

DANIEL WYATT



THE FILBERG CONSORTIUM

DANIEL WYATT

a Mushroom eBooks sample

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CHAPTER ONE

New York City – July 29, 1941

The name Filberg was instantly recognized by the personal secretary at Kerr, Chapman & Company when she saw the file at the bottom of the heap of other documents inside her bank manager's private vault.

Her boss, Mr. Chapman, had sent her there to return the Watson file to its rightful place. He then retreated to the adjacent room, preparing to leave on one of his important, highly confidential corporate meetings elsewhere. She shut the vault, and then watched him leave less than three minutes later through the glass front doors that opened onto Wall Street. Chapman wasn't expected back until two or so in the afternoon.

Aris Palini closed the door to her boss's inner glassed-in office, then opened the vault with the proper combination, removed the Filberg material, and crossed to her desk. She dialed zero and gave the operator the Washington DC number she had memorized months before. She stood and waited, drumming her fingers on the desktop. "Mr. Bill, please. It's important," she said

smoothly to the woman in Washington. She heard a man's voice in the background.

"May I ask who's calling?" the woman enquired.

"It's Aris. Hurry, please." Aris sat behind her desk, looking through the inside office windows to the other employees busy at their work. From her perfect vantage point, she could also see the street, the cars, the sidewalk, and the pedestrians through the open blinds.

"Just a moment. I will transfer you to his line."

"Thank you."

She heard the receiver click.

"Aris. How are you?"

"Fine, sir."

"Where are you calling from?"

"Work."

"What is it? Careful what you say."

"Of course, sir. I found some – " she stopped and opened the file to a half-dozen blank white pages. "What the..." She sat, horrified. "What's this?"

"Aris, what's the matter?"

"Sir, there's something very strange here. I found a file inside the vault marked Filberg."

"Filberg? Are you sure?"

"Yes, sir. But inside it . . . are . . . well . . . blank pages."

"Hold one of them up to the light, and tilt it at an angle."

She obeyed, moving the paper around. "Yes, there are some impressions on them. Some indentations." She glanced over to the window. Hells Bells! Her boss had just come through the bank doors! Had he forgotten

something? Lucky for her, a bank employee had stopped him. They talked. "Sir, I have to go. He's coming back," she said, quickly.

"The cafe. Noon tomorrow."

"Yes, sir." She hung up.

Aris would have to move fast to return the Filberg file.

* * * *

Washington

Wesley Hollinger woke with two words stamped on his mind: White House.

Why him? He thought about his upcoming briefing for two grueling hours, until Colonel Bill Donovan arrived and handed over the car keys in the hotel parking lot. It was obvious his boss didn't want to drive.

"It's yours. Remember, right side of the road here."

"Yes sir, colonel," Hollinger replied, yawning.

"Keep the speed down, Kid. I've heard about that MG of yours. This here is government property."

The two shared a laugh and walked towards the car. Since his involvement with the Rudolf Hess peace flight, Hollinger had been affectionately known in certain American and British fraternities as the Kid. He didn't mind. In fact, he kind of liked the name.

At ease in his boss's presence, Hollinger perked up after a good night's sleep in the comfortable air-conditioned hotel. The day was just starting, a steamy Monday morning in the nation's capital, thousands of miles away from the real action. What a hectic joyride

he had taken on short notice. The President had called him and he jumped. The young man packed a change or two of clothing in London, was slapped a forged Canadian passport, and ordered to board a military aircraft in Prestwick, Scotland, that made stops in Iceland and Labrador, the latter in the midst of an intense rainstorm. At Montreal, a Canadian agent friendly to Donovan cornered Hollinger, rushed him through customs and threw him on a flight to Bolling Air Force Base, Washington, where Donovan intercepted him late last night. London to Washington inside of thirty-six hours must have been some kind of record.

Hollinger, the American cipher analyst on loan to the British MI-6, was back home in the States. The land of two-bits, ten-spots, Jack Benny on the radio, Clark Gable at the movies, and the Brooklyn Dodgers and the New York Yankees at the ballpark. The biggest difference was the bright lights. No blackout here. No barrage balloons. No rationing of food or gasoline. No taped windows to prevent shattering in an air raid. No tweed suits or deep pockets jingling with funny English currency. There were jobs and money in America. Lots of both. And edible meals. People were busy. The young women he saw already looked as great as the women here did a year ago. They hadn't lost their bloom, as Langford would say. And the people spoke the English vernacular he knew, not that rhyming London Cockney slang that even many Brits found tough to decipher.

The American situation annoyed Hollinger. Nothing had changed since his boss had sent him on his original

mission to England in 1940. His fellow countrymen were oblivious to the frightening state of affairs in Great Britain. What was the matter with them? Sure, supplying England and now Russia had taken Americans out of the Great Depression and into defense plants. But they didn't want another war so soon in this century, although it didn't bother them to aid other countries in fighting one a few thousand miles removed from North America, all for the sake of profit. *Thank God for Hitler* was the latest American slogan. To most Americans, the conflict was more like a million miles away. It was a European war. Let them sort it out.

Hollinger wondered what would make them come to their senses.

* * * *

Estoril, Portugal

It wasn't all sport for the MI-6 agent codenamed *Saturn*, the British Embassy trouble-shooter in the Atlantic paradise. It wasn't just the white beaches, the bubbling surf, the waving palm trees, the beautiful bronze-skinned women, and the casinos at the Atlantic resort that kept him engrossed. Although he did enjoy such pleasures, plus many more fringe benefits previously unimagined in his native England.

At first, he didn't know how to take the highly irregular order from London. Had they lost their minds? Damn it all to Hell, this was walking headlong into the enemy camp.

He crossed the busy, narrow street to the sidewalk restaurant on the corner, opposite the beach. A breeze gusted off the tranquil blue Atlantic, a crisp odor of salty sea in the air. The sun felt warm, the temperature in the low eighties. Most of the restaurant tables were filled with the typical sad-eyed refugee clientele escaping the Nazis and war in Europe, seeking passage off the continent. Most were Jews with blank looks. They had been there for months, hoping and praying daily for boat or flight arrangements to the havens of either London, or Africa, or New York City.

How ironical Portugal was. The place never ceased to amaze him. Spies from every country went about their daily routines side by side in this the largest of neutral espionage hotbeds. A person in intelligence had to be careful. Such close proximity between individuals of belligerent nations was a tricky affair. At Sintra Field, eighteen miles out of the nearby capital of Lisbon, the ticket offices and hangars of Lufthansa and British Overseas Airways were within a stone's throw of each other. Germans and Brits, side by side. Weird place, this Portugal. Never dull.

Saturn regarded the shaggy-haired man in the white suit, sitting at one of the tables with his hat tilted back and smoking, under the shade of a wide, white umbrella. *Saturn* knew him as Hans Schmidt. MI-6 had a file on him. Registered agent A-296. An alleged importer-exporter who smelled of Gestapo from across the street. He was known to have strong Berlin connections. The

two had always kept their distance these last many months. Not even so much as a friendly “hello”.

That would soon change.

Schmidt looked away and munched on his last morsel of baked fish, a glass of liquor in his hand. He was *Saturn’s* age. Early to mid thirties. Aryan. Dirty-blonde. Blue eyes. Fair-skinned, somewhat burnt. *Saturn* strode by with a steady gait. Their eyes locked for a moment. The Englishman entered the restaurant, slipped the headwaiter a one-pound currency note, and darted for Schmidt’s table. The German casually watched him all the way.

“Mind if I sit down?” *Saturn* said over the clamor of crystal, cutlery and conversation. The ocean breeze intensified a touch, then died off.

The German stared at the tanned Englishman. “My, my, if it isn’t Kenneth Sims.”

“May I?”

“Is it business?”

Sims paused. “Sort of.”

“Name your commodity. Swiss clocks? Schnapps? Cognac? Or is it lumber you want?”

“Other . . . business. Let’s say, from one warring country to another.”

“Sit down, Herr Sims.”

“Thank you.”

“May I have the privilege of ordering something for you? The sherry is quite delightful. The salmon is excellent. Freshly caught.”

Sims pulled up a seat. “No, thank you. I shan’t keep you long.”

“Smoke?”

“Yes. I might have time for that, at least.”

Schmidt let Sims remove a cigarette from the pack on the table. “*Prost*, anyway,” he said, tipping back his glass.

“*Prost*. I say, it’s hot.”

“*Ja*. So, Herr Sims, what does MI-6 want with me?”

Sims smiled oddly, lighting the smoke. The German knew he was Secret Service. Was that surprising? And Sims knew Schmidt was Gestapo. “I have a message for your Berlin friends,” Sims said. He blew out his first drag.

“My company, you mean?”

“To hell with your company,” Sims spoke in a low tone, looking away at an attractive Jewish woman two tables down. Schmidt noticed her too. “I’m talking about your Gestapo Headquarters. Look, old boy, let’s not pretend. We both know who the other works for.”

“Ach, you Englishmen, such nuisances. All right. Tell me, what’s the message?”

Sims ignored the German’s sarcasm. “There have been some rumors circulating ever since Hess’s little . . . peace escapade to Scotland.”

“Hess,” Schmidt smirked. “The man is crazy, you know. But then you Englishmen have probably found that out.”

“Have we?”

Schmidt chuckled. "Of course, he's crazy. Flying off like that in his plane and landing in Scotland, thinking he could cut a peace deal with the British. Why would Churchill even listen to him?"

"Obviously, our Prime Minister didn't."

"Hess's mind is *kaput*. He has been crazy for many years."

"Perhaps. At least that's what Lord Haw-Haw and the Fuehrer have broadcast to save face. Who believes that, though? Some insiders say Hess was deserting the sinking ship."

"*Hah.*" The German laughed, sitting up. "What sinking ship? When are you English going to give up? Churchill is a big bluff. How do you expect to win a war with a drunk leading you?"

Sims stiffened. "And what about your situation back home? I hear there's a little turmoil in the High Command. You might call it a master plot."

"A plot?"

"Yes. Your boss, Himmler, has aspirations to oust Hitler and become Fuehrer. He has even taken the liberty to create a new title for himself. Fuehrermaster." Sims caught a sudden twitch to Schmidt's right cheek.

"You think so, do you?"

"Yes, I daresay. Hess knew when to get out. He was going to get it next. And that's from an excellent source."

"So, why tell me all this?"

"Just thought you might like to know, seeing as Himmler is your Berlin boss." Sims rose from the chair,

his throat dry. Now he wished he had the sherry. It might have hit the spot after all.

Schmidt stared. "Going so soon?"

"Yes. I must run along. One other thing."

"What is that, Herr Sims?"

The Englishman leaned over the table, and stared at the German, void of expression. "We know what Himmler and his henchman are planning to do to the Jews." He glanced at three Jews in the table next to him. "If we win this war, there'll be hell to pay. The drunk, as you call him, will see to it. Goodbye, Herr Schmidt. You don't have to see me out," Sims said, taking his leave of the German.

Schmidt looked away, eyeing the attractive Jewish woman. The German knew that he and Sims would cross paths again. No doubt about that.

* * * *

Washington

Hollinger flipped his Air Force sunglasses on, then turned the ignition of the shiny, black, 1940 Packard. The engine came to life. Hollinger wore his year-old single-breasted suit, still in fashion in America, although he was seeing more double-breasted attire already today. His white monogrammed shirt was freshly starched. His silk tie was a little on the bright and flowery side. His oxfords were polished, his hair cut and combed. Early that morning he had showered, shaved close, sent his cables to London, then run out

and bought a new dark gray fedora to match his medium gray suit. He wanted to make a good impression on Winston Churchill. He had to do his best for the Big Guy from 10 Downing Street.

Hollinger released the clutch and pressed down on the accelerator of the eight-cylinder motor. The car jumped forward. Hollinger was tense and showed it with jerky movements on the steering wheel. For a brief moment, he pictured the English woman he had left behind in war-torn Great Britain. He smiled, thinking of Roberta Langford. Feisty, clever, quick wit, deep-brown eyes, long red hair, smashing dresser, great legs. He had a penchant for women with great legs. But he loved everything else about her too. She was fun. Too bad he still hadn't hit it off with her. And it seemed so close after his accident in May. He couldn't figure out what had gone wrong. Maybe she wasn't his type. He never knew what to expect from her most of the time. At any given moment she could be one of two people – either Robbie the sweetie or Robbie the smart-ass. Maybe he should have given up on her and tried dating other English dames again, like Annie, the MI-6 clerk on the third floor, the short, cute brunette who, according to rumor, was reported to have a Union Jack tattoo on her butt. Now that was patriotism.

“Tired?” Donovan asked, flicking on the car's air-conditioning.

“No, sir, colonel,” Hollinger replied, changing lanes awkwardly, his eyes fixed to the busy street. Cars and

trucks crammed the capital, despite the morning rush having come and gone. "I slept well."

"That's good. Nervous?"

Hollinger looked over. "Yep." His voice cracked. "I mean, yes, sir, I have to admit I am, a little. How should I act?"

"A word to the wise. He's no different to Churchill. Be yourself. He likes that. But don't pick your nose or anything."

"I won't."

"Just kidding. He's liable to say anything. He's that way. Off the cuff. You know, there's not too many consultants your age who get to brief the President on an intelligence or a military matter. But don't worry, kid. He and I are old friends."

"Are you?"

"We went to law school together."

"Really, sir? I didn't know that."

"And he mixes great martinis."

"I thought you didn't drink, sir."

"I mentioned that for your benefit."

"Oh, I see. Thank you, sir." Hollinger concentrated on driving, while the air-conditioner whirred a comfortable beat.

The wide-nosed, round-faced passenger with the greased hair and powerful torso removed the early edition of the *Washington Post* from his briefcase. His eyes roamed over the day's news. The Pacific was exploding. The Japanese had placed a freeze on British and American assets. The British and Americans

immediately blocked Japanese assets and canceled all oil deals with them, unless they were willing to let up on their Asian conquests, including China. The main sources of Japanese oil supplies were now cut off. Early reports indicated that Tokyo was fuming. Donovan knew this oil embargo was just a way to bide time for America to strengthen her Pacific forces. But was it also giving the Japanese time to prepare for war? In recent meetings, he and the President seemed to think so.

More than twice Hollinger's age, Colonel William Donovan was an accomplished, resourceful individual. Some colleagues thought him an old fud, somebody who bore a close resemblance to Hollywood comedian W C Fields. Hollinger paid such unfair babble little mind. Few fathomed the dedication of the 58-year-old that some knew as Mr. Bill and others as Wild Bill.

Born to Irish parents in Buffalo, New York, Donovan was brought up near the tough Lake Erie waterfront where he had to fight to survive. Determined to make something of himself, he enrolled at New York's Columbia University. On campus, he received his law degree and his Wild Bill nickname playing football. He was also a World War I battle hero, receiving the Congressional Medal of Honor. He later jumped in and out of different professions. He was once a successful mob-busting Buffalo District Attorney, then a millionaire Wall Street lawyer with connections, and a Republican candidate for Governor of New York.

During the turbulent years before Adolf Hitler attacked Poland, Donovan had been the eyes and ears for

his old friend, Democrat President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. The Irishman had conferred with various heads of state and prominent people, obtaining intelligence information that would someday be useful to his country. He took two trips to England in 1940, which gave him the ammunition he needed to model an American intelligence agency after the British. He studied MI-5, the experts in counterespionage on English territory, and the MI-6 Secret Intelligence Service, who specialized in foreign espionage. He discovered that the two departments' paths crossed on occasion. That was a good sign. That meant cooperation. With Roosevelt's blessings, Wild Bill began structuring a top-secret federal organization. He recruited individuals. He farmed them out to observe and report. By mid-1941, he was hoping that the work was not in vain. Wesley Hollinger was a product of that system.

Only two weeks earlier the President appointed Colonel Donovan to head a new federal intelligence agency designated "The Office of the Coordinator of Information." The American spy agency – the COI for short – was officially up and running. Considering the shaky world position, it could not have come any sooner for a handful of Americans and Brits in-the-know.

Closing the newspaper, Donovan threw Hollinger a sideways glance. "Somebody is going to get their war soon."

"Why do you say that, sir?"

“Because some high-ups want it, that’s why. And they always get what they want.”

“You mean the President and his staff?”

Donovan shook his head. “Nope. Higher than that.”

Hollinger felt uneasy. “Who’s higher than the President?”

“Wesley, you’re still young yet. And idealistic. Certain people, that’s who,” the colonel replied, thinking of the telephone conversation he had that morning with Aris, his former secretary at his Wall Street lawyer’s office. “Roosevelt supporters. People who stand to make a lot of money if we go to war.”

“*Thank God for Hitler,*” Hollinger mumbled.

“What was that?”

“Nothing, sir.” The light turned red, and Hollinger nearly slammed into the car in front of him. “Oh, shit!”

“Damn it! Watch it, Wesley!”

Hollinger shot a glance at his boss. “Sir, are you telling me that—”

“I’ve said enough. Take a right at the next block.”

“Yes, sir.

Hollinger slowed the Packard down at the light ahead, and turned at the street sign marked Pennsylvania Avenue. He looked ahead. In the distance, he saw it. The *White House*. He couldn’t believe he was doing this. If only that cheeky redhead were here to see him.

* * * *

MI-6 Headquarters, London

The secretary finger-tapped on the office door, and peered into the room. "Colonel, the Prime Minister is on the line."

"Thank you, Margaret." MI-6 officer Colonel Raymond Lampert quickly lit his pipe and lifted the C-phone receiver. It was not in his best interests to keep Winston Churchill waiting on his Whitehall 4433 private line. "Yes, sir."

"Let's go on scramble."

"Very good, sir." Lampert punched a white button on the side of the C-phone attached to a two-by-two-foot square box by his feet. "Can you hear me, sir?"

"Yes, I can. You left word for me?" The Prime Minister's familiar lisp was clipped, anxious for a reply.

"Yes, sir. I did. A cable was forwarded to me just a few minutes ago from the Kid. He made it safe and sound last evening, and will be briefing the President at ten-thirty, Washington time. Any additional cables will be forwarded to your office."

"Jolly good."

"There's a good lot resting on our errand boy. What do you think he'll say, sir?"

"What we told him to say, I should expect. He's there for one purpose. Ours."

"As long as the Big Fish in Washington buys it."

"If he doesn't bite, colonel, we're done for."

"Yes. But can the Kid do it how we want him to do it?"

"Second thoughts, colonel?"

“Perhaps.” Taking a ballpoint pen, Lampert doodled on his foolscap pad.

“Remember our goal. Stop Hitler. The end justifies the means, colonel.”

“Yes, sir.”

“We’ll let the bloke think he’s a hero. He seems gullible enough.”

“In any event, isn’t that what he rather is, sir. A hero?”

“Yes, I suppose he is, now that you mention it.”

Lampert hesitated. “Wesley Hollinger. Whoever would have believed it a few months ago? May the angels in heaven help us. Do you know what he did, sir, before he left?”

“Up to more mischief, was he?”

“He put NO SMOKING signs in his new office.”

“It *is* his office.”

“Yes, but—”

“Never mind. Did you receive the copy of the report I sent to the President?”

“Yes, sir. About an hour ago.”

“I have an update. We’ve made the arrangements for the Atlantic meeting. It’s on.”

“Already? Good show, sir,” Lampert said, mustering as much enthusiasm as he could.

“Anything else, colonel, while I have you on the line? How’s *Operation Decoy* coming along?”

“Not a word, as yet.”

“Let me know the minute you hear from your Portugal agent.”

“Certainly, sir.”

“What about Camp Z?”

“I’ll be out the door in minutes, sir.”

“Fine. Get it over with now.”

“Of course, sir.”

Lampert’s secretary knocked at the door.

“Just a minute, sir,” Lampert said. “Yes, Margaret?”

“Colonel, a sealed envelope has just arrived from the code room.” She showed the package to him.

Lampert waved her over. “Sir,” he said into the C-phone, “I think we just got our answer from Portugal.”

CHAPTER TWO

Firth of Forth, Scotland

Two husky men struggled with the long, heavy, wooden crate. Sweating, they hauled it from the motorcar, across the creaky dock, to the edge of the water line and aboard the small boat. Then they ordered the whiskered fisherman on a north by northeast course.

The Firth of Forth was a windy waterway off the western slant of the North Sea, filled by hard-working fishermen during the less turbulent hours – in the morning, when the water was the calmest. Now, mid-afternoon, the waves were choppy. It was a rough ride. Three miles from shore, one of the men gripped the starboard rail and vomited over the side.

“Are you going to make it?” the other man asked.

“Yeah, I will. Why do we have to go so damn far out?”

“Still too shallow here. We need to go another mile or more.”

“Tell that to my stomach. Who’s going to look out here, anyway?”

“Orders. Chin up.”

“I’ll try.”

The fisherman steered into the brisk northerly wind, and a few minutes later killed the throttle. The two passengers bent over the crate and picked it up. With grunts, they heaved it into the cold, unforgiving water. The crate bubbled and sank instantly, lapping a series of waves against the hull.

“So long, Kraut,” the sick man said.

* * * *

Bletchley Park, England

Langford removed her reading glasses and sniffed. She had picked up a summer cold from somewhere, and was a little under the weather.

She sat on her desk, sipping her tea. She was back. She had slipped into the old routine at the Secret Service cipher school, a young face under twenty-five stuck in with the “elite old farts,” as Hollinger had often referred to them. They were mostly innocent old men, a decade older than her. And married. Murphy. Green. Boley. Scott. Jansen. Ellis. She told herself that she didn’t mind these last three weeks too much. The twelve-hour shifts, six days a week. The secrecy between huts. The stale food. She was a desk soldier at her post. A dignified clerk. For King and Country. And Lampert and the Prime Minister too.

Then she set her tea down and thought for a moment, laughing at her situation. She forgot how much she disliked the place the first time around. Now she was

here only temporarily, waiting on her boss – Hollinger – to return to Great Britain in a few more days. Not a bad job, this, she tried to tell herself. It was different this time. Like a sabbatical. Different messages. Different hut. Different people. And fascinating. Like a game. It was another part of the radio war that saw her organization processing over eight million enemy words every month. Although tedious, she took pleasure in heading off the Nazi military and High Command dispatches. Not many women in Britain had a wartime job as interesting – at least on the surface – as hers. She didn't have to teach bratty kids, or toil on an assembly line. She didn't have to drive an ambulance and pull mutilated bodies out of rubble, as her girlfriend had done during the dreadful London Blitz the past winter. Since choosing her profession, Langford hardly looked back.

Roberta Langford flipped her shoes off and lit a *Player's* cigarette. With her reading glasses in place, she leafed through the deciphered *Enigma* intercepts that had come through fairly steady from the Russian Front. Eighty-four for her eyes today. So far. *Enigma II* had six of low priority. Stacked on her desk were the messages from the girls in the nearby Decoding Room hut. Next, the *Ultra* experts – the distributors of the traffic, of which she was one – would take over and separate the correspondence for the Army, the Navy, and the other branches of the service. Alerting the Soviets and passing the German military codes on to them was forbidden. The Russians couldn't be trusted to keep the source

secret. They couldn't do anything anyway. They were getting severely whipped by superior German forces and their newfangled machinery. Roberta Langford would follow the directives. Her job was to chaperone only. Screen and catalogue for the departments. Let Lampert know of anything in the high-priority class. He'd be getting some dispatches today, without question.

In the five weeks since their synchronized *Operation Barbarossa* ground and air attack, the German Wehrmacht forces had slashed deep into the Soviet Union. The *Enigma* orders in the deciphered messages spoke of lightning movements, major and minor sieges, and glorious victories. Today, in the north country, the German Sixteenth Army had already reached the south side of Lake Ilmen. Langford shot a glance over her shoulder to a map of Russia she kept on the wall. She nodded. Lake Ilmen was only 100 miles from Leningrad, a prime objective for the Germans. To be sure, the Sixteenth Army would push on tomorrow. And the next day. And the next. At the rate they were advancing, they would be knocking at Leningrad's doors in a week.

What made Langford's work more interesting this time around was that the German *Enigma* machines being utilized on the Russian Front differed from the model preferred in the occupied countries of Denmark and France, and on the Atlantic U-boats. The cryptographers at Bletchley always had to keep in mind that the Germans had many variations of their high-grade cipher traffic. Every area encountered a new set of rules. Some meteorological reports – six – had come through today,

using single letters for various conditions. Lucky for Bletchley, they had the codebooks for reference. Stolen, of course. Simple enough codes, once broken. The Germans changed letters weekly. This week . . . K for cloud . . . L for clear...

She heard two people in the hall.

"I'm looking for Roberta Langford," a male voice asked.

A female voice answered, "And you are?"

"Spencer Winslow."

"Yes, go on in."

"Thank you."

Langford looked over her glasses through brown, deer-like eyes to see the freckled face and the thick round glasses of Spencer Winslow from the *Enigma II* Hut Nine. He had telephoned a few minutes before, keeping in mind that inter-office contact was forbidden, except by phone or memo first.

"Ah, there you are. Caught you before the shift change, my dear."

She puffed on her cigarette. Blue tobacco smoke enclosed her like a fog. "Hello, Spencer. What brings you here this hour of the day?" She sniffed.

"How's the cold?"

"Better, thank you."

"Got a cable for you. From Washington. Your Yank boss man, I should think," he said, looking about.

"You don't say."

“They delivered it to the wrong hut.” He slapped the sealed envelope in his hand, shaking his head. “Hut Nine, his old stomping grounds.”

“That’s simply terrible. What a way to run a war. With this kind of incompetence, we’ll lose for sure.”

“I don’t know what you see in that fellow.”

“I don’t see anything,” she told him.

“Don’t pull my leg. He came, he saw, he conquered.”

“We’ve never even so much as gone out.” She held out her pearl-smooth hand. “Now I’ll take that, if you don’t mind.”

“So, there’s other fish in the sea?”

She laughed low and husky. “Right you are.”

They smiled at each other.

He left and she opened the cable.

HEY REDHEAD. MEETING POTUS FOR COFFEE.
WISH YOU WERE HERE. SAY HELLO TO THE JUDGE.
TOODELOO. THE KID.

Langford smiled at Hollinger’s silly humor. What a tease.

The fast-talking American had a nickname for everybody. He felt comfortable now in his surroundings, this exclusive club. She was Redhead. Churchill was the Big Guy. Lampert was the Judge or Your Honor. Then again, Langford knew, Churchill was no better, for he thrived on his codenames. *Enigma II* transmissions were recently christened the *Falcon File*. It made sense. *Falcon* was the Deputy Fuehrer’s codename.

And it didn’t end there. The Prime Minister favored *Former Naval Person* for himself when communicating

with Roosevelt. He was also the one who came up with *Operation Urge*, Hollinger's "Mission of Persuasion" to Washington. Not to be left out, Roosevelt used *POTUS* – President of the United States – whenever he cabled Churchill over the London-Washington Hotline. Nicknames and codenames were getting to be a habit in this line of work.

She wondered how well Hollinger was performing on his trip to the White House. What would they do when he returned? She still couldn't quite see herself with Hollinger, the bloke with the ego, although she was leaving the back door open all the same. She tried to tell herself she was not in love with him. Not really. Not the way she had been with Arthur. She was fond of Hollinger.

Love? Good Lord, no! At least she didn't think so. Not with the man who hardly ever took things seriously. Neither was she steadfastly in love with her new friend, Alex Nevin, the RAF fighter pilot from Liverpool. Suitors everywhere. So many to pick from. But she was in no hurry. Spencer Winslow had always enjoyed her company. He was single. One of the few at Bletchley. He knew her status since Arthur had dropped her, and he had tried to move in on her a couple of times. Although she always backed off, he was still trying. But he wasn't her type. Too dreary. At least with Hollinger there was never a dull moment. He was a cocky young man, but rather nice at times, when he wanted to be. Sometimes he was even honestly sincere. He definitely had a good side to him. She took a long pull of her cigarette and

wondered what Lampert thought of the gutsy analyst now. The Kid was briefing the President on the status of England. Put a mark on the wall.

She sniffed and wiped her nose with a tissue. Damn this cold!

* * * *

Farnborough, England

Lampert steered his mud-covered Austin to the gate at Mytchett Place. It was another warm day in what was turning out to be one of the hottest summers on record. This was Camp Z. For two months, the sinister, eighteenth century Victorian mansion an hour's drive out of London had housed Great Britain's most notorious Nazi prisoner-of-war.

The German was now referred to as Prisoner Z. Most of the world knew him to be Nazi Germany's Deputy Fuehrer Rudolf Hess. Only a handful would even guess he was an impostor. Lampert checked in with the armed guard and drove ahead to the gravel parking space alongside the driveway. Inside the double-perimeter barbwire barricades were machine-gun posts, slit-trenches dug into the lawns, floodlights for night use, as well as colorful, unkempt gardens full of rhododendrons. Lampert could see the German prisoner walking the gardens this late afternoon, very slowly, under close surveillance. Three hundred feet up, two Spitfires from the nearby fighter base roared, full-throttle, in close formation.

Lampert raised his six-foot frame from the vehicle, lit his pipe and waited. Colonel Raymond Lampert went about his work today with a high degree of dignity, as Executive Officer of *Enigma* Operations, his new, month-old MI-6 title. The ex-British Army officer who had distinguished himself in the Great War had all the time in the world. So did the prisoner, it seemed. When the armed entourage helped the prisoner into the building through the ground floor music room, the colonel waited several more minutes, then entered the gloomy front entrance of the badly-maintained estate. When he saw the cracked, wooden floors, dark walls, and chipped furniture, he wondered who had done the decorating. A drunk? Mytchett Place could have passed for Dracula's castle.

Lampert climbed the squeaky oak staircase, one level up. At the top, he looked around. All the windows were closed. The mansion was surprisingly cool. The prisoner's bedroom was on the first floor, surrounded by a metal cage. Beside it

“Yes, Mr. President. Two of note, Auschwitz and Dachau have been around for a few years to house political prisoners and Jews. Now, they are being converted over to what Hess described as—”

“Internment camps,” the President answered. “In other words, execution sites.”

“That’s correct, sir. They go by several names. But, beneath the fancy words they have one purpose. That is to enslave and to kill.”

The President’s face went pale. “The Germans are methodical people. What’s their method of execution?” His voice seemed weak.

“We don’t know that yet, sir. Most of this is still in the planning stages. Along with their version of genetic breeding. Some master Aryan race.”

The President inhaled noisily. “Have these reports been verified?”

“Yes, sir. MI-6 agents have confirmed everything as true.”

The President seemed to deflate by the second. “Classic case of the inmates running the prison. Coffee isn’t strong enough this morning. What do you say to a martini? You game, Wesley?”

“I’ll try anything once, sir.”

“Atta, boy. I’m going to like you,” the President said, perking up, his voice rising.

I hope so, Hollinger wanted to say. He and Donovan eyed each other, both slowly grinning. Hollinger was not accustomed to drinking before eleven in the morning. Roosevelt buzzed the intercom for his valet, who

brought with him all the ingredients on a roll-out, then left. The President enjoyed doctoring up the exact amounts of gin and vermouth, topped with a strip of lemon.

On his first taste, Hollinger was sold. Donovan knew what he was talking about. The presidential martinis were great. “Sir,” Hollinger said, holding his drink up, “I’ve yet to taste a martini anywhere quite this good.”

Roosevelt beamed. “Thank you, Wesley. I take pride in my bartending.”

“That’s not all with Hess, Mr. President,” Donovan said. “There was another set of proposals found.”

“Another set?”

“Yes, sir. Here they are.”

Roosevelt buried his attention in the mimeographed copies handed to him from Donovan’s briefcase. “Himmler? What does he have to do with this?” He paused to read. “One billion pounds! You mean he was prepared to hand the British a billion pounds tucked away in a Swiss account? I find that figure a little far-fetched.”

Donovan and Hollinger glanced at each other.

“So do we, sir,” Hollinger confirmed. “The one billion booty seemed legit, at first. But now we know it was a lie to entice the appeasers. British agents in Switzerland checked it out. There’s no more than the equivalent of fifteen million dollars after the exchange – at most – in the account. MI-6 tried to access it, but came up short when they discovered Himmler had placed a secret codename to it. The money was only the beginning of

Himmler's participation in the Hess flight. He had a plot of his own. We think he had schemed to kill Hess in mid-flight, and send a man over by sub instead, to present a peace deal with the British. Part of the pact would see Himmler take over as the new Fuehrer."

The President raised an eyebrow. "Himmler? That's incredible."

"But something went wrong. Hess escaped the net and flew his way to Scotland the same time Himmler's man arrived by sub. Himmler's man shot Hess dead, then attempted to fly out of Scotland for Ireland, using Hess's aircraft, only—"

"Hold on here, boy. What do you mean he shot Hess dead? Who the hell is behind bars in England?"

"Sir," Hollinger said. "The man the Limeys have in custody is an impostor."

"What!"

"A Hess look-a-like. With new experimental truth drugs, they've discovered his name is Felix Schubert."

The President was mortified. "Good Lord! Are you serious? An impostor?"

Hollinger nodded. "Fraid so."

"No wonder the British are so tight-lipped about it."

"Churchill couldn't tell you the truth, sir, over the wire. In case the line was tapped by the enemy."

"Who else knows?"

"Only a handful."

"How long will the British keep this a secret?"

"With the real Hess dead, we might have to take it to our graves."

“It’s a massive cover-up, then.”

“Only a few choice people know. It’s labeled Most Secret, as the Brits say. Churchill, us three, a few members of MI-6. MI-5 don’t and will not know. Neither will the Special Operations Branch of MI-6. Churchill has made it clear that no one in England who knew Hess before the war will see the prisoner. Movies, photographs, unauthorized interviews are forbidden. The impostor, meanwhile, is under heavy guard in a castle fifty miles southwest of London. He’ll play along if he knows it’s his only way to stay alive.”

Roosevelt grinned, bringing the martini to his lips and swallowing. “An impostor. What do you know? You saw this man, did you?”

“Yes, sir. He . . . he was the one who shot me.”

“Oh.”

A hush swept over the three men.

“I saw both him and the real Hess up close, a few feet apart,” Hollinger continued. “The likeness is pretty fair, enough to fool those who had never met him face to face.”

“I see. Hitler’s broadcasts said Hess was crazy. Hallucinating, was the word,” Roosevelt said, glancing at Donovan. “Since the news of his flight, Stalin is suspicious. He’s convinced that Germany and England are plotting against him.”

Hollinger shook his head. “It might look that way to him. But that’s not the case. It’s a desperate situation, Mr. President.”

Roosevelt sat up, clenching the cigarette holder in his mouth. “Wesley, you’re already privy to some sensitive information. Therefore, it’s quite safe to tell you a story, one that Wild Bill knows well. I decided to go for my third term of office last year for one reason. One reason only. England – Churchill in particular – needs this administration. We see eye to eye. There’s been a direct channel between us for two years. We share secrets. You’ve been a witness to some of this at Bletchley Park. Another administration in the White House would have passed England off as lost. My situation is critical. They have me by the short hairs. If the truth were known about how we were secretly aiding Britain, I’d be impeached by now. Tell the Prime Minister that.”

“I will, sir.” Hollinger felt at ease in his heart. Perhaps, he was headed back to Great Britain.

“On the whole our country isn’t behind England. Not enough to send American boys over. I can’t afford to bring a divided nation into this. Even though we’re already in it more than most Americans realize. We’re neutral and we don’t want to abuse the neutrality laws. Only Congress can declare war. Not me. Tell Churchill that and I will too, when I see him. But damn it, one of these times,” Roosevelt nodded with a fluid firmness, a pride in his voice, “we’ll get into it. How and when is the question.”

Donovan looked over at Hollinger as if to say, *see I told you.*

“I hope it won’t be too late, for England’s sake,” Hollinger said.

“Me too, boy. This is it?” Roosevelt waved the papers in his hand. “How do we know that the British aren’t holding anything back?”

Hollinger had been considering that for weeks. “To my knowledge, they aren’t. Then again, that’s all they gave me.”

“Leave the room for a moment, won’t you, Wesley,” the President ordered, smiling, “so we can talk behind your back.”

“Yes, sir.” Hollinger stood and crossed into the reception area and sat down in a wide, comfortable chair. His future was being discussed in the Oval Office. Him. Wesley Hollinger, one of Wild Bill’s sidekicks. If it was all the same to him, he’d vote to gladly remain in England. He only had to wait ten minutes to find out the verdict. Donovan called him back to face the President.

“Wesley,” Roosevelt said firmly, raising a finger. “Return to England. Keep a low profile, but your eyes and ears should be open for anything that might concern us as Americans first. I want somebody who can sink their teeth into the situation there. Report directly to Colonel Donovan.”

Hollinger was relieved. And another chance with Roberta Langford. “Yes, sir.”

“This has been a most enlightening morning. Thanks for coming, you two.” Roosevelt returned the papers to Donovan. “Shocking. Have a safe trip back, Wesley.”

Donovan stood beside Hollinger, the briefing at an end.

“Thank you, sir,” Hollinger replied, grabbing his fedora off the arm rest. “And a special thanks for the refreshments.”

The President appreciated the remark, looking up from his wheelchair. “Good luck, and God speed, my boy.”

Filing out in step with Donovan, Hollinger came to some quick conclusions. He was won over. FDR and Churchill had a lot in common. They knew which end was up. They were ruthless with their opponents, in a democratic sense. And they could drink at any hour. Any day. Iron Asses, the both of them.

Walking down a hall, Donovan turned to Hollinger, and in a low voice said, “By the way, our little talk in the car about the war is not to be repeated to anyone. In fact, forget I said it.”

Hollinger cleared his throat. “What talk?”

“Good boy. Hollinger, you’ll go far in the COI.”

**That's the end of the sampler. We hope you enjoyed it.
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About the author

Historical fiction author Daniel Wyatt is Canadian, born and raised on the prairies of Saskatchewan. He now resides with his wife and two children in Burlington, Ontario, thirty miles outside Toronto.

His first published work was a set of first-person stories from World War II allied air force veterans called *Two Wings and a Prayer* by Boston Mills Press, Erin, Ontario, Canada in 1984. This was followed up in 1986 by *Maximum Effort* with the same publisher. In 1990, Wyatt made the switch to historical fiction with *The Last Flight of the Arrow*, a techno-thriller set during the Cold War years of the late 1950's. *The Mary Jane Mission* came out two years later. Wyatt's other published works include aviation magazine articles in Canada and the United States.

A big baseball fan, Wyatt enjoys collecting Detroit Tigers memorabilia. In the summer months, he coaches a local fastball team.

Books by the author

The Last Flight of the Arrow

The Mary Jane Mission

The Falcon File series:

The Fuehrermaster

The Filberg Consortium

Foo Fighters