Peering ahead, Drew made out the shape of a German truck blocking the street. He cast a quick look around, “Here,” indicating an intersecting street, “this way, this street goes west.” Angelique looked at it in distaste, the street was narrower and trashier than the ones that they had so far traversed, but she obediently turned into it. The street remained narrow and winding, and the only intersections were with very narrow alleys. The looks they were getting from the few Arab passersby were definitely unfriendly. Drew got more and more worried as the street seemed to be bending back the way they had come.

Suddenly they were accosted by three Arab men, who pulled knives out of their belts. “Your money, quickly, French dog,” one of them said in guttural French, waving his knife threateningly. Drew pushed Angelique behind him with one arm while he pulled out his pistol with the other hand. This gave the Arabs pause. Now they were in a stand-off, Drew not wanting to fire his gun to draw attention to themselves, and the Arabs not wanting to rush him.
Angelique looked wildly around, her heart in her mouth. There was a narrow alley next to her, and she could hear crowd noises coming from it. She grabbed Drew’s free arm, “This way.” Angelique hurried down the alley which was barely wide enough for one person to walk through. The smell was atrocious, and Angelique tried to hold her breath as much as possible while shuddering at what she must be walking through. Drew followed behind keeping watch on the Arabs, who seemed disinclined to follow.

Suddenly they turned a corner and were in a square. Drew hurriedly pocketed the pistol and they started to walk across it, trying to mingle with the other pedestrians, when they saw to their horror German soldiers guarding the exits. Drew turned around and bumped into an Arab’s back. The Arab turned around, and Drew looked into the face of Abu Mehouf.

Abu was so surprised to see Captain Matthews right in front of him, that he opened his mouth and shouted, “Here they are!” in French, instead of trying to inveigle his way into their confidence. Drew threw a punch and knocked Abu down. The nearby Arabs, seeing a Frenchman hit one of their own for no apparent reason, started shouting imprecations and milling about him. The German guarding the nearest exit waded into the melee and used the butt of his rifle to clear a path for himself. The volatile Arabs suddenly turned on him and a shoving, yelling, wild melee ensued. As more German soldiers entered the square, a group of Arabs and French rushed away down the unguarded street, sweeping Drew and Angelique with them. As they raced down the street, they could see a squad of Germans coming towards them. A group split off and turned down a narrow and smelly alley and Drew and Angelique followed them. After a short distance they spilled out into a broader and cleaner street and everyone scattered.

Drew and Angelique dropped down into a saunter and made their way along the street. “Whew,” Drew mopped his face. “That was close! Well, at least we know which side Abu is on.”

“Why, did you see him?” Angelique panted in the heat and from the exertion of running. “That is who I punched back there.”

Angelique’s eyes grew big, “Mon Dieu!” she gasped. As she gazed around the street, an arrested look came over her. “Monsieur Dupleix, Monsieur Dupleix!” she called out. A balding middle-aged man walking down the street looked over to see her waving at him. She dashed over to his side with Drew following, wondering what was going on. Monsieur Dupleix peered nearsightedly at her and then said wonderingly, “Mademoiselle DuBois?”

“Oui, it is I,” she answered him rather breathlessly. “Why my dear, what are you doing in Sfax? I thought you were in Gafsa.” He beamed at her.

“I was, but when fighting broke out there I went to Faid and now I am here.” “I am on my way home now, please come with me. Mathilde would be pleased to see you,” he invited them. He peered at Drew. “And who is this?”

“This is…,” Angelique started to say and then stopped. She couldn’t remember the name on Drew’s id.

“Etienne Pinochet, at your service.” Drew bowed to the older man, who with a smile acknowledged the greeting.

Theo Dupleix started to lead them towards his home while Drew explained how they happened to meet him, “We got caught up with a mob that was running away from the Germans and lost our way, and then Mademoiselle DuBois saw you.”
Theo threw his hands up in the air, “Oh, those Boche!” He looked around guiltily and then continued his tirade all the way home. Drew hid a smile; to hear him talk one would think the Germans were the cause of all the sins of the earth.

They arrived at the small abode of the Dupleix family and went in. “Mathilde, you will never guess who I ran into just now,” Theo announced as he entered the house.

“Who was it?” a feminine voice answered followed by the appearance of its owner, a rather large woman who blinked at the unexpected guests. “Why, Mademoiselle DuBois, Angelique, whatever are you doing here?” she asked in surprise. So Angelique explained again why she was in Sfax, leaving huge gaps in her story, such as exactly how she got to Sfax. In response to Mathilde’s unasked but obvious question she introduced Drew. After a few minutes chatter the Dupleix’s went to get some refreshments. While they were absent Angelique whispered to Drew, “Do you think we should leave now? I can find my way out of the city from here.”

Drew considered and then shook his head, “Let’s wait a bit for things to die down a bit.”

Just then their hosts rejoined them with a dish of dates and a bottle of wine. Mathilde wasted no time in starting what she thought was a subtle examination. “Where are you from, Monsieur Pinochet? I must say your accent is unfamiliar to me.”

Drew tried not to look worried. “I am from Gefosse-Fontenay in Normandy.”

She still looked puzzled, “Gefosse-Fontenay? I don’t believe I have ever heard of that town. Where is it?”

“It is near to Isigny.”

“Oh, Isigny, yes, I know where that is.” Still not satisfied about his accent, she decided to ask a more pressing question, “How long have you and Angelique known each other?”

Rather nonplussed, Drew replied, “We met while traveling from Faid to Sfax.”

“What were you doing in Faid?” as she passed him a glass of wine and offered the dates.

Drew took a sip of wine and a date while he tried to organize his thoughts. “I was looking for a source of fruit for exporting. I am a fruit exporter.”

Theo took a date and a glass after Angelique had been served. “What company do you work for?”

Drew choked on the date. He had never thought about a name of a company and forgot that he was supposed to be a freelancer. When he stopped coughing he muttered, “The Marseille Fruit Company.”

Theo looked puzzled, “The Marseille Fruit Company? I don’t believe I have heard of them.”

“Oh, it’s a new company, just starting, I am trying to line up some contacts,” Drew stammered a little.

“Well, if you like I can point you to some local growers. I am sure some of them may be interested if the price is right.”

“Oh, thank you very much, I will certainly be in touch with you in a day or two.” Drew didn’t quite know what to say and cast an anguished eye at Angelique.

She came to his rescue, “Oh, look at the time, we had best be going before the curfew.”

“The curfew?” Theo exclaimed and went off on another tirade about that. When he ran out of breath Mathilde interjected, “Where are you off to?”

“We are staying with some other people we met on the journey, and we really must be on our way,” she set down the empty glass and gracefully rose to her feet, followed by Drew.

“Who are they? Perhaps we know them,” Mathilde pressed, suspicion starting to grow in
her.

“I don’t think so, they are new to the area, refugees also,” Drew was starting to stumble at
the look he was getting from his hostess.

“Thank you so much for your hospitality, it is so nice to see you again,” Angélique gushed
as she led Drew to the door. Before the astonished couple could say any more, Angélique and
Drew were gone.

“Whew,” Drew sighed in relief. “I sure am glad to get out of there. I’m not sure what
Madame Dupleix was thinking but I am sure it was trouble.” He looked at Angélique’s flushed
cheeks. “Why, what is it?”

Angélique flushed more, “She probably thought I am…entertaining…” embarrassed, she
couldn’t go on.

Drew’s mouth dropped open, “What! Well I never, oh.” He shut his mouth, also
embarrassed.

She indicated the direction. “This way leads us out of the city in the direction we want to
go.”

Drew fell into step alongside of her and said with amazement as he thought of the recent
events, “You know, we are having an incredible run of luck!”

Angélique looked at him with an unfathomable look in her dark eyes, “Would you call this
just plain ‘luck’? We successfully enter and leave a café the Germans have under surveillance, at
least once and maybe twice. When they try to arrest us, you knock two armed men out, when we
are discovered again, a mob of Arabs interfere, and when we follow a group running away, they
lead us to one of the few people I know in this city, and therefore, I can find the way out of the
city.”

Drew gave an arrested look to her, “It doesn’t seem likely, does it? Either someone is
leading us on, or…”

Angélique nodded, “Or someone is praying for us again.” Deep in thought they quietly
walked on down the street which ran more or less to the west, the direction they wanted to go.

They followed the street until it reached a large square with shops on the east side. The west
side was an old wall, punctured now in several places where streets went through to a built up
area beyond. Through the gateway in front of them, they could see the street continuing on
through the houses and on out of the city. Partially blocking the gateway was a German truck
with a German sitting behind the wheel. When they looked around the square they could see
German sentries posted at each entrance. They melted back into the crowd.

“Now what do we do?” Drew breathed. He looked around for inspiration. He noticed the
nearby shops: a coffee house, a bakery, what looked like a junk store, a grocery store, a store
selling women’s hats. Suddenly something seemed to click in his head. “Angélique, get some
white flour or something that will turn my hair white for a few minutes from that grocery store.”

He handed her a fistful of money and pushed her in that direction. Not waiting to see if she was
doing what he told her, he went over to the junk shop and picked out a short walking stick about
two feet long that he had noticed. The proprietor wanted to haggle about the price, but Drew
handed him a franc and left the man speechless.

He returned and saw Angélique leaving the grocery store with a small bag. He led her back
down the street to the nearest ubiquitous alley. He rapidly explained his plan and Angélique
wiped his hair down with white flour. It wouldn’t withstand anything like an inspection, but it
wasn’t meant to. Leaning over on the short walking stick and dragging one foot, the prematurely-going-white-haired, half-crippled Frenchman made his painful way back up the street and across the square. The German driver gave him a once over and then returned to watching the crowd for a nearly six foot tall, brown haired man trying to leave the city.

Drew slowly walked around the truck, and when he was hidden from the view of the other German sentries, straightened up, pulled out the pistol, stood on the running board, and with one hand pointed the gun at the driver and with the other held up a forefinger across his lips in the universal sign of silence. The driver, completely taken by surprise, had a quick decision to make; either sound the alarm and receive a posthumous award for bravery, or surrender quietly. He started to raise his hands. Drew motioned for him to keep his hands down and to slide over and get out on the passenger side. As he was getting out, Drew hit him over the head with his pistol and knocked him out, the driver having a hat on and not a helmet.

Angelique, while waiting for the driver to disappear, noticed three children playing nearby. She walked over to them and knelt down, “Enfants Bonjour.” They looked shyly back and returned her greeting. “Would each of you like to earn a franc?”

“A whole franc? For each of us?” Their eyes grew big as the oldest asked the questions.

“Oui, a whole franc for each of you. Just walk with me across the square to the truck and wait until the truck drives away. Then you can come back.”

“Oui, oui, oui,” they echoed. Angelique stood up and noticed the driver was gone. She took the hands of the two smallest children and walked across the square. The sentries noticed her, of course, but as she was obviously not the one they were looking out for, she got only the normal male appreciation. When she reached the truck, the white haired driver wearing the cap and shirt of a German soldier was sitting behind the wheel. Angelique paid off her guardians and slipped into the cab. It was a tight fit, trying to lie down on top of the unconscious, shirtless German, but Angelique was able to keep out of sight as Drew started the truck and drove away, the sentries gaping and wondering why Hans was leaving.

When they had driven out of sight of town, they stopped and dumped the driver out and took off towards the camp. As they drove along suddenly Drew whistled, “I never thought of it until now, but you could have stayed with the Dupleix’s.”

Angelique looked blankly at him, “I never thought of it either.” She felt an awful lump in her throat at the thought of never seeing Dane or Drew again. As she bounced along in the truck, the refrain kept going around and around in her mind: Dane and Drew, Drew and Dane. She looked fearfully over at Drew. What was going to happen to her? Now that they had the information, would they just leave her? “Drew, what will you do with me?” she finally asked.

“Do with you?” he repeated with surprise. “Why, take you with us back to our lines, unless you want to remain here?” he asked anxiously with a worried look on his face.

“Oh no,” she replied happily, “I would like to go with you.” She settled back in her seat. Dane and Drew, Drew and Dane went around and around again.
need to pray for Angelique and Drew, and spent a lot of time in prayer, so much so that he missed what was going on under his nose. Zabronski sidled up to Fredericks, “I’ve been thinking about all that money, just going to waste out there.”

Fredericks looked up at him, a trifle fearfully. He had seen what Shaw had done to Zabronski, but he also knew that he was no Dane Shaw. “What about it? I suppose we will pick up the halftrack on the way back, and the captain will turn the money over to the authorities.”

“But what will they do with it, and who’s to say that it won’t disappear into some moneygrubbing hands that have less right to it than we do? After all, we’re the ones who risked our lives to recapture it,” he said persuasively.

“Well,” Fredericks twisted uncomfortably, “that has nothing to do with me. I know the corporal is going to turn it over, and you can’t stop him. The captain and Tielson are on his side about it too. There’s nothing that you can do about it.”

The Russian’s face turned dark at the jibe about the fight. “Things happen during battles, people die,” he said smoothly and walked away, leaving a man behind him, frightened, but not knowing what to do.

As midafternoon came, Dane took his turn on the hill as guard. He carefully searched the barren hills, but saw no sign of life. “Not even much vegetation,” he mused to himself. Some low bushes, some kind of thistles, and a handful of cacti were all that he could see. In the distance, he could see some greenery, probably marking oases.

As he scanned the desert hills, he could feel a pressure, like someone crying out for help, and he was needed to supply that help. He felt it mount and mount while images of Angelique and Drew filled his mind. He had no doubt this was coming from God, that God wanted him to pray for them. He prayed and begged God for the help he was sure Angelique and Drew needed now. He wanted to fly to their rescue, but he couldn’t; he didn’t know where they were. Only God could help them right now, and he was begging God to supply that help. But all the while he prayed, he also knew that his men were depending on him to be their lookout and he did not close his eyes, but kept them active.

Suddenly, he spotted movement towards the north, and at the same time the pressure left him. Whatever was happening to them was now in God’s hands, and he had to concentrate on the here and now. He ducked for cover, and carefully using the binoculars so they wouldn’t reflect the sun, scanned the hills. A group of Arabs jumped into view and his heart jumped too; they were spread out in a line abreast, watching the ground, moving from the northwest towards the southeast. Suddenly one of them pulled his camel to a stop and flung his arm up in the air. The others gathered around him, looking at the ground.

“Found our tracks,” Dane muttered to himself, his mind now completely focused on the problem materializing in front of him. Then one of them looked up, apparently straight at Dane. Dane froze, knowing that he was invisible to the Arab where he was lying, but that any movement would draw the man’s attention. He could see the Arab’s face in the glasses, a sly, cruel looking man with grey appearing in his beard. The Arab broke the unseen eye contact and turned to his comrades and said unheard orders to them. They turned directly in the direction of the camp. Dane counted nine of them.

Dane moved carefully, keeping under cover, until he could look down into the camp. He saw Tielson, and threw a rock to catch his attention. When Tielson looked up, Dane pointed in the direction the Arabs were coming and held up nine fingers. Tielson nodded his understanding
and quickly and silently alerted the others. They assumed their defensive positions and Dane melted away.

As the Arabs came into view, Bob Tielson carefully picked out his target. Some sixth sense seemed to warn the Arab and he halted, looking around for the danger. Tielson squeezed the trigger and the Arab tumbled off his camel and lay still on the ground. Three more rifle shots rang out and another Arab fell to the ground. Suddenly all the Arabs disappeared from sight. Tielson wiped his sweaty face, and a bullet ricocheted off the rock he was hiding behind. He fired back and heard the whine of his bullet as it smashed off a rock. A few minutes later he saw a bush slightly move and he sent a round through it, and instantly two or three bullets smashed into his rock, cutting his face slightly with rock fragments. He heard Fredericks off to his right and then Zabronski above and behind him return the fire. High above them all, Dane lay hidden in the rocks, waiting and watching for an opportunity to whittle down the odds, undetected by the attacking Arabs, his eyes constantly on the move while his body waited motionless.

Webster caught a glimpse of a shadowy figure and fired, but in his haste shot too high, and then he, too, was bracketed by rifle fire. By now, the Arabs had pegged the positions of the four Americans and started working their way around them. Sporadic gunfire would erupt whenever one side would catch glimpses of the other. Fredericks got his hand burned, and Webster got a leg scratched.

Suddenly, there was a single gunshot, and an Arab threw up his hands and slid down the slope. Startled, the Arab leader, Ali, looked around. Where had that shot come from? His desert wise eyes could see nothing, and yet there must be a fifth enemy somewhere. He felt a premonition that it must be that fox he had mentioned two days ago. He motioned for his men to keep up the pressure while he tried to keep an eye out for where the fox was holed up. Another half an hour passed, with an occasional burst of fire as he tightened the circle about the Americans. But his divided attention cost him, as Tielson saw him dodge from one rock to another and wounded him.

Then came that single shot again and an Arab howled in pain, grabbing his side. Ali was close enough to pull him to safety and see how bad the wound was. By now, Ali was worried. He had three dead and another badly wounded. He himself was nursing a shoulder wound, and he still had no idea where the hidden marksman was. He scanned the slope above him, and his heart froze. If the fox was up there near the top, it would only be a matter of time before more of his men would be killed. Since no firing had come from there at first, he had assumed no one was up there and he had allowed his men to come in close enough that now they were in real danger from that infidel. He cursed the fox under his breath and then raised his voice, “Back, my children, back to the camels.”

Zabronski, from his position, could tell that the Arabs were starting to pull back. He could see one Arab who was trying to draw a bead on Tielson before he left. He could also plainly see Tielson. He carefully aimed his rifle and squeezed the trigger. The rock exploded just inches from Tielson’s face. Startled, he jerked his head up. An Arab bullet found its mark, and Tielson fell down, dead.

After the Arabs’ departure, the Americans gathered around their fallen comrade while Dane watched to make sure the Arabs really left. He rose from his hiding place and sped down the slope to the gathering, and only then found out that Tielson was dead. Dane, with real sorrow, gathered his friend’s belongings together. While Dane was busy, Zabronski, with an innocent
face, spoke to Fredericks, “See what I mean about people dying in battle? Are you with us or not?”

“You killed Tielson?” Fredericks asked in shock.

“Check the body, he was killed by an Arab,” Zabronski said with a smirk. Fredericks looked at the big man and shivered. If he accused Zabronski of murdering Tielson, there was no proof and who would believe him? If he could have Tielson killed that easily, how much easier would it be for Zabronski to have him killed? Thinking that he was trapped, and overawed by the bigger and wiliest man, Fredericks jerked a nod. “Good man,” Zabronski clapped him on the shoulder with a jovial laugh. “What do you want me to do?” Fredericks asked miserably. “Nothing, just don’t interfere, and for that you will get a full share of the treasure.”

Dane returned to Tielson’s body with real distress on his face, “We don’t have anything to dig a grave with, and I don’t want to just leave his body out here.” He sighed, “Well, let’s put it in the overhang for now.” Zabronski volunteered to help, and the two of them carried the body and put it at the back of the overhang.

The sun was sinking behind the mountains in the west when they heard a truck motor coming closer. Alarmed, they hid themselves and watched a German truck come into sight. They were readying their weapons when it stopped and a woman got out of the cab. Angelique! They stood up and waved, and she waved back and climbed back in the truck, and the truck started up again. Now it was close enough to see the captain driving, and Dane ran down the slope to greet them.

Zabronski stared at the truck and saw all of his plans go up in smoke. With the truck, there was no need to go back and get the halftrack and loot, and he knew full well the corporal and captain regarded it as unimportant and would not go after it. He had to come up with another plan quickly. While the other three conversed, Zabronski gathered his henchmen and hatched another plan.

“What happened?” panted Dane. Drew started to explain but Dane waved him off, “Did you get the information?”

“Yes, but what is the matter?” Drew asked, puzzled by Dane’s demeanor.

“We were attacked by Arabs. We drove them off, but I’ll bet anything they’ll be back tonight. They killed Tielson.”

“Oh, no!” gasped Angelique.

Drew stared at him, “And we are probably being trailed from town, to boot. We have to leave now.” By then Zabronski and the others had joined them and the captain started issuing orders. “Break camp and load up the truck. We can’t go back by the Faid Pass, we’ll have to go south around the mountains and back northwest to our lines.” All of them noticed the change in the captain; instead of asking questions and relying on Dane, he was issuing orders and taking command. With a chorus of ‘Yes, sirs,’ they started scurrying around.

Zabronski carefully looked around. Shaw had found an iron rod in the truck and was trying to cave in part of the overhang to bury Bob Tielson, Angelique had put her belongings in the back of the truck and was watching the corporal, and the captain was carrying an armful of stuff towards the truck. He nodded to Webster and waited for the captain at the back of the truck.

“Hey cap’n, did you see this?” holding back the flap and pointing to something in the bed of the truck.

“I haven’t looked back there, what is it?” Drew tried to see what Zabronski was pointing to.
Zabronski lifted his rifle butt and brought it crashing down on the captain’s head. He crumpled to the ground. Zabronski picked the body up and heaved it into the truck and crawled in after it, tied and gagged the unconscious man, and then scrambled out again.

Webster wandered over to Angelique and touched her arm to get her attention, “Ma’am, the captain wants to see you at the back of the truck.”

“Oh, oui,” Angelique hurried over to see what Drew wanted while Webster moved over to Fredericks and whispered in his ear. The two of them walked over to the truck. When Angelique reached the back of the truck, she didn’t see anyone, so she lifted the flap to look into the bed of the truck. Just then she felt something stick into her back, and a hand roughly cover her mouth. “Make any noise and it will be your last,” hissed Zabronski’s voice in her ear. “Get in,” he commanded. She looked down to see the knife in his hand and climbed into the back of the truck. He tied and gagged her and left her lying beside Drew. Holding the captain’s pistol, he went back to the front of the truck, while Webster climbed in the back and Fredericks got under the wheel and started the truck.

Dane had finally got enough of the overhang to collapse to cover the body and backed out, subconsciously noticing the motor starting. “They must be ready to go,” he thought to himself as he picked up his submachine gun and got to his feet. He took a step and noticed something glittering in the rocky soil by his feet. A clip of ammo! What was it doing there? He bent down to pick it up. The bending down saved his life, for Zabronski fired just then. The bullet, instead of hitting him in the chest, hit his right shoulder and spilled him to the ground. Immediately, he rolled on the ground, gun out, looking for the assailant. He saw Zabronski standing on the far side of the truck, a look of surprise on his face at having missed such an easy target, and holding a pistol pointed at him.

Dane sprayed some bullets at him but missed as Zabronski jumped in the truck and hollered, “Go! Go!” Where were Angelique and the captain? Dane spared a quick look around but did not see them, and realized they must be in the truck. He held the gun down and sprayed more bullets at the tires of the disappearing truck, so as not to hit anyone inside. He saw with satisfaction that he hit one tire, but it was not enough, the truck kept on going.

After it was gone he sat there, surprised at the rapid turn of events, trying to grasp what had happened. “First things first,” he muttered and applied sulpha powder and a bandage to his shoulder. As far as he could tell, it wasn’t a major wound; it had passed through the top of his shoulder, somehow missing the bones. The shock was wearing off already and it was starting to hurt.

He took stock of his belongings; he had his submachine gun and spare ammo, his canteen was almost full of water, he had found the hand grenade in Tielson’s belt and added it to his own, so he had two now. He had no food and was over fifty miles away from the American lines as the crow flies, about twice that distance the way he would have to go. But the questions were, where was Zabronski taking the others, and why break away now?

Dane bowed his head, “Lord, you know what is going on and why. Where are they going? Is there a way that I can rescue Drew and Angelique? Lord, I need you to direct my steps now, and I cannot afford to make a mistake. Lord, give me wisdom. I need you now, Drew needs you now, Angelique needs you now. Oh God, help me!”

He sat there with his eyes closed, thinking. They had been on the verge of heading south, and the halftrack and loot were north. He opened his eyes. So that was why Zabronski had fled
now, he wanted that loot. But he didn’t know that the loot and halftrack were hidden in different places. Drew would resist showing Zabronski where they were, knowing that once he did, Zabronski would have no further use for him and kill him. But Zabronski also had Angelique, and could use her to force Drew to tell him. Dane ruthlessly forced from his mind the methods Zabronski would use. If Drew resisted long enough, and went to the halftrack first, that just might give Dane time to get to the hidden treasure first. He also had to get out of here; the Arabs were probably not far away and just as likely had heard the gunfire. He got to his feet, took his bearings, and started walking north, a set look to his face and a greenish cast to his eyes.

Back to Table of Contents

Chapter Twenty-Three
February 4, Evening Lindisl

Lindisl pounded his desk in fury, “Idiots! Imbeciles!” he shouted at the line of unfortunate soldiers, one of whom was still shirtless. “How could you let one dumkopff American outsmart all of you and escape?” The German soldiers stood stiffly at attention while Abu tried to become invisible. “I will deal with all of you personally when I return,” he said threatening. “Captain Heidelstrauss!” he roared. When the captain ran in, Lindisl issued orders to him, “Make ready my kubelwagon and driver, and another kubelwagon and five soldiers who share half a brain between them. That dog will come too,” pointing to Abu.

Within half an hour, they left the city. In the growing dusk, they drove to where the driver had been dumped, and they started trailing the truck. After a couple of miles, they came to a place where there was an overhang. Part of the overhang had collapsed, and they could see the tracks of the truck heading north. Lindisl worried about that, where could they be going in that direction? He looked suspiciously at the fresh collapsed dirt, “See what is under there,” he ordered.

While some of the men dug into the fresh dirt, Abu wandered around trying to make sense of the footprints. He found the camel tracks and wondered about them. Scouting around, he found a bloodstain on the ground. He realized that a battle must have been fought here. He heard a shout from the digging men and turned around. In front of him were five Arabs. “Ali,” Abu happily greeted the leader. “Abu, my brother,” the leader just as happily greeted the other.

“Ali, do you know who was here?” Abu asked. Ali’s face darkened as he recounted the events of the afternoon. “Why are you here, my brother?” Ali asked. Abu explained his presence, and then went on. “There is money involved. The German leader has a halftrack loaded with treasure somewhere out here.”

“Treasure?” That word caught Ali’s attention. His agile mind put two and two together and he realized what must have happened. “Not any more, he doesn’t,” he answered his brother. “Those American’s took it. We followed the trail to the road between Kairouan and Sfax and lost it.” The two men’s faces turned greedy. “What if we join forces with the German’s until the money is found? Then we shall see who the sly one that keeps the treasure is.”

They could hear Lindisl bellowing for Abu, and the group of Arabs walked out. They could see the disinterred body of Tielson with the Germans surrounding it. “Who is this?” Lindisl demanded of Abu.

“This is my brother, Ali, effendi. The American dogs attacked them and killed some of his
men. His blood is hot for revenge, and he is volunteering to help track them, effendi.”
   “For a price, no doubt,” Lindisl sneered.
   “A very modest price,” Ali bowed. “As he said, my blood is hot. Shall we say, a hundred francs?”
   “Shall we say forty francs?” Lindisl smiled wolfishly. They agreed on sixty-five. The Arabs went and got their camels and joined the Germans and led off into the night.

Back to Table of Contents

Chapter Twenty-Four
February 4 Evening Americans

After they had traveled far enough to be safe from Dane, at least for a few minutes, Zabronski ordered Fredericks to stop the truck, hopped out, and walked to the back. He lifted the flap and saw Webster’s shape. “Is the captain awake?”
   Webster replied, “I think so, should I strike a light to see?”
   “No, just push him out.”
   As Webster was pulling the bound figure of the captain out, Fredericks arrived. “What do you think you were doing back there?” his voice shook. “You didn’t get him; he’ll be coming after us now!”
   Zabronski glared at him, “Shut up! I said that I would shoot him and let him die.”
   “But you didn’t kill him, you only wounded him! I tell you, he’ll be coming after us. We’ve got to keep going!”
   “Shut up!” Zabronski roared at Fredericks as he raised his arm to strike at him. “He doesn’t have anything that can catch us.” He wouldn’t admit it, but he didn’t want to remain here for long just in case the corporal was hot on their trail. He felt a cold shudder of what would happen if Shaw did catch up with them.
   Fredericks subsided, but plainly was not happy about the event. Drew and Angelique’s hearts rose; Dane was alive! Hurt obviously, but now there was a chance of rescue. Zabronski stood Drew up on his feet and removed his gag.
   “I am in charge here,” Drew commanded. “I order you two men to cover Zabronski and free us!”
   “No, I am in charge,” Zabronski sneered, “and you will do what I say.” He looked at his two followers. Webster grinned, thinking of all that money. Fredericks looked miserable, but did nothing. Satisfied, he turned back to the captain. “I say that you will tell us where you hid the halftrack.”
   “Halftrack?” Drew’s mind was muddled; they had the truck, why want the halftrack too? “Why do you want…?” Suddenly his mind cleared. Zabronski didn’t want the halftrack, he was after the loot! And he didn’t know that they were hidden in different places! Suddenly, it was like the whole plan unfolded in his mind, a plan that could not have been devised by any mere human. Not by him, not by Dane, not even by the diabolical Major Lindisl. It could only have come from Someone greater than they, Someone all-powerful and all-knowing. He felt his blood chill as he realized the awesomeness of what had happened. This is why they had to abandon the halftrack; this is why it had seemed like a good idea to hide the treasure in a separate place. If they still had the halftrack, then he would not have been hit on the head, he would have had a
bullet in it. He went cold at the next thought—Angelique would have been at Zabronski’s mercy.

His mind raced, if Dane was not shot too bad, if he would think of it, then he might head for
where they had buried the cases. If he, Drew, could delay Zabronski and the others, then maybe
there was hope for Angelique and himself yet. He knew that once Zabronski had the money, he
would have no further use for the captain. He drew himself up as straight as he could and
squared his jaw, “I am giving you a direct order, place Zabronski under arrest and free myself
and Miss DuBois,” he ordered Webster and Fredericks, but didn’t get any better response than
the last time.

Zabronski glared at the captain. He didn’t have time to play games with him. The Arabs
were around somewhere, and despite his bravado, he definitely did not want to face that corporal
again, wounded or not. “Tell me, where did you hide that halftrack!” he ordered right back.

“No,” and Drew braced himself for what he was sure would be physical retaliation. Instead
Zabronski gave a mysterious smile. “Pull Miss Dubois out,” he ordered. As Webster helped slide
her out of the truck, her skirt got caught up around her waist. Zabronski reached out and pulled it
down, but as he did so he ran his hands down her legs. She shivered and tried to arch away while
Drew bit his tongue to keep from saying something that would escalate the situation. Zabronski
leered at her, and then told Webster, “Bring her up to the front of the truck.” He picked up Drew
and carried him to the passenger side of the cab and put him in it. With his hands tied behind his
back and his legs bound up, Drew was most uncomfortable. Zabronski turned to his two
henchmen, “Get in the back of the truck.”

“What are you going to do?” Fredericks asked.

“I am going to find out where that halftrack is,” he glared at Fredericks. “Now get in the
back of the truck!” Fredericks looked at Angelique but obeyed Webster’s tug on his arm and
followed him into the truck. Zabronski bent down and untied her legs, tied one end of that rope
to the rope which tied her hands together behind her back, and then tied the other end to the
headlight on the truck so that Drew could see her. He turned back to Drew, “Now will you tell
me where the halftrack is?” Drew shook his head. Zabronski shrugged, got in behind the wheel
and started driving. As he went down the slope, he was going slowly enough that Angelique was
able to keep up by jogging. When he drove up the next slope she was able to walk, but on the
next slope down he sped up, and she was forced to run. He drove faster and she went off of her
feet and started being dragged.

“Stop! Stop!” Drew yelled. Zabronski gave an evil grin and said, “I can’t hear you. Are you
telling me the location of the halftrack?”

Drew shouted “Yes!” and slumped when Zabronski stopped the truck. “Where is it?” was
the demand.

“It’s in a draw about a quarter mile east of the Kairouan-Sfax highway.”

“East of that highway?” Zabronski was amazed that they had hidden it so far away, but at
the captain’s defeated nod, he got out, untied Angelique from the truck, and put her in the front
seat between him and the captain. She was whimpering in pain behind her gag, and Drew could
see one leg was scratched and bloody. For the first time in his life he felt hatred for another man,
and glared at Zabronski, wishing for just one chance to kill him.

Zabronski drove north until they could see headlights on the Faid-Sfax highway. Then he
waited for a break in the traffic and continued north, driving up and down the ridges. Drew was
able to brace his feet with his back to the door, hoping that it wouldn’t fly open. Angelique was
being bounced around, with occasional moans, until she too was able to brace her feet with her shoulder wedged behind Drew’s shoulder. Drew said softly to her in French, “Be brave, chéri.” Finally Zabronski slowed to a stop. “Is this the draw you drove on?” he asked. Drew looked around, “I don’t know, everything looks different at night.”

Zabronski cursed, “I think we’ve come far enough north, let’s try it.” He drove straight east until they came close to the highway. Ahead of them they could see the road going over the draw on a low bridge, too low for a vehicle to pass under. Zabronski cursed again, backed up the vehicle until he could drive over the ridge without being seen from the road, and drove to the next draw. They drove to the road, and with a sinking heart Drew saw the draw where they had stashed the halftrack before them.

“Is this the one?” Zabronski asked. Drew tried to stall for time, “I’m not sure, it doesn’t look quite right somehow.” Zabronski grabbed Angelique and said, “Time for another walk.”

“Wait,” Drew exclaimed. He took another look and wearily nodded, “It’s the right one.” Zabronski sneered and released her, and when the coast was clear drove across the highway. “It’s about a quarter mile ahead,” Drew volunteered. Zabronski grunted. When they saw the two bushes guarding the halftrack, they stopped. The three renegades got out and pulled the bushes out, but because of the way the vehicle was jammed in, they couldn’t see what was in the back. Zabronski got in, and after two tries got the halftrack out of the hole it was wedged into. Then the three of them dove into the back of the halftrack.

Drew looked at Angelique; her face was white and strained. “Courage my dear, we have to give Dane enough time to get to the cases.” Her eyes asked the question her gagged mouth couldn’t. “We hid the cases in a different location than the halftrack.” She closed her eyes and sagged in relief, knowing that they weren’t about to be killed in the next few minutes, as three angry men got out of the halftrack and headed back to them. She knew, or thought she knew, that as soon as they had the loot that she and Drew would be killed.

Zabronski wrenched open the door and dragged Drew out. “Where are they?” he shouted as he shook the bound man like a rag doll. “It’s right there,” Drew managed to get out. “You were just in it.”

“Not the halftrack, the cases that were in it!” he roared.

Drew looked innocent, “You never asked me about them, only the halftrack.” Zabronski balled his fist and smashed the other man in the mouth. Completely helpless to break his fall, Drew fell on his face to the ground. He could taste the blood in his mouth, there was a ringing in his ears, and he felt the bite of the gravel in his face. Grimly he knew another blow like that would knock him out, and he tried to think of something to say to provoke that blow.

“You think you’re a big man,” he taunted his captor. “That corporal outsmarted you, he whipped you in a fistfight, and when you shot and wounded him, you ran like a scared rabbit.” Enraged, Zabronski yanked him to his feet and reared back to deliver another blow. “Anything to cause delay,” Drew thought to himself as he prepared to receive the blow as best he could.

Webster grabbed Zabronski’s arm with both hands, “Wait, we’ll never find the money if you kill him!” For a moment rage battled for reason within the Russian. Finally he dropped his arm and shook Webster off. He glared at the captain, “Where is the money?” Drew just stared back. Zabronski turned and reached into the cab of the truck and dragged Angelique out. He yanked down her gag, and before she could move, fastened his lips on hers. As she tried to pull her head away, he shifted his hold so he had a free hand, which disappeared under her clothing. She
redoubled her efforts to writhe away, with as little success. Drew could hear her moans and finally yelled, “That’s enough! I’ll tell!” Still Zabronski ground on and more of her skin appeared. “Is he going to rape her right in front of me?” Drew thought frantically to himself. “If you don’t stop right now, I’ll never tell you!” he thundered at Zabronski.

After a few more seconds Zabronski lifted his head. He leered at Angelique while he said to Drew, “You give up too easily.” He shot a fierce look at Drew while keeping his hold on the girl, “Where is it?”

“On down this draw,” Drew answered glumly. Zabronski weighed his options, hoisted the girl into his arms, and commanded the other two men, “Put him into the cab of the halftrack,” as he carried her over.

“Why the halftrack, why not stay with the truck?” asked Webster.

“Because the halftrack is better for cross country travel, and the truck is low on gas, and has a flat tire,” Zabronski snapped. When he reached the halftrack, he tossed Angelique into the cab and got in behind the wheel. Webster and Fredericks helped the captain in and then climbed into the back of the vehicle. Drew and Angelique braced themselves like they had been in the truck, and Angelique vigorously wiped her mouth on Drew’s shirt sleeve.

As Drew braced himself he wondered if he had bought Dane enough time to reach the hidden loot, if he was coming. As he thought of Dane, he thought of what Dane had told them from the Bible, and it was like scales dropping from his eyes. He understood what Dane had said about salvation. HE UNDERSTOOD! Just like he, Drew, was helpless to save himself and was totally relying on someone else to save him, so he could not save himself from his sins. He had to totally and completely rely on Jesus Christ and His sacrifice on the cross to save him from the consequences of sin. Drew bowed his head, and in the bouncing vehicle with Angelique staring at him in amazement, he prayed to Jesus, “Jesus, I understand that I am a sinner, I know that there is nothing that I can do of my own self to wipe away my sins. But I know that you paid for my sins on the cross, and I accept your sacrifice and I ask you to forgive my sins and come into my heart.”

When Drew raised his head, he was a new creature. He had a look of wonderment on his face as, for the first time in his life, he was free of the burden of sin that he hadn’t even realized, until he had met Dane and heard the Word of God, that he was bearing. He felt the presence of the Holy Spirit in his heart, just like Dane had described. He knew that within an hour he could be dead, but he felt no panic because he knew that he would be with Jesus.

He turned his head towards Angelique with that look of wonder, “Angelique, I understand what Dane was telling us. I just accepted Jesus as my savior, and it is just like what Dane described. I am free from sin; I can feel Jesus in my heart.”

Before Angelique could answer, Zabronski roared, “Shaddup! I don’t want to hear anything about that Jesus! I had enough of that sermonizing!” They subsided, and Zabronski drove to the road. It was empty, and they drove across and continued on in the draw. They drove to where the cases were hidden. “Here they are,” Drew announced and Zabronski stopped the vehicle. As the three American’s jumped out, Zabronski held up his hand for quiet. In the distance they could hear the sound of vehicles.

“Germans,” shouted Fredericks, and started to jump back in.

“No,” Zabronski stopped him, “the cases first. Where are they?” he demanded from Drew.

“There,” he pointed with his chin. Zabronski growled, yanked him from the cab and cut his
bonds. “Show me where!” he demanded again. Drew stumbled over to where they were hidden, “Here.” As the blood returned to his feet and hands, it was causing excruciating pain, but he tried to hide it from his captors. Zabronski pushed him to the ground, “Dig them out!” As Drew started to painfully unbury the first case, Webster and Fredericks started digging up the other two, Zabronski watching them work.

“Fredericks, you and the cap’n take the first one, Webster and I will take the second. Hurry!” he commanded when the cases were uncovered. Obediently Drew and Fredericks grabbed the first case and carried it over to the halftrack and shoved it in. Zabronski and Webster pushed their case in while the other two went back for the third case. They picked it up and started walking towards the vehicle. Drew prayed silently in his heart, “Lord, this is it. Please save us. Angelique isn’t saved yet, please give her the chance. God, where is Dane? Help him if you can.”

In the cab Angelique was sobbing. That awful man had kissed her! She could still taste him on her lips, and she tried to scrub them again on her shoulder, but to move her shoulder caused such pain! And where he had put his hand! She shuddered again at the remembrance of his touch. Mon Dieu, now she hoped that he would kill her since he had the treasure, and not keep her for a while. She broke down again, and then started praying, “God, if you are real, if what Dane and Drew said to me are real, then save us. If you prove to me that you are real, then I will believe.”

Back to Table of Contents

Chapter Twenty-Five
February 4, Night

The German and Arab force started following the tracks from where they had discovered the camp at the overhang. Two Arabs went on front on foot, but even though it was a moonless night the desert-wise trackers were able to follow the trail of the truck at a trot. The kubelwagons and four Arabs, one of them wounded, on camelback followed them. They came to the place where the truck had turned east to the bridge. They traveled down the draw towards the bridge and followed the tracks over the ridge to the next draw, missing the Americans as they drove past on the way to the cases, which everyone had unknowingly passed by earlier. The two Arabs in front stopped and searched the ground for tracks in the next draw. With great excitement they called out and pointed to the ground. Abu got out of the kubelwagon and hurried over to them.

“What is it?” demanded Lindisl who had followed Abu. “Effendi, the truck turned and went northeast, but a halftrack came from the northeast and went west up this draw just a few minutes ago. Listen!” He held up his hand. Just faintly they could hear the sound of the halftrack. Suddenly the sound stopped. All of them looked at each other in surprise, “They stopped,” Ali said and Abu translated.

“Let’s go!” ordered Lindisl, and they hurried back to their vehicles and started following them again. After a few minutes one of the lead Arabs stopped and waited for the major’s kubelwagon to catch up to him. He said something to Abu, who turned to Lindisl, “Effendi, stop the vehicles and turn off the engines.” Lindisl gave the order and quiet descended over the desert once more. “Effendi, they are still stopped and they are close, they could hear the engines if we continue. If we hurry on foot we could surprise them.” Lindisl considered the advice and then
started issuing orders. Two German soldiers were to remain with the kubelwagons, and the
wounded Arab with the camels, while the rest hurried on foot in the draw. When they heard
firing they were to come. Lindisl waved the remainder on and they started moving rapidly on up
the draw. Lindisl’s heart was beating faster, “The halftrack, it must have the loot on it. At last I
have my property back!” Ali was thinking about the fox and soon he would be face to face with
the man that killed three of his men. Abu’s mind was full of the treasure and how they could take
it from that cursed Major Lindisl.

Meanwhile, Dane had been following the North Star and walking northward. There was no
moon tonight, and it was hard to make out the details of the terrain ahead of him. As he slogged
his way up and down the ridges, he kept praying for the safety of Angelique and Drew, and most
of all that God would direct him to the right place at the right time. After almost three hours of
walking, Dane heard the faint, but approaching sound of an engine. “It must be them,” he
thought to himself, and started running. It sounded like it could be a rise or two away.

As he ran, suddenly the ground disappeared in front of him. What he thought was dark
colored ground turned out to be a deeply cut ravine. He was going too fast to stop, and ran down
the side of the ravine, his feet nimble as a mountain goat, seeming to barely touch the ground
before springing for the next step, his heart in his mouth, for he knew that one misstep would
send him tumbling head over heels. Under the present circumstances, a broken neck or leg, either
one, would mean his death, a long, lingering one. He reached the bottom safely on his feet, but
the momentum almost drove him to his knees. He sprang up the other side, hands and feet
clawing for holds. Once both feet slipped and he caught himself with his right hand, the pain in
his shoulder tearing at him, but he forced himself on. He reached the top and heaved himself
over, the blood drumming in his ears and gasping for breath and shocked that he had made it out
without injury. As he breathed a prayer of thankfulness, his ears stopped drumming and he heard
silence, or almost. He sat up, “They’ve stopped! They must be at the cache,” he told himself. But
were his ears still drumming? Then he realized that he was hearing more vehicles. He got up and
started running again towards the next rise, but being more careful this time.

As he started to climb the ridge, the motor sounds stopped. Moving carefully now, he made
his way to the top of the ridge and looked down. Below and to his left was the bulk of the
halftrack. Two men were carrying a case towards the vehicle. As Dane tried to make out who
was doing the carrying, movement caught the corner of his eye. He froze and tried to see what
had moved to his right. Then he saw a gleam of metal. By straining his eyes he could barely
make out a figure of someone. It was an Arab pointing a rifle towards the two men with the case!
Before he could move, the Arab shot and one of the two men stumbled and fell. Suddenly
gunfire erupted as the group of Germans opened up from where they were hiding at the bottom
of the draw. The other figure with the case fell to the ground.

Lindisl felt the elation sweep over him, he had them! “Attack,” he screamed and led his men
in a charge around the shoulder of the draw towards the halftrack.

Dane yanked out a grenade, armed it, and threw it. It exploded just in front of the Germans,
knocking one of them to the ground. Guns started firing from the back of the halftrack and more
Germans went down. Dane snatched up his submachine gun and nailed the Arab who had fired
first.
Suddenly a bullet struck next to his head, peppering him with rock fragments. He ducked and rolled, spotting where the bullet came from and showered bullets in that direction. He heard the roar of approaching vehicles, and leaving the fight, moved back down the ridge and to his right to intercept them. He popped his head over the top of the ridge, and waited for the vehicles. When the two kubelwagons came into range, he heaved his last grenade and the first kubelwagon exploded and blocked the path. He sprayed the second kubelwagon with bullets, and the driver bailed out. Dane melted away into the darkness, hurrying now to get back to the halftrack.

Lindisl couldn’t believe what just happened. One minute his men were sweeping their way to victory, the enemy was falling, and then came the explosion knocking him down, and his men were dying. He saw an Arab fall, and then he got to his feet and ran back towards the advancing kubelwagons, just in time to see one explode. He just stood there in stunned surprise as Abu and Ali ran by him. He met them by the second kubelwagon as his driver crawled out of hiding and joined them. They heard a few more shots from the battle behind them and then the sound of the retreating halftrack. Eventually two more Arabs appeared.

Ali was beside himself with fury, and fear. “That cursed infidel American fox! He trapped us again! More of my men gone, and for what, my brother? An empty purse and now empty camels. I must have revenge and I must have the treasure to rebuild with!”

Abu soothed him, “We will, my brother, we will.” They spoke in their native Derja, which Major Lindisl did not understand, nor any of his men.

Lindisl was shaken up. “What happened, what went wrong?” he asked Abu in amazement. “We had them, they were being destroyed.”

“My brother says it was the American fox, he has defeated and outwitted Ali several times already. We must get him!”

“We will, we will,” Lindisl grunted back, his mind in turmoil over the unbelievable turn of events in the last few minutes. He shook himself and regained his composure. “I need reinforcements, I can call for more men and a halftrack to rendezvous with us and in the morning I can have planes combing the desert for them,” he said out loud to himself. He looked at his watch, it was incredible, but it was only midnight. Where would those Americans go? Surely not northward, that led only to Von Arnim’s army. West was the Faid Pass, securely under German control. To the south was Rommel’s army. Southwest! That had to be it, between the gap between the two German armies who had not quite linked up there yet. He got on the radio that was on the surviving kubelwagon and ordered a squad of soldiers in a halftrack to meet him to the southwest, ordered planes to search the desert at first light for a German halftrack, but not to attack unless they were positive that it was not driven by Germans. He explained to Captain HeidelStrauss that he was on the trail of an American that the Arabs called The Fox. He also alerted the local commander at Faid Pass about the possibility of a German halftrack being driven by Americans and a French woman trying to sneak through. “That should cover all the possibilities,” he said to himself.

Back to Table of Contents

Chapter Twenty-Six
February 5 After Midnight Americans

Drew was carrying the case when a shot rang out, and he felt a white-hot searing pain in his
leg. He fell to the ground, holding his leg, just as a group of Germans opened fire and Fredericks fell. Then there was an explosion, and Germans and pieces of Germans flew through the air. A submachine gun opened up from the ridge. It was Dane! Drew felt like cheering and shouting. Zabronski and Webster opened up from behind the halftrack, and more Germans fell.

Angelique was cowering in the cab of the halftrack, sobbing in mingled fear and joy and pain. They were being rescued! But all the shooting and explosions were scaring her, and her shoulder and leg were hurting.

Drew was trying to hide behind the case, and he could hear Fredericks’ groans of pain. As the firing died down, he could hear Fredericks cry out, “Mother, Mother,” and then “Mandie.” Then he went still. “I wonder who Mandie is?” Drew wondered. Then another shot rang out, and he saw Webster fall. Zabronski fired twice and silence fell again.

Zabronski peered out from behind the half-track. He could see the third case out there and thought it was the one with the bags of money in it. He had to have it! He cautiously looked around; all was quiet, except for the moans of the wounded. Making a decision, he raced to the case, bending low, grabbed one end and ran back to the halftrack, the other end of the case bouncing along behind him. He laid his rifle in the bed of the halftrack and heaved the case into the vehicle. He did it! He had the money and the girl, and there was no one to share with. He just had to get in the vehicle and drive off. He had done it, he exalted to himself.

“Zabronski,” came the quiet voice behind him.

Zabronski froze. That hated voice! Not moving his body, he slowly turned his head, searching the shadows. “How did you get here,” he asked, trying to pinpoint where Shaw was.

“I walked. Now turn around slowly and hold your hands up,” Dane commanded.

Zabronski peered into the dark. There, it looked like a shadow beside that rock. His hand closed on his gun. “There’s more than enough here for the two of us,” he suggested, and then paused. Silence. Yanking his rifle out, he twisted and fired. He had done it! Suddenly a gun blazed back at him, BUT NOT FROM THE SHADOW! He felt the shock of bullets, and suddenly the ground reached up and hit him. He stared at it, wondering where it had come from. He felt strange and a deeper darkness settled over his eyes. He shuddered and died. He opened his eyes and felt the fires of hell burning him and started screaming, screams that lasted for all eternity.

Dane appeared from the other side of the rock and carefully approached the body. When he was sure the man was dead, he searched the body and recovered the ammo, canteen, and grenade that Zabronski had been carrying. He hurried to the cab and flung open the door. Angelique’s white and tear-stained face stared back at him.

“Angelique, are you hurt?” He saw that her hands were tied behind her, so he pulled out his knife and cut her bonds. Her arms dropped to her sides, seemingly lifeless from the abuse they had taken.

“Oh Dane, Dane, Dane,” she tried to throw herself into his arms, crying from relief and pain from the returning circulation.

He held her close to him, feeling her shudders. He looked into her dear face, “Are you hurt?” he asked again.

“Oui, my shoulder and leg. Oh Dane, you came! You came! I prayed and prayed, and you came!” She stared crying some more.

Dane shook her gently, “We aren’t free yet. Do you know where the captain is?”
“Oui,” she shook again and pointed, “he was carrying the case when...when.” She couldn’t go on.

“Stay here,” he commanded and slid out. He ran over to the two bodies. One of them sat up. With heartfelt relief Dane recognized Drew. He went to his knees, “Are you hurt, sir?”

“Shot in the leg,” Drew grimaced. Dane took a quick look and bound his leg with a handkerchief for a tourniquet. “We have to get out of here before they come back,” Dane pointed out. At the Captain’s nod, he helped him to his feet, over to the vehicle, and into it beside Angelique. He ran back to Fredericks, and saw with one look that he was dead. He grabbed his canteen, spare ammo, and canteen, then ran back to Webster and did the same. He tossed everything into the bed of the halftrack, jumped into the cab, and took off.

As soon as he could, he got out of the draw and headed southwest. About twenty minutes later, he pulled to a stop and everyone started babbling at the same time. “Where did you come from?” “What happened to you?” “How bad are you hurt?” The three of them stopped talking, looked at each other and started laughing almost hysterically, trying to put their arms around each other.

Dane regained his composure first, “We have to release that tourniquet.” Drew nodded and loosened it. Drew went on, “We have about a hundred miles to go to reach friendly lines, going cross country like we have to, and I don’t think we are going to make it by sun up.”

Dane tapped the fuel gauge, “I don’t think we have quite enough fuel either, but it will be close.” He winced at the pain in his shoulder from the movement.

Angelique noticed, “Are you hurt bad, mon chéri?”

“He got me in the shoulder,” Dane replied as he put the vehicle in gear. “Better tighten up that tourniquet.”

Drew complied as Angelique drew a deep breath to make her announcement. “Mon chéris, I prayed to God that if he saved us, then I would serve him.”

“No!” Both men shouted in unison. As Dane looked at Drew in surprise, Drew tried to explain in halting words what he knew, “You have to admit that you are a sinner and, and that you can do nothing of, or by, yourself to warrant God’s forgiveness of your sins. Only by believing in Jesus Christ can your sins be forgiven, and then you can serve God, like I did tonight.”

Dane looked over at him incredulously, “You got saved tonight?”

“Yes,” Drew averred firmly.

“Praise God, praise God, praise God!” Dane hammered the steering wheel in joy. Then he turned to Angelique, “If you try to serve God without surrendering to Jesus, then you will be serving him in your own strength and you will fail. But if you accept Jesus as your savior first, then you will serve Him with God’s strength and you will succeed.”

Angelique looked at him, “I believe that Jesus died for my sins, and I want him to save me. Will you show me how?”

“Just pray and tell God what you just told me. I’ll pray first and you pray after me. Dear Lord, Angelique knows that she is a sinner, that she cannot save herself, and that only Jesus can save her. Please forgive her sins, wipe them away with the blood of Jesus Christ, and come and enter her heart. Amen.”

Angelique closed her eyes and bowed her head, “Mon Dieu, I have sinned. I cannot wash away my sins, only the blood shed by Jesus can do that. I ask you to forgive me, and enter my
heart. Amen.” Angelique lifted her head with the same wonder that Drew had felt before. “I understand,” she breathed. “I understand.” She looked into the face of Dane, sitting next to her, and saw joy and happiness, and something else. She saw that he loved her.

Dane beamed at her, his heart in his eyes. Not only had she accepted Jesus as her savior, but also he was now free to love her, free to marry her. He couldn’t ask her here and now, as they weren’t alone and they were in great danger. He was willing to die to keep her safe, but, ‘Oh Lord, I don’t want to die, not now,’ he prayed. He would wait until they were safe before proposing. He hadn’t been this happy since…since… well, he couldn’t remember since when. He beamed again and then turned his mind to practical matters, like driving.

As they traveled on, the three rejoiced together in their newfound happiness in Christ. They knew that, whatever happened in the future, they would always have this bond between them; they were brothers and sister in Christ first and foremost, and the bonds of a deep friendship were being forged this night.

After about another twenty minutes Dane pulled to a stop, “Time to loosen that tourniquet again. Let’s take a look at it.”

Drew loosened the handkerchief but grumbled, “We can’t be stopping every twenty minutes, we’ll never get back.”

Dane agreed, “We’ll get the wounds bandaged up now and then drive all night long. We can’t afford to lose any more time than we possibly need to.” He examined Drew’s leg and saw that the bullet had passed completely through the thigh muscle. He applied sulpha powder and bandages and then turned to Angelique. When he touched her shoulder she winced. “Try to move your arm,” he commanded.

“I can’t,” she whimpered. Dane felt her shoulder and looked at them both, “I think her shoulder is dislocated. How did that happen?” Drew described how she had been drug, and Angelique shuddered at the look that came over Dane’s face and the green flecks that started burning in his eyes.

“Here,” Drew said, “I know how to pop it back into place.” He bent her elbow to 90 degrees and then rotated her arm and shoulder inward towards her chest. Then he balled one fist and put it in her armpit while rotating her arm and shoulder outward. She stiffened with pain but then it popped into place.

“Ooh, that feels so much better. Thank you mon chéri.”

The two men then examined her leg, and stared at each other, grim-faced. It was scraped and bloody and gravel was embedded in it. When she tried to bend it, she moaned in pain.

“Angelique, honey,” Drew explained, “This needs cleaned out, but we can’t do it here and now. Can you endure it until we reach a hospital in the morning?”

“Oh,” she nodded determinedly. The two men looked at each other over her head, “Whatever happens,” Drew said and Dane nodded. The two men sealed their vow with looks of determination. Whatever happened, she was going to make it back, whatever it cost them.

They took off again, and as they traveled, they exchanged stories of what had happened to them since Zabronski’s attack.

As the night wore on, the three Christians talked for a while, and then Angelique started dozing with her head on Drew’s shoulder. As he looked at her, he realized that he was in love with her, but he wasn’t sure how she felt about him. Sometimes he thought she favored him, other times she looked to Dane. As he thought about it, he started to pray within himself, “Lord,
whichever one of us is your will for Angelique to marry, let the other accept it. Let there be no hard feelings to mar the fellowship and friendship we have now.” A thought came into his mind. “And if she chooses neither of us, let us both accept it. Lord, whatever is best for Angelique, let it be done. In Jesus name I pray, Amen.” He felt at peace, and furthermore that if she did choose Dane, that he could rejoice for them. He marveled at how Jesus had changed him already

Back to Table of Contents

Chapter Twenty-Seven
February 5 After Midnight Germans

Captain Heidelstrauss hung up from talking to Major Lindisl and looked at the clock. Midnight! Didn’t Lindisl ever sleep? Yes, of course he did, Heidelstrauss mentally corrected himself. He did, but he didn’t expect his underlings to. Now he was expected to send out a patrol to rendezvous with the major in the middle of the desert, and if connections were missed he knew whose head would roll. He only hoped it would be figuratively and not literally. And what was this about hunting some American Fox? Heidelstrauss mentally shrugged and got on with the problem.

He placed a call to the barracks and talked to the officer on duty. “Lieutenant, Major Lindisl wants a squad in a halftrack to meet him out in the desert. Have the men take three days rations and plenty of extra fuel.”

The mere mention of Major Lindisl was enough to silence any protestations the lieutenant may have thought of making. Heidelstrauss shrewdly used some psychology, “Major Lindisl is tracking down some American calling himself The Fox.”

“What?” the lieutenant sputtered. “Field Marshal Rommel is The Fox, how dare he take that name! The squad will be ready in ten minutes!”

Heidelstrauss chuckled as he hung up, and then grew serious as he pulled out the map and pondered. Major Lindisl was northwest of Sfax and the fugitives were heading southwest. If the halftrack headed straight west out of Sfax they could meet up with Major Lindisl in a relatively short amount of time.

Meanwhile Lindisl checked his resources. Three Germans were dead and two badly wounded, there remained only himself and his driver and one kubelwagon. Of the Arabs, Abu and one other were unhurt. Ali and two Arabs were wounded but still able to continue, and one was able to ride but not fight. Lindisl gave his orders to Abu in French, “Your wounded man will take my two wounded men back to Sfax on camels. We will continue on and rendezvous with the halftrack. We will follow them and catch them. Let’s go!”

Abu passed on his orders to Ali. The two brothers exchanged knowing looks before Abu got in the kubelwagon. Ali gave his orders to his men; they mounted up and followed the vehicle. After everyone else had left, the remaining Arab calmly slit the throats of the two Germans, stripped all the bodies, and melted into the darkness with the three camels.

When Lindisl reached the road to Faid, he stopped and called Captain Heidelstrauss. “Where is the halftrack?” he commanded.

“They have just left town,” he was informed and was given the frequency and call sign of it. He then conferred with Ali and Abu, “How far are we from Sfax?”

They looked at each other and shrugged, “About ten kilometers, effendi.”
Lindisl then called up the halftrack. “This is Major Lindisl. How far are you from Sfax?”
“Two or three kilometers, Herr Major.”
Lindisl pondered for a moment. “We are about ten kilometers from Sfax on the Faid road and traveling southwest. Keep traveling west until you are ten kilometers from town. Call when you reach that point.”
“Jawohl, Herr Major.”
Lindisl gave the order to keep on driving southwest, following the tracks. The sergeant in the halftrack called in at the appointed place, and again Lindisl conferred with Abu and Ali. Judging from the description the sergeant gave of his immediate area, they agreed that the halftrack had come far enough west. “Sergeant, turn southwest and catch up as soon as you can,” Lindisl ordered.
“Jawohl, Herr Major,” the sergeant acknowledged.
Time passed, and Lindisl commanded his driver to stop and turn off the engine. As they stood outside the vehicle, they could hear a motor in the distance. Lindisl got back on the radio and vectored the approaching halftrack towards him. In a few moments, the halftrack carrying a squad of German soldiers pulled up beside the kubelwagon and the sergeant jumped out and saluted Major Lindisl, “Reporting as ordered, Herr Major.”
As the two of them were talking, Ali said something to Abu, who hurried over to Lindisl. “Effendi, if the American dogs are circling around to return to their comrades, there is a short cut we can take.”
Lindisl whirled around, “Where is it?”
“Just a little further, effendi.”
“Would the Americans have taken it also?”
Abu shook his head, “Ali says that unless they know about it, probably not. The entrance looks narrow and is easily overlooked.”
“Can the halftrack go through?”
“It is narrow, it is doubtful.”
Lindisl made his decision, “We will try it anyway, lead us to this shortcut.” Abu humbly bowed and conversed with Ali. The vehicles took off with the Arabs on their camels in the lead. Within a couple of miles, the Arabs turned off into a narrow defile. The halftrack made it through, but did scrape both sides. As they slowly made their way through the twisting defile, rising in altitude as they went, it widened the further they traveled. They reached the top and started descending down the other side. Lindisl was leaning forward in his seat, anticipating the victory that was almost in his grasp. When they debouched on the other side of the heights, Lindisl asked Abu, “How much distance did that save us?”
“About thirty kilometers, effendi.”
“Good! We must be close behind them now.”
They continued westward for about another hour, and when red streaks were heralding the dawn they reached a height. One of the Arabs shouted and threw out his hand, pointing to the far side of a level area. They could see the dark blot of a vehicle coming close to a defile on the other side.
“I have them!” Lindisl gloated. He reached for the radio to call in a plane.
Chapter Twenty-Eight  
February 5, Dawn

Something caught Dane’s attention in the mirror. He twisted the wheel to make the vehicle swerve so that he could get a look behind them. Silhouetted against the morning light, he could see vehicles and riders on camels on a ridge top. The sudden swerve had roused Drew and Angelique. “What’s wrong?” Drew asked.

“They are behind us.”

“Who are behind us, Arabs or Germans?” The two of them twisted to look behind them.

“Both,” Dane answered grimly. They entered the defile and Dane glanced at the fuel gauge, it was on empty. “Are we going to make it, mon chéri?” Angelique anxiously asked Dane.

“I don’t know, we are almost out of fuel. How much further do you think we have to go?”

The last question was directed at Drew.

Drew bit his lip, “It can’t be but a handful of miles now.” The two men fell silent, trying to think of something, while Angelique stared white-faced at one and then the other.

Nearing the end of the defile, Dane grunted, “I’ve got a plan. I’ll stay here and block them as long as I can. You two take the halftrack and drive as far as it will go. Then you will have to walk. There are rifles in the back, use them for crutches.”

“No,” Drew shook his head. “You go and I’ll stay. You can make better time than I can.”

“With your leg, you have a zero chance of escaping them. I have a chance. You have to take Angelique as far as you can in the vehicle. Who knows, the gauge might be off and you can make it to our lines.”

“Or maybe not,” Drew stated, staring at the other man.

“Or maybe not,” Dane agreed.

Angelique stared at one and then the other. ‘Mon Dieu,’ she thought to herself, ‘I will probably never see one of these men again, he will probably die trying to save me and the other.’ Her heart contracted with the pain of never seeing one of them again. But which one? Both of them were so dear to her heart, but which one could she not live without? Somehow she knew that if she made the decision as to which one would stay and which one would go with her, they would acquiesce to her wishes. But she couldn’t make the choice. She breathed a quick prayer, “Dear Jesus, if you will, save both of them.”

Dane braked to a stop, flung himself out of the vehicle, ran around to the passenger door, and practically carried Drew over to the driver’s door. He grabbed his submachine gun and hollered, “Go, go,” and started scrambling up the slope. Drew slid beneath the wheel and took off. He turned an anguished face to Angelique, “Am I a coward for running away?”

Angelique reached out and patted his arm, “Non, you are not a coward, neither of you are. If anyone is a coward it is I. I could not make the decision which of you was to go and which stays. It is as Dane said, he has the greater chance of surviving. I pray that Jesus would spare you both.”

Drew gripped the steering wheel hard, “It is all that we can do now, just pray.” They drove out of the defile, down another draw, up and over a ridge, and the engine started sputtering. It caught, went a little further, sputtered and died.

“Now we walk,” Drew announced, trying to put on a cheerful face. They painfully hobbled out of the cab and to the back of the halftrack. Drew pulled out two rifles that were within reach,
and using them as crutches, they started making their way up a defile.

Behind them, Dane hid behind a boulder at the top of the slope where he could see anyone coming down the defile. Sooner than he liked, he heard the sound of vehicles. First into sight were four Arabs riding camels, followed by a kubelwagon, and then, to Dane’s dismay, a halftrack, filled no doubt with German soldiers. There were two camels tied to the back of the halftrack. He only had two hand grenades, and he would have to make them count. He looked down onto the halftrack, which had a canvas cover. There was a wide rent in it, if he could throw a grenade into the hole...He armed both of them and flung them. The first hit in front of the kubelwagon and went off, and the vehicle lurched sideways. On the halftrack, there were three braces holding up the canvas cover, with the canvas sagging down between them and rent was at the middle of one of the sags. The second grenade lit on top of the canvas top in front of the hole, bounced over the hole and rolled up the slope of the canvas to almost where the brace held the canvas up, and then rolled back down and into the hole. It must have fallen amid gas cans, because when it blew up the whole halftrack burst into flames.

Dane opened fire with his submachine gun upon the Arabs and saw them drop or fall to the ground. He nailed the driver bailing out of the burning halftrack. He sprayed the kubelwagon, and ran out of ammo. Frantically he searched his person for spare ammo but found none. He checked his pistol, only two rounds were left. Stunned, he leaned back against the rock; if he just had one more clip of ammo, he could end this pursuit now. The enemy started firing back at him, and there were at least two or three guns. He would have to leave. He slithered down the reverse side of the slope and took off after his friends.

Behind him, he left a shattered column. As the survivors laid down a covering fire, Ali slipped his way to where he could see behind the rock where the ambusher had hid. He raised his gun and peeked out. There was nobody there. Quickly he searched for other hiding spots. Nothing! The fox had escaped! He started cursing in anger and fear. How did this infidel keep ambushing and escaping from him?

Below in the defile, Major Lindisl was having some of the same feelings. He had called for a plane, which would be overhead in about half an hour. He could almost taste victory, when explosions suddenly ripped his troops apart. His kubelwagon was out of commission, and the halftrack and the entire squad of soldiers were gone, snuffed out in a second. Bullets had penetrated his vehicle from the top. He had a slight wound in his side. If he had ducked the other way, he would be dead. His driver had a wound in his arm, only Abu had escaped injury. Of the Arabs, two more were dead. He could hear the Arab Ali yelling something and Abu yelled, “Stop shooting, the fox has escaped!”

They stopped firing and Lindisl turned questioning eyes towards Abu, “Escaped? He escaped?”

“That American infidel, he is a devil!” and Abu shivered. Lindisl felt an answering shiver.

Dane took off jogging, following the tracks of the halftrack. He crossed another level place and entered a defile, slowing down to a walk. He followed them into a draw and scrambled up a ridge, his heart in his mouth. How far had they been able to go? Did they have enough gas to reach the American line? At the top of the ridge he got his answer, he could see the abandoned vehicle a little ways ahead. He ran down the slope and up to the halftrack. He got into the bed and searched and found another rifle, dropping his worthless submachine gun. He picked up as
many spare clips of ammunition as he could quickly find and grabbed a canteen. Without giving
the three cases of treasure another look, he dropped out and sped after his friends, following the
holes in the ground made by the barrels of the guns that they were using for crutches. He caught
up to them in only five minutes. His heart bleed for them as he saw their limping progress.

“Oh chéri, you are alive!” Angelique exclaimed, throwing her free arm around him while
Drew pumped his arm with a huge grin on his face.

“We have to keep going, I couldn’t stop all of them,” Dane returned the hug while trying to
explain his failure. “I ran out of ammo.” Drew looked at him in surprise, he couldn’t think of
another person who would try to stop such an enemy force singlehanded, and then apologize for
not wiping it out.

Dane handed Angelique’s rifle to Drew, “Here, use both of the rifles, but don’t try to fire
them,” he teased. Drew gave a grin back, he knew the barrels had to be plugged by now. Dane
wrapped an arm around Angelique and half-carrying, half-supporting her, took off at a much
faster pace, Drew swinging along using both rifles as crutches.

After about fifteen minutes, they came to a draw sloping upward and they stopped for a
breather, and then walked up the draw. At the top of the draw, the slope on the right continued
for about fifteen feet and then sharply dropped down, forming a shoulder. In front of them and to
their left the ground dropped down into a valley. On the other side of the valley they could see an
encampment, with dark dots of people moving around and the shapes of vehicles. Above them a
flag snapped in the morning breeze, an American flag.

Drew raised both hands in the air, still gripping the rifles, “We did it! We did it! We made
it!” Dane and Angelique each had an arm around the other, and she heard him softly say, “Praise
God, praise God. To Him all the glory.”

A trickle of sand and gravel fell down the slope. They looked up into four gun barrels
pointing at them. Major Lindisl ordered, “Throw down your guns.”

When the three of them turned to look up the slope, Dane was on the right, Angelique in the
middle, and Drew, with his arms still raised in victory, on the left, and the base of the slope was
about six feet in front of them. They heard a sound, and Drew saw an Arab with a greying beard
step around the shoulder and point his long rifle at them. He looked back up the slope; Major
Lindisl was standing in the middle holding a pistol. To his left, a German sergeant had a
submachine gun on a sling, the gun was tucked under his right arm, pointing at them, and the
sling was over his right shoulder. To Lindisl’s right stood Abu and another Arab pointing long
rifles at them.

Drew felt the bitter gall of defeat rising up in his throat, choking him. They were so close,
SO CLOSE! How could they fail now! How could, how could God let them down now! He felt
tears stinging his eyes as he lowered his arms. How did the enemy get there ahead of them? They
had heard no vehicle. Just then, he heard the loud groan of a camel from behind the slope.

“Drop them, now!” Lindisl ordered again. Drew watched as Dane threw his rifle to the
slope, between him and the sergeant, and then tossed his pistol and even his knife and then raised
his hands shoulder level. Drew stood there irresolute, for one mad moment contemplating trying
to shoot with the rifles in his hands. Maybe by some miracle they weren’t clogged, maybe they
would fire. He watched as all five weapons turned toward him, and then reason won out and he
dropped his rifles and .45.

At the shoulder of the slope, Ali burned in his hate. Which one was the fox? The fox had had
a submachine gun, but neither of these two had one. But by the tracks they had seen, there were only the three of them left. He saw a taller, brown haired man and a shorter, dark haired man. From his angle, he could not see the bandage on Drew’s leg. He saw the shorter man throw down his weapons and raise his hands in the air. The taller man just stood there, and Ali read the emotions crossing his face before he, too, threw down his weapons. He must be the fox, and Ali concentrated his gun and attention on him.

With the surrender of Drew, the four men at the top of the slope relaxed their guard. Lindisl and the sergeant started down the slope, followed by the Arabs, who, in order to keep their balance, had to lower their guns. “So we meet again,” Lindisl gloated to Drew and Angelique. “We will have a very interesting conversation in a little while.” The sergeant reached Dane’s guns and started to bend down to pick them up.

Everybody, Americans, Arabs, and Germans, were caught flatfooted with surprise when Dane exploded into action. With a snarling growl, he leaped the six feet separating him and the sergeant, yanking out the knife that hung between his shoulders, which he had taken from the Arab days before, and jamming it into the sergeant. He saw from the corner of his eye the Arab at the shoulder swing his rifle around, and Dane twisted the sergeant’s body between them, and felt the solid ‘thunk’ of the bullet hitting the dying German. At the same time, releasing the knife and holding the German upright with his right arm, Dane twisted the submachine gun with his left hand so that the barrel pointed behind the German, and hung upside down. Dane pulled the trigger, and the spray of bullets knocked down Lindisl and the two Arabs standing only feet away. He sent a fusillade into the Arab standing by himself and saw him go down. Then he saw Lindisl aiming his pistol, and he poured bullets into the German’s chest.

Like a primitive savage, Dane stood there among the dead and dying, with a snarl on his lips and green fire in his eyes. Angelique screamed in white-faced terror at the sight of him, and instinctively turned and buried her face into Drew’s shoulder.

Both men looked at her in astonishment and then at each other. They both realized that in that instant, Angelique had decided which man was for her. Drew watched Dane release the German sergeant’s body and slowly stand up, the green vanishing from his eyes and naked pain on his face, listening to her sobs.

Back to Table of Contents

Chapter Twenty-Nine
February 5 Morning

None of them paid any attention to the sound of the airplane. Flight Sergeant Steutsel had been called in to his superior officer and his morning schedule revised. Instead of taking off on another flight to the south, his planes were to be used to search for a German halftrack to the southwest. Vectoring out over the desert, his four planes soon lost sight of each other. As he was scanning the ground, he spotted a halftrack that was stopped, with three camels next to it. He buzzed it and saw an Arab pulling cases out of the bed. “Obviously looting it, and no Germans in sight,” he thought to himself. He circled around again, and with guns blazing, cut down the Arab looter. He radioed back to his base, “Mission accomplished,” and flew back to his base.

About three hours later, Angelique, Drew, and Dane faced each other at the American base. They all had been patched up by the doctors, and were now saying their goodbyes. Angelique
clung to Drew’s arm with a strained look on her face; she knew that she had broken Dane’s heart. “Chéri, thank you for bringing Jesus to me, thank you for saving my life, thank you,” she waved her free arm in the Gallic manner, “thank you for everything.”

Dane’s face was set, but nothing could hide the pain in his eyes. At her words, he looked at her and his face softened. “God bless,” he said huskily, “God bless you.” He looked at Drew, “God bless both of you. I am so glad both of you are saved.” He couldn’t go on.

Drew cleared his throat, “Yes, thank you for sharing Jesus with me too, and for saving my life, and everything else that you have done. I have a few things to wrap up, and I will need to see you in a few days. What is your outfit?”

“Second platoon, King Company, 26th Infantry,” Dane answered automatically. Drew held out his hand, and was relieved when Dane took it. “I’ll see you later, Dane.”

Dane turned away, and as he walked away with his catlike walk, Angelique looked after him with an unfathomable look in her dark eyes, “He needs a wife that…,” she paused, searching for the right words.

“That can tame him?” Drew finished her sentence softly.

“No!” She shook her head vehemently, “Non, never tame.” She had the same unfathomable look in her eyes as she gazed at his disappearing figure. “He needs a wife that… can equal him. I could never be that woman! Mon Dieu,” her eyes grew big as she softly added, “What a woman she would be!” She turned and buried her head in Drew’s shoulder again, much to the envy of those around them.

Six days later, Drew was limping through a camp, looking for a certain person. He had been told that his quarry was here, and sure enough he found him. Although Dane was surrounded by men, somehow he seemed utterly alone as he sat and cleaned his gun. Drew stopped and dropped a packet into his lap. Dane looked up, and a smile crossed his lips. “Drew, I mean Captain Matthews,” as he scrambled to his feet and saluted. Drew saluted back, “Drew is correct, and it is good to see you again, Dane.”

Dane picked up the packet, “What is this?”

“Open it and find out.”

Dane did, and found sergeant’s stripes, a silver star, and a purple heart. He stared at them and then at Drew with a twisted smile, “So you get the girl and I get these.”

“Don’t knock it, Dane. It was entirely due to you that we completed the mission and escaped.” He pointed to the items, “This was the least that I could do.”

Dane gave a more natural smile, “Well, thank you for these.”

“I hear that your squad is being rebuilt.”

“Yes, and then it’s back to the front.” Dane held out his hand and Drew gripped it thankfully. “Thank you again for telling me about Jesus, for saving my life, and for making me a better officer.”

“What?” Dane was surprised. “What do you mean?”

Drew gave a wry smile, “I wasn’t a very good officer when you met me, but you taught me how to command.”

“How did I do that?”

“By example.”

Dane shook his head, “I didn’t show you anything that you didn’t already have. What are your plans?”
“Angelique and I are going to Algiers and get married there and then it’s back to intelligence work for me.” Drew waited a moment, “No warnings that if I don’t treat her right, you will come back?”

“No,” Dane grinned, “I know that you will treat her right, and besides,” his grin became twisted, “she wouldn’t want me anyway.”

Back to Table of Contents

Historical Note

When Hitler declared war on the United States in December, 1941, he and the German High Command knew that it would take the Americans a year to put an army in the field. They also knew from historical fact that it would take another year before that army would become battlefield proficient. The soldiers of every other country in the world had to fight for a year before the soldiers learned to fight and survive on the battlefield. The Americans landed an army in North Africa on November 8, 1942, eleven months after Pearl Harbor.

When Rommel routed the Americans at The Battle of Kassarine Pass, he told his tankers to ‘Put your tanks in road gear.’ The experienced general knew beyond any shadow of a doubt that the green Americans would not stop running until they reached the sea. Instead, although they ran for up to fifty miles, individual sergeants, corporals, and privates stopped running, organized themselves, and turned and faced the enemy. These impromptu groups slowed down the German advance, allowing time for the Allied reinforcements to arrive. Rommel was incredulous. Although he was urged by other generals to keep attacking, the wily Desert Fox knew that he was beaten and retreated to his original positions.

After the battle, the Americans removed many incompetent commanders and replaced them with able and aggressive men; the most notable exchange was the Second Corps General Fredendall being replaced by General Patton. When the American army fought again in just a few weeks, they gave a very different account of themselves. What it took the soldiers of Britain, Germany, Italy, China, Japan, Russia, France, and every other country in the world a year to learn, the American soldiers learned in one battle, The Battle of Kassarine Pass.

About the author

Dwayne Straw grew up in Council Bluffs, Iowa. He has always enjoyed reading books, with his mother starting to read to him when he was a baby. As a young teenager growing up in the Sixties, one of his favorite places was the Young Adult Room at the local library, where he discovered authors like Joseph Altscheler, Robert Heinlein, and Andre Norton.

During junior high school, he wrote a series of science fiction stories about a soldier and his adventures fighting in China, Mars, and space. He never wrote again until recently, when he remembered those stories and sat down and started writing the Dane Shaw Adventures.

He accepted Jesus as his savior when he was five years old one hot summer day when he and his sister started asking their mother questions about God. She stopped ironing and sat down with a Bible and showed them the answers. They both were saved then. As an adult he has served in his local church as an usher, Sunday School teacher,
church treasurer, and deacon.

He currently resides in Omaha, Nebraska, with his wife and two children.

Back to Table of Contents

Excerpt from Steadfast in Sicily
Book two of the Dane Shaw Adventures

It was almost an hour later when Dane kneeled beside Lieutenant Jennings, the last surviving officer, and saluted him. The lieutenant had multiple wounds, but had refused to be made unconscious, preferring to help organize the company and suffer the pain. He was one of the good ninety day wonders. But the pain had got to the point where the medic had had to give him another shot of morphine a few minutes ago.

“What’s the story?” he wheezed.

“I’ve got one of my men who understands some German interrogating the prisoners, but we’re not going to learn much more. Apparently, we were spotted by the Germans and a platoon ambushed us. It looks like they suffered about 20 casualties before breaking off.”

The lieutenant grimaced in pain, “I heard you caused 17 of them.” Dane shrugged and went on, “There are guards on each side of us, and scouts are out looking for a place to take our wounded.” He mopped his face, “If we stay down here, they will cook. There has to be farmhouses or other buildings nearby.

“As for casualties, the company’s been beheaded; Captain Carter, Lieutenants Galow and Wilson are dead, and the medic says Lieutenant Oosterkamp probably won’t survive his wounds. The First Sergeant and all four technical sergeants are down, as well as seven other sergeants and five corporals. We have a total of 14 dead and 36 wounded, one third of the company.”

Jennings looked at Sergeant Shaw through half closed eyes. The morphine shot that the corpsman had given him had taken effect, and his mind tended to drift away. He had noticed that when it was discovered that all the officers were down, it was Shaw who started issuing orders that were effectual and economic and brought organization out of the chaos. His mind drifted back to the first exploding mortar. Either it was incredibly bad luck or very good aiming, but it had exploded right in the middle of the meeting called by Captain Carter, and the second had landed close by. They had devastated the command structure of the company. He could still hear the screams of the wounded and dying men, and the pain as the shrapnel ripped into his own body.

He forced his mind back to the matter at hand. He had been funneling orders through Shaw up until now, but he wouldn’t be able to hold up much longer. “Sergeant,” he licked his dry lips, “you’re gonna have to take command of the company, you’re the senior surviving sergeant. I suggest we go back to our lines.” He sighed in resignation. He didn’t like it, but he didn’t know what else to do.

Dane pursed his lips, “Since we haven’t seen any other American units, I expect the Germans have plugged the hole in their line and are between us and our lines. Have you had any radio contact with battalion?”
Jennings shook his head, “We haven’t been able to raise them, radio problems again.” He paused, “They could have broken through and be following us.”

Dane shook his head, “We can’t rely on that, we have to assume that we are on our own with a mission to accomplish. By the way, do you know where we are and where the bridge is?”

Jennings looked surprised, “Captain Carter had the only map, didn’t you get it?”

Dane looked grim, “It wasn’t with his body, and I didn’t see it. So am I right to assume we don’t know where we are going?”

Jennings grimaced in pain, “It looks like we can’t go back, can’t go forward, and can’t stay here.” He shot a look at the sergeant, “Maybe you should have a council of war with all the sergeants and see what they think.”

“Sir,” Dane hesitated and then doggedly plowed on, “If I am in command, then I will command. I’m not going to stop and have a vote every time there needs to be a decision made. I’m open to ideas and suggestions, but I will make the decisions.”

Jennings looked at the determined face and was satisfied that Shaw had passed his first test. He sagged, “Do you know what you are going to do?”

“Not yet, but God will show me,” Dane replied confidently.

Jennings started drifting out again. What was it Sergeant Shaw had said, something about God? His mind retreated into a drug induced haze, blocking out the pain.

Just then Corporal Winans came up, followed by Private Braun. Winans saluted, “Lieutenant, burial detail is finished digging the graves.” He stared at the lieutenant’s white face and closed eyes. Dane turned to him, “Lieutenant Jennings has turned the company over to me.” He sighed, “I’ll be there in a couple of minutes for the burials.”

“Yes, Sarge,” Winans hurried away. Dane turned to Braun, “Did you get anything more out of the prisoners?”

Braun shook his head, “Just names, ranks and serial numbers mostly.”

“How about any other Germans units around, like their company?”

Braun hesitated, “I’m not sure, the company might be close by. Somebody said something before he was hushed up that might have meant that they were an advance platoon for their company.”

“Oh no!” Dane moaned, “So we might be attacked by a company at any time!” He looked around, “We have got of get out of here quick! Go join your squad for now; I’ll probably have to detach you for guarding the prisoners later. Let Corporal Gates know.”

As Braun left, Dane went in search of a sergeant.

“Sergeant Zimmerman!” Gaylord Zimmerman looked up as he heard his name called and saw Sergeant Shaw coming towards him. He finished the instructions that he was giving a corporal and turned to Shaw, who wasted no time in getting to the point.

“Lieutenant Jennings has turned the company over to me. I’m putting you in charge of First Platoon, Sergeant Grissom over the Heavy Weapons Platoon, Sergeant Lassiter over the Second Platoon, and Sergeant Jones over the Third. There could be a Kraut company nearby and if there is, the Germans that ambushed us have warned them about us. I need you to send a detail ahead and find a place where we can take the wounded out of this riverbed, and also a place where we can defend ourselves from an attack.”

Zimmerman looked at Shaw and thought about what he had just said. He was a
lumberjack foreman from Minnesota and well used to keeping men in line. Lassiter was a tough Texan, Grissom was a heavy weapons sergeant and the natural choice there, and Jones was the senior surviving sergeant of his platoon. Good choices all around. He nodded, “I’ll send out a squad immediately. Anything else?”

Dane looked around, “I should have a conference with the four of you, and I’ll need to round the others up. Do you know where they are?”

Zimmerman looked at him, “Um, you could send the runners to find them.”

Dane looked at him blankly and then shook his head in self-disgust. “You’re right, I didn’t think about them.” He looked around, “Do you know where they are?”

Zimmerman chuckled, “I’ll send them out. Where and when do you want to meet?”

Dane looked around and pointed to a big rock at the top of the slope, “Meet there in ten minutes,” he looked at his watch, “at 1045 hours, I need some fresh air. Now I’ve got to hold the funeral.” Dane moved off, fumbling his well-worn Bible out of his pocket.

When he got to the grave site, with some of the men standing around, he started reading from Psalms 104, starting at verse 13: “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For He knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.”

When Braun climbed the slope to return to his squad, he met Conners standing watch. “Did you learn anything from your cousins?” Conners asked, his ever-present cigarette drooping from the corner of his mouth. Infuriated, Braun swore and turned on him, “Don’t call me a Kraut!” he yelled and swung a punch that caught the surprised Conners in the face, giving him a bloody lip and smashing his cigarette. Instantly the two men started punching each other. Braun dropped his rifle and swung a right at Conners’ head. Conners ducked, the blow missed and then hit Braun in the face that snapped Braun’s head back.

In a rage, Braun rushed Conners, smothering him with a succession of rights and lefts. Conners put up a desperate defense, trying to block the blows with his forearms as he gave up ground, and then his heel caught on a rock and he tripped and fell down with Braun on top of him. Braun felt hands grabbing him and pulling him off before he could land another blow. Rosario held him while O’Halloran yanked Conners to his feet. Gates came storming up, “What is going on here?”, he stormed, or words to that effect.

“He called me a Kraut,” Braun accused.

“I just asked if he had learned anything from the prisoners,” Conners whined. “I didn’t call him a Kraut.”

Gates looked at both of them in disgust. “If you want to fight somebody, there’s a whole German and Italian army out there, go fight them. Braun, stop being overly sensitive. Conners, get back to your post.” Rosario and O’Halloran released their grips and Conners wiped his mouth, saw the blood on it, glared at Braun with dislike, and slouched away, pulling out another cigarette. Braun mopped his sweaty face and looked at Gates while the other two went back to their posts. “Sergeant Shaw wanted me to tell you that he’s going to dispatch me to guard duty over the prisoners.”

“Did he say when?”

“No,” Braun shook his head, and then added, “What a mess. We got whipped, a sergeant’s in command of the company, and I don’t think he knows what to do.”

Gates looked at him coldly, “You’ve only been with the squad a couple of weeks,
you’ll soon find out that Sergeant Shaw always has a plan. As for being whipped, we’re only whipped if you think so. Now get back to your post.”

Although Dane did not hear what Braun said, he could see what Braun had said echoed in his men as he moved among them. The body language and the side long looks let him know that the men were dispirited by the defeat, and disquieted at being led by a sergeant, and a sergeant that many of them knew little about. Since becoming a sergeant, he had held himself apart from most of the men for personal reasons, and as a result was not well known by them. He could tell some of the men were whipped, but the attitude of many others was summed up by a comment he overheard, “Ambushed by a platoon. A platoon, for crying out loud!” When he gave orders for the wounded to be made ready to be carried out of the riverbed, just the hope of them getting out of the oven that was the riverbed made the men perk up. Many of them weren’t beaten yet, but if he didn’t come up with something soon, they very well could be. If only he knew what to do.

While all this was going on, Tennessee and Hemphill were out scouting for someplace to take the wounded- a farmhouse, empty barn, something. They were about half a mile away from the company and hadn’t seen anything yet. They were climbing a rocky ridge when they heard movement on the other side. They froze, listening, and then Tennessee silently motioned for Hemphill to cover him. He crawled up and slowly peered around a rock, to see a face staring at him from only a few inches away.

Back to Table of Contents