



“What have you told my parents?” asked Kat, still trying to take in what Oater was saying to her. She pictured her mum and dad at home, working on the vegetables they were growing in their garden or helping their elderly neighbor, Mrs Watkins, with cooking or looking after her cat, Blossom. What on earth would they think if they knew Where she was or what she was about to do?

“They know nothing,” said Oater, “and they won’t do until you’re safely back in Blighty.”

Kat chewed her lower lip. Was she brave enough to risk her life for the Allied cause?

“But what if...you know...what if I die? They’ll be furious that they had no say in the matter. I mean; I know it’s wartime and everything but this is something on a different level.”

“Listen,” said Oater, placing a hand on Kat’s shoulder. “I’m old enough to have been around in the First World War and that was bad. But in terms of technology and the potential for destruction this is much worse. Mr Hitler has got some of the world’s best scientific brains working on all sorts of weapons and no one has any idea what kind of force they might be able to unleash. We have to stop him. There’s never been a moment in world history as serious as this. I’m deadly serious.”

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Kat could see that Oater was a good man. She could also see that what he was saying was true. The world was entering very deep and dangerous waters. Who knew...in a matter of months there may be no world to speak of.

"Right," she nodded, 'tell me about the kit I'm taking with me."

Oater smiled, recognising the bravery and grit of this teenage girl he was about to place in the gravest of danger.

"OK, As well as the explosives kit in the rucksack," he said, "there's also food and water, a torch, a first-aid kit, a compass, a hunting knife, a blanket, and a detailed map of the area," added Oater. "The road the bridge is on, is surrounded by dense foliage – perfect for hiding out. Do you think you're up to it?"

Kat paused for a few seconds and then nodded, even though a voice in her head was screaming no.

"Excellent," replied Oater. "Let's get your parachute on."

He picked up a grey pack and after Kat stood up, helped loop her arms through the parachute's straps. He then clipped the blue rucksack to the front of her jacket.

"This has been checked and double checked and triple checked," he informed her. "It's as sound as the Bank of England."

"But hang on a second," said Kat. "When we practiced landing yesterday we only jumped from shoulder height."

"The technique is exactly the same," replied Oater. "You'll count to ten and pull the cord. On impact, land exactly as you did at the weekend. I promise you even though the height you fall will be far greater the sensation of landing is always the same. Follow the safety moves and you'll be as right as rain. Then pack the parachute as small as possible

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and bury it in the woods. You'll wait until 9:45 p.m. tomorrow. That's when you'll set off to the bridge."

He quickly checked Kat's watch and synchronized it with his own.

"You'll use the fifteen minutes between 9.45 and 10 p.m. to edge your way towards the road. At exactly fifteen seconds after 10 p.m. you'll sprint to the underside of the bridge, attach the explosives and set off the timer. When that job is done, race back to the field where we're going to drop you. We'll be there to pick you up. I mean it Kat. We will be there."

"What happens if you're not?" thought Kat, anxiety biting at her nerves.

"Now hold onto that metal pole above your head," Oater instructed. He clipped a line from her parachute to the pole and did the same with a rope attached to his jacket. He reached for a white handle on the wall and pulled it downwards. A door slid open and the full force of the wind rushed into the plane, nearly knocking Kat off her feet.

Oater checked his watch again and nodded at Kat. "May King and country be with you," he saluted gravely, unclipping Kat's line from the pole.

Kat took a deep breath and jumped.