



Remarkably, Kat slept pretty well that night and when she woke, filters of light were shining through the gaps between the huge trees. Breakfast was some bread and jam, followed by a small apple. She spent the whole morning going over the plan again and again in her mind.

She'd be thinking about the intricacies of some technical detail and then suddenly remember where she was and what she was expected to do. It always felt so unreal. A year ago there had been no war. Sure, Mr Hitler had been making bolder and more threatening speeches but to her that was just some foreign-sounding disjointed voice on the wireless. But when Germany invaded Poland and the war actually started things had changed quickly. Sure, Britain wasn't attacked immediately but you could feel it in the air, the corrosive smell of dread and fear. Adults, normally so good at hiding their worries from their children, were suddenly pictures of anguish and uncertainty. It was no longer a question of if the Germans would start bombing Europe, it was a question of when.

Her father, a man of calm solidity had spoken to her on several occasions about how serious things were looking and like any parents wishing to protect their child, while not telling her everything, had warned her that dark days may well lay ahead. Many of them.

Kat thought about all of this through the afternoon as she kept on returning to her mental preparations for the task in hand and also thought

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about what her friends would be doing back in England. They'd probably be at Charlotte's house, playing board games, listening to the wireless or running around the town seeing if anyone had any sweets. If they could see her now and know what she was up to they would be struck down with astonishment. In a way this filled Kat with a surge of pride but it also made her feel a jolt of fear, being well aware that she may never see them again. But that was negative thinking and she forced such notions out of her brain. Oater and people like him had placed their trust in her and she was going to do her utmost to repay that trust.

Between 6 p.m. and 7 p.m. she dozed and after waking, as the sun set, she laid all of the explosive equipment out on her leaf carpet and checked if everything was in order. This is what it must be like to be a real spy or soldier. Your tools and gadgets were totally central to your every move. One piece went out of joint or warped or misfired and an entire mission could be scuppered.

The next couple of hours dragged terribly and her anxiety levels cranked up several notches. From 9 p.m. she checked her watch every couple of seconds, at the same time willing time forward so she could get on with the job and also wanting time to freeze so she didn't have to go through with it.

Finally 9.45 p.m. arrived and slipping on the rucksack she studied the compass and began walking. Through to the edge of the first wood she went, across a large field and into the second wood. Turning the torch off and popping it into the rucksack, she now found herself at the edge of the second wood.

And there, straight in front of her was the Vascombe Bridge – a large black structure that passed over what looked like a wide, fast-moving and very deep river. With the bridge gone she didn't fancy any army's chances of getting from one side to the other.

On the far left of the bridge was a small sentry's hut. At five to ten a German soldier emerged from within, rubbing his hands together and adjusting the rifle slung over his shoulder. A couple of minutes later another soldier appeared round a bend in the road and approached the

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hut. The two men hugged each other as if they were long lost brothers and then with their laughter ringing out in the night air, they entered the hut together. Just like Oater had said they would.

Kat checked her watch. 10 0'clock had finally arrived. She watched the second hand move round until it hit fifteen seconds. Then she stepped out from the trees and prepared for the most important few minutes of her life.