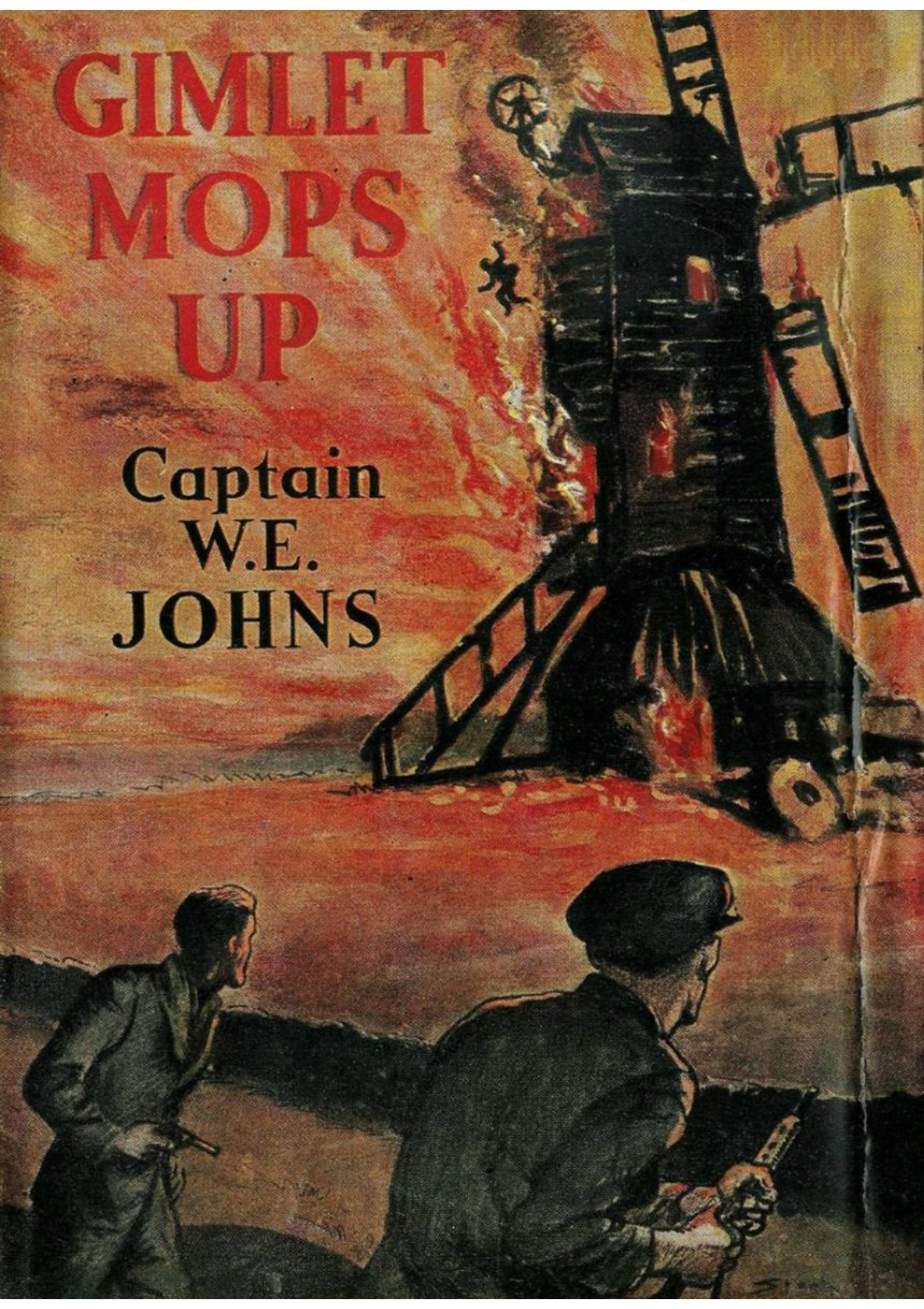


# GIMLET MOPS UP

Captain  
W.E.  
JOHNS



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# GIMLET MOPS UP

AN ADVENTURE OF KING OF  
THE COMMANDOS AND HIS  
THREE MUSKETEERS, CORPORAL  
"COPPER" COLSON, "TRAPPER"  
TROUBLAY AND "CUB" PETERS

By

CAPTAIN W. E. JOHNS

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# CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I AN UNOFFICIAL RENDEZVOUS . . . . .	<a href="#">9</a>
II HOTEL EUROPA. . . . .	<a href="#">25</a>
III NIGHT WATCH . . . . .	<a href="#">37</a>
IV A CHASE AND A CRASH. . . . .	<a href="#">47</a>
V COUNCIL OF WAR . . . . .	<a href="#">56</a>
VI IN AT THE DEATH . . . . .	<a href="#">61</a>
VII THE GENERAL TAKES A HAND . . . . .	<a href="#">77</a>
VIII ON THE TRAIL . . . . .	<a href="#">91</a>
IX CUB GOES TO CHURCH . . . . .	<a href="#">99</a>
X WHAT HAPPENED AT LORRINGTON . . . . .	<a href="#">115</a>
XI BACK TO TOWN. . . . .	<a href="#">121</a>
XII A WOLF COMES BACK . . . . .	<a href="#">135</a>
XIII DEAD MEN'S BOOTS . . . . .	<a href="#">147</a>
XIV "LIKE OLD TIMES". . . . .	<a href="#">157</a>
XV OBJECTIVE A. . . . .	<a href="#">167</a>
XVI OPERATION COMPLETE. . . . .	<a href="#">177</a>

# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PLATE	PAGE
I . . . . .	<a href="#"><u>Frontispiece</u></a>
II . . . <i>via a series of cellars which terminated in a static water tank</i> . . . . .	<a href="#"><u>31</u></a>
III <i>He made it out to be Gimlet, with a Werewolf on either side supporting him</i> . . . . .	<a href="#"><u>43</u></a>
IV <i>The black took the fence gamely, but it was almost beyond her and she stumbled on landing. Cub pitched on to her neck but hung on.</i> . . . . .	<a href="#"><u>63</u></a>
V <i>“Cover me while I get Freddie into the trees,” said Gimlet</i> . . . . .	<a href="#"><u>70</u></a>
VI <i>There was a crashing in the undergrowth, and from out of the trees burst a man, holding with difficulty a couple of straining bloodhounds.</i> . . . . .	<a href="#"><u>86</u></a>
VII <i>“What goes on here?” demanded Copper</i> . . . . .	<a href="#"><u>106</u></a>
VIII <i>Copper snatched up a heavy chair and flung it into the gap</i> . . . . .	<a href="#"><u>129</u></a>
IX <i>A flying leap took him across the room</i> . . . . .	<a href="#"><u>145</u></a>

## AN UNOFFICIAL RENDEZVOUS

ACCORDING to contemporary accounts, to own a house a century ago in Brummel Square, London, W.1., was a thing to boast of. But a century is a hundred years, and in that time many things change. In Brummel Square they did not change for the better. The decline of the Square as a place of residence began when the Great Northern Railway track was laid through the gardens on the east side. By the end of the Victorian Era its atmosphere of decorous affluence had faded, like the paint on its doors and windows, and the railings that penned in—as if they were in danger of straying—the group of sun-starved lime trees that occupied the central area.

One by one, by death or design, the proud house-holders had been called away, leaving their rooms to be adapted to the requirements of small hotels and boarding establishments. The brief period of prosperity that followed was brought to an abrupt end by the blitz of 1940. Not every house was destroyed, of course, but those not demolished were sadly scarred. By the autumn of 1946 the damage had still not been repaired, so that even on the brightest of days the Square presented a melancholy spectacle. In the bleak gloom of a November evening, with a chill damp wind moaning through the gaunt skeletons of the once happy homes, it seemed that the cold hand of death still lingered—at least, so thought Nigel Peters as, for the first time in his life, he surveyed its mutilated, fire-charred dwellings from the rubble-bounded end of what had once been the Stratton Street entrance.

Nigel, better known as “Cub” in No. 9 Troop, Combined Operations, (the celebrated King’s “Kittens”) was not alone. With him were two other members of the once redoubtable unit, now disbanded: Corporal “Copper” Colson, and ex-trooper, “Trapper” Troublay. The nicknames, as is so often the case in the army, were appropriate, for until the war had caused him to change his blue uniform for khaki, Copper had in fact been a London policeman; and Trapper, a French Canadian, before stories of Nazi atrocities had brought him from the backwoods wherein he had spent his early years, had been a trapper.

In appearance the three comrades had nothing in common. Copper, who had started life as a pickpocket in the East End,<sup>[1]</sup> as a man stood six foot two inches in his socks. His composition of bone and muscle, backed by a fast-working Cockney wit, had enabled him to create a record by winning the City Police Heavyweight Trophy three years in succession. His fresh-



complexioned face normally wore an expression of naive simplicity. This, however, was no guide to his behaviour in battle.

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☐ See “King of the Commandos”.

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Trapper Troublay, lean, dapper, swarthy, was more French than British, a fact that became evident when he spoke, for although he had the usual trans-Atlantic drawl he had a habit of falling back on French expletives when his English failed him, as it sometimes did in moments of excitement or deep feeling. A wisp of black moustache decorated his upper lip—the surviving hairs, he once explained, of a beard he had tried to grow to hide a scar which had been the parting gift of a grizzly after a difference of opinion on the important matter of life or death. His favourite weapons, also survivors of his trapping days, were a small bow and arrow and a businesslike-looking Indian skinning knife; and with these he was so singularly adept that his C.O., after one demonstration, had raised no objection to their inclusion in his war kit. Apart from these unorthodox weapons it must be made clear that he was no ordinary performer with rifle or revolver, as was only to be expected of one who had used both weapons constantly as a means of gaining a livelihood. From the same Indians who had given him the knife he had picked up a trick of grunting and clicking his tongue in moments of emotion, presumably to save words.

Cub Peters was several years younger than the comrades to whom he was attached by the battle-forged bonds of war, for he had gone straight from school to Europe at the time when death and destruction were the orders of the day. He had grown into a lean, loose-limbed lad, although what he had seen in Occupied France had left its mark upon his face, ageing it beyond his years. He had not settled down to the routine of civil life for the simple reason that, like many others, he found it impossible to do so. When one is young the habits of four years are not easily discarded.

He stopped when he came to the Square and surveyed the ruins dispassionately. He had seen plenty of ruins in his time. “Gimlet said number ten,” he remarked. “As I can see only five houses standing our objective shouldn’t be hard to find.”

“Nine o’clock was to be zero hour,” observed Copper. “It must be close on that now. Let’s keep movin’. Where Gimlet is concerned you might as well be an hour late as sixty blinkin’ seconds. Besides, I want ter know what

all this is about. Blimy, what a joint. They must 'ave copped a fair packet 'ere. What's Gimlet doin' in a place like this? That's what beats me."

"*Tch*," clicked Trapper. "Let's find out."

They walked on to the houses that were still more or less intact. Tarnished brass figures on a door told them when they had reached their destination. White letters on a cracked fanlight proclaimed that the establishment was, or had been, the Hotel Belvedere. Mounting two dirty steps Cub rang the bell.

The door was opened instantly by a man, a civilian, none of them had ever seen before; but there was something in his manner, in his bearing, that caused Copper to give him a second glance before nudging Cub with an elbow, with a whispered, "Plain-clothes man. Spot 'em every time."

"We've an appointment with Captain King," announced Cub.

"Captain King is here," answered the man. "You must be the party he's expecting. Come in."

They entered. The door was not only closed behind them, but locked, Cub observed. The janitor turned to an inner door, knocked, and pushed it open. "Here's your men, sir," he announced to someone inside.

Stepping forward Cub saw his late commanding officer, Captain Lorrington King, D.S.O., M.C., known affectionately to the troops under his command as "Gimlet." He was standing with his back to a fire that gave at once an atmosphere of warmth and comfort to a shabbily furnished room. The main feature was a large dining-room table round which chairs had been placed as if for a committee meeting.

"Come in, you fellows," invited Gimlet, offering a hand to all three in turn. "Glad to see you looking so fit."

"What's cookin', sir?" inquired Copper, with the easy yet respectful familiarity that comes of long association in dangerous places.

Gimlet selected a cigarette from a gold case. "I know no more about it than you do," he replied.

"We got our orders to be here from you, sir, so here we are," said Copper. "I mean, where did your orders come from if I may ask? After our jaunt in Scotland<sup>[2]</sup> I thought you said you was goin' back home a'fox-huntin'?"

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<sup>[2]</sup> See "Gimlet Comes Home"

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“That was my idea,” admitted Gimlet, “but it happens that I’m still on Reserve, so when I received orders to report here to-night, I came. I was asked to bring you with me if you were available. That fact, considered in conjunction with the name of the officer who issued the order, leads me to suspect that as far as we are concerned the war is not yet over. My instructions came from the War Office. They were signed by General Sir Saxon Craig, late Assistant Director of Military Intelligence—now, he tells me in his letter, Chief Liaison Officer between the War Office and Scotland Yard.”

“Numero Neuf,” breathed Cub.

Gimlet nodded. “That was the name by which he was known to the French Underground movement, and to us when we were mixed up with it<sup>[3]</sup>. Why he has asked us to come here, instead of going to the War Office or Police Headquarters, I don’t understand, but doubtless he had a good reason for it. We shall soon know. He’s not the sort of officer to keep us waiting. By the way, corporal, see about getting your hair cut. It’s too long.”

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<sup>[3]</sup> See “Gimlet Goes Again”

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“Blimy, sir, I ’ad it cut yesterday,” protested Copper.

“Then get it cut again by someone who knows how to handle scissors.”

Further conversation of an intimate nature was prevented by the entrance of a man who, like themselves, was dressed in civilian clothes. Cub recognised him at once, for they had met during the war, in France. It was General Sir Saxon Craig, once known in the enemy-occupied countries of Europe as Numero Neuf—otherwise Number Nine. Regarding him anew, Cub found it hard to believe that behind the mild, commonplace face, was one of the shrewdest brains of the British war-time Intelligence Service. It was clean shaven, with little about it to merit description. It was neither fat nor thin, nor was there an outstanding feature. Slightly bald in front, wearing spectacles, the General looked more like a prosperous tradesman than a spy hunter of international renown. But his manner, as he invited them to be seated, was brisk, alert.

“Make yourselves comfortable,” he requested. “Smoke if you like. I shall be as brief as possible, but we may be some little time.” As he spoke he pulled out the chair at the head of the table, sat down, and opening a portfolio selected some papers. “Now,” he continued, “first of all let me

make clear certain things that must to you seem to call for explanation—why you were sent for, and why such a place as Brummel Square should be chosen for the rendezvous when, as Liaison Officer between M.I.5. and the C.I.D., I have quarters at both the War Office and Scotland Yard. Both departments, and indeed, the Government, are faced by a problem, a threat, of considerable gravity. To me has been given the questionable privilege of solving it. It is not one for which any existing government organization is really qualified to deal, unless—and this is my own idea—it turns out to be a commando job. That is to say, for men with active service commando experience. As far as I can see at present they alone have the necessary qualifications to deal with circumstances that may arise. That is why I sent for Captain King, and asked him to bring with him those members of his unit whom I met in somewhat peculiar conditions in France a year or two ago.” The General smiled faintly at the recollection.

“I am going to ask you all to help me to solve our problem,” he continued. “But in fairness I must warn you not to be hasty in your decision. First hear what I have to say. I arranged this meeting here rather than at the War Office or Scotland Yard because, for reasons which will presently become apparent, the less we associate with either place the better. In short, we are out on our own—I hope. I say I hope, because the men against whom we are opposed may have a spy system of their own, so they may know that I am the individual who has been selected to destroy them. If they do know that, then I am already in danger, and so are you. However, I hope that here we shall remain undisturbed for at least a little while. Of course, being here doesn’t mean that we are cut off from official support. On the contrary, the entire resources of the fighting services, and the national police organization, are at our disposal should we require them. That alone will give you an idea of the seriousness with which the heads of the State regard the menace, which, for your private ears, I will now reveal.” The General leaned forward and dropped his voice a trifle.

“You will have heard, no doubt, of the Nazi Underground Movement, the members of which call themselves Werewolves. It did not turn out to be the vast national secret army the Nazi leaders hoped for. Even in Germany itself, where the organization first operated, the majority of members were lukewarm and soon fell away; but there remained a kernel, an inner core of diehards, a murder gang which, supported by hidden funds, was powerful enough to spread its tentacles into the liberated countries. Who is at the head of it we don’t know. We don’t even know if the thing is one cohesive unit or a number of isolated bands, some slaying out of sheer revenge, others using the Werewolf organization to cover private criminal enterprises. Either way

the thing is a formidable outfit, and one which, since the Werewolves have now launched an attack on this country, we have got to tackle. How many of them are here we don't know. How they got here we don't know. But we do know this. They are here, and those who have arrived are, beyond all shadow of doubt, the worst possible type." The General looked slowly round the table before he resumed.

"This is no common affair of gangsterism such as was seen in the United States in prohibition days. It is something infinitely more deadly. The American gangster was concerned primarily with making money and killed only in the furtherance of that object or in self-defence. The men with whom we have to deal are not concerned with money. They kill for the sake of killing, inspired by such a hatred as is hard for a normal balanced brain to comprehend. They are, in fact, the ultimate product of Nazi-ism. If the average Nazi is a fanatic, a man from whom the virtues and all humane emotions have been eliminated, how much worse, we may ask ourselves, are the high priests of this pernicious creed?—for that is what the surviving Werewolf leaders are.

"You will be wondering why these men have come here. That is soon answered, for they have told us. The information was broadcast from a secret radio station somewhere in Germany three weeks ago. These men have come here to kill. As you know, during the war the Allies compiled a list of war criminals, setting down the names of those Nazis who had committed atrocities, with the object of punishing them should they after a fair trial be found guilty. Certain Nazi leaders, in their rage and hate, are now claiming to do the same thing, out of revenge. They have compiled a list of selected victims—not men who have committed atrocities, mark you, but British subjects who played a major part in winning the war. Rightly or wrongly, possibly because we stemmed their victorious advance, the Nazis hold Britain responsible for their downfall. Now, as I say, they are out for vengeance. They have turned to assassination, and are attempting to justify their crimes by going through a form of mock trial. The victim, having been condemned to death—a foregone conclusion—is then seized and executed, by hanging, shooting, or decapitation, in a pseudo-official manner.

"The first intimation we had of this was, as I said just now, a broadcast by a secret Nazi radio station. This was followed by a broadcast from this country, from what we suspect was a mobile unit. Within the next ten days a number of people in this country received what purported to be a death warrant. How many of these sinister documents were sent out we don't know. Some of the recipients may not have taken the threat seriously. A few did, and got in touch with Scotland Yard. During the following week we had

ample proof that the threat was no idle hoax. First, Sir Eric Gurney, one of our leading Intelligence Officers, was found hanged in Hyde Park. There were indications that a car had been driven under the tree on which his body was found, and a rope made fast to a bough. A noose was then passed round Sir Eric's neck and the car was driven away leaving him hanging. Captain Martin Winhope, V.C., of the Special Air Service, was the next victim. His body was found, riddled with bullets, at the rear of his own West End club. To both bodies was attached a card setting out, under the Nazi swastika insignia, the alleged crimes for which these officers had been condemned to death." Again the General paused and glanced round at the faces of his listeners.

"There is no doubt that this terrorism will be continued," he went on. "Clearly, we shall have to do something about it, and without loss of time, for any day may bring us a fresh tragedy. Remember, not only are these Werewolves the enemies of those they intend to kill, they are the enemies of all decent society, and as such they must be dealt with. They call themselves Werewolves, so on their own admission they are inhuman creatures. There is only one way to deal with a blood-crazy wolf, and that is shoot it, for such a beast is beyond redemption. I am going to ask you to find the lair of these monsters, and having found it, drag them out one by one and kill them. It is a terrible thing for me to have to say that, because it would seem to put me on the same low level as the Nazis; but what is the alternative? Take them alive by all means if you can, and we will give them a fair trial, for that is our way of doing things; but a cornered wolf is a dangerous animal, and to attempt to take it alive may involve risks not justified by the circumstances. One cannot apply justice to a wild beast. Moreover, in this case the Home Office takes the view that these Werewolves, by announcing a policy of premeditated murder which they have already put into practice, have condemned themselves. Our business, therefore, is to destroy them, as they have destroyed others, and will, if we do not prevent it, destroy still more. Remember, it does not necessarily follow that these creatures will wear the appearance of wolves. It is more likely that they will be too crafty for that. There is an old fable about a wolf in sheep's clothing. These wolves may play the same trick—or some of them may. Indeed, we must expect that. Some may have been in this country right through the war, for it would be vainglorious to boast that we had caught every enemy agent planted here by the Wilhelmstrasse. No doubt the clever ones slipped through our counter-espionage net. They may still be here, with well-established hide-outs which the Werewolves may now be using as their dens. They must be found. Naturally, you will say how?"

“From which I take it that so far you have no clue as to who these Nazis are, or where they are?” murmured Gimlet.

“That, I regret to say, is the case,” answered the General. “As to *who* they are—well, we might guess at some of them. We are aware that certain Nazi war criminals, knowing what their fate would be if they were caught, joined the Werewolf organization to carry on the war against Britain in their own way. So far these men have eluded us.” The General looked down at one of the documents he had taken from the portfolio. “For example: there is Hugo Stresser, late Commandant of the Growsky murder camp—the man who on one occasion burnt to death in a barn more than six hundred internees; there is Rudolf von Pless, a savage who ordered the shooting of forty-seven British airmen prisoners of war for attempting to escape; there is Lothar Eindhofen, a group commander of the S.S. who was responsible for many atrocities in Occupied France; there is Karl von Runtz, one of Himmler’s pet torturers, and Otto Vossmayer, Under-Commissioner of Police in Austria, responsible for the deaths of hundreds of anti-Nazi Austrians. He speaks English fluently, having lived in this country and America. These are some of the Nazi criminals who have disappeared. In the chaos that followed the German collapse escape was not difficult. They had ample time to make plans. Together they would form about the worst gang of thugs ever brought together. They may be over here—but that is surmise. Anyway, all of them hate us to the limit of mania.”

“Have you photographs of these men?” asked Gimlet.

“Fortunately, yes. I will show them to you later on, although it must not be overlooked that they may have adopted disguises. As to where they are, they may be anywhere between Lands End and John O’Groats—that is, in fact they are in this country. So far we have had little time to get on their track. I must tell you that when this matter first arose a meeting of all responsible authorities took place in Whitehall. The first question was how to tackle the problem, for it was no ordinary one. Was it a matter for the War Office or the police? As you may know, before the war police methods in Europe differed considerably. In Germany, for instance, in the case of a major crime the entire police force was set to work like an enormous machine to find the criminal. France, relying on individual effort, detailed one or two highly trained detectives who worked independently. In this country we chose to compromise. A C.I.D. man was usually given the assignment with power to employ the entire police force if necessary. But the case now before us seems to call for a military operation rather than normal police procedure. We don’t know how many men we are up against, but they will certainly be armed, probably with the latest thing in weapons.

For that reason I decided to make the matter a military one—at least in the first instance. Turning over in my mind the men most able to deal with such a situation as this, naturally, knowing something of what you did in Occupied France I thought of you. Now you know why you are here. For the purpose of this operation, if you undertake it, you will be something between soldiers and policemen—shall we say, something in the nature of the G-Men who dealt so effectively with the booze racketeers in America.”

“Have you a list of the people who have so far received death warrants?” asked Gimlet.

“I expected that question,” replied the General. “Yes, we have a list. It may not be complete. Naturally, each man has been put under police protection, but that may not save them. The Werewolves will anticipate such a move on our part and act accordingly. Even if we provided each selected victim with a personal bodyguard it might not be enough. In any case, the average Briton resents having to live, sleep, eat and play, surrounded by armed men. With regard to possible candidates for death who so far have not made contact with us, you may say, why don’t we issue a public warning? We shall have to do that, of course, if things get really bad, but the Government is anxious to avoid such a step if it is possible, for these reasons. First, such publicity would flatter not only the murderers, but a large part of the German population still smarting under the sting of defeat. The Werewolves would become national heroes and the organization would tend to grow. Secondly, the thing might be copied by hooligan elements in this country, who would commit crimes and make them look like the work of the Werewolves. As I have already observed, the Nazis are trying to give these proceedings some sort of legal status. The selected victims are tried, in some cases, in their absence. The findings of the alleged court—always the death sentence, of course, are sent to the accused by post. The condemned man is not murdered in his house, in the street, or at his place of business. He is abducted by his executioners and taken to some chosen place where, in a pseudo-official manner, the sentence is carried out. We are hoping that more of the men who have received death certificates will come to us, but without broadcasting a warning, or issuing a notice in the press, it is hard to know how to get in touch with them.”

Gimlet smiled curiously. “I can tell you one of them,” he announced.

The General looked surprised. “You can?”

Gimlet nodded.

“And who is the victim in this case?”



Gimlet put his hand in his pocket and took out a folded sheet of paper. There was dead silence in the room as he laid it out flat. “The name on this particular chit is my own,” he said evenly. “It came by yesterday morning’s post. From it I gather that I was sentenced to death on Thursday last by a Werewolf military tribunal for the crime of espionage and murder within the Reich over a period of years. In particular, I am indicted for the killing of that bounder von Roth, at Chateaudun<sup>[4]</sup>, and a Gestapo agent named Bussemann, near Paris.” With a quiet laugh Gimlet tossed the paper on the table.

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<sup>[4]</sup> See “King of the Commandos”

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“This is no laughing matter,” asserted the General.

“It all depends on who laughs last,” returned Gimlet drily.

The General considered him pensively over his glasses. “I fear that you still tend to underestimate the desperate nature of our undertaking,” said he, critically. “I will endeavour to put the thing in terms that cannot be misunderstood. The enemy against whom we are opposed is shrewd, calculating, resourceful, efficient, and is possessed—obsessed, if you like—with the fearlessness of a fanatic. He will be supported by all the money he needs, and, there is reason to suppose, every hellish device that modern science and human ingenuity can invent. He is not likely to walk about with anything as conspicuous as a Tommy-gun under his arm. We must be prepared for gas, drugs, new explosives, new weapons the existence of which we do not even suspect, and the lethal instruments which were being developed by the best brains in Germany when Hitler fell. If you accept this assignment, every step that you take may be your last. The sugar that you put in your coffee may contain a deadly poison. A cigarette may explode in your face. The man next to you in a tram or bus may carry in his sleeve a needle loaded with bacteria. These are the methods the Gestapo adored. Make no mistake; if once these Werewolves suspect that you are on their trail they will wipe you out—or try to—with no more concern than a housemaid swatting a fly. Should they capture you alive they may employ unspeakable tortures to make you speak. From liberated prisoners we have learned that a well-trained Nazi can make medieval torments look like juvenile pastimes. Nazi cruelty knows no limits. It is normal procedure. I know this must all sound highly coloured and melodramatic, but

unfortunately it is the simple truth, and it must be faced at the outset. I trust I have made myself clear?"

"Perfectly," answered Gimlet.

The telephone on a side table shrilled its summons. The General picked it up, listened for a few seconds, and with a crisp, "I see, thanks," replaced the receiver.

"That was Scotland Yard," he announced. "The body of Major Hugh Beverley, who was at one time officer-in-charge of prisoner-of-war interrogation, has just been found, decapitated, in the garden of his Surrey home." The General's eyes found Gimlet's face. "He, too, received his death warrant by yesterday morning's post," he concluded softly.

The brief interval of silence that followed this tragic statement was again broken by the General. He looked slowly round the table. "Well, how do you feel about helping me to find these fiends?"

"I didn't know there was any question about it," replied Gimlet evenly. "I think that goes for all present."

There was a murmur of assent.

"There's your answer, sir," Gimlet told the General. "We are ready to start as soon as you like."

"To-morrow?"

"Certainly."

"Where are you lodging?"

"At the Europa, in Piccadilly."

"I see," murmured the General. "You can't go on living at an hotel, of course. In the first place it would be inconvenient, and in the second, dangerous. With all due respect to big hotels, their very size, the numbers of their staffs and the nature of their clients, make them a regular hunting ground for spies. I had no idea that you were a marked man when I wrote to you. I hope you weren't followed here."

"I think that's unlikely," opined Gimlet. "I may have been followed from Devonshire to the hotel; there was no way of avoiding that; but in view of the engaging document I received from the Werewolves—which I took seriously, by the way—I left the hotel by the somewhat irregular course of taking the fire escape from the staff quarters to the rear premises."

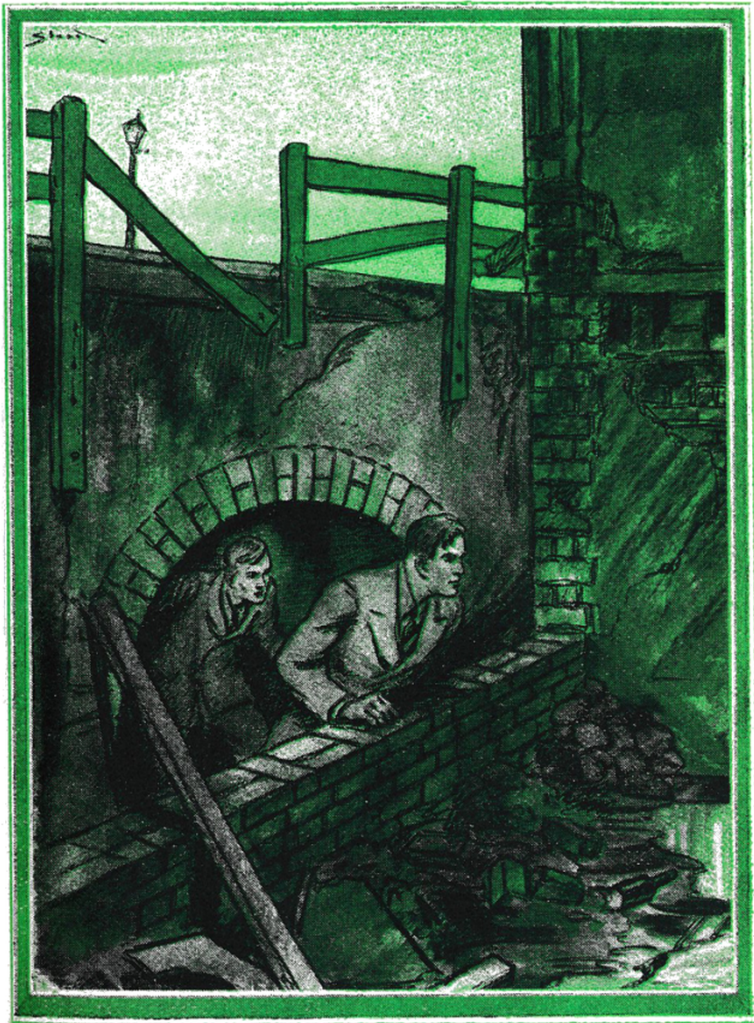
"Good," acknowledged the General. "Very well. For the most part I shall be here, at what we may call administrative headquarters. I can tell you now that I have been to some trouble in their preparation. This whole block of buildings has been taken over by us. There is more than one entrance, and

exit, as I will show you presently. All are guarded by reliable men from the Yard. And in case you should wonder why I selected such an insalubrious area as Brummel Square it was because the place was admirably suited to our requirements. There is little traffic, and a stranger prowling about would quickly be observed. No one can approach without being seen or heard. I have mustered everything that we shall be likely to require—among other things an armoury, radio and transport. Incidentally, assuming that you are unarmed, I think you had better each put an automatic in your pocket before you leave here. You will have to keep in close touch with me, so in the morning I should like you to get your kits together and move in here. I'll have quarters prepared for you. We'll have another talk to-morrow and then get down to business." The General paused, and taking an envelope from his pocket spilled four small green cards on the table. "I have also had these prepared," he went on. "They are police passes—not ordinary ones, but extra specials. They will take you anywhere—into Buckingham Palace, if you wish. They are rarely issued, so take care of them; on no account must they be allowed to fall into the hands of the enemy. I have issued them to you because you may need them urgently. Any policeman will recognise one of these cards and without question give you all the assistance in his power. Finally, I have arranged for my telephone number to be an easy one to commit to memory. It's the same as the calibre of the service rifle—Central, 303. It's a priority number, so you can get me instantly, day or night. Avoid names on the 'phone. You can use your nicknames. I shall use mine. I have tried to think of everything, but I may have forgotten something; if any of you have a suggestion to make I shall be pleased to consider it. For the rest, I do not intend to issue orders to you. Work how you wish. I shall be here to act on your advice and to provide you with anything you may need. That's all for now. I'll just show you round; then we'll adjourn until to-morrow."

## CHAPTER II

### HOTEL EUROPA

THE precautions taken by the General when the party left, struck Cub as being somewhat overdone. First, the man who had been on front door duty called up, on an inter-house telephone, an observation post on the top floor of the building. On the report 'all clear' being received, the party left, two at a time, at intervals of five minutes. The exit was not made through the front door, but via a series of cellars which terminated in an empty static water tank, a survival of the blitz period, half buried under rubble at the end of the block. Here a second doorkeeper was on duty. He was equipped with a sound detector so that no one could approach over the fallen masonry without being heard. He unlocked a metal door, like that of a bank strong-room, which gave access to the open air beneath the fire-distorted girders of a gutted house. The password, Britannia, would, the General said, gain them admittance by the same door at any hour. Cub perceived the wisdom of all this, although in the absence of any apparent danger it seemed theatrical and unreal. He was the last to leave. Climbing over the rubble to the pavement, he and Gimlet went on to the corner of Stratton Street where, by arrangement, they found the others waiting for them. A cruising taxi was picked up at the far end of the street and the driver instructed to take them to the Hotel Europa.



[\[Page 25\]](#)

*... via a series of cellars which terminated in a static water tank.*

Little was said until the vehicle turned into Piccadilly, when Gimlet remarked: "It's just occurred to me that we might do better than trooping into my quarters together. What I mean is, I received my chit from the Werewolves by the same post as Major Beverley. In his case action was so quickly taken that I am bound to suppose that my turn will come at any time. Admittedly, the death notice was addressed to my place in Devonshire, but it seems likely that I was being watched even there, in which case the enemy would follow me to London. That being so, they would know that I am

staying at the Europa. I assume, therefore, that the hotel is under observation. I don't want to scare the watchers by appearing to have a bodyguard, so I'll go in alone. The number of my private suite is thirty. It's on the first floor. You fellows follow on and join me there. Keep your eyes open. I'm inclined to agree with the General; this business is no joke, and it would be silly, having survived the war, to be bumped off on one's own doorstep. This will do—I'll drop you here. As I go in I'll warn the hall-porter that I'm expecting guests. He'll have you shown to my quarters. He's safe enough; I've known him for years; but we shall have to treat strangers with suspicion."

Gimlet stopped the car some fifty yards short of the hotel and went on alone.

As the others walked quickly along the pavement, Copper observed: "S'welp me! We've played this game in some queer places, but I never expected to do it in the old home town, and that's a fact."

They saw Gimlet dismount and pay off the cab. Pedestrians and taxis were passing in both directions, but there was nothing to indicate that any of them had an interest in the man who had just entered the big hotel.

The hall-porter showed no surprise when the inquiry was made for suite thirty. He called a page boy who, acting as guide, led the way to the suite and left them there. The door was ajar. Gimlet evidently heard them arrive for he called to them to come in.

"Did you notice anything like a wolf on the prowl?" he asked lightly, as they entered the private sitting-room and closed the door behind them.

"Not a sign, sir," answered Copper. "Did you?"

"I thought I caught a slight taint," replied Gimlet slowly, at the same time smiling curiously. "I fancy there's one not far away." As he spoke he opened an inner door which gave access to the bedroom. For a few seconds he surveyed the room without speaking; he inspected the wardrobe and glanced under the bed.

"Can you *still* smell that wolf, sir?" asked Copper, frowning heavily.

"Very faintly," returned Gimlet. "Someone has been in these rooms since I went out. As a simple precaution, when I left I stuck a narrow strip of cellophane across the crack of the bedroom door, and another piece on the outer door; both pieces have been broken. It may have been a chambermaid, of course," he added, as they returned to the sitting-room. "I locked the outer door, but the maid would have a master key. Sit down. Let's have some coffee and talk this thing over." He pressed the bell.

It was answered by a chambermaid. Gimlet ordered coffee. "By the way," he remarked, as the girl was leaving the room, "has anyone been in here since I went out?"

"Only me, sir," was the ready answer. "I put your bag in."

"Ah! My bag," murmured Gimlet.

"Yes, sir—the little brown attache case."

"Quite so. How did it arrive?"

"I think it came by taxi, sir. A porter from the reception office brought it up to me and I put it inside."

"Where did you put it?"

"He said it was to go in a safe place, so I put it in the long drawer at the bottom of the wardrobe."

"I see." Gimlet thought for a moment. "Will you ask the porter who brought it up to come and have a word with me?"

"Certainly, sir." The girl departed.

"The smell of that wolf becomes more distinct," remarked Gimlet quietly, as he returned to the bedroom. He opened the wardrobe and pulled out the bottom drawer. In it lay an attache case. He regarded it suspiciously without touching it. "No doubt you have realised that this bag isn't mine?" he said softly to the others.

"It's got your name on it, sir," Copper pointed out.

"That still doesn't make it mine," answered Gimlet drily. "Anyone can paint a name on a case."

A knock on the sitting-room door took them back to that apartment. It was the chambermaid again. "It's a funny thing, but I can't find that porter, sir," she announced in a puzzled voice. "The reception clerk has no record of a case coming for you. I don't understand it."

"Never mind," returned Gimlet casually.

"But the porter said the bag was for Captain Lorrington King—I remember that distinctly. I trust there's nothing wrong, sir?"

"Nothing at all," asserted Gimlet. "You did quite right. I rather gather from what you say that you have never seen this particular porter before?"

"No, sir. But they're always chopping and changing."

"Do you remember what this fellow looked like?"

"I can only say he seemed a young chap. I didn't pay much attention to him," admitted the maid frankly.

"I see. Never mind. That's all."

The chambermaid went out, closing the door behind her.

“I begin to get a whiff of that wolf you spoke about just now, sir,” said Copper shrewdly. “I reckon there’s a bomb in that bag.”

“I doubt it,” replied Gimlet. “But it seems pretty certain that the enemy has started operations. I can think of no other explanation that would account for the arrival of this mysterious case, which certainly isn’t mine, although it bears my name. The chambermaid is above suspicion. I’ve often seen her here. She was telling the truth. The porter is the fake.”

“What I’d like to know is, what’s in that bag?” muttered Copper.

“So would I,” admitted Gimlet. “It won’t be a bomb. That isn’t their way of doing things—unless they’ve departed from their usual procedure. They aim to take their victim alive, presumably to let him know why he’s being killed. Call it a form of mental torture. They’d get no satisfaction from blowing a man to pieces with a bomb.”

“Why not open the bag and ’ave a look inside?” suggested Copper practically.

“I’m tempted to do that,” confessed Gimlet, “but if we did it might upset their plan. Things are going so well that I hesitate to risk spoiling them. I thought we should have to go out hunting for these fellows; instead, it seems that they are hunting for us. That should save us a lot of trouble. They’ve started by planting a case on us. That means something is going to happen here, probably to-night. The question is what? The easiest way to find out is to wait and see. If, as I say, something is going to happen here, the Nazis, with their thoroughness in matters of detail, will have it nicely timed. Meanwhile, the place will be watched, in case I should go out. Corporal, you know your way round. I suggest you make a reconnaissance outside. Be careful. It’s vital that the enemy should think I’m alone here.”

At this juncture the chambermaid brought the coffee. She set it on a table and withdrew. Copper followed her out, closing the door behind him.

“Let’s have another look at the attache case,” suggested Gimlet.

They went back to the bedroom. Handling the piece of luggage carefully Gimlet examined it. There was little to see. The case was a second-hand one on which the name had recently been painted. There was a small hole in one corner, as if the leather had been punctured by careless handling. Gimlet laid an ear to it. “It ticks,” he reported quietly. “That means a clockwork device of some sort.” Still handling the case gently he tried to open it, but it was locked and none of his keys would fit it. “We’d better not try using force,” he remarked, replacing the case.



A minute or two later Copper came back. “There’s only one thing, sir,” he reported. “There’s a taxi a bit along the other side of the road. I noticed it there when we came in. I’ve just had a closer look at it. There’s two men in it besides the driver. One of them seems to be wearing what looks like a porter’s uniform. Smells fishy. If the cab was waiting for somebody it’d be empty, except for the driver. Does your window overlook the street, sir?”

Gimlet said it did.

Copper switched off the light and drawing the curtain aside, looked out. “It’s still there,” he announced. Releasing the curtain he switched on the light again.

“They may be the body snatchers,” opined Gimlet.

Cub raised his eyebrows. “Body snatchers?”

Gimlet shrugged. “They want me alive, I imagine, in order to carry out their execution ritual. It would require at least two men to carry me. The driver would have to stay with the cab. Did you take its number, corporal?”

“Yes, sir. If it is the enemy I’m wondering how they got hold of the cab.”

“They might have stolen it from a rank.”

Copper shook his head doubtfully. “Not likely. If a cab was pinched every bobby in London would be on the lookout for it in five minutes. It would have been spotted before this.”

“You’re sure it’s a pukka taxi?”

“Absolutely. No fake about it. Of course, they might ’ave got ’old of an old cab from the scrap heap and done it up.”

“I suppose so.” Gimlet thought for a moment, and then went on. “When in doubt, it’s a good thing to try to see through the enemy’s eyes. The first thing to remember is, the enemy wants me alive. Naturally, they would work out what my movements are most likely to be. In London few people in hotels settle down before midnight. Let us say, then, that nothing is likely to happen until that time. Anything can happen afterwards. Very well. Clearly, it would be next to impossible for the enemy to take me out of this hotel and across the street to the cab if I was conscious, because the noise I should certainly make would attract attention. So we may safely assume that when I am removed from this room I shall be—well, if not actually unconscious, in a condition which would make me powerless to resist. I shall certainly be escorted out. As the hour is getting late it is unlikely that I shall go out again to-night, so it follows that the enemy will have to come here for me. It will be interesting to see how they propose to get me out without attracting attention. They must have a reasonable plan or they wouldn’t attempt it.

What they may not know is, first, that I am not here alone, and secondly, that I shall be waiting for them.”

“So all we have to do is bash ’em when they come,” suggested Copper cheerfully.

Gimlet looked pained. “Oh no. Nothing so primitive as that.”

“But this is our chance to grab a brace of Werewolves—maybe three,” asserted Copper, looking disappointed.

“What good would that do?” demanded Gimlet.

“There would be two skunks less in the world, anyhow,” declared Copper.

“That may be, but we should destroy our only link between the enemy and his headquarters,” argued Gimlet. “These fellows will probably be junior operatives. We’ve got to get at the head man. The ideal thing would be to let these fellows think they have got what they came for, so that we shall know where they go when they have done the job. I’m inclined to let their plan work—up to a point.”

Trapper clicked his tongue. “I get it,” he grunted.

“D’you mean you’re planning to let them carry you out?” asked Cub, incredulously.

“I’m toying with the idea,” admitted Gimlet. “You’ll be watching, of course.”

Copper shook his head. “I don’t like it,” he averred bluntly. “It’s too risky. We might lose sight of you, and that’s easy enough in London—don’t I know it. Next time we see you you’d be on a slate slab in the mortuary. No, I don’t like it. We’re dealing with wolves, not rabbits.”

“Perhaps there is a better way,” concurred Gimlet. “We could wait here until the enemy shows his hand, anyway. We should at least get a sight of them. We ought to be able to grab them.”

“And make them talk,” suggested Copper.

“They wouldn’t talk—they’re Nazis.”

“*Sacre!* I know a trick, an Indian showed it to me, that makes dead men talk,” asserted Trapper earnestly.

“I’ve told you before, Trapper, I bar torture,” said Gimlet curtly.

“Pity,” breathed Trapper, shaking his head. “It saves time and trouble.”

“If we caught them we should hand them over to the General for interrogation,” decided Gimlet. “Before doing that, however, you, corporal, and Trapper, could put on their hats and coats and escort me to the cab, which would then—we hope—drive on to its destination, where the enemy

would find he'd caught a tartar. Cub could follow in another car to check up in case of accidents." Gimlet glanced at his watch. "It's a quarter past eleven," he announced. "Let's start to get organised."

"They'll expect to find you in bed," Cub pointed out.

"I shall be in bed," answered Gimlet.

"What—with your clothes off?" inquired Copper in a voice of astonishment.

"No, with my clothes on," returned Gimlet evenly.

"Won't they think that's a bit odd?" queried Cub.

"I shall pull my pyjamas on over my clothes," said Gimlet. "We shall have to lock the outer door, of course. If we failed to do that it would look suspicious. Having put the lights out I shall get into bed, leaving the door between the sitting-room and the bedroom open. You will take up positions where you can't be seen. All we shall have to do is then wait. When I give the signal Cub will switch on the lights and we'll grab every one in these rooms. No shooting—we don't want more noise than can be prevented. By acting quickly we ought to be able to stop the enemy from using his weapons—whatever they may be."

"Then you're going to leave the attache case where it is?" queried Cub.

"Oh no," answered Gimlet. "Ask yourself—why did they put it here? It wasn't for fun. When they come they'll expect to find me unconscious. What is going to make me unconscious? Obviously the medium is in the attache case. What is it most likely to be? Again the answer shouldn't be hard to find. Gas. Gas is a Nazi speciality. Don't forget the little hole in the attache case. I'd risk a wager that the little case contains gas, with an arrangement to set it off about midnight or soon after. I may be wrong, but I'm not prepared to take the risk. We should not justify the General's confidence if we fell for such a trick."

"But what can we do with the case?" asked Cub.

Gimlet thought for a moment. "It won't do to go out again, and we daren't risk gassing other people in the hotel. I'll put it in the chimney," he decided. "It should be safe there. The draught will carry the gas up and out of the way."

Handling it carefully he took the attache case, and carrying it to the large old-fashioned fireplace lodged it just above the bars, with the escape hole at the upper end. "That ought to do it," he observed. "But come on—it's twelve o'clock. We'd better see about getting into our action stations."

## NIGHT WATCH

ALMOST imperceptibly the muffled murmur of traffic in Piccadilly began to subside. Periods of quiet became more frequent and more clearly defined. The buses stopped running. To those in suite thirty the hum of an occasional passing taxi came faintly, a sound remote and detached.

Gimlet, with pyjamas over grey flannel trousers and a sweater, was in bed. The others could not see him because they were in the sitting-room and the bed was out of line with the door. In any case, all lights had been switched off, although a feeble glow from street lamps filtered through the bedroom window, the blinds of which had not been drawn. The door leading into the corridor outside had been locked, for to leave it unlocked, Gimlet had opined, would look suspicious. Copper had taken up a standing position behind the heavy curtain that covered the sitting-room window, a position from which, as the window overlooked the street, he could watch the suspicious taxi. Cub, with Trapper beside him, reclined in comparative comfort behind the settee, half supported by cushions removed from that piece of furniture.

In these positions they had waited, without incident, for half an hour. Occasionally footsteps padded softly on the carpeted corridor beyond the door, and on each such occasion Cub's nerves tingled with anticipation; but so far the footsteps had always passed on, presumably being those of other guests retiring to their rooms for the night. Once a woman laughed, a harmless and natural expression, but one so out of character with the circumstances behind the closed door that Cub frowned. As time wore on, however, such sounds became less frequent. The whirr of a distant lift and the faint clang of its gates, almost constant earlier in the evening, became intermittent, the intervals of silence lengthening as fewer guests remained to go to their beds.

Waiting is always tedious. Cub yawned. The atmosphere seemed oppressive, unduly so, even making allowance for the fact that the windows had been closed to deaden the street noises. He yawned again, wiping a hand across his forehead on which tiny beads of perspiration had formed, and then settling himself more comfortably on an elbow. He could not understand why he was so tired. Thinking became an effort. He could have fallen asleep easily. Presently he did in fact catch himself nodding. This did not worry him overmuch. The others, he reflected drowsily, would wake him when the vigil ended. He heard Copper say, in a low voice: "The taxi's

moving; it's coming over to our side; it's creeping along the curb; it's stopped about ten yards down." The voice seemed strangely distant. It seemed to Cub that his hearing had become defective. Pondering in a detached sort of way on this peculiar occurrence he decided that the curtain behind which Copper stood must have muffled the sound.

When, presently, his ears began to sing, he became faintly alarmed. There *was* something wrong with his hearing. Not only with his hearing. He became aware of a peculiar sense of unreality, of detachment from the scene, as if he were a spectator rather than an actor in it. A sudden fear struck him that he was going to be ill. He decided to consult Trapper, and raised himself a trifle. The movement required effort, for his limbs were like lead. "Open—a—window—Trapper," he said dully, haltingly. His voice sounded far away. Trapper did not answer.

Copper spoke. "What was that you said, Cub?" he asked, moving aside the curtain.

Cub tried to reply, but could not. He tried desperately. Darkness was closing in on him. Fear, a sudden fear of something he could not understand, took him by the throat. It partly restored him and spurred him to a tremendous effort. Clutching the back of the settee behind which he had been reclining he strove to drag himself up; but his strength seemed to run out of his finger-tips and he slid back.

"'Ere, come on, what's up with you?" demanded Copper.

In a vague sort of way Cub saw the curtain move, saw Copper's tall form move forward. It bent over him.

"What's wrong with you?" inquired Copper again. "What's the big idea of going ter sleep . . ." He took Trapper by the jacket, lifted him a little, then released his hold. Trapper's body flopped back to the floor with a sullen thud. Copper caught his breath sharply and then moved swiftly. There was a swish of curtains. A window scraped. Cool air flooded into the room. Copper snatched up the hearth rug and swung it round his head like a great fan.

The effect on Cub was almost instantaneous. Consciousness returned. He moved, slowly, like one awaking from a deep sleep. His head began to clear. He felt Trapper stir.

"We've been—doped," gasped Cub.

"Doped my foot," snarled Copper savagely. "We've bin gassed. It must 'ave bin that blindin' case."

"Gimlet. What about Gimlet?" said Cub.

Copper strode into the bedroom. A moment later his voice came through the gloom. "Gimlet's out for the count." He reappeared with the attache case in his hand. He went straight to the door, opened it and disappeared. He was back in a couple of minutes, without it.

"What did you do with it?" asked Cub, rising. "Don't gas the whole hotel."

"I shoved it in a wash place just along," answered Copper. "I'll attend to it properly as soon as we've got things squared up here."

Trapper was now also on his feet, a hand to his forehead, swaying gently. "*Sacre nom!* What happens?" he asked in a bewildered voice.

Cub's faculties were returning fast. "We were being gassed," he replied. "But for Copper we should have had it. He must have got away with it because he was standing up, near the window. Let's see about Gimlet."

It took only five minutes to bring Gimlet round, but several more were required to restore him to full consciousness. Brisk work with towels, with doors and windows open, cleared the room of gas.

Gimlet shook his head. "By gad! We nearly bought it that time," he muttered. "I don't understand it. There should have been plenty of draught . . ." He knelt in front of the fireplace and thrust an arm up the chimney. There was a dull metallic thud. When the arm was withdrawn the knuckles were black with soot. "Would you believe that?" he breathed. "One can't think of everything."

"What is it—I don't understand?" murmured Cub.

"I suppose I should have remembered that nearly all these old-fashioned grates have a hinged flap that closes the chimney to prevent draughts when the fireplace is not in use. This flap is closed. The gas couldn't get up the chimney. We might as well have left the attache case on the floor. But we'll talk about it later. Where's the case now, Copper?"

"I've put it where it won't do no harm fer a bit," answered Copper.

"All right. Close the windows and we'll get back into position. The clockwork device must have been set to release the gas at twelve-thirty, or thereabouts, and the enemy must know exactly how long the stuff takes to operate. They'll be here any minute now."

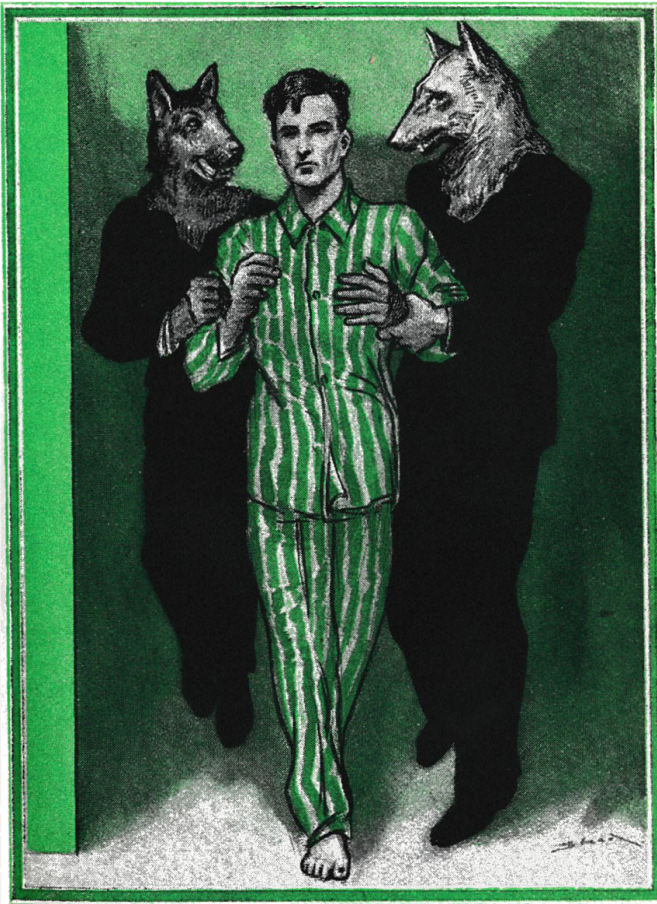
Cub returned to his position. The others did the same, and a hush, an expectant one now, settled on the apartment. The dragging minutes resumed their interrupted progress.

A distant clock had just struck one when the enemy gave the first intimation of his arrival. Had the silence not been profound the sound would

not have been audible. It was no more than a faint scratching at the door, as if a key, or an instrument, had been inserted in the lock. Trapper nudged Cub, although the warning was unnecessary. Came another sound, this time a gentle click, and Cub knew that the lock had been turned. His eyes were on the door, just discernable in the dim light. It was pushed open, noiselessly, slowly, but deliberately. A figure appeared, vague, sinister, making no more noise than a shadow. It moved two paces into the room and stopped. Cub stiffened, his mouth drying, as his eyes probed, and probed again, the sombre light, trying to make a human outline of the head and shoulders of the visitor. The head in particular appeared to be distorted.

The figure moved again, so that it revealed a silhouette in profile. Then Cub understood. The figure was that of a man, but the head, with pointed muzzle and short erect ears, was that of a wolf. The apparition advanced, and such was its stealth that it appeared to float rather than walk. It halted again. A second figure materialized in the gloom behind it. The door closed. A white beam from a small torch stabbed the darkness. The wedge of light moved furtively across the furniture to stop at the bedroom door. Soundlessly the figures advanced again towards the door, to disappear from sight.

With his heart palpitating uncomfortably, for there was something uncanny, unreal, something evil about the whole business, Cub rose from his place of concealment and edged towards the electric light switch. His fingers found and rested lightly on the tiny knob. His eyes never left the bedroom door, and presently, as he watched, a confused mass, moving slowly, filled the opening. He made it out to be Gimlet, with a Werewolf on either side supporting him. Copper was still behind his curtain. Of Trapper there was no sign.



[Page 43](#)

*He made it out to be Gimlet, with a Werewolf on either side supporting him.*

For perhaps ten seconds the scene remained thus, vague, sinister, sluggish in movement; but in that time the picture was engraved indelibly in Cub's brain. Then, on the instant, several things happened simultaneously. The silence was shattered; the spell was broken and the picture leapt to spasmodic life.

Gimlet's voice cut through the gloom with the crisp decisiveness of a whip-lash. He said only two words. "Get 'em." And as he spoke he moved swiftly. Cub flicked on the light, locked the door on the inside and slipped the key in his pocket. By that time Copper had stepped from behind the curtain. Trapper sprang up from the settee and vaulted it with feline speed and grace.



Coincidental with the light flashing on, the three central figures had broken apart, but not very far, for, as the light revealed, Gimlet's arms had closed round the furry necks on either side of him. The two Werewolves struggled convulsively and did, in fact, succeed in breaking away; but by that time Copper was upon them. With one blow he halved the opposition. His right fist swung up in a slashing uppercut that would have made a bull stagger. It took the nearest Werewolf under the pointed muzzle, lifted the creature off its feet and hurled it with a crash against the wall where it subsided like an empty sack. Both Gimlet and Trapper were grappling with the other Nazi whose mask had been torn off in the struggle. Copper's big hand reached out. With a deliberation that fascinated Cub to watch, he grasped the Nazi by the throat and stood him firmly on his feet. His left fist jabbed viciously into the pit of the German's stomach. With a convulsive gasp the man's body closed like a jack-knife. Copper's right swung up to meet the face coming down. The body spun into a corner and lay still.

Copper brushed his hands together as if they had been made unclean by the contact. He looked down dispassionately at the fallen man. "That ought ter learn 'em," he observed calmly. "Blimy! What a set-up. What do they reckon this is—Guy Fawkes' Day?"

Gimlet picked up the mask that had been torn from its wearer and examined it curiously. It was a hideous thing, even in the light, with bared fangs and a lolling red tongue. "Very pretty," he remarked cynically. "It had a dual purpose. Apart from anything else it's a gas mask." With a sneer of disgust he tossed the mask into the nearest chair.

Copper looked amazed. "Did they reckon that thing was going to scare us?"

"Probably," returned Gimlet. "I don't mind admitting that I got a nasty jolt when I opened my eyes and saw these monsters gazing down at me. Let's have a look at what we've caught."

The two unconscious men were stretched out side by side on the floor. The second gas mask was removed and the face thus revealed. Both were young men—neither more than twenty, Cub judged. One wore a grey suit, the other a dark blue porter's uniform—evidently the man who had delivered the attache case.

"Go through their pockets and truss them before they come round," ordered Gimlet. "Better carry them into the bedroom, in case some member of the hotel staff should come along."

With the blind-cord the two Werewolves were tied up securely, commando fashion, and carried into the next room. While this was being

done Gimlet telephoned the General at headquarters. There was a brief delay, for, as was to be expected, the General was in bed. However, he was soon at the instrument.

“This is King speaking, from the Europa,” Gimlet told him, speaking quickly. “We’ve just picked up a couple of stray wolves, out for blood. You had better take care of them, so will you send round and collect the bodies? Yes, right away . . . room thirty, on the first floor. Be as quick as you can because things are still on the move. We may need a spare car. Yes, we’ll wait. Right-ho, sir.” Gimlet hung up.

In the brief interval of silence that followed these words there came a sound, a sound so slight that had Cub’s nerves not been screwed up he might not have noticed it. It came from the door. Switching his eyes in that direction he thought he saw the handle move slightly. He was not sure. Silence, a silence brittle with sudden tension, returned.

Gimlet had evidently heard the sound for he laid a finger on his lips. They all stared at the door. Then Gimlet took a pace forward, holding out a hand to Cub for the key. As he moved there came another sound. This time it was a knock. Not the bold confident knock of a visitor with a definite purpose, but rather, a gentle tap.

Gimlet advanced, inserted the key noiselessly, turned it and opened the door.

## A CHASE AND A CRASH

A MAN stood on the threshold; a man loosely clad in a dark red silk dressing gown. Cub, who could see his face distinctly, judged him to be in the early fifties. He was shortish, heavily built without being fat, bald in front and wore an iron-grey close-trimmed beard. His expression was one of apologetic concern. When he spoke he expressed himself fluently, although with a curious, slight, trans-Atlantic accent.

“Sorry to trouble you at this late hour, but I have a very devil of a headache just come on,” he announced, after an almost imperceptible pause. “Have you by any chance got a couple of aspirins? My room is next door,” he added by way of explanation. The man sniffed, twisting his nose, as if he had a cold coming.

“Sorry I can’t help you, but I don’t use them,” answered Gimlet evenly.

The visitor smiled wanly. “Thank you. In that case I shall have to ring for the night-porter and send him out for some. Sorry to have troubled you. Goodnight.” He turned away.

“Don’t mention it,” murmured Gimlet, and closed the door. The instant this was done he turned to face the others. For a moment he stared at them with a queer expression on his face. “You heard that?” he breathed. “Unless my imagination is fooling me that inquiry had a phoney ring about it. It’s hardly the time to knock up a complete stranger and ask for aspirins. Did you notice the pause before he spoke? He gave me the impression of finding something he didn’t expect; he recovered quickly and trotted out the aspirin story; but it took him half a second to think of that excuse. I could almost swear he tried our door before he knocked. I have an uncomfortable feeling that our two Werewolves were not alone in the hotel. There’s another down in the street. Cub, slip down and take up a position near that taxi. You may see something. Watch your step. These wolves have teeth with venom in them.”

With a wave of understanding Cub departed. Outside the sitting-room he paused instinctively to glance up and down the heavily-carpeted corridor; and in that moment he thought he heard a door close softly. As there was some twenty doors along the corridor there was nothing particularly significant in this; it might have been any one of the doors; but in the circumstances, to Cub at that moment any sound would have been suspicious. Hardly knowing why, he slipped into a convenient housemaid’s

pantry, and there he stood, listening, expectant. All he could hear was an indistinct murmur of voices in Gimlet's apartment.

He waited for perhaps a minute. Nothing happened. He was about to move on when the door of room thirty-one, the room next to Gimlet's, opened, and the head of the man who had asked for aspirins was thrust out. He, too, took a swift glance up and down the corridor; then three swift steps took him to the door of room thirty. He no longer wore the dressing gown, but was fully dressed in a dark lounge suit. For about half a minute he stood outside Gimlet's door, listening. This apparently was sufficient for his purpose, for moving quickly and noiselessly he returned to his own room, the door of which he had left ajar. In order to enter he had to push it wide open, and in the brief interval of time occupied by this minor operation Cub observed, inside the room, a conspicuous object. It was a trunk; a big, old-fashioned receptacle made of stiffened fabric, painted black. There is nothing remarkable about a trunk in a hotel bedroom; it is in fact the rule rather than the exception, and at the time it merely struck Cub as odd that such an unwieldy piece of luggage should be parked in the middle of the floor instead of against the wall, where one would expect it to be and where it would be out of the way. Cub was to remember this later. At the moment he had other matters to occupy his mind. He was in a quandary. His duty lay outside, with the taxi under observation, for those were Gimlet's orders. In view of what he had just witnessed he was tempted to continue watching room thirty-one, or at least warn Gimlet of the suspicious behaviour of the man next door. However, after a moment's reflection he decided that obedience to orders must overrule personal inclinations so he hastened down to the street.

The taxi was still there. As he sauntered past it he observed that the driver was in a curious position. He was still in his seat, but he was bending forward and at the same time staring upward slightly to the left. It was at once evident to Cub that the man was watching the front upper windows of the hotel. Nothing else could account for such a posture. So as soon as he was behind the cab he looked up over his shoulder to see what it was that engaged the driver's attention. He was just in time to see a tiny red light flash three times from one of the windows on the first floor. That this was in the nature of a signal was at once apparent, for the driver settled back in his seat and put his engine into gear. Who had made the signal did not for the moment matter, but it was evidently a warning and the taxi driver was acting on it. He was moving off. This, reasoned Cub swiftly, meant that Gimlet's plan of impersonation in order to track the vehicle to its destination had miscarried. Neither he nor Copper nor Trapper had appeared. Copper, from

his position at the sitting-room window might have seen the taxi start to move, but he would know nothing of the red light. By the time these thoughts had flashed through Cub's brain the taxi was gliding away. After turning in a tight circle it headed in the direction of Piccadilly Circus.

At this critical stage of the proceedings, when it seemed certain that the taxi would fade out of the picture, by what Cub imagined at the time to be a stroke of luck, two cars pulled up near the hotel entrance. From the rear one a man alighted and walked briskly towards the hotel. Cub, concerned only with keeping the taxi in sight, made a bee-line for the vacated vehicle. There was no time for explanations. The owner of the car turned as Cub settled himself in the driving seat and slammed the door; he gave a cry of alarm and ran back; but he was too late. Cub was on the move. And it must be admitted that having turned in the wake of the taxi, now a hundred yards distant, he gave no further thought to the man whose place he had so brazenly usurped. Putting his foot down on the accelerator he closed up a little on his quarry which, he did not fail to notice, was travelling faster than might be expected of a taxi plying for hire.

The pursuit that followed was never a chase. The taxi went on at a steady thirty miles an hour with Cub varying his distance behind from forty to sixty yards. His problem was how to be sure of maintaining contact without making it obvious to the taxi driver that he was being followed. If he dropped too far behind he might be cut off by traffic lights, or by a policeman on point duty. If he got too near and remained in that position the driver could hardly fail to notice him. However, none of these things happened. The taxi went on, crossed Trafalgar Square, cruised down Whitehall and at the bottom turned left along the Embankment. Here it increased speed and was soon at the approaches of the East End.

Just where they were when the pursuit ended abruptly Cub did not know at the time, except that he was in the district of Limehouse. He was sailing along, quite content, with his quarry in plain view. As he admitted later, the thought that he himself might be followed did not occur to him; yet such must have been the case. The first intimation he had of it was when a big dark-painted car, travelling in the same direction, overtook him, turned in towards the curb and forced him into the gutter. The thing happened so quickly that his first thought, not an unnatural one, was that he was the victim of an accident due to the atrocious driving of the man in the overtaking car; but when the car persisted in its pull to the left, forcing him on to the pavement, he realised with a shock that this was no mischance. It was being deliberately staged. Of course he jammed on his brakes, which was all he could do; but it was too late. A street lamp standard loomed up.

There was no way of avoiding it. His radiator rammed it with a crash that flung him forward against the instrument panel. Luckily the car did not turn over. There was another crash, mingled with the tinkle of shattered glass, as the street lamp fell across the pavement. The car that had caused the damage did not stop.

Slightly dazed, muttering incoherently with rage and mortification, Cub scrambled out of the wrecked car, by which time the vehicle that had caused the mischief was thirty yards away, accelerating. But he could still see the registration plate. MAL747, he read, and repeated the number thrice to commit it to memory. There was nothing more he could do. One or two pedestrians appeared, then the inevitable policeman, calm and unhurried. He took out his notebook and approached Cub with the imperturbable confidence of a metropolitan guardian of the law. But before he could start asking questions another car drew up. Out of it, to Cub's infinite astonishment, stepped Gimlet.

"How did it happen?" inquired Gimlet curtly.

Cub told him.

"How long ago was this?"

"Two or three minutes."

Gimlet shrugged. "Then it's no use going on. The car and the taxi will have a lead of a mile or more. They could be anywhere by now. We may as well go back."

By this time Copper and Trapper had joined Gimlet and the policeman had confronted the party. The authority of Gimlet's green police pass was instantly apparent when he produced it. The constable's manner changed to one of respectful obedience. What could he do, he asked. Gimlet told him to take charge of the wrecked car pending further instructions and left it at that. The policeman did not question the order. Then they all got into the undamaged car and headed back for the West End.

As they travelled, at Gimlet's request Cub narrated precisely what had happened since he left the hotel. He then learned with surprise that the car he had purloined was, in fact, a police car, on the strength of General Craig. Of the two cars that had driven up just as the taxi left the hotel one contained the General and two plain-clothes policemen of his staff, who, as requested, had come to collect the prisoners. The other car, the one Cub had "borrowed," was the spare transport that Gimlet had asked for.

It turned out that Copper had seen quite a lot from the window. He had seen the taxi drive off, although knowing nothing about the red danger signal he did not know why. He had seen Cub grab the vacated car and had

reported this to Gimlet, with the result that they had hurried down the stairs and followed in the General's car, leaving the General to take care of the prisoners. Gimlet had had bad luck near London Bridge, being twice held up by horse-drawn lorries, otherwise he would have overtaken Cub earlier. As it was he had lost him, and was hunting for him without any real hope of success when he had come upon the crash.

"In view of what you saw it seems practically certain that the fellow who has the room next to mine in the hotel is one of the Werewolf pack, even if he isn't actually one of the operatives," remarked Gimlet as they turned into Piccadilly. "It must have been he who signalled to the taxi to pull out. We'll inquire about him when we get back."

"It was hard to tell from the street which was our window, consequently I couldn't locate the signal," explained Cub.

"We'll talk the thing over when we get inside," asserted Gimlet, as they slowed down at the hotel entrance. "I imagine the General will still be here, waiting to learn what all this is about. Just a minute." He walked over to the reception office. He was soon back. When he returned he murmured: "Our interesting friend is Professor Wenson—at least, that's the name he has registered under. We'll call on him presently."

As Gimlet had predicted, the General was waiting, with his police assistants from headquarters. The two Werewolves, no longer figures of fear now they were stripped of their masks, lay on the floor, half covered by a blanket from the bed. They lay very still. Indeed, they lay so still that Gimlet stared hard at them before turning questioning eyes to the General.

"Have you had a word with them?" he asked.

The General shook his head. "They didn't give me a chance."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Gimlet tersely, still staring.

"They're dead."

"Dead?"

"That's what I said. They killed themselves."

"How?"

"Poison. The divisional doctor has seen them. Each has a loose tooth in his head. The doctor is of opinion that the tooth could be unscrewed with the tongue and poison thus released. It should give you an idea of what we are up against. Succeed or die is the Werewolf creed. The blood-waggon is on its way to take them to the mortuary."

"You've searched them, I suppose?"

"Thoroughly."

“Find anything?”

“Only these.” The General held out two curious squat objects.

“What are they?”

“Gas pistols. They were ready for emergencies. Each carried one under his coat, concealed under the left armpit. I haven’t seen this type before. I’ll get our expert at the Yard to make a report on them, but we can be quite sure that they are deadly. Apart from the pistols they carried nothing. And when I say nothing I mean nothing. There isn’t a mark of any sort on their clothes.”

Gimlet nodded. “All right, let’s deal with the living. I have reason to suppose that the man next door—he calls himself Professor Wenson—is associated with the wolf-pack. I’m going in to have a word with him right away.” He described the man’s suspicious behaviour, mentioning the red danger signal and the trunk.

Cub stepped into the conversation. He addressed Gimlet. “I think I know what the trunk was for,” he said. “It’s just occurred to me. I fancy it explains how you were to be carried out of the hotel. That trunk was plenty big enough to hold a body.”

Gimlet drew a deep breath. “By gad! You’ve hit it.” He looked at the General. “It’s time we called on this gentleman.”

“I agree,” said the General.

Without further parley the party went outside and walked along the corridor until they stood outside room thirty-one. The door was ajar. Someone was moving about inside. Gimlet pushed the door wide open. A night-porter, who appeared to be tidying up the room, swung round.

“It’s all right. We were looking for Professor Wenson,” stated Gimlet.

“He’s just checked out, sir,” answered the man.

Gimlet frowned. “How long ago?”

“About twenty minutes.”

“Funny time to check out of an hotel, isn’t it?”

“That’s what I thought.”

“And he took his luggage with him, I see.”

“Yes, sir. I got him a taxi and carried his stuff down.”

“One of his pieces of luggage was a trunk, I believe?”

“That’s right, sir.”

“Was it very heavy?”

“It weighed next to nothing, sir. I fancy it must have been empty.”

“Did you know he was leaving to-night?”



“No, sir, but I believe he took the room by the day.”

“I see. We’re from the police department. How long have you worked at this hotel?”

The man looked concerned. “Twelve years, sir.”

“That’s good enough. Say nothing about this to anybody. We’ll speak to the manager in the morning.”

“Very good, sir.”

“Are you going to search the room?” the General asked Gimlet.

“Waste of time,” answered Gimlet curtly. “A man engaged on the job he was on would take care to leave nothing behind.” He led the way back to suite thirty, and after they had entered, closed the door. “So the bird has flown?” he muttered. “That, I suppose, was only to be expected.”

“We’ll find him, don’t worry,” asserted the General. “I’ll have Professor Wenson checked up. We’ve got a fair description of him. And I’ll get the Yard on the track of those two cars right away—the taxi and the private car, MAL747.”

“They’ll have changed the number plate by now,” muttered Copper.

“But the plate will still be in existence,” averred the General quietly. “I don’t think we can do any more until we’ve had some sleep. You fellows might as well move round to Brummel Square right away. Your quarters are ready and it’s a good opportunity to get round.”

At this juncture a police ambulance arrived and collected the bodies. The General and his men departed. Gimlet began packing his suitcase.

“Go and get your kits and take them round to Brummel Square,” he ordered. “I’ll see you in the morning.”

Copper saluted automatically, although he was in civilian clothes. “Aye, aye, sir,” he acknowledged.

## COUNCIL OF WAR

NINE o'clock the following morning found the conference in progress at the Brummel Square headquarters. The General was speaking.

"We've checked up on Wenson," said he. "There is no such person. That is, the particulars he gave on his hotel registration form are fictitious. I suppose that was only to be expected if, as there is reason to suppose, he was the organizer of last night's affair at the Europa. As a result of that the situation has changed somewhat. The head of the Werewolf pack in this country will know by now that the plan miscarried, and why. He will know that a trap was laid and succeeded so far as to destroy two of his men—not that it will matter much to him because one imagines he will have ample reserves to replace them. He will know that the police are now seriously on the trail, which means, in turn, that the Werewolves will exercise even more caution in their operations." The General paused.

"The question arises, what to do next? Unlike a normal crime, when the criminal is content to escape, in this case there is no fugitive." The General looked at Gimlet. "What I mean is, it is not to be expected that the attempt on your life will be abandoned. Thus, the curious situation arises, while you are hunting the wolves, the wolves will be hunting you. The side that finds the other first will have a big advantage—perhaps a vital one. Our problem is, and will continue to be, how to catch the king wolf. Killing members of his pack may irritate him, but will not seriously affect his programme. As I said just now, there will be no lack of recruits. We are therefore confronted—I might say handicapped—by the task of having to undertake two jobs at the same time. Not only must we wipe out the entire Werewolf brood, but we must, if it is humanly possible, prevent them from continuing their programme of murder." Again the General paused.

"The next point is, what clues, what information have we to work on? Very little. We have examined the police car that collided with the lamp post." The General glanced at Cub. "The car that did the mischief was marked, if not damaged. It's colour was dark green, for it left some of its paint on the police car when it grazed it in passing. I have men out looking for it, also the taxi. Just where they were heading for we don't know, beyond the fact that they were making for the East End; but the East End embraces an enormous area so that doesn't help us much." Again the General turned his eyes on Gimlet. "Have you any ideas about how you would like to proceed?"

Gimlet pondered the question. “It seems to me that we have two schemes, two methods, open to us,” he answered slowly. “The first is to allow my movements to become known to the gang so that they will lie in wait for me, and, I hope, find that they have caught a tartar. I will deal with that project in more detail should the need arise. The alternative is to discover, and mount guard over, the next victim selected for death, with the object of both frustrating the attack and following the operatives to their headquarters—not an easy matter, I admit. However, on my own responsibility I have made a start in this direction. I am assuming that after last night’s affair the Werewolves will exercise even more cunning than hitherto, but they are bound to go on with their dirty work, otherwise their object will have failed and interest in the Nazi homeland will start to flag. That wouldn’t suit them, you may be sure.” Gimlet lit a cigarette.

“Early this morning I compiled a short list of probable candidates for Nazi vengeance, and I got in touch, by telephone, with some of them. At the third attempt I found what I was looking for. Freddy Ashton—Captain the Honourable Frederick Ashton to most people—was a star turn in the Intelligence Service during the war. Posing as a Frenchman, in Occupied Normandy he kept a pub by the name of the *Cheval Noir*. He did some wonderful work, getting a lot of people out of trouble—including ourselves on one occasion—and bumping off several important Nazis at the same time.” Gimlet smiled faintly at the recollection<sup>[5]</sup>.

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[5] See “King of the Commandos”

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“By this morning’s post Freddie received his death ticket. Actually, it’s lucky I rang him up, because as one would expect, he was inclined to take the thing as a joke. He takes most things as a joke. Naturally, I disillusioned him, warning him to watch his step. The snag is—again as one would expect—he wants to go wolf hunting. I managed to persuade him to do nothing until we make personal contact with him. He lives at Wongerford Manor, in Sussex. Now then: it so happens that there is this morning a meet of foxhounds, of which he is the Master, on the local village green. He will, of course, turn out. I tried my utmost to persuade him to make excuses and stay at home, but he wouldn’t hear of it. Nothing, I fear, not all the wolves in Europe, will prevent Freddie from hunting if there is a fox to be found.”

“He may finish by being hunted himself,” put in the General drily.

“That is precisely what I told him, and why I propose running down to Wongerford this morning, to keep an eye on things. Of course, it doesn’t necessarily follow that the wolves will try anything in broad daylight—so far they have worked in the dark; but they might, and as the field becomes scattered there would be opportunities.”

“The Werewolves will know all about the hunt, you may be sure,” asserted the General. “I imagine they learn as much as possible about the movements of their victims before they strike at them. It might well be that they sent the death warrant to coincide with the meet of foxhounds at Wongerford.”

Gimlet nodded. “That’s why I think we had better go down.”

“Even so, if he rides as straight as his reputation suggests, you’ll have a job to keep in touch with him.”

Gimlet smiled faintly. “You may have noticed that I am wearing riding breeches myself. I’m hoping to pick up a mount.” He looked at his watch. “If we’re going to be in time we had better be moving. The meet is timed for eleven o’clock.”

“All right,” confirmed the General. “Meanwhile I’ll get busy at this end. You have no idea, of course, when you will be back?”

“If nothing happens during the day, we may hang on at Wongerford for the night,” said Gimlet.

The General nodded. “Very well. Be careful. If the wolves spot you, assuming they know you by sight, they may decide to have another go at you.”

“I’ll bear it in mind,” promised Gimlet. He got up. “Come on, you fellows, let’s move along.” He smiled. “This seems to be a case where we run with the fox and hunt with the hounds.”

## IN AT THE DEATH

IT was ten minutes to eleven when Gimlet's car threaded its way through the miscellaneous assortment of humanity that had converged on Wongerford Green to watch a scene that seems never to lose its fascination. It was apparent at a glance that the meet was a popular one. The weather was as perfect as a late autumn day can be and everyone within walking or cycling distance had evidently taken the day off to watch the sport—or at any rate, the start of it. A big field had turned out and there were a good many motor cars—too many, Gimlet observed, as he wound a tortuous course between them in order to get in sight of the hounds.

“Freddie's all right so far, anyway,” he remarked, as he brought the car to a standstill. “There he is, over there, in pink, on the chestnut mare. I'll bet that lady can travel. Whoever hopes to keep up with her will have to ride, and ride hard. I'm afraid it isn't much use trying to pick out any wolves in this mob. We shall have to see how we go.”

“Are you going to speak to Captain Ashton, to let him know you're about?” inquired Cub.

“No,” answered Gimlet. “He may spot me, in which case he'll know; but I'm hoping he won't. If he did he'd want me to ride with him, and that would defeat my object. Stay where you are while I make some inquiries. By the way, you fellows, would any of you like to ride, if I can get mounts?”

Copper's answer was prompt. “Not fer me,” he said warmly. “I'm safer on me own legs.”

Trapper clicked his tongue. “I've ridden a packhorse,” he observed dubiously.

“That won't help you much in the hunting field,” Gimlet told him. “You'd better stay in the car with Copper. How about you, Cub?”

“I'd like to ride if it can be arranged,” replied Cub. “My father made me start riding almost as soon as I could walk.”

“I'll have a word with Tom Lench, Freddie's huntsman,” promised Gimlet as he moved off. “He knows me. He was Freddie's batman in the war. He may let me have his spare horse.”

The others watched him approach the huntsman who smiled a greeting and touched his cap respectfully as he leaned down from the saddle to hear what Gimlet had to say. There was a brief conversation and they disappeared together behind the throng. When, five minutes later, they reappeared,

Gimlet was mounted on a tall, upstanding grey horse, leading a small but racy looking black mare. Tom Lench returned to his hounds. Gimlet came straight on to the car. He beckoned to Cub. "Come on," he said sharply. "Up you get. Hounds are about to move off."

While Cub was adjusting his stirrup leathers Gimlet spoke to the others. "You'll have to follow the field as well as you can," he ordered. "We're going to draw the Gorse first—it's about half a mile down the road. There are plenty of roads—too many in fact—so you should be able to keep somewhere near us. If you can keep in touch with hounds you'll never be far away from Captain Ashton; he's the man you've got to watch. He's unmistakable in pink, on that mare. If you lose us come back here."

"Aye-aye, sir," answered Copper.

Further conversation was made difficult by a general movement of the crowd. The voice of the huntsman could be heard above the babble. "Hounds, gentlemen, please."

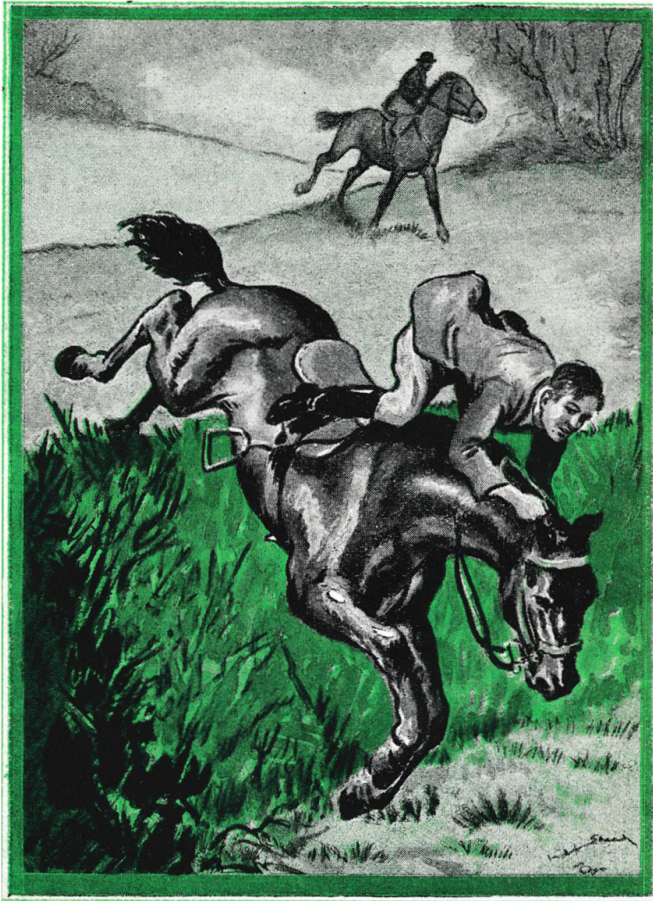
The field, a long crocodile of pedestrians, cyclists and cars, followed the hounds down the road. Cub, caught in the press, moved with it. From time to time he could see their car but he had no chance to speak to Trapper, or to Copper, who was driving. In fact, not until hounds were put into the four-acre copse of undergrowth called the Gorse did he get an opportunity to speak to Gimlet. Then it was Gimlet who did the talking.

"Never mind the fox," he said curtly. "Our job is to watch Freddie. Keep as close as you can behind me. If you lose me, or if I should take a toss, don't wait. Follow Freddie. If anything happens—and anything can happen in this crowd—you'll have to act as you think best."

"Okay, sir," acknowledged Cub, holding with difficulty his mount, now crab-walking in her impatience to be away. He wanted to say something else, for out of the corner of his eye he had noticed a large dark green saloon car among those crawling along the nearby road to watch the proceedings; but at that precise moment somewhere in the near distance a huntsman wound his horn and a voice wailed. "Gone—away." That was enough for the little black mare. She reared, and when Cub next saw Gimlet he was fifty yards away.

The next few minutes, before the field settled down, were minutes of confusion in which he nearly knocked down an elderly parson whose enthusiasm had clearly exceeded his discretion. Cub's mount was almost unmanageable in her excitement, but as she knew the game and followed the field no harm was done beyond the fact that he was now some distance from the road so had no further chance to look at the green car.

The first fence, an ugly “bullfinch,” thinned the crowd considerably, most of the riders making for the nearest gate. Of those who tried to take the fence some were left because their mounts refused. Others fell. Cub nearly came down himself. The black took the fence gamely enough, but it was almost beyond her and she stumbled on landing. Cub was pitched on to her neck but hung on, and with a gasp of relief got back into the saddle. Before him stretched a rolling pasture beyond which was a belt of trees into which hounds were just disappearing. There were not more than a dozen riders in front of him. He made out Freddie, with Tom Lench close behind, followed by Gimlet, riding smoothly. As far as the circumstances permitted Cub scanned the others, but as was to be expected, they were all strangers to him and he gathered no useful information from his inspection. Some were in hunting pink, obviously members of the hunt. He noticed a woman, bowler hatted and veiled, riding astride a good-looking bay, and riding well.



[\[Page 63\]](#)

*The black took the fence gamely, but it was almost beyond her and she stumbled on landing. Cub pitched on to her neck, but hung on.*

Without losing its order the field went on through the belt of trees to a main road on the far side, clearly indicated by a thick collection of telegraph wires that accompanied it. Here a farm hand had sensibly opened a gate, so the field went on across the road without casualties. In crossing, out of the tail of his eye, Cub noticed some cars, one of which he thought was their own; but there was no time to confirm this. A broad sweep of stubble lay ahead. Freddie was well on his way across it, followed by several riders, now strung out. Gimlet was still there, as was Tom Lench. Hounds could not be seen, but they were evidently on a high scent for their voices could be heard, indicating the direction of the run. Cub saw Gimlet look round and



assumed he was looking for him, so he sat down to ride in the hope of catching him; he did, in fact, succeed in closing the distance somewhat, but nothing more.

A field of roots, another stubble, and Cub glimpsed hounds swinging round in a wide curve as if the fox might be trying to make back for the Gorse. Two riders came down at the next fence, a “cut and laid” with a ditch on the far side. Cub’s mare made no trouble over it, however, and when things had settled down again he could see only five people in front of him—Freddie, Lench, Gimlet, an elderly man in pink who had lost his hat, and the woman he had previously noticed, in that order, an order that was maintained for the next two or three miles, by which time the woman had nearly caught up with the hatless man. Without being particularly concerned, it struck Cub that the woman was riding unnecessarily hard on the heels of the old gentleman. With the whole field at her disposal there seemed to be no need for it. The thought struck him that she might be a friend, or relative. But when, for no apparent reason that Cub could see, the old man fell with a fearful crash, he thought otherwise; for the woman without even a glance behind her, rode on. As Cub passed the old man was lying flat on his back; fortunately he had fallen clear, but his mount was galloping away and he was out of courtesy tempted to go after it; or at least stop to see how badly the old man was hurt. For a moment he hesitated in indecision, and at that moment, for the first time, it struck him that what he had seen had not been an accident. Remembering the green car he had an increasing desire to speak to Gimlet, to tell him of what he had seen. A yokel running across the field helped him to make up his mind, so he rode on, determined if possible to catch up with Gimlet, leaving the yokel to take care of the fallen man.

A minute later another strange thing happened. With a swift thunder of hooves a rider overtook him. Wearing ordinary riding kit he was mounted on a raking light chestnut that seemed extraordinarily fresh. Cub caught a glimpse of a young, pale, tight-lipped face, as the newcomer tore on without taking the slightest notice of him. Again Cub stared at the horse. Unlike his mare, which was in a lather, it was not even sweating. He could only conclude that the rider had just joined in the hunt. How and from where he had so suddenly appeared he could not imagine, and the uneasy feeling of which he had previously been aware, struck him with renewed force. He looked at the man again, although by this time he could only see his back. The fellow, he noticed, had a stiff, military seat, and carried something like a small satchel slung over his shoulder. Apart from that Cub learned nothing. He could not recall seeing the man or the horse at the meet. The man caught

up with the woman rider and then steadied his pace, so that the two rode almost side by side.

Filled now with definite misgivings Cub called on his mare for a final effort in the hope of overtaking Gimlet, but he could get no nearer than fifty yards. Gimlet still turned occasionally and must have seen him, as he must also have seen the man and woman close behind him; but he in turn was obviously trying to keep in touch with Freddie, so he let the grey have its head, apparently content with things as they were.

At this juncture there came a change in the situation, and for this reason was responsible. Hounds, in full cry, appeared suddenly in a dip on Cub's left. Fifty yards ahead of the leader ran a very tired fox, his brush trailing, caked with mud. It was clear that he was nearly all in, and with the cunning of his kind he obviously intended back-tracking his own scent to the Gorse, or to the belt of trees through which the hunt had passed earlier. A hundred yards behind hounds came Freddie, yoicking, following as fast as a weary horse could carry him. Behind came Gimlet. Of Lench there was no sign.

Now what Cub could see was also observed by the woman and her male companion—for the two were unmistakably riding together; and they lost no time in taking advantage of a situation that might have been created for their benefit. Wheeling their mounts they cut off a wide turn by riding straight down the sloping ground into the dip, towards the strung-out pack and the two riders behind. This, of course, was the obvious thing for them to do if they wanted to be in at the death, which clearly could not long be delayed. Cub did likewise, although he was now more concerned with the riders than with the fox. He noticed that the man and woman were not looking at the fox, or hounds, as might have been expected in the circumstances; they were looking at Freddie, and even making allowances for his imagination, it struck him that they were riding with a more definite purpose than the position warranted. They would be in at the death, anyway, now, and as they were going there seemed to be some risk of their committing the unpardonable sin of over-riding hounds. Freddie evidently thought so too, for looking up at them he shouted and made a warning gesture. It had no effect.

The fox reached the covert for which he was making with the leading hound snapping at his heels. The rest piled in, and it was somewhere inside the belt of trees, or on the road just beyond, judging from the sounds, that hounds killed their fox. In this proceeding Cub was not interested, for thereafter things happened, and they happened quickly. This was the order of them.

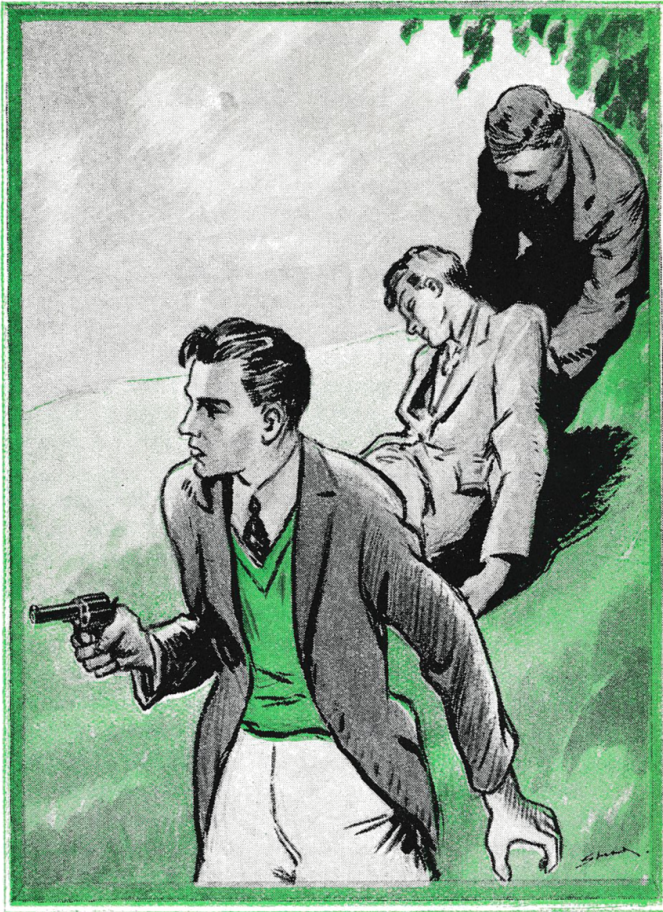
Freddie arrived at the edge of the timber and reined in, as he was bound to, the undergrowth being thick. He glanced behind him, perhaps to see who had survived the run, or more probably to look for Tom Lench. Gimlet was at this time the best part of a hundred yards away. He had pulled up to a trot and the reason was at once apparent. His horse had gone dead lame. The woman and her male companion rode straight for Freddie, who crop in hand, was about to enter the trees, on foot. The man, Cub noted with astonishment, was talking, or rather shouting, into an instrument like a small telephone receiver which he held in his hand. A cable connected it with the satchel. Cub, also riding on, realised instantly that the instrument could be only one thing—a mobile radio unit. The man finished speaking and thrust the microphone back into his jacket. His hand flashed to his pocket and came up holding a squat black object. Reaching Freddie, he was taking deliberate aim when Freddie turned, and seeing what was happening, ducked. He was too late, or so it seemed. There was a dull report, a sort of vicious *whoof*, and Freddie went over backwards as though he had been punched on the jaw. The woman, who had gone round behind him, dismounted.

Now, all this had occurred in three seconds of time, and, of course, Cub was no longer in doubt as to what was afoot. Without a moment's hesitation he rode straight at the man who had fired the shot and knocked him flying with his foot, unseating himself in the process. His horse jumped over Freddie's motionless body and galloped away. Picking himself up, he flung himself aside as he saw the woman taking aim at him with a short, fat pistol similar to the ones they had found on the Werewolves at the Europa. Again came the vicious *whoof*. A blast of wind spun him off his feet. Without getting up he groped for his thirty-eight and fired back; but he was in an awkward position and the shot missed its mark. It grazed the woman's horse, however, which reared, throwing its rider. She got up, still holding her pistol, and took aim at Cub; but before she could fire a shot rang out and she staggered, calling out something which Cub did not catch, speaking presumably to the man. The voice gave Cub a shock. It was deep and hard, clearly a male voice, and for the first time he realised that the dress was a disguise. Both Werewolves ran into the wood. Gimlet arrived an instant later. He hesitated, his pistol covering sounds of crashing undergrowth which indicated the direction taken by the fugitives. Thus the situation remained, like a screen play suddenly arrested, for perhaps five seconds. Then Gimlet said tersely: "Are you all right, Cub?"

Cub answered. "Yes."

Gimlet's eyes probed the bushes. "Watch out. We're vulnerable here in the open. Cover me while I get Freddie into the trees."

Cub stood guard, pistol at the ready, while Gimlet picked up the unconscious Freddie and carried him to a safer place. Said Gimlet: "I don't know what hit him but he seems to be in a bad way. We'd better get him to a doctor. Let's carry him to the road—we may pick up a car."



[\[Page 70\]](#)

*"Cover me while I get Freddie into the trees," said Gimlet.*

Not without difficulty they carried Freddie some fifty yards or so to the road where they laid him on the grass verge. And precisely at that moment a car came tearing round the nearest bend. Cub caught his breath, for its colour was dark green. In a flash he understood. The mounted Werewolves had been in radio communication with the car all the time and had called it to the spot.

“Look out!” he warned crisply. “Here comes trouble.”

The car came on, slowing down. But before it reached the spot where Freddie lay on the grass there was a shout, and the man in riding kit, without his pseudo-female attendant, burst out of the trees, an arm raised in a peremptory stop signal. The car slowed to a standstill, picked him up and came on again, by which time Gimlet and Cub, perceiving that the enemy had received reinforcements, had slithered into the ditch that skirted the road, dragging Freddie with them. How many men there were in the green car Cub could not see, but there were at least two, not counting the man they had just picked up.

As the car drew level, travelling dead slow, Cub took aim at the man nearest to him. The face seemed vaguely familiar. He fired, hoping to reduce the opposition by one, at any rate; but all that happened was a small white spot that appeared on the glass, and he realised with disgust that the glass was bullet proof. Gimlet had also fired with like result. He, too, must have perceived what they were up against, for he muttered a warning against wasting ammunition.

How the business would have ended had not a new factor appeared on the scene is a matter for speculation. The new factor was another car, their own, which, travelling at suicidal speed, now came tearing round the bend from which the green car had appeared. It turned out later that Copper had heard the shots—hence his haste.

Whether the occupants of the green car knew or suspected that they were being followed, or whether it was decided that there was nothing more they could do—which in fact they could not without getting out of the car, which would have been a dangerous undertaking, as they must have realised—was not known to those in the ditch. Somebody must have been on the lookout, however, for as the police car came to a skidding stop the green car shot forward, and accelerating swiftly sped on down the road. Out of the police car tumbled Copper and Trapper, pistols in their hands.

“Follow that car!” shouted Gimlet. Then he appeared to remember something and changed his mind. “No! Wait! We’ve got a casualty on our hands. Captain Ashton has been hurt. We shall have to get him home and send for a doctor.”

Copper turned hostile eyes after the retreating car. “Seems a pity to let ‘em get away,” he muttered.

“Can’t help it,” said Gimlet shortly. “Freddie must come first. We can’t leave him here.” He made a quick examination of the unconscious man, but could find no wound. “It may be gas or it may be sheer concussion,” he

decided. “We’ll get him home. Keep your eyes skinned—there’s a female wolf about somewhere.”

“It isn’t a woman, it’s a man,” put in Cub. “At least, if it’s a woman she’s got a man’s voice.”

“That doesn’t surprise me,” returned Gimlet.

With Trapper keeping guard they lifted Freddie into the car, by which time, of course, the green car had been out of sight for some minutes.

“Lucky you turned up when you did,” said Gimlet to Copper during the operation.

“I wouldn’t say it was altogether luck, sir,” answered Copper. “After we lost touch with you we spotted the green car. It was following the hunt, too, and when I sees a graze on the paintwork I sez to Trapper ‘My gawd! There’s *our* fox.’ So we followed it, not knowing what it was goin’ ter bring us to, but having a rough idea. That’s all there was to it.”

“I see,” murmured Gimlet.

Tom Lench appeared, an expression of bewilderment on his face. “What’s happened, sir?” he inquired. “My horse put his foot in a rabbit hole, the darned old fool, so I got a bit behind.”

“There’s been an accident,” replied Gimlet. “Captain Freddie has taken a nasty toss. We’re getting him home. You’d better look after hounds.”

“Very good, sir.”

Gimlet turned to Copper. “Get a move on,” he ordered. “Make for Wongerford Manor, but stop at the first house that looks as if it might have a telephone.”

“Aye, aye, sir,” acknowledged Copper.

“What about the wolf in the wood?” reminded Cub.

Gimlet hesitated. “We’ll attend to that later,” he resolved. “Never follow a wounded beast into cover—it’s asking for trouble. We’ve other things to do; we’ve only one car and we had better keep together. We may come back later. Go ahead, Copper.”

The car shot forward.

## THE GENERAL TAKES A HAND

THE car took the road towards Wongerford and ran on for perhaps half a mile when Copper slowed down in front of a modern house of some size standing in its own grounds not far from the highway. "How about this, sir?" he questioned. "They're on the 'phone. I can see the wires."

"Fine," answered Gimlet, getting out. "Wait for me." He hurried up the short drive.

During his absence of a few minutes the others tried without success to restore the injured man to consciousness, at the same time discussing in low tones the events of the morning. When Gimlet came back, he merely said: "I've spoken to the General, and to the butler at Wongerford Manor. The hunt doctor is at the manor now. Get a move on, Copper."

They went on to the Manor, a matter of just on two miles, where Captain Ashton was handed over to the doctor, and the house servants, who carried him to his bed. The visitors then waited in the library for the doctor's diagnosis. After about a quarter of an hour he appeared, and with a puzzled expression on his face asked Gimlet to describe just what had happened. This information Gimlet could not, of course, withhold, so taking the medico into his confidence he told him as much as he thought would be helpful. Having heard this the doctor went off again, this time for an hour. Then he returned.

"I've done all I can," he reported. "He seems fairly comfortable, certainly better than he was, which leads me to hope that the trouble is not serious. There are symptoms of shock, but I suspect he was brought to unconsciousness by an anesthetic of some sort being forced into his lungs under pressure—perhaps by a weapon designed for that purpose."

"A gas pistol might have that effect," opined Gimlet.

"Quite so. I understand that the intention was not to kill him, but to make him unconscious in order that he might be carried off without offering resistance. If that is correct we may assume I think that the effects of the gas will soon wear off, leaving him in a condition comparable with that of a patient coming round from an anesthetic. Different constitutions react differently, so it may be a matter of hours or days before he is quite normal. The time factor would depend on the potency of the gas used. I shall stay with him for the time being. He will be safe in my hands."

"In that case we'll go along to the village inn for a bite of lunch and come back later to see how he is," said Gimlet, picking up his cap.

“Very well,” agreed the doctor.

“Don’t leave him or you may find you have a dead man on your hands after all,” warned Gimlet seriously.

“Don’t worry about that,” the doctor assured him.

Leaving the Manor, Gimlet took the others to the village, where, at the Three Bells tavern he arranged for a late lunch to be served in a small private sitting-room.

A simple but satisfying meal had just been concluded when the door opened and—to Cub’s unbounded astonishment—the General entered, carrying a small but obviously heavy leather case which, after a nod of greeting, he put on the sideboard before opening it to reveal a compact radio unit. Having set the dials at what was clearly a fine adjustment he left the instrument and joined the others at the table.

“Things are going well,” he stated crisply, without preamble, looking at Gimlet. “We’ve picked up the green car.”

“Strewth! That was quick work,” breathed Copper.

“Where is it?” asked Gimlet.

“It’s on its way again,” asserted the General. “We let it go.”

“Let it go?” gasped Copper.

“Don’t interrupt, Corporal,” adjured Gimlet.

“I’ll tell you exactly what I’ve done as a result of the information you gave me over the telephone this morning,” continued the General, still addressing Gimlet. “I’ve put a cordon of picked men round the area in which the wounded wolf is assumed to have taken cover. They should see that he doesn’t slink out and at the same time take care of any others who try to get in to his assistance. More important than that, though, is the car. I had all roads trapped that lead north from this area with the result that the green car was stopped by a barrier at Bletchworth. There’s no doubt about it being the car we are interested in; your bullet marks were on the window. There were four men in it.” The General smiled faintly. “The police were very nice to them, explaining that they had been stopped in connection with a smash and grab raid at Portsmouth. That put their minds at rest, or so we may assume, for on that charge they were most certainly innocent as there had been no such raid. They were therefore quite pleasant about it—said they quite understood—and gave us no trouble. After a delay they were allowed to go, with apologies from the police for their having been troubled. The guilty car, the police explained, had been picked up elsewhere. In the interval, however, while they were waiting, I got through on the ’phone to the new Special Air Police Department at Scotland Yard. It’s under the direction of



an ex-Air Force officer named Bigglesworth, whom I believe you know. Bigglesworth happened to be out, but I spoke to one of his assistants, a lad named Hebblethwaite, known unofficially as “Ginger,” but officially as Number Four S.A.P. He grasped the situation right away. He is now in the air watching the car, which he should have no difficulty in following because while the wolves were being detained—out of sight of the car, of course—a large white circle was on my instructions whitewashed on the roof of the car. As the roof of a car is normally above eye level, as it is in this case, it is unlikely that the occupants will be aware of the mark for at least some time. The first rain will wash it off, so they may never know anything about it. It is to be hoped that they do not discover it, otherwise they may guess its purpose and our efforts will prove fruitless. Hebblethwaite’s job is to watch the car from the air and by radio keep me informed of its movements. He should be coming through any minute now. Unless anything unforeseen occurs he should be able to watch the car to its destination, which is the information we so badly need. It may not be easy for Hebblethwaite to keep track of the car in London, which I imagine is its probable destination. Indeed, in the ordinary way it would hardly be possible on account of the volume of traffic; but to-day is Saturday, and on Saturday afternoon traffic in the City thins out considerably, as you know. We can only hope . . .”

At this juncture a voice from the radio broke into the conversation. “Number Four, S.A.P. calling. Number Four, S.A.P. calling. Can you hear me Number Nine—can you hear me. Over to you . . . over to you.”

The General was already at the instrument, his mouth near the microphone. “Number Nine here—Number Nine here. Go ahead S.A.P. Transmission good. Go ahead S.A.P. Over to you.”

The voice of the air constable came through again. “Car under observation heading north on road N.3., approaching Caterham valley. Repeat. Car heading north on road N.3., approaching Caterham valley. Now passing Blindley Heath. Stand by.”

The General quickly unfolded a map and indicated a spot with the point of a pencil. “Here we are,” he said.

Again the voice came over the air. “Car still heading north on N.3. Approaching Purley. Weather deteriorating. Met. reports cold front coming down from north. Have you anything to say? Over.”

The General answered: “Thanks, S.A.P. Go ahead. Keep car in sight as long as possible. Over.”

And so it went on for the next twenty minutes by which time the objective car was crossing Vauxhall Bridge. The weather continued steadily to deteriorate, and when such reports were received the General shook his head sadly. "The only thing that could defeat us was the weather," he muttered irritably.

Again came the voice from the air. "Weather bad. Visibility poor and getting worse. Rain coming from the north. Give me your instructions please. Over."

The General answered. "Hang on as long as you can, S.A.P. Fly as low as you like. Forget regulations against low flying over the Metropolitan Area."

"Okay, Number Nine," replied the pilot. "Car now moving eastward. Car moving eastward. Raining now."

Another ten minutes passed slowly with occasional comments from the air. By the end of that time the weather had closed down, making observation increasingly difficult, particularly as the tell-tale white circle was being erased by the rain. The car was still heading east, the General following its position on the map.

The end came suddenly. "Hello, Number Nine. Car stopped. Car stopped. Name of street unknown, but pin-pointed on my map. One man getting out. Car moving on again." There was a short interval, then: "Sorry, Number Nine. Now in heavy rain. Visibility zero. Car last seen heading north-east. I am going home—I am going home. Over."

"Thanks, S.A.P.," answered the General. "Will see you later about stopping place of the car, and its last known position. Am switching off now. Good-bye." The instrument clicked and fell silent.

The General turned to Gimlet. "Well, that might have been better and it might have been worse," he remarked philosophically. "S.A.P. should be able to tell us where the man got out. That may mean something or it may lead to nothing. We shall see. There's a great future in the Special Air Police. When Bigglesworth gets the thing properly organized, crooks are going to find it much harder to get away with it. That's all we can do for the moment. What would you like to do next?"

"I'd like to have a look at this place where the car dropped one of its passengers, but there are other things I must do here first," answered Gimlet. "There's a wounded Werewolf to be picked up and I must have a word with Freddie Ashton, if he's conscious."

"Very well. You hang on here for a bit. I'll see Hebblethwaite and collect all available information about the car," offered the General. "I don't think

the wounded wolf will get away; I've a pretty strong cordon round the area."

"That may be the best way of handling things," Gimlet concurred. "You go back to Town. We'll stay here until we have things cleaned up, then we'll join you at headquarters—bringing with us, I hope, a live Werewolf."

"You'd better take steps to see that no further harm comes to Ashton," instructed the General. "Now that he has had a sample of what the Werewolves can hand out he may agree to lie low for a bit. If he goes barging about on his own they'll get him as sure as fate. Impress that on him."

"I'll do my best," promised Gimlet.

The General stayed for a cup of tea. Then the party broke up, the General starting back for London, and Gimlet's party, in the police car, returning to the Manor, where, to their relief, they learned that Captain Ashton had regained consciousness, and although he was still in bed appeared to be little the worse for his adventure.

Gimlet saw him alone in his room while the others waited in the library. When he returned he was able to report that Captain Ashton had agreed to move right away, under cover of darkness, to the house of his brother in Chelsea—this on the understanding that he would be allowed to have a "crack at the wolves" should the opportunity offer.

"Let's get along to see what the police are doing about this stray wolf," concluded Gimlet. "The Nazis are a cold-blooded lot, so the king wolf may decide to abandon him. On the other hand, if he's a useful member of the gang, he may attempt a rescue."

They went out to the car.

Night drew its sombre veil across the landscape as the car cruised slowly back over its tracks to the scene of the attempted abduction. The air was mild; the rain had passed; a full moon glowed mistily through a high cloud layer, with an occasional star blinking through the gaps.

The police cordon of whom the General had spoken was soon in evidence. While still half a mile from the wood a red light sprang suddenly to light in the middle of the road, and as the car slowed to a standstill two shadowy figures closed in on it. Cub could just make out a third standing in the background, with what looked like an automatic rifle levelled. Copper evidently noticed it too, for he breathed. "Strewth! They ain't takin' no chances of bein' bit. Don't blame 'em, either. I'd do the same. What say you, Trapper, old pal? Am I right?"

"*Tch!* Every time," agreed Trapper.

Gimlet opened the door on his side, whereupon a voice of authority ordered, "Stay where you are. This is the police. Who are you and where are you bound for?"

Gimlet revealed his identity, showing his special pass, which had the desired effect. "Any news?" he inquired.

"Nothing so far, sir," answered the police officer. "We're gradually closing in, but the chief's orders were to cover every inch of ground and that takes time. The cordon is still best part of a mile across with the wood about in the middle. We've sent for a couple of bloodhounds. They're on the way. They should liven things up a bit."

"In that case we'll wait for a while and see the finish," returned Gimlet. "Where can I park my car out of the way?"

"There's an old cart track a bit along the left," replied the officer. "It ought to be all right there."

The car was parked and locked, Gimlet putting the key in his pocket. Leaving the police, the party then moved quietly to a spot at the corner of the wood, one that commanded a wide view of the open country beyond. For the most part it comprised broad rolling fields with very little cover. At one point the moonlight glistened faintly on a long, if rather narrow, sheet of water. This, Gimlet told the others, was an artificial lake, brought about by the damming of a brook at the lower end, the object being to provide Captain Ashton, who owned the property, with his own trout fishing.

"Not much risk of the wolf breaking out that way," observed Copper.

Gimlet agreed.

Trapper spoke. He had been regarding the wood thoughtfully, and now put forward the suggestion that he should enter it, find the wolf, and either kill it or bring it out alive. He supported this request by pointing out that he had tracked plenty of wolves in his time.

But Gimlet would not hear of it. He said he did not doubt Trapper's ability as a scout, for this had been demonstrated often enough; but his entrance into the wood at that juncture would complicate things for the police, who might easily shoot him in mistake for their quarry.

Time wore on. Nothing happened for about an hour. Then an excited canine bay, quickly silenced by a sharp word of command, came from somewhere in the direction of the road.

"That means the bloodhounds have arrived," murmured Gimlet. "We shouldn't be long now."

Hardly had the words left his lips when, from the inky recesses of the trees, there arose a long-drawn howl, so sinister, so horrible, that Cub experienced a tingling sensation at the nape of the neck.

“That’s our wolf howling,” muttered Copper.

“Why should it howl?” demanded Gimlet.

Trapper shrugged. “Why it should howl I do not know, but it is the howl of a wounded wolf calling to its mate. I have heard it before.”

“Calling to its mate? You mean—a wolf makes a noise like that when it calls for help?”

“So the Indians used to say,” replied Trapper carelessly.

“Then it may mean that our wolf heard the bay of that hound and is calling urgently for help,” suggested Gimlet. “It might easily be a signal, and come to think of it, the fellow may have a portable radio,” he added.

“Could be,” agreed Trapper.

“Seems likely he’s expecting help or he’d do better to keep his mouth shut,” reasoned Copper.

Silence fell again. A few minutes passed. Then came another sound, but this time one so common that no one remarked on it. It was the purr of an aircraft, distant, but coming nearer. Cub glanced in the direction of the sound but could see nothing. He made a casual remark about the machine not carrying navigation lights, but apart from that no comment was made. It was not until the drone ended abruptly that anything further was said about it. Then Gimlet said: “What does that fellow think he’s doing? I hope he isn’t in trouble.”

No one answered. The truth was, as was afterwards admitted, it did not occur to any one of them that the aircraft had any connection with their own affairs.

It was not until a soft whine overhead suggested that the aircraft might be circling preparatory to landing that the first glimmerings of a suspicion entered Cub’s head. Looking at Gimlet questioningly, he said sharply, “That machine’s coming down.”

“As long as he don’t land on us, that’s ’is worry,” asserted Copper dispassionately. “He’s got plenty of fields to chose from.”

“Yes, now you come to mention it, he has,” said Gimlet in a curious voice. “By gad! I wonder . . .”

What it was that he wondered was never revealed, although it did not take Cub long to guess; for at that moment there was a diversion of such significance that the conversation broke off short. There was a crashing in

the undergrowth, and from out of the trees, a hundred yards from where the party stood watching, burst a man holding with difficulty on leash a couple of straining bloodhounds. Three figures, presumably policemen, followed close behind.



[\[Page 86\]](#)

*There was a crashing in the undergrowth, and from out of the trees burst a man, holding with difficulty a couple of straining bloodhounds.*

“*Sacre!* Those hounds are on a hot scent,” declared Trapper straining his eyes.

“Queer—they seem to be making for the water,” observed Gimlet in a puzzled voice. “Surely our man wouldn’t go that way.” He started forward at

a run and the others did the same.

The aircraft now came into the picture. It was Cub who spotted it first and his voice rose in his excitement, for, suddenly he understood. "Look!" he cried. "The machine. It's down—on the lake. Watch out."

Gimlet pulled up dead, stared for a moment and then went on. "I should have thought of it," he muttered in a hard voice.

His words were half drowned in the bellow of an aero engine as the machine, without finishing its run, opened up and swung in a smother of foam, sending white ripples racing towards the rushes that fringed the shelving bank. From these rushes a man's form now arose and floundered through the water towards the aircraft.

There was a shout from the police as their quarry broke cover. The hounds bayed furiously. Gimlet increased his pace to a sprint, as did the others, although it was evident that they were going to be too late; they still had fifty yards to cover and the fugitive was already being helped aboard the machine. Shots rang out as one of the policemen pulled up and opened fire; but the light was tricky and the range long, and as far as Cub could see the shots had no effect. There was no answering fire from the aircraft, but suddenly the air was filled with a curious whistling noise which Cub could not understand until from several points along the bank there arose grey clouds of what looked like steam. The clouds spread and merged swiftly until they formed an almost continuous curtain.

"Smoke screen, eh?" panted Copper.

"Steady!" shouted Gimlet suddenly. "Stop! 'Ware gas! Keep back everyone." He shouted an urgent warning to the police who were some twenty or thirty yards farther along the bank. In any case, it was obviously no use going on, for the aircraft was again on the move, racing away at ever increasing speed across the ruffled surface of the lake. Backing away from the spreading grey clouds those ashore could only stand impotent while the aircraft took off, to disappear almost at once in the night sky.

"So he got away after all," said Gimlet bitterly. "Well, we have at least learned this much. The enemy has aircraft at his disposal. We'll bear it in mind."

The police came up. "Sorry, sir," said one. "We weren't reckoning on an airplane."

"Neither was I," admitted Gimlet frankly. "I'm afraid we're all a bit old-fashioned. We shall have to buck our ideas up. Well, we might as well pack up and go home. I'll go and report to the General that our wolf suddenly

sprouted wings. Keep clear of that gas—it can't be anything else. I imagine it will soon disperse.”

For a moment or two they stood watching the sinister clouds weaving and spreading until they lost themselves in the air. Then, with a brief, “Goodnight, sir,” the police withdrew. Gimlet turned and strode towards the track where they had left the car.



## CHAPTER VIII

### ON THE TRAIL

IT was eleven o'clock when Gimlet and his party reached headquarters. The General was waiting for them. He knew about the escape of the Werewolf, for the information had been passed on to him by Scotland Yard, so it only remained for Gimlet to give him the details.

"It boils down to this," he concluded. "We know that the wolves are using at least one aircraft. The machine we saw had a flying-boat hull, but it may have been an amphibian. It might have suited the pilot to come down on the lake. The machine is probably the link between this country and Germany. If it is, then that disposes of the transportation problem. But whatever type of aircraft it may be it must have a base, a landing ground and, perhaps, a refuelling station, over this side. We ought to be able to find it. The Special Air Police may be able to help us there. You might speak to Bigglesworth about it. Which reminds me—have you seen Hebblethwaite? I'm anxious to hear about this place where the car stopped and dropped one of its occupants."

"Yes, I've seen young Hebblethwaite," answered the General. "I saw him at the Yard and brought back with me a copy of the map with the spot pin-pointed. It's on the lefthand side, half way down a side street leading off the Whitechapel Road. Hebblethwaite, with commendable initiative, took a photograph. I understand Bigglesworth has had all police aircraft fitted with cameras. The picture is not very clear, owing to the weather, but it shows a car stationary outside a building which from the size and shape of its roof is larger than any private house in that district. It may be a store, a garage, or possibly a small cinema. Anyway, it shouldn't be hard to find. I haven't been to the place. There was no desperate hurry. I decided to wait for you to come back. You may prefer to make your own reconnaissance."

"I'd certainly like to cast an eye over the place," returned Gimlet. "I think we'll have a quick cup of tea and slip down right away. That will save time to-morrow, and I've none to waste. I happen to be President of the Lorrington Cottage Garden Society, and they're expecting me down on Monday to judge the exhibits, and, in the evening, distribute the prizes at the village hall. Of course, I could get out of it, but this is the first post-war meeting, and as many of the competitors are my own tenants I don't like letting them down. I could catch the night train up and be back here on Tuesday morning. So if it's all right with you I'll leave my plans as they are—for the time being, at any rate."

“You’re not forgetting that you’re a wanted man yourself?” put in the General.

Gimlet smiled. “No, I’m not forgetting.”

“The wolves may have a go at you at Lorrington.”

“I think that’s hardly likely.”

“Everything so far shows that they know all about the movements of their selected victims. They will know about the flower show.”

Gimlet shrugged. “They may. But I shall be with a crowd of people all the time.”

“I’d rather somebody went with you. Two are harder to deal with than one.”

“I can take one of my fellows.”

“All right. You know what you’re doing.”

Gimlet nodded. “I’ll have a look at this Whitechapel place before I go. In fact, I’ll slip down right away. If a further reconnaissance is indicated, or if I decide to keep the place under observation, two of my fellows can take care of it while I’m down in Devon.”

“As you wish,” agreed the General. “Let’s go through to the mess and have a cup of tea. I’ve had a busy day and I’m tired, so I shall go to bed; but you can always get me if you need me.”

They went through to the room that had been fitted up as a canteen.

Three-quarters of an hour later the car was gliding down the Whitechapel Road. There was practically no traffic and only a few pedestrians remained in the streets, for the usual damp November mist hung over the City like a pall.

“This must be the turning—the next one on the right,” observed Gimlet, who was driving. “It might not be wise to take the car any nearer. I don’t think there’s any point in us all trooping along,” he continued, after bringing the car to a stop against the curb. “There shouldn’t be any trouble. I’ll stroll along with Cub and give the place the once-over from the outside. Copper, you can follow us and stand at the corner. You may not be able to see us all the time, but you should hear if anything unexpected happens. Trapper will remain in the car.”

Followed by Cub, Gimlet got out, and leaving the others turned down the street that held the object of the expedition. Being dark, all that could be seen clearly were those areas of road, pavement, and house, that came within the radius of the old-fashioned street lamps. What these revealed was a scene typical of Victorian slum districts. Most of the houses were miserable

little shops of miscellaneous character, drab, squalid, paint dilapidated and blinds awry. Some of the windows were boarded up, apparently victims of the London blitz. It was evident that the street had once been a narrow thoroughfare between cheap little houses of uniform plan, built in a continuous row, the sort of thing that may be found in almost any London parish.

There was no difficulty in finding the objective for there was only one structure that differed from the rest. It stood back a little way, behind railings. As they drew level with it Gimlet slowed down a trifle, but did not stop. He expressed surprise by a soft, "Ah-huh."

Cub also was surprised; so surprised, in fact, that for a moment he felt sure they were making a mistake; but there was no other building of any size for as far as he could see, so he quickly realised that however remarkable it seemed, the building must be the one they sought. It was not a store, or a garage, or a cinema, as the General had surmised. It was a small church, or chapel, or at any rate, a place of worship. This was at once made evident by the shape of the door and windows. The building was new, or comparatively so, for the bricks were still more or less red. Over the door appeared a notice. In passing, Cub could just make out the words, painted in white letters on a black board, TABERNACLE OF ST. BARNABY IN THE EAST. To what religious denomination it was devoted he could not even hazard a guess, but there it was—a church.

Gimlet walked on a little way and stopped in a shadow. "Well," he breathed, "what do you make of that?"

"Nothing," answered Cub frankly, without hesitation. "Of course, the fact that the man got out here doesn't necessarily mean that he was going to church," he opined. "He might simply have chosen this spot to alight."

Gimlet admitted the possibility of this. "Let's go back," he decided. "We'll take it more slowly this time."

They strolled back. All was still, dark and silent, outside the church. Gimlet stopped in front of a small notice board carved in the usual Gothic style affected by religious buildings. On it was pinned a small square of paper. His torch flashed on and made it possible to read a brief notice to the effect that there would be a special service at noon on the following day, Sunday, when the preacher would be Brother Geraldus. All were invited. All would be made welcome. The light switched off, but Gimlet did not move.

"Funny," he said in a normal voice. "I never noticed before that there was a church here." Then he added quickly, under his breath: "Is there any way round these railings?"

Cub did not answer. As his eyes had become accustomed to the gloom he had observed something that had previously escaped his notice. Hunched in the scant shelter provided by a shallow porch was a dark heap, a large bundle of what looked like rags. It was surmounted by a small round object, light in colour, and this, he now realised with a shock, was a human face. At least, he thought so. He wasn't certain. Nudging Gimlet he pointed. Gimlet stared for perhaps five seconds; then his torch switched on, and the beam threw into relief the crouching figure of the lowest form of tramp, ragged, dirty, half buried in an ancient greatcoat.

“Are you all right there?” asked Gimlet.

The answer came back in a bad-tempered growl. “Why shouldn't I be? Why can't you let a man sleep?”

“Sorry,” returned Gimlet carelessly, and strolled on. But before reaching the corner he stopped again and drew Cub into a doorway. “I've got a feeling there's something going on here,” he breathed. “That fellow may have been a genuine tramp, or he may have been a sentry. If he was a sentry, as we seemed curious, the chances are he'll watch us. Keep still.”

They waited for perhaps five minutes, but they saw no sign of the tramp; and Gimlet had just stirred preparatory to moving on when a car, travelling quickly, came round the corner. With a squeak of brakes it pulled up in front of the church.

“Now what?” murmured Gimlet, bending forward to watch.

One man got out of the car, carrying a small black bag, and disappeared into the church entrance. When some five minutes had passed and he did not reappear, Gimlet said quietly: “Stand fast.” He glided away along the path.

He was gone only for two or three minutes. When he came back he said: “There's no one in the car. I've got its number. We'll hang on for a little while to see what happens.”

They had to wait for nearly half an hour. Then the man, still carrying his little black bag, emerged, entered the car and drove away.

“I should say that's all for to-night,” murmured Gimlet. “Let's get back to headquarters.”

They walked down the street. Copper joined them at the corner. “You've bin a long time. I was just comin' lookin' for you,” he complained.

In the car there was a brief debate. “Whether the place has anything to do with our business remains to be seen,” said Gimlet. “We'll have a look inside that church sometime—but not to-night.”

“Why not to-morrow?” suggested Cub. “There’s a service at noon. It sounds like a ready-made chance.”

“I shall be on my way to Lorrington,” reminded Gimlet. “I shall have to get the morning train down from Paddington if I’m to do my job on Monday.”

“I could attend the service and tell you all about it when you get back,” offered Cub.

“It’s an idea,” admitted Gimlet. “Be careful. If the place is what it pretends to be, all so well and good; but if it’s what I suspect it might be it could easily be a death trap.”

“Copper and Trapper could keep an eye on things even if they didn’t come to the service,” persisted Cub.

“I promised the General that I’d take one of you with me to Devon. Trapper had better come. Copper could stay here with you. I’ll turn it over in my mind,” promised Gimlet, as he started the car.

Arriving back at Brummel Square they found that the General had not gone to bed after all. Gimlet told him what had transpired. When the number of the car was mentioned he reached for the telephone, asked the operator for Scotland Yard and put through an inquiry.

“If the number plate on that car is genuine we shall soon know who it belongs to,” he said as he replaced the receiver. “The black bag suggests that the man might have been a doctor or a lawyer, although I must admit that it was hardly the hour one would expect a professional man to visit a church.”

“I was thinking the same thing,” replied Gimlet. “There might be one explanation. The rescued Werewolf was wounded, and would almost certainly be in need of medical attention. He might have been dropped off at the church. If we follow that line of thought we may discover that the church is a sort of Werewolf hospital, or a base where medical attention is available. It might even be the London headquarters of the gang.”

“More likely a meeting place—a church would serve that purpose admirably,” opined the General. “Had it been the general headquarters surely all the Werewolves would have got out there? And there is the car to consider. It must be garaged somewhere. We should have to be sure of our ground before we dare make anything like a raid on a place of worship.”

“Cub is going to attend the service there to-morrow morning,” stated Gimlet. “He may learn something.” He then explained his plan for taking Trapper with him to Lorrington, leaving Copper to watch events in the Whitechapel Road.

To this the General agreed.

At this point the telephone rang. The call was from Scotland Yard. The General took the message.

“Hm. I wasn’t far wrong after all,” he remarked as he hung up. “The car belongs to a Doctor Guthram Paul, a practitioner in the Mile End Road.”

“British subject?” queried Gimlet.

“Apparently,” answered the General. “But that is nothing to go on. Too many enemy agents in this country carry British nationality papers. We’ll keep an eye on this particular gentleman—it shouldn’t take us long to find out who his patients are in Whitechapel.” He got up. “Well, it’s getting late. We’d better see about some sleep,” he concluded. “We’ll discuss the matter further in the morning.”

## CUB GOES TO CHURCH

ELEVEN-FIFTY the following morning found Cub, feeling unusually respectable in a navy blue suit, walking down the Whitechapel Road on his way to attend divine service at the Chapel of St. Barnaby in the East. Behind, at a reasonable distance, strolled Copper, who had undertaken to see that Cub emerged safely from the church when the service was over. Trapper had gone with Gimlet to Lorrington, whither the others were to follow later in the day if they felt inclined, or should they have any urgent information to impart.

Cub's paramount sensation as he turned into the narrow street was curiosity. With Copper standing by, and the entire Metropolitan police force available should it be required, he felt that he had no cause to be afraid or even nervous of the outcome of his adventure. Nothing, he thought, could have looked more innocent, more mundane, more devoid of anything sinister than the little brick church, at the door of which two men in black clothes were engaged in conversation.

Just short of the entrance a middle-aged man stood leaning against the door post of a tawdry newsagent's shop, scanning a newspaper. Coatless, hatless, collarless and unshaven, it was evident that he was the proprietor of the establishment. He threw a casual glance at Cub as he passed.

"So they've got a new recruit, eh?" he observed, half jocularly, with a strong Cockney accent.

Cub pulled up. "Who's got a recruit for what?"

The newsagent jabbed a thumb towards the church. "That's where you're going, I'll bet."

Cub admitted that this was correct.

"I've got to know most of 'em, but you're a new 'un to me," stated the man.

Cub became interested. "I see. You watch the people who go to church every Sunday, eh?"

"Not *every* Sunday. The church ain't open every Sunday."

Cub raised his eyebrows. "Is that so? How often is it open?"

"Oh, every now and again, when they feel like psalm singin', I suppose."

"Then how do people know when they may come to the church?"

"The fellow who runs the joint puts a notice in the paper."

Cub became even more interested. “Do I understand that the church only opens occasionally and advertises the doings?”

“That’s right. Funny bloomin’ show I calls it. They must be a queer lot.”

Cub nodded. “As you say, they must be a queer lot. In what paper does this advertisement appear?”

“On a Saturday, in the *Evening Herald*.”

“I see. And there was an advertisement yesterday, I suppose?”

“That’s right. Here, I’ll show it to you if you don’t believe me,” went on the Cockney tartly, as if he resented his information being doubted. He went into the shop and returned unfolding a newspaper. “There you are. There it is,” he declared, stabbing the paper with a blunt finger. “Of course, they put a notice outside the church as well.”

Cub read the advertisement, which was framed in general terms under the heading of ‘Brotherhood of St. Barnaby in the East.’ “Can I keep this paper?” he asked.

“You’re welcome, I’ve done with it,” was the ready answer.

Cub folded the paper and put it in his pocket. For a moment he hesitated. Copper, he observed, was standing at the corner. “Well, I only happened to notice the place by chance,” he remarked carelessly. “Having nothing better to do I thought I’d take a look inside . . .”

At this juncture the conversation was interrupted by the arrival of another man, apparently a friend of the newsagent. The two greeted each other cheerfully and retired together into the house. Deep in thought Cub walked on to the church.

As he turned from the pavement to the entrance a man in a black suit was about to close the door. Seeing Cub coming, he paused long enough for him to enter, regarding him the while with a steady, appraising glance, natural, perhaps, in the circumstances. At least, Cub thought so. But he experienced a twinge of uneasiness as he heard the door being closed behind him. It reminded him that he had crossed the threshold from the security of the public street into—well, he did not know what.

The first thing he noticed was a curious smell—curious only because of where it occurred. It was faint but unmistakable. He recognised it for iodoform. Then he remembered the doctor and the remarks that had been made at headquarters overnight. The supposition that the doctor had called at the church to attend a patient was practically confirmed. There was less time to dwell on this than he would have wished, for the service, apparently, was about to begin. The congregation were standing.



It was a very small gathering and it took him only a moment to count the members of the congregation. It comprised eleven men. No women were present. No one took any notice of him as he tip-toed into one of the rear pews, but he observed that the verger—or the man who had been on door duty—did not leave his post. He wondered what would happen if he tried to leave, but it was not the moment, he decided, to put the experiment to practical test.

The minister entered and took his place at something that was half way between a reading desk and a pulpit. He was an elderly man dressed in an ordinary dark suit without anything in the nature of vestments. His eyes roved over his flock. It struck Cub that they rested on him rather longer than on the others, although this again was natural, since he was a stranger and the others were probably known to him. Cub stared back, and as he did so a feeling came over him that he had seen the man before somewhere. It was not his face so much as the way he carried himself. When he spoke he became more than ever convinced that this was so, that he had heard the voice in entirely different circumstances; but search his memory as he would he could not recall the occasion.

“Let us pray,” ordered the preacher.

The congregation knelt. Cub did likewise.

After that the service proceeded in a manner that was normal enough although the ritual was a strange mixture of spiritual and temporal exhortations. He did not know quite what to make of it. He appreciated, of course, that if the church was a genuine place of worship the service would be strange, because the worshippers were not of an orthodox sect; but he could not shake off a feeling that what he was watching was insincere; that it was an act put on for a particular purpose—possibly for his benefit. Several times the preacher hesitated as if he was at a loss for words, or was not certain of the procedure; and the congregation was sometimes slow with its responses, as if for the same reason. And when, after about twenty minutes of this, the service ended abruptly, Cub became increasingly convinced that the whole thing was a sham; that the service would have been different had he not been there. An atmosphere, a sort of tension, had become perceptible.

As the minister rose after the final prayer—a curious extemporaneous speech which, as far as Cub could make out, meant nothing—one of the congregation left his place and made a collection in a small black bag. This was usual enough and Cub thought nothing of it until he noticed that one of the worshippers furtively dropped into the bag a small folded piece of paper. When, presently, another did the same, Cub’s suspicions were again aroused. That these little pieces of folded paper were treasury notes he could not

believe. None of those present looked particularly affluent. Had one put in a note it would have been remarkable, he thought, but that two should do so was straining credulity too far. When his own turn came he dropped in a shilling. It clinked, he noticed, when it fell, so apparently some coins had been put in.

The preacher retired and most of the members of the congregation moved towards the door which, to Cub's relief, was opened to permit them to leave. Cub would have gone too, but when he left his pew he found his way barred. It might have been accidental, but two members of the congregation occupied the gangway. And they did not move aside.

The verger came forward. "Our preacher would like to have a word with you," he said softly. His lips smiled, but there was no humour in his eyes.

"What about?" inquired Cub evenly, but fully aware that if things were not what they appeared to be this was going to be the show-down.

"You are a stranger in our midst," explained the verger in a flat voice. "Our minister makes it a rule to ask strangers if they enjoyed the service and if they would care to join the Brotherhood."

Cub was thinking fast. His eyes went to the door hoping to see Copper outside; instead, he saw that with the exception of three men the congregation had gone. Two were standing by him; the other was closing the door from the inside, "I'd like to think it over," averred Cub.

"But it would be discourteous not to speak to the preacher," chided the verger gently. "Come, he is waiting."

The other two men were watching with cold dispassionate eyes. Again it might have been accidental, but one of them put a hand into his pocket.

"Very well," agreed Cub, who now saw clearly that he was in no case to argue.

"This way, please."

Cub was no longer in doubt. The procession that moved down the aisle was by its very nature a threat. The verger led the way. Cub followed. Close behind came the two members of the congregation.

Reaching the vestry, or what in the ordinary way Cub would have called the vestry, the verger tapped on the door.

A voice called, "Come in."

The verger pushed the door open and by a wave of his hand invited Cub to enter.

The minister was waiting, seated at a low writing table. As he glanced up he sniffed, screwing his nose sideways, and the movement, slight though it

was, acted as a spur to Cub's memory. With a sudden tightening of the heartstrings he remembered where he had seen the man before. It was at the Hotel Europa. The man was Wenson.

There was something different about his general appearance suggesting that either then or now he had affected some simple form of disguise, but Cub knew that he was not mistaken. He hoped fervently that nothing in his own manner had revealed that identification had been established. On the other hand, had Wenson recognised him? Neither by word nor deed was it suggested that he had, although this could not be accepted as proof. After all, thought Cub swiftly, although he had seen Wenson when the man had come to Gimlet's room at the Europa, Wenson may not have seen him, or noticed him, for his eyes had naturally been on Gimlet, who had opened the door.

Surmise was cut short by a remark from Wenson. "I hope you enjoyed our little service," he said smoothly.

Cub shrugged. "It was all right," he answered casually, seeing no reason to pretend an enthusiasm which he did not feel.

"What brought you to our little church?" Wenson still spoke quietly, but his eyes were on Cub's face, and they were hard, suspicious.

"I happened to be passing. I saw the notice on the board about the service so I thought I'd come in."

"You are interested in religion, eh?"

"Not particularly."

"So!" Wenson's voice took on a slightly harder quality. "And now suppose you tell us the real reason why you came?"

Cub affected surprise. "Is this usually how you talk to new members of your church?"

"Who sent you here?" demanded Wenson.

"I came entirely on my own account," returned Cub, truthfully enough.

"Very well. We shall accept you into our Brotherhood," decided Wenson.

"I have no objection," replied Cub. "What does it involve exactly?"

"In the first place it involves a little ceremony of initiation."

"What sort of ceremony?" asked Cub slowly. Out of the corners of his eyes he could see the men who had remained behind edging closer to him.

"It is a sort of confirmation. We call it the Spirit of Truth."

"Would you mind being a little more explicit?"

“Not in the least. Quite recently, as you may have heard, some very remarkable drugs have been discovered, and they can be made to serve very useful purposes. There is one which, when injected into a human body, makes that person a simple subject for interrogation. In other words, the answers that he gives are truthful. He cannot lie. It is reasonable that before adopting you we should like to know something of your past life. You may have made mistakes, committed indiscretions which, naturally, you would wish to conceal. We shall remove the risk of such temptation. There is no need for you to be afraid. We have a doctor present. He will apply the necessary treatment.”

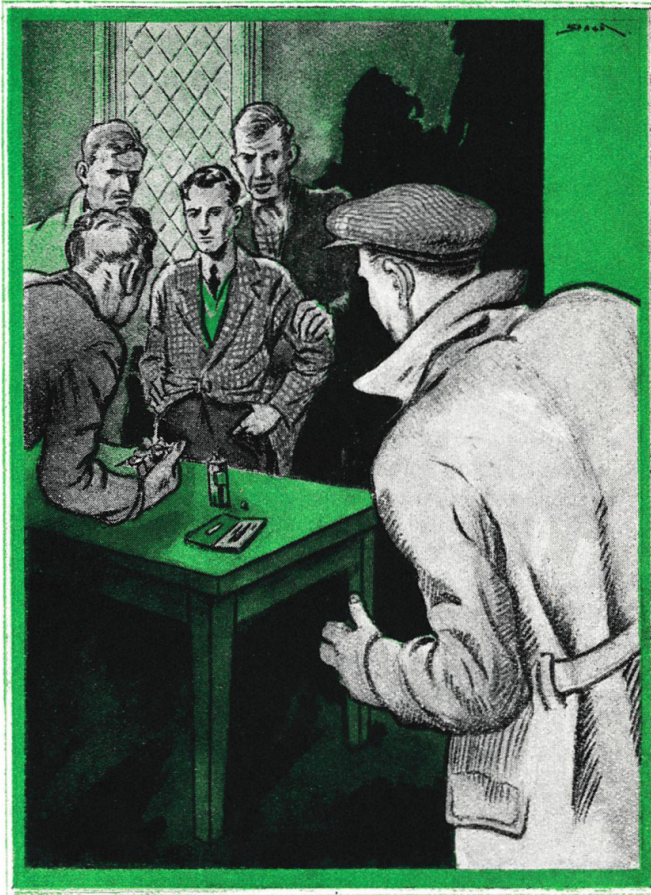
The word ‘doctor’ came as another shock to Cub. Remembering the man with the black bag he did not doubt the truth of Wenson’s statement. “I shall not, of course, submit to any treatment,” he declared.

“My dear boy,” murmured Wenson blandly. “I do not think you are in a position to refuse our little request. You came here entirely of your own accord, remember. Refusal on your part would suggest that your true motives are open to suspicion. If you have told the truth you have nothing to fear.” Wenson turned to a man who was standing a little apart. “Please proceed, doctor,” he ordered.

Cub, of course, had everything to fear; and he had an increasing feeling that Wenson knew it, or suspected it. He was in a trap and it was not easy to see how he could get out of it. These people would do as they had threatened. He had heard of the drug such as Wenson had described. They would not hesitate to use it; of that he had no doubt at all. They would do anything to achieve their purpose. If he struggled he would be more likely to hurt himself than the four men who stood about him. His pistol was in his pocket. But these men would also be armed. He might shoot one of them, or even two, but he could not reasonably hope to kill four men before he himself was brought down. Apart from that he was by no means sure that the circumstances justified wholesale homicide.

Hands closed over his arms. Instinctively he began to struggle to free himself, even though in his heart he knew that such efforts would be futile. The doctor, ignoring the commotion, had put a bottle on the desk and was calmly sterilizing a hypodermic needle.

At this critical juncture the door was burst open with some violence, and Copper strode in. “What goes on here?” he demanded.



[\[Page 106\]](#)

*“What goes on here?” demanded Copper.*

Silence fell. Movement stopped. Wenson glared. “Who are you?” he demanded harshly.

“What’s that got to do with you?” flared Copper. “A pal of mine came into your lousy tabernacle and he didn’t come out, so I came in to see why. What’s all the fuss about?”

It was, Cub perceived, a curious state of affairs. Wenson did nothing, perhaps because he did not know how to meet a circumstance for which he had made no provision. The others, not daring to act on their own initiative, waited for a signal from their chief. The signal did not come.

“They were proposing to initiate me into their Brotherhood,” Cub explained to Copper.

“Pah! Don’t make me laugh,” sneered Copper. “You told me you were coming with me to Hampstead Heath. What are you messing about here for? If I hadn’t happened to see you drift into the church I shouldn’t have known where you were. Come on, we ain’t got no time ter lose if we’re a-goin’.”

For a moment the situation hung in the balance. Wenson, Cub could see, had been taken in by Copper’s off-hand manner. Or if he was not entirely taken in he was in doubt. In any case, now, a fight would be a different matter from what it would have been before Copper arrived.

In the end Wenson did nothing. Accepting defeat he put the best possible face on it. “Very well,” he said in a hard voice. “This is disgraceful behaviour on a Sunday morning.”

“You asked for it,” returned Copper carelessly. “Come on, kid, let’s get cracking.”

Cub backed out of the room. Copper followed, and with a swift movement slammed the door behind him. Together, keeping close watch behind them, they strode down the aisle, opened the door and went out into the street.

“Phew!” gasped Cub, “You were just about in time.”

“You’re telling me!”

“That bunch had got me where they wanted me.”

“That’s what I reckoned when you didn’t come out.”

“How did you get in?”

“Through a window—no trouble at all.”

“It’s a Werewolf nest all right. That fellow at the desk was Wenson, the man we saw at the Europa.”

“I’ve got eyes, ain’t I?”

“The question is,” muttered Cub as they strode on down the street to where they had left the car, “what will Wenson do now?”

“Search me.”

“He’ll be reluctant to abandon his headquarters while he thinks there is a chance that we were a genuine pair of casuals. You put on a great act. I don’t think he recognised us.”

“No?”

“In that case he may hang on for a bit to see what happens.”

“That’d suit us.”

“They’ve got a sick man there—that wounded Werewolf, I imagine. The place stinks of iodoform. The doctor is there, too.”

“So I saw. I spotted his car higher up the street after you’d gone in. That in itself was enough to make me anxious.”

They got into the car.

“Well, what are we goin’ ter do?” demanded Copper.

Cub thought hard. “We can do one of two things,” he decided. “We could ring the General and ask him to tell the police to raid the place. The only thing about that is, the raid would take a little while to organize. If Wenson does take fright, by that time he would have bolted and we should simply show our hand for nothing. The raid would do more harm than good, because we should lose touch with the enemy. Even if we got Wenson I’m not sure that we should have done anything very clever. He isn’t the head man. He isn’t big enough. He’s no more than a section leader. It’s the king-pin Gimlet’s after. The only other thing we can do is to head for Lorrington, tell Gimlet what has happened, and leave the decision to him.”

“That sounds more like it ter me,” said Copper, nodding.

“On second thoughts, there is a middle course,” resumed Cub pensively.

“I’m listening.”

“We could keep an eye on the chapel for a bit in the hope of finding out definitely what happens. After all, it won’t be much use going to Gimlet not knowing whether the church has been abandoned or not. The first thing he’ll want to know is whether the wolves are still there or if they’ve pulled out. If they go we might with luck keep track of them.”

“That’s better,” agreed Copper. “We ain’t in no hurry. The flower show ain’t till ter-morrow.”

“Okay, then, we’ll do that. Move the car along to the end of the street so that we can watch the church.”

The car was moved so that a window commanded a view up the street in which the chapel was situated.

“The doctor’s car is still there, anyway,” observed Copper. “That’s it, on the right, about a hundred yards up. Just a mo’, though. I wonder if there’s a back entrance to the chapel. If there is they might slip out without us spotting them. You stay here while I go and find out.”

Copper was away about ten minutes. He returned with the information that there was a way out to the rear, although it was only a narrow path.

“Could a car get through it?” asked Cub.

“No—why?”

“Because if they go they’ll have to use a car,” Cub pointed out. “They’ve got a wounded man on their hands, don’t forget. The wound will have

stiffened by now, particularly if that doctor has had to take a bullet out of the fellow Gimlet hit.”

“Aye, that’s right enough.”

An hour passed. Nothing happened. Cub began to fidget. For one thing, he was getting hungry. “I’ll tell you what,” he suggested. “I think we ought to let the General know how things are going. I’ll slip along to a call box and ’phone him. Then I’ll have a bite to eat at a café and come back.”

“Okay. Bring me a sandwich and a packet of gaspers.”

Cub went off, made his report to the General who confirmed that they had done the right thing in keeping the chapel under observation, had a snack at a coffee shop and returned to the car with Copper’s sandwiches and cigarettes. He was away about an hour.

Copper had only one item of news. The doctor had gone off in his car, alone.

“Fine. I take that to mean that the others have decided to stay,” said Cub. “Had they been going to pull out I reckon the doctor would have had to take his patient with him. We’ll go on watching for a bit.”

To pass the time Cub narrated in detail what had happened in the chapel from the time of his entry. He also told him what the newsagent had said and showed him the advertisement in the paper, which he still had in his pocket. “It looks as if it all boils down to this,” he concluded. “The chapel is a Werewolf depot, although I do not think it is the general headquarters. It was probably a spy hang-out during the war. When the day comes that we raid the place we shall find radio there. The church service is, of course, sheer bunkum. When a service is advertised the spies who have anything to report come in. The information is dropped into the offertory bag—all very simple. The doctor was in this country during the war. We may assume, I think, that he was a spy. Now, whether he likes it or not, he’s in the Werewolf racket. If the chapel is, in fact, equipped as a spy depot, one can understand that Wenson would be reluctant to lose it.”

The afternoon wore on. The short November day began to close in.

“We shan’t be able to watch from here much longer,” Copper pointed out.

The truth of this was evident. “If they haven’t gone by now then we can pretty well take it for certain that Wenson’s decided to stay,” averred Cub.

“They may have slipped out down that back way,” said Copper anxiously.

“I could soon settle that,” answered Cub.



“How?”

“By knocking on the door.”

Copper started. “Are you nuts?”

Cub smiled. “No. I could just go along and say that I was sorry about the rumpus this morning. Apart from giving us the information we want that would do good because it would help to settle any uneasiness that Wenson may feel. I mean, it should help to convince him that my visit this morning was all straight and above board. He was suspicious of me—but then, in his line of business he would be suspicious of any stranger. I’ll drift along.”

“Don’t you go inside,” ordered Copper crisply.

Cub laughed. “I’m not likely to.”

He strode quickly up the street to the chapel, stopped at the door and knocked. There was a short delay in which, he thought—he wasn’t sure—that someone was inspecting him from a window. Then the door was opened by Wenson himself.

“Well, now what is it?” he asked sharply.

“I just called in passing, sir, to apologise for my friend’s rowdy behaviour this morning,” said Cub meekly. “He’s got a silly idea that I can’t take care of myself. Perhaps I was wrong to keep him waiting. I’m sorry about the whole business.”

Wenson drew a deep breath that might have been relief. “That’s all right,” he replied. “I understand. It was courteous of you to call. Won’t you come in?”

“Not now, thanks; I’ve got to get home,” answered Cub evenly. “Maybe I’ll come to the service another day, when I’m on my own.”

“Do,” invited Wenson. “You will be welcome.”

Cub backed away. “Goodnight, sir.”

“Goodnight.”

The door closed.

Whistling, Cub walked back to the car. “It’s okay,” he told Copper. “Wenson’s still there, which means he must be staying. At least, he raised no objection when I said I’d attend another service later on.”

“I’ll bet he didn’t,” growled Copper. “When I saw you talking to him at the door I broke into a sweat. I wouldn’t trust that murdering rat inside the length of a barge pole of me.”

“Neither would I,” returned Cub cheerfully.

“Well, what do we do now?”

“I think for a start we ought to go back to headquarters for a word with the General,” decided Cub. “Then we’ll have a night’s rest. In the morning we’ll run down to Lorrington to see how the others are getting on.”

“Suits me,” agreed Copper.

## WHAT HAPPENED AT LORRINGTON

IN spite of an early start, it was four o'clock when, the following evening, in deep twilight Copper brought the car to a skidding stop at the front entrance of Lorrington Hall. Iced roads had caused the delay. Cub pulled the bell, only to learn that Gimlet and Trapper were then at the prize-giving in the village hall. They hastened on. Leaving the car in the street, where several others were parked, they made their way into the hall.

It was full; packed to suffocation. Clearly, the annual prize-giving was an event not to be missed. Not without difficulty Copper and Cub found standing room at the back.

When their eyes had become accustomed to the bright electric light, through a cloud of slowly rising tobacco smoke, Cub could just make out Gimlet on the stage, the central figure of a line of people of both sexes, seated in chairs. Cub's eyes roved over the scene. Trapper he could not see, but assumed that he was sitting somewhere in front. For the rest, the gathering was, as might have been expected, almost entirely composed of farmers and farm hands, with a sprinkling of artisans who, apparently, were gardening enthusiasts.

"I don't think Gimlet can get far wrong here," said Copper to Cub in a low voice. He was also surveying the picture.

"If the Werewolves know about this, they might try to get him between here and the Hall, when he goes home," opined Cub thoughtfully.

"Not if Trapper is with him," declared Copper confidently. "I'll bet Trapper has got a finger on the trigger all the time."

At that moment Gimlet rose to speak. He was given a boisterous greeting, with hand clapping and cheering.

Copper glanced at Cub and winked. "Sounds as if the Skipper's kind of popular in his little home town. Am I right?"

Cub smiled. "You certainly are."

"No use tryin' ter talk to 'im till the speech-makin's over, I reckon."

"No, we shall have to wait."

"I hope he ain't goin' ter be long, that's all. 'E's got more important business to attend to."

Gimlet, who had waited for the welcome he was receiving to subside, raised a hand. Silence fell. Nothing happened. The silence became embarrassing. Twice Gimlet opened his mouth to speak, but no sound came.

Copper stared, frowning. "What's the matter with 'im?" he asked sharply, in a hoarse whisper.

By what was obviously an effort, Gimlet managed to get out the words, "Ladies . . . and . . . gentlemen . . ." His voice trailed away, and he swayed suddenly.

"There's somethin' wrong 'ere," rasped Copper.

"You're telling me," returned Cub tersely.

Before either of them could speak again the lights went out.

There was a brief silence; then the audience reacted as it usually does in such circumstances. There came a buzz of conversation that mounted to something like disorder. Some people laughed, as if the thing were a joke. Some tried to get out. Others shouted, "Sit still!" A few of the men struck matches. Others held up lighted petrol lighters, although the light they gave was futile.

Cub's first thought was, naturally, that the lights had fused; that the thing was a simple accident. But hard on the heels of this sprang a doubt, a doubt which grew to apprehension. It gave him a sinking feeling in the stomach. Was it an accident? Accident or not, it was a contingency that had not been foreseen, and it was in a fever of impatience that he waited for the lights to go on again. His eyes tried to probe the gloom, but except in the limited areas of light given by the petrol lighters and matches it was impossible to see what was going on. The stage was in total darkness. He had a feeling that he ought to do something, but it was hard to know what could be done. It was obviously too early to give way to anything like panic.

"I don't like this," he told Copper tersely.

Copper grabbed him by the arm. "Hang on to me," he ordered. "If once we get separated in this mob we shall never get together again. It might be a pukka accident."

"And it might not," answered Cub anxiously. "Let's try to reach the stage."

This was easier said than done, but Copper, heedless of expostulations, ploughed a way down a side gangway. Cub, by keeping close behind him, as a tug hangs in the wake of a big liner, found the going fairly easy. This went on for about five minutes, by which time he judged that they were somewhere near the front row.

Suddenly Copper shouted, "Trapper! Trapper, where are you?"

The lights, as suddenly as they had been extinguished, came on again. The first person Cub recognised was Trapper. He was on the stage, one hand

in a side pocket, looking about him. But Gimlet was not there. His chair was vacant.

Copper vaulted on to the stage. He caught Trapper by the arm. "Where is he?" he rapped out.

"He's gone," snapped Trapper. "Who would think—"

"Which is the quickest way out of this place?" broke in Cub, who realised that they could do no good in the hall.

"This way." Trapper pointed to a stage exit. "That's the way we came in."

"Then let's get out of this," said Copper grimly.

A nervous-looking curate tried to bar their way, but Copper thrust him aside. "Sorry, mate, but I'm in a hurry," he flung back over his shoulder.

Half-a-dozen strides and they were in the open air. There, after the babble inside, things were comparatively quiet.

"Gimlet!" called Copper sharply.

There was no answer.

"They've got him," declared Cub. "He wouldn't have left the hall voluntarily."

"Where do we start looking?" muttered Copper. He asked the question hopelessly, for night had now fallen. To make things worse, they did not know their way about. "Gimlet!" shouted Copper again.

The only answer was the sharp purr of an engine as a car, apparently in the street, was started up.

"After that car!" cried Copper, and started running towards it.

He was too late. A big touring car slipped out of the rank and accelerating swiftly sped up the road. Cub tried to see the number plate, but could not, for the rear light was dim and the plate was smothered with mud.

"*Sacre!* I'd say he's in that car," asserted Trapper.

"The trouble is, we ain't sure of it," returned Copper. He looked at Cub helplessly. "Well, what are we going to do?"

Cub thought for a few moments and then made up his mind. "We'll have a look inside the hall. If he isn't there, we can assume that he has been taken away by force. If he was taken by force then obviously the Werewolves are responsible. They'll murder him unless we prevent it. I should say Trapper is right; he was in that car that just went off."

"We might overtake it," said Copper quickly.

“Yes, we might,” agreed Cub. “But if they realise that they are being followed they’ll probably kill the Skipper and chuck him out. Once having got him in their hands they won’t let him go alive. That’s the snag. If it comes to a show-down the first thing they’ll do is kill Gimlet. Our best chance, as far as I can see, is to try to track the car to its destination and do something then. Of course, we can’t track the car literally. We can only guess where it has gone. As it started up the west road it had probably gone to London. The only Werewolf depot that we know of in London is the chapel. We might try it. If he isn’t there, we’re sunk. There is just a hope that they may have taken him there. He isn’t here, that’s certain, so it’s no use staying. We might as well tell the parson, or whoever is in charge of things inside, that Gimlet won’t be coming back. We needn’t go into explanations.”

Cub spoke quietly and calmly, but his brain was racing. He felt sick inside, for he realised that of all the tight corners that Gimlet had been in, he was now in the tightest. The chances of it happening were always on the boards. Reasonable precautions had been taken. They had failed. That’s all there was to it. No one was to blame. The thing might have happened anywhere at any time. In his heart he had no hope of seeing Gimlet again, alive, but to save his sanity he felt that they must do something. “I’ll go and let the parson know that Gimlet won’t be back,” he said dully. “Then we’ll hit the road for London.”

Gimlet was not in the hall. His disappearance had created a sensation. No one knew why he had gone, the parson said. Cub did not enlighten him. He merely explained that Gimlet had been called away on duty and would not be coming back. They would have to conclude the show without him. Then he hastened to the car where the others were waiting, Copper at the wheel, the engine running. “Okay—step on it,” he said quietly. “Make for Brummel Square first. We shall have to let the General know what has happened—not that he’ll be surprised, I fancy.”

## BACK TO TOWN

THE car ran straight to headquarters, arriving in the early hours of the morning. The General was, of course, in bed. Cub aroused him and told him of what had happened.

The General's instant and rather obvious plan was to throw a police cordon round the chapel and then send in a special squad to clean the whole place up.

To this, with due respect, Cub objected, on the grounds that it would involve delay when every minute was precious. The Werewolves, he declared, might even at that moment be putting Gimlet to death. Again, an official police raid could not be made without a certain amount of noise. Whether Gimlet was on the chapel premises or not this would alarm the Werewolves who were there. They might still escape. It was hardly likely, he asserted, that they had failed to make provision for such a contingency.

"What do you suggest, then?" asked the General, quickly getting into his clothes.

"I suggest, sir, that you proceed with your plans for raiding the place, but give us time to do what we can, first. We'll go straight on down and try to find a way in without creating any disturbance. Copper—that is, Corporal Colson—is an expert at getting into a place. If he can't find a way into the chapel I shall be surprised."

"I see. The main thing is, you want to be inside the chapel building before we arrive?"

"That's right, sir. Your men can stand fast while all remains quiet; but should anything like a rough house start they had better come right in and mop the place up."

To this the General agreed. "Have you got everything you're likely to require?" he asked.

"We've got guns and torches—they should be enough, sir," replied Cub.

He returned to the car where he found the others waiting with irritable impatience.

"Here, come on; what's all the jawing about?" muttered Copper. "What about it?"

"Push along to the chapel. I'll give you the set-up as we go," answered Cub.

In twenty minutes, without incident, Copper brought the car to a stop in the Whitechapel Road just short of the turning in which the chapel was situated. Apart from an occasional pedestrian the street at that hour was deserted. It was still dark although dawn was not far off. Leaving the car as it stood they all walked on through the gloom towards the objective.

“Even if Gimlet ain’t ’ere I’ll bet that rat Wenson and his thugs will know where he’s bin taken to,” said Copper in a low voice.

“He wouldn’t be likely to tell us,” Cub pointed out.

“Is that so?” breathed Copper grimly. “Wenson will answer my questions or I’ll twist his wolf’s head off ’is shoulders with my bare ’ands—and I ain’t kiddin’.”

There was no sign of life as they approached the chapel, but Cub, remembering the tramp in the porch suspected by Gimlet of being a sentry, asked the others to stand fast for a moment while he went on alone. Advancing cautiously on tip-toe, making no more noise than a shadow, he peered through the railings. The tramp was there; at least, there was a dark motionless heap, which told Cub what he wanted to know. Backing away he conveyed the information to the others.

“Leave ’im ter me,” breathed Copper.

“No noise,” warned Cub.

“There won’t be no noise, mate,” murmured Copper meaningly.

They moved on, slowly, silently, Copper now leading. The progress was maintained until the railings were reached. Copper stopped and drew a deep breath. When he moved again it was with such speed that even Cub, prepared for something of the sort, was startled. One vault took Copper over the railings. There was a scuffle and a sharp intake of breath, cut short by a double thump.

Copper reappeared. “Okay,” he said softly. “He’s sleepin’ as peacefully as a baby—and ’e’ll stay asleep for a little while, I reckon.”

The others joined him within the precincts of the chapel. The tramp lay in a huddled heap in a corner of the porch.

“Which way now?” asked Copper.

“I think we ought to give the place the once-over from the outside to see if any lights are showing,” whispered Cub. “If there aren’t any you might try getting through the window you used on Sunday.”

“Suits me,” agreed Copper.

“What about this guy?” inquired Trapper, indicating the unconscious sentry.



“I swiped ’im pretty hard,” answered Copper. “ ’E should be all right for half an hour or so if I know anything about it.”

“The police can pick him up when they come,” put in Cub. “We’re wasting time. Let’s look round.”

A cautious reconnaissance of the chapel premises revealed no signs of activity. Not a light showed anywhere.

“Come on, let’s get into the joint,” growled Copper impatiently.

Groping his way along a narrow alley he stopped under the window which, he said, was the one he had used on the previous occasion. Entry then had been affected by the simple method of using the blade of his knife to turn the hasp. He tried the same method now; but he did not succeed in opening the window. Instead, he dropped back to inform the others that he was a fool to suppose that the same trick would work twice. Counter-measures had been taken. They took the form of a wedge to prevent the hasp from being turned, and iron bars arranged horizontally across the window frame. “We’d need a hacksaw to cut a way in and we didn’t bring one with us,” he lamented. “No use wasting time fetching one. We shall have to find another way in. If there ain’t one it’ll be the first time I’ve bin beat.”

They tried the front door of the church, not expecting to find it open. Their expectations proved correct. It was locked.

“No use,” muttered Copper, feeling the heavy timber. “It’d take axes ter knock a ’ole through that, and even then it wouldn’t be no easy job.”

“It would also make a certain amount of noise,” Cub pointed out sarcastically.

“Let’s try round the back,” suggested Copper.

It was soon discovered that as the one window had been treated, so had the others. As each in turn was tried it was found to be barred.

“Okay, don’t worry,” murmured Copper. “I’ll bet there’s one they’ve forgot. It’ll be either the pantry or the lavatory. People usually make the mistake of thinkin’ they’re too small fer a man ter get through. It’s easy. You’ll see.”

He was right. A small window had been left out of the general scheme. It was so small that Cub looked at it doubtfully. Then he tried to climb through, head first.

Copper pulled him back. “Not that way—silly,” he growled. “You’ll get your shoulders stuck. Catch hold of the sill with your ’and and pull yourself through feet first.”

Cub tried the new method and to his surprise, after some slight wriggling, found that he could slide through, landing, of course, on his feet instead of his head, as would have been the case had he succeeded in his own method. Switching on his torch he found himself in a small pantry. This told him that he was in the living quarters attached to the chapel. Again he caught the whiff of iodoform. He tried the door. It was unlocked and gave access to a passage. The silence was of a tomb. He took pains not to break it. Advancing with infinite care he found the back door. It was locked and bolted. Still taking the greatest possible care not to make the slightest noise, he unfastened the door. Copper and Trapper stepped in, Trapper closing the door behind him.

“Where are we?” whispered Copper.

“We’re in the house attached to the back of the chapel—Wenson’s living quarters, I imagine,” answered Cub.

“Let’s explore!”

“All right. Hark!” Cub did no more than breathe the last word.

Somewhere at no great distance a door had opened and closed. For the two or three seconds it was open a faint murmur of conversation could be heard. This was cut off by the closing of the door.

“They’re still here, anyway,” whispered Copper. “Let’s look round. Cub, you’re lightest on yer feet—you go first. I shall be close handy if you bump into trouble. Use yer torch, but switch it off if you hear anyone amovin’.”

In silent procession they made their way along the corridor and presently came to a door on the left. Very slowly Cub turned the handle and opened it, first an inch, then more. It was the vestry, the scene of his encounter with Wenson and the doctor. The room was unoccupied. A door at the far side, he knew, gave access to the church. He glanced into it, but all was in darkness.

“We shall ’ave ter get a move on; it’ll start ter get daylight in less than no time,” whispered Copper.

Proceeding, they had only taken a pace or two when Cub halted again. He looked at the others, raising his eyebrows. Speech was unnecessary. Near at hand two people were engaged in conversation. The voices came from behind the next door on the right. Cub jerked a thumb. “In there,” he breathed.

Even as the words left his lips a hand was laid on the door handle from the far side. His torch was out instantly, but it made no difference. The door of the room swung open and the corridor was flooded with light.

What followed occurred faster than it can be told. The man who had opened the door was the doctor—Doctor Guthram Paul. Cub recognised him

instantly. The doctor was still talking when he opened the door, but when he saw the invaders in the corridor the words died on his lips. For a split second, while the reek of iodoform flooded out of the room, no one moved; then the doctor, with a single action, slammed the door; but not before Cub had caught a glimpse of the interior of the room. He did not see much, but what he saw was significant. A man, obviously the patient with whom the doctor had been talking, was lying on a small bed of the "camp" type. From behind the closed door came a shout of alarm.

"Get going, Copper," rapped out Cub. "It's our only chance now."

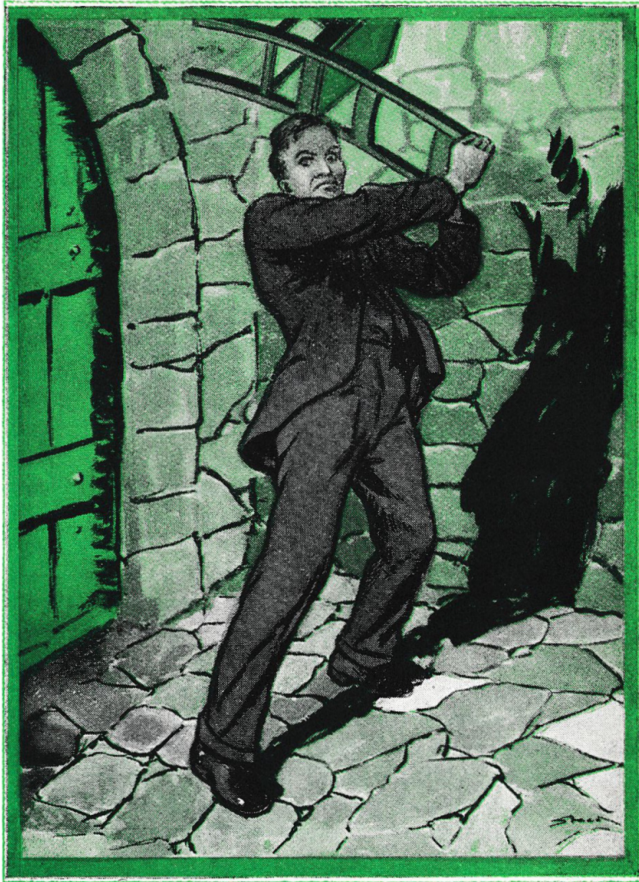
Copper needed no second invitation. Now that they were discovered the need for stealth had gone. Putting his foot against the lock he sent the door crashing inwards, the lock torn from the woodwork. His war experience made him side-step automatically as the door went in; and it was as well that he did so, for a pistol crashed. The bullet crossed the corridor to bury itself with a vicious thud in the wall. The lights went out, but Trapper was already shooting. Cub could see the sparks streaming from the muzzle of his gun to end at a stumbling figure. He switched on his torch, and by that time the doctor was on the floor. The patient was no longer in the bed. The clothes had been flung off, and the man might have made his escape had he not in his haste caught the tail of his pyjama jacket in the door by which he was leaving the room. Foolishly, as it fell out, he opened the door again to release himself. He would have done better to discard his jacket. With a bound Copper had crossed the room. Reaching out he caught the fugitive by the back of his pyjamas, dragged him back and flung him on the bed, where he lay panting.

"Never mind him," said Cub tersely. "There must be others. It's Gimlet we want."

There was only one way to go, and that was through the door by which the sick man tried to leave. It opened into a corridor. Down this Copper sped to fling open a door at the far end. Cub was hard on his heels, but he now stopped short, astonished at the sight that met his gaze.

Before them was a long low room which, since it ran under the chapel, was actually a cellar, but a cellar much larger than a genuine place of worship could have demanded for any proper purpose. The walls, Cub noted at a glance, were of concrete. But for the furnishings the place might have been a public air raid shelter; and, Cub thought, during the war it might well have been used for such a purpose by those who frequented the chapel. The furnishings were curious. They reminded Cub of a courtroom. So much he observed in one sweep of the eyes. At the same time he noted subconsciously that the atmosphere was warm. This, and a faint aroma of

tobacco smoke gave the impression that the place had recently been occupied. However, there was no time for attention to details, for with a shout Copper was on the move again, fairly leaping across the seating accommodation towards an aperture in the wall that had just started to close. This aperture was, in fact, a sliding door, the moving part being to all appearances concrete as solid as the walls. Seeing that he would not reach it in time to prevent its closure Copper snatched up a heavy chair and flung it into the gap. The door crushed it slightly, then stopped, from which it was evident that the machinery operating the device was of no great strength.



[Page 129]

*Copper snatched up a heavy chair and flung it into the gap.*

“Watch your step!” cried Cub in a warning voice, as Copper, ignoring risks of which he must have been aware, went on towards the opening.

Copper, growling a remark which Cub did not catch, raced on. Revolver in hand he jumped over the chair into the darkness beyond. Cub held his breath, fully expecting shots, but none came.

Trapper now joined Cub. "I've tied that guy to the bed," he announced. "Where's Copper?"

Cup pointed.

"Let's go," snapped Trapper.

Cub jumped over the chair. His torch revealed a narrow subway. The walls were of brick and obviously of fairly recent construction. Somewhere ahead, at a distance impossible to judge, a nebulous area of light was dancing. Cub made it out to be someone running in front of him, holding a torch, presumably Copper; it struck him as a most dangerous thing to do, but it was obviously impossible to proceed without a light of some sort. A pistol shot crashed, another, and another, and bullets came slithering and scuttering as they ricocheted from floor to walls along the tunnel. After that the only sound was the echoing thud of running feet. It was a weird, unreal effect, and Cub was not sorry when he came upon Copper standing at a point, a junction, where the tunnel ran into a subway of greater size. Here the brickwork was much older, besides being in a foul condition, and for a moment Cub wondered what they had struck. A ledge, a sort of catwalk about two feet wide running along one side of the tunnel, gave him a clue. He recalled seeing a picture of such a place in one of the illustrated magazines.

"This is one of the old London sewers," he told the others.

Copper answered that he already knew that. What worried him was, he could turn to left or right, and he was uncertain which way to go.

Trapper answered the question. After examining the ledge closely in the light of his torch he pointed to the right. "That's the way they went," he declared, and the pursuit was resumed as fast as circumstances would permit.

Cub, being lightest on his feet, took the lead. A sound of splintering woodwork some distance ahead spurred him on, and before he had gone far, grey light, light that could only be daylight, appeared at no great distance. As he drew near he saw that it came from a large jagged hole, as if the end of the tunnel had been boarded over and someone had smashed a way through it. Figures could be seen silhouetted against the light. There appeared to be several. He put on a spurt, and a moment later all lesser sounds were drowned in the throbbing roar of a powerful engine. Out of the corners of his eyes he noticed that the floor of the sewer, below him and on

the left, was now a turgid stream of water along which surged sinister ripples. It did not require much imagination to guess the cause. The engine that he could hear was the power unit of a boat of some sort.

With his attention now focussed on the figures that loomed darkly against the eerie light, Cub tore on. Sometimes the figures were a confused blur; at other times they seemed to open and close as they sank down into what he soon made out to be a boat. Then one of the figures detached itself from the rest. There was a shout. An arm was raised. It fell, and as it fell the detached figure recoiled and disappeared. There was a loud splash. Instantly the roar of the engine became deafening; then, as suddenly, it began to recede.

Panting, Cub arrived at the end of the tunnel just in time to see a motor boat in which several figures were hunched, fade into a pea-soup fog that hung low over the sullen waters of a large river which could only be the Thames. He perceived that dawn had broken, but he wasted no time in contemplation of it. Sick with disappointment he climbed through the jagged hole, which he now saw had been knocked through a large advertisement boarding facing the river, and stared about him. There was nothing he could do. There was no way to left or right. Water lapped at his feet. Remembering the splash he had heard he looked down at the water, not really expecting to see anything; but as he stared there was a swirl, and for a second a pallid face broke the surface. Shouting to the others who now ran up behind him he threw off his jacket and jumped in. Not knowing the depth of the water he dare not risk a dive. The sudden immersion nearly paralysed him, but groping about he found what he sought. His fingers closed in the material of a garment and he came up dragging a body with him. It was heavy, so heavy that alone he could not have got it out; but Copper, seeing his plight, helped him. Gasping, dripping water, Cub got to his knees to see Gimlet trying to do the same thing. Copper and Trapper were helping him.

Gimlet was conscious, but seemed half dazed. He was in a dreadful state. There was mud on his clothes and blood on the side of his face. His collar had been wrenched back to front and his hands had been fastened behind him with a piece of cord. This Copper lost no time in removing. Trapper gave Gimlet a handkerchief to wipe his face. Situated as they were there was nothing more they could do.

It was a minute or two before Gimlet could speak. Then he said, "Which way did they go?"

Cub pointed. "They got away in a motor boat."

Gimlet wrung the water from his hair and eyes. “No use worrying about it. They had everything set for a get-away. I’m lucky to be here. Br-r-r—it’s cold. Let’s get out of this.”

“What about your face, sir?” asked Copper. “Someone hit you pretty hard.”

Gimlet stood up. “It’s nothing serious. Wenson tried to crown me with the butt of his pistol. I’ll tell you about it later. There’s nothing we can do here. Let’s go home and get into some dry clothes. The police will never find that boat in this fog.”

They set off up the tunnel. Before they had gone far, lights appeared, and the sound of running footsteps could be heard. But the newcomers turned out to be a police sergeant and some constables. The sergeant challenged, but when he realised who they were he came on.

Gimlet told him that he need not go any farther, and why. As they walked back up the tunnel the sergeant informed them that the General was in the chapel. He went on to say that the cordon was just being formed when shots inside the chapel buildings had caused the General to give the order to break in. The police were now in occupation.

Reaching the underground chamber the first person they saw was the General, who, upon their arrival, greeted them with a cry of relief. “I was afraid they’d got you!” he exclaimed, speaking to Gimlet. Then, when he saw the condition they were in he suggested that they should go straight on to headquarters for a bath and a change of clothes. He would join them there as soon as he had made the arrangements called for by the situation.

Gimlet gave him a brief account of what had happened, after which, in a police car, they went on to Brummel Square.

## A WOLF COMES BACK

SOME three hours later, after a hot bath, an overdue meal and a change of clothes, in the presence of the General notes were compared and Gimlet was able to tell the others how he had fallen into the hands of the enemy, and what had happened afterwards—not, as he explained, that there was very much to tell.

The trouble really began, he revealed, when he had taken his seat on the platform of the village hall at Lorrington. When he sat down in his chair he was conscious of a sharp pain, a prick, and looking for the reason he discovered a drawing pin. He thought little of it at the time. He certainly did not connect it with the Werewolves. He took it to be a mischievous prank on the part of someone with a warped sense of humour, or else it had been left there, carelessly, by the people who had decorated the hall for the occasion. In the light of subsequent events he had realised that it had been deliberately planted there. The chair provided for him, as President, was in the middle; moreover, it was the largest, so there could be no mistake as to where he would sit. The point of the pin, asserted Gimlet, must have been treated with some sort of drug or poison, although there was no indication of that at the time.

“I imagine it would be one like this,” put in the General, taking a match-box from his pocket and shaking out of it a number of squat, rather fat drawing pins.

“Exactly,” agreed Gimlet quickly. “Where did you get those?”

“I found them at the chapel—to say nothing of some other interesting lethal devices,” returned the General. “Watch.” Picking up a pencil he pressed gently on the point of the pin. It sank slightly and two drops of liquid oozed out. “It works rather on the lines of a snake’s poison fangs—simple but effective,” murmured the General. “I imagine they could be used either for poison or dope, as the case demanded. But carry on.”

“In any case it must have been dope,” resumed Gimlet. “I remember feeling drowsy, but it was not until I stood up to speak that I realised that something was seriously wrong, and then it was too late to do anything about it. I recollect the lights going out, and that’s all. I must have lost consciousness. When I came round I was in the chapel, although I did not know it at the time.”

He went on to describe how the doctor, who was one of several people present, was just putting away a hypodermic syringe, having injected him



with an antidote for the drug. At any rate, his faculties quickly returned. When it was seen that he was fully conscious he was taken to an imitation courtroom where a mock trial was staged, with a masked man playing the part of judge. Wenson was there. He acted as the prosecuting counsel, reading a list of alleged crimes. There was no question of putting up any sort of resistance, explained Gimlet, because his hands were tied behind his back. Moreover, he was guarded by two men who wore the wolf head-dress of the organization.

Suddenly, he continued, there was a good deal of noise overhead, and soon afterwards the proceedings were interrupted when a man burst into the room to say that the police were upstairs. The result was a panic flight in which he hoped he might be overlooked and left behind. In this he was disappointed. He was grabbed by his guards and taken along the escape tunnel which now appeared. Wenson seemed determined that he should go with them, and that undoubtedly would have happened had not two factors combined to prevent it. The first was the speed of the pursuit, which gave Wenson no time to get the retreat properly organized; the second, said Gimlet, smiling at the recollection, was his own behaviour. Perceiving that he was doomed and so had nothing more to lose, he refused to walk, which meant that his guards had to half carry, half drag him along. This not only slowed down the escape, but kept the retreat in a state of pandemonium. Gimlet smiled again as he described how, on reaching the boat, he had kicked out at everyone who came within reach. This also helped to make the arrangements for departure run less smoothly.

Here the General put in another word. "What I can't understand is why they didn't shoot you out of hand."

"Some of them were most anxious to," replied Gimlet. "But you know what the average German is for implicit obedience to orders—not so much as a matter of willing discipline as because he is scared stiff of the people over him. Apparently Wenson's orders were to get me alive, and to give the devil his due he tried his utmost to do that. Had he not been cluttered up with me the whole bunch could have got away quite comfortably; as it was, there seemed to be a chance that if I continued throwing my weight about I might sink the ship—literally. Finally, as the business was getting urgent—we could hear someone running up the tunnel—even Wenson lost his temper and made a swipe at me with the butt of his pistol. I ducked, but I was not quite fast enough, with the result that instead of the pistol landing on my skull it caught me on the side of the face and knocked me into the drink."

"I saw that happen," declared Cub.

“That’s all there was to it,” concluded Gimlet. “Either they hadn’t time to finish me off or else they assumed that I had gone to the bottom for good; anyway, they left me to it. I should have gone to the bottom, too, if you fellows hadn’t turned up because with my hands tied I couldn’t swim. All I could do was hold my breath and kick out with my legs—and I couldn’t have gone on doing that for long.”

Cub then took up the story, giving Gimlet an account of all that had happened since he departed for Lorrington.

The General concluded the debate by describing how, in accordance with Cub’s plan, he was throwing a cordon round the chapel when the noise of shooting inside took them in with a rush. There was no opposition. Three casualties were picked up—an unconscious tramp, the Nazi who Trapper had tied to the bed, and the doctor. All were now dead. The tramp had come round and had been shot dead resisting arrest. The doctor had died of gunshot wounds on the way to hospital—presumably the shots that had been fired when Copper burst into the sick-room—and the Nazi had killed himself by poison in the same manner as those in the Hotel Europa. “In future we shall have to try to remember to unscrew these false teeth they carry,” observed the General drily.

“I put the River Police on to search for the motor boat right away, but they haven’t a hope while this infernal fog persists,” he continued. “We don’t even know which way the boat went, upstream or down. The Wolves may have another bolt-hole somewhere, like the one through which they escaped. They might have a hiding place on one of the hundreds of ships of one sort and another in the dock area. To start and search every one, every warehouse and every wharf, isn’t a practicable proposition. However, we can rely on the River Police to do everything possible. By the way, the casualties were taken to the mortuary. I put a man from the Yard on the job of going through their clothes to see if there was anything of interest, anything in the nature of a clue to where the others might be going. There was nothing, although after our experience with the two Wolves at the Europa that didn’t surprise me. Nazi security precautions were always like iron, so it is only reasonable to expect it from these fellows. The only remaining hope was the doctor’s house. I went there myself. There was nothing there, either. The man was unmarried—lived with a housekeeper. She’s a German of the sullen sort. She says she knows nothing—which may be true. Anyway, she won’t speak. The doctor seems to have been running a genuine practice; his books prove that. He may have been forced into this Werewolf business quite recently, and was then only called upon when he

was needed. Anyhow, the point is, up to the moment we've found nothing there likely to help us. I've still got a man searching."

"What's happening at the chapel?" asked Gimlet.

"I've got two of the best men from the Yard going through the place with a fine comb," answered the General. "If you feel up to it I was going to suggest that we went back to see if the search has produced results."

"I hope it has, or we're going to lose a lot of time trying to pick up the trail again," said Gimlet. "We've lost the one we were on, that's certain. The chapel, as a wolf den, is finished. As things fell out that couldn't be prevented, but it's a pity."

"The Wolves will have to show their tracks somewhere pretty soon," asserted the General.

"Yes, and when they do it will be to kill somebody," returned Gimlet bitterly. "Well, we'll do what we can. I'm still of the opinion that the chapel was not the general headquarters of the gang in this country. It may have been the London hideout, but Wenson was in charge there and he didn't strike me as being the big noise of the entire organization. In fact, I'm sure he wasn't, from the way he dealt with me. He was acting under orders. We know that the Wolves have an aircraft and unless I've missed my guess the King Wolf won't be far away from its base. It seems likely that he would have to go to Germany from time to time, and the only way he could do that would be by air."

"I think you're right," agreed the General. "Apart from going to Germany it is my experience that the head man of any crooked show places himself in the best position to get clear should the need arise. But let's go down to the chapel to see if anything has turned up to give us a fresh scent. That building has been in use for some time, so we've got a fair chance."

Cub stepped into the conversation. "Talking of picking up a fresh scent, sir, reminds me of the hunt," he said. "Would it be worth while trying to find out how those two Wolves who went hunting managed to get horses? They could hardly have brought them from Germany."

"I went into that right away," answered the General. "Obviously it was an angle not to be overlooked. The horses were hired from a local livery stable, by two strangers. They paid a deposit—which incidentally has been forfeited—and they haven't been seen since. The horses were found wandering about by a farm hand who recognised them and took them back to their stable. But let's get along to the chapel."

On arrival it was at once evident that the two expert searchers from the Yard had done their job well. The contents of every drawer, cupboard and

receptacle, had been collected, neatly arranged and numbered. The walls and floors had been probed for secret hiding places. The result was that a considerable amount of material had been accumulated, much of it of course, being wearing apparel which the Werewolves in the haste of their departure had not had time to pack. There was, in fact, so much stuff that time would be needed to go through it all. Evidence of Werewolf activity was there in plenty. There were weapons of many sorts, bottles and jars of chemicals, grenades, metal gas containers, garotting ropes, daggers—a miscellaneous collection that was not without interest although it served no useful purpose. As the General remarked, it was all stuff that could be replaced easily by the Wolves. In a cupboard had been found a number of the wolfish masks such as had first been seen at the Europa; some were fitted with gas filters, others not. Perhaps the most gruesome discovery was an axe, stated by the General to be a German execution axe, the purpose of which was known to them, although they did not discuss it.

The General, with the help of the men from the Yard, went over everything in turn, while the others watched, satisfied to leave the examination in the hands of men specially trained in the work. This occupied some time, and Cub, getting bored, went for a stroll round. Presently he found himself in the chapel. It was just as he had last seen it. Finding nothing of interest there he walked on to one of the windows that overlooked the street. There was only one person in sight—the Cockney newsagent with whom he had held a conversation on the occasion of his first visit. He was sweeping the pavement in front of his shop. After watching him for a moment it occurred to Cub that the man might be able to tell him something, for he recalled that he had made a remark about knowing most of the regular congregation by sight. Not with any great confidence, but feeling that he might as well be doing something, he unfastened the front door and stepped out.

The newsagent recognised him instantly, and greeted him with a wave. “What cheer!” he cried, pausing in his sweeping. “You must ’ave got it bad, mate.”

“Got what bad?” inquired Cub, sauntering along to the man.

“Why, the religious bug. To-day ain’t Sunday.”

“What of it?”

“Oh, nothin’. I jest wondered if you’d got a special prayer meetin’ on or somethin’.”

“What gave you that idea?”

“Well, first I see one o’ the regular churchgoers moochin’ round, then I see you come out. I thought maybe there was something goin’ on.”

Cub’s manner changed as the significance of these words dawned on him. “What’s that? You saw one of the regular congregation?”

“Yus.”

“Where?”

“’E was ’ere a minute ago. I think I saw ’im go round the back.”

“Ah,” breathed Cub. “I’ll go and find him.” By an effort he kept his voice normal, for if what the man had said was true there seemed to be more than a possibility that those inside were in danger. There was, he reasoned, a chance that the Wolf might be merely a scout, sent round to find out what was happening at the chapel; but even so, in that case there would be no need for him to approach so near. The police car outside would tell him all that he needed to know.

As soon as he was inside the building Cub quickened his steps. The thought in his mind was, should he try to find the Wolf or first warn the others that there was one about? He decided on the latter course, and hastened on towards the door of the vestry, through which he passed to reach the chapel. Reaching it he pulled up short. The door was shut. He was sure that he had left it open. None of the others would be likely to close it. Who, then, . . .? A sudden awareness of danger prompted him to draw his pistol. Taking a step forward on tip-toe, with the greatest possible caution he turned the door handle. To his great relief the door yielded to his pressure and he peeped inside.

One glance confirmed what he half suspected. A man, a young man who was a complete stranger to him, was there. Fortunately his back was towards him. He was working at feverish speed, cutting with a knife a small circle out of the wall paper; and this he did so easily that there was evidently a hollow behind it. This was proved when an instant later the man impatiently ripped aside the paper to disclose a piece of apparatus, rather like the plunger of a fire extinguisher. With a gasp of satisfaction he thrust the knife into his pocket and reached for the plunger.

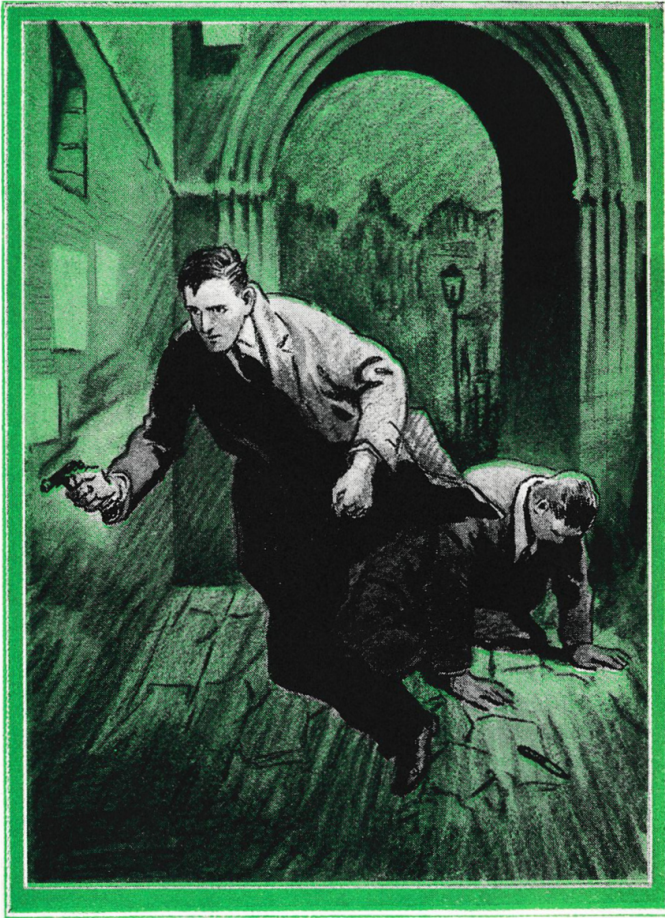
Now all this had happened in two seconds of time, but it was plenty long enough to give Cub an idea of what was going on. He had not stood still. He had the man covered, and consequently had ample reason to suppose that he had the situation under control. His voice cut across the room like the lash of a whip. “Don’t move. Get your hands up!”

At the sound the man started violently and looked over his shoulder. He saw Cub at once, of course, but his reactions were not in the least what Cub

expected. Instead of being nonplussed, or reaching for a weapon, he let out a yell of triumph, and before Cub could pull trigger, with a swift jerk he thrust the plunger home.

Cub's pistol spat, and although the bullet found its mark it was too late to prevent the movement. What had happened, just what the Wolf had done, he did not know, but the unmistakable triumph in the man's voice boded trouble, if nothing worse. Indeed, the expression of triumphant success still frozen on the Wolf's face as he slid slowly down the wall to collapse in a heap on the floor, terrified him. There was something almost inhuman about it.

A flying leap took him across the room. He flung open the opposite door to come face to face with the others, looking startled, on their way to ascertain the reason for the shot.



[\[Page 145\]](#)

*A flying leap took him across the room.*

“Get out!” shouted Cub. “Don’t ask questions—get out!”

Without further explanation he tore through the building, out of the back door and down the alley as fast as his legs would take him. Not until he reached what he considered a safe distance did he pull up and turn, to see the others coming along with expressions of bewilderment on their faces. The two official searchers followed slowly.

“Run!” yelled Cub.

“What’s all this about?” snapped Gimlet.

Feeling rather foolish as nothing had happened, Cub pointed at the chapel. “There’s a Wolf in there.”

Gimlet stopped. “Then what—?” he began. He got no further. A sheet of flame and smoke leapt skyward, and an instant later they were all flung to the ground by a tremendous explosion and a wave of blast that lifted them off their feet. They lay still with their hands clasped over the backs of their heads while debris rained down. As the clash and clatter died away Cub looked up to see a great pile of rubble where the chapel had been. The others, of course, were also looking at it, but several seconds elapsed before anyone spoke.

Then it was Copper who ejaculated. “Phew! Swipe me with a blanket! What a wowser.”

They all got to their feet—the General holding a pair of flying boots. From all sides came shouts of alarm. A police whistle shrilled.

Gimlet looked at Cub. “What was it?” he asked.

Cub told him what he had seen, and done. “I had a feeling that something of the sort was going to happen,” he concluded. “There must have been a delayed action fuse in the bomb to give the Wolf a chance to get out—which he would have done I suppose, if my bullet hadn’t stopped him. He’s inside under the wreckage. I hadn’t time to think of getting him out—I was in too much of a hurry to get out myself.”

The General looked at Gimlet and shrugged. “I suppose we should have taken precautions against such a thing happening,” he said wearily. “But there, it isn’t easy to think of everything when you are dealing with madmen. Let’s get back to headquarters. We can leave the local police to deal with this mess. I have at least saved the boots. Luckily I had them in my hand at the time.”

Just what the General meant by this was not clear to Cub, but he understood later.

The police car, which had been standing by the front door, was, of course, a complete wreck, but they hired a taxi which, under the General’s instructions, took them, not to Brummel Square as Cub expected, but to Scotland Yard. Asking the others to wait the General went inside, taking the flying boots with him. He was away about five minutes. When he returned it was without the boots, but he made no reference to them. The taxi went on to Brummel Square.



## DEAD MEN'S BOOTS

AFTER lunch, as they sat over their coffee discussing the situation that had arisen, Cub's curiosity regarding the flying boots was satisfied. He had a feeling that the General was waiting for something, and because of the reference to the boots at the time of the explosion he suspected that it had some connection with them, although he could not imagine what.

The telephone rang. The General answered it and had a long conversation with someone, although the person at the other end did most of the talking. The General's comments were confined to an occasional "Yes . . . quite so." Having rung off he returned to his seat.

With a ghost of a smile hovering about his lips he said: "I shall now have to let you into one of our little back-stage secrets. We have quite a number of departments at the Yard about which the public knows nothing, departments where the latest scientific knowledge is applied to the detection of crime. One such department would, I think, win the warm approval of that redoubtable sleuth, Mr. Sherlock Holmes, who, you may remember, had a wonderful eye for detail. He could tell, or he pretended to be able to tell, where a man came from by the colour of the mud on his boots. But that was before the era of fast transport. Nowadays, with travel made easy, colour is hardly enough. We prefer to rely on chemical analysis. Just before the explosion occurred in the chapel I was pleased to come across a pair of flying boots. It was not so much the boots that pleased me as the fact that there was a good quantity of mud on them. This was the most promising clue I had struck. It was interesting to note in the first place that the man who had used them, whom we must presume was an air pilot, found it necessary to operate from a small airfield—or from a place that was not, in fact, a regulation airfield. Most modern airfields are provided not only with a concrete or macadam apron in front of the hangars, but with concrete runways, for which reason pilots, air crews and passengers, are able to keep their footwear reasonably clean. The pilot in this case, however, had obviously been walking about a very muddy field. That was the first clue—a slender one, of course, because mud alone could not have given us even an inkling of the locality of this particular field." The General sipped his coffee.

"In the department of the Yard to which I referred a moment ago there are filed several thousand analyses covering every type of soil found in Great Britain. This has enabled the officer in charge of the department, who just rang me up, to state definitely that the mud on the boots is peculiar to

the eastern side of the county of Norfolk. He can be even more specific than that. The mud was picked up on the edge of one of the lakes, known locally as broads, or from one of the canals that sometimes connect them.”

“How did he work that out?” asked Gimlet.

“Had the mud been picked up from agricultural land—that is, arable land—analysis would reveal traces of organic or chemical manure, which in fact, it does not. Had the man been walking over grass land the question would not have arisen, because the boots could hardly have picked up so much mud. The mud on the boots is river mud. A further proof of that is, the mud contains only one sort of seed—stinging nettles. All earth contains a certain number of seeds, mostly grasses. But in damp earth they either grow or they rot—all except stinging nettle seeds. The seeds of the nettle will last under water for twenty years or more, which is why, when a river has been dredged, you will always find a good crop of nettles springing up on the bank. So the fact that the mud on the boots carries a number of stinging nettle seeds suggests, if it does not actually prove, that the wearer picked up the mud on the banks of a recently dredged waterway.”

“That fits in with what we already know,” asserted Gimlet. “I’m thinking of the type of aircraft we know the Wolves are using. A flying-boat or amphibian could land easily on one of the Norfolk Broads, which, when you come to think about it, are one of the few places where such an aircraft could land, outside marine airports. Moreover, some of the broads are very lonely, certainly at this time of the year. Another point worth taking into consideration too, is the fact that Norfolk is on the east coast, the most convenient point for flying to and from Germany.”

“Quite so.” The General sat back in his chair. “Well, gentlemen, there you are. I think you will agree that the Norfolk Broads should be given the once-over. It does not necessarily follow, of course, that the Wolves have made their headquarters there; but if we can locate the enemy’s air base we might get a line on it.”

“The only snag about that I can see is this: it’s going to take some time to cover all that ground,” observed Gimlet.

“We can save a lot of time by using aircraft ourselves,” the General pointed out. “I wasn’t thinking of exploring Norfolk on foot. We needn’t take to the air to do it. We can leave that to the Special Air Police, who have already helped us, and I am sure will be pleased to do so again. I’m all in favour of using up-to-date methods, particularly as the enemy is doing that. We must not forget too, that it takes a trained eye to pick out from the air objects on the ground.”

“Even if the Air Police had to reconnoitre the whole of the Broads area it wouldn’t take them very long,” put in Cub. “They carry cameras. They could photograph all likely spots, anything that might indicate an aircraft landing station.”

“Exactly,” agreed the General. “That is obviously the most expeditious way of setting about it. If everyone is agreed, I’ll ring up Bigglesworth, who is in charge of the air squad, to see what he can do about it.”

The General went to the telephone, put through the call on the private wire and had a long conversation. When he came back he said: “That’s fixed. Biggles—that’s what they call him—doesn’t let grass grow under his tyres, so to speak, when he takes on a job. He’s putting four machines in the air right away; in fact, he says he’ll go out himself. Visibility is good along the east coast so each machine will take on a zone and photograph any likely spots. He’ll have the photographs developed right away and bring the prints round this evening. That seems to be all we can do for the moment. You fellows had better get in a few hours rest while the opportunity offers. You can’t go on without sleep. If Bigglesworth should happen to spot anything you may have a busy time ahead of you. We must keep going if it is humanly possible, to prevent these fiends from resuming their programme of murder in their own time.”

This was agreed and the meeting adjourned.

Cub went to his room. He needed no rocking. Throwing off his jacket he fell on his bed and slept like a log for four hours, although he disputed the time hotly when, after what seemed like ten minutes he was awakened by Copper to be told that it was nearly six o’clock and that Sergeant Bigglesworth of the Air Police was below with a batch of photos.

Cub lost no time in getting into his jacket and joining the others in the conference room. Photographs, still damp, were lying all over the table, and the Chief of the Air Police, with a large magnifying glass in his hand, was talking about them. As Cub joined the party he smiled a greeting and went on with what he was saying.

“On the whole the reconnaissance would appear to be rather disappointing; but then, we could hardly expect these people to be so foolish, so ill-advised, as to litter the area with obvious signs of their presence. We were able to save a lot of time by ignoring the larger broads which, as they are overlooked by roads, hotels and houses, would hardly suit their purpose. As far as the lesser-known sheets of water are concerned we pin-pointed three places, one of which might turn out to be what you are looking for. The one which looks most promising came into Hebblethwaite’s

zone. He called me on his radio to look at it, which I did. I daren't go too low for fear of alarming the Wolves if they were there, but I had a good look and took several photos, both vertical and oblique, from different angles. Of course, there was no aircraft on view, but we could hardly expect that. Here are the prints. This particular piece of water is known locally as Grimston Broad. For reference purposes I have called it Objective A." Biggles picked up half a dozen enlarged photographs and arranged them in line on the table.

Taking a magnifying glass the General examined each one in turn. "There doesn't seem to be much here," he observed in a voice that held a suspicion of disappointment.

"Actually, there is more than you might suppose," returned Biggles. "Suppose I read the picture for you as I see it."

"Please do," invited the General.

"The first thing that might strike you is, the actual water area seems to be on the small side," began Biggles. "So it is, but the shape is important. As you can see, the water is in the shape of a letter T. Admittedly, the two arms are narrow, but arranged as they are they would enable a pilot to take off no matter in what direction the wind was blowing. In other words you can take it from me that an efficient pilot, in normal weather conditions, could put a marine aircraft down on that water and take it off again. The very fact that by reason of its shape no one in the ordinary way would imagine an aircraft landing on it, would all be in favour of these Nazis if, in fact, they are using it. The next point is this. It is just about as lonely a spot as you could find in England. There isn't a house within four miles. The nearest village is Reedsholm, and that's a good five miles away."

The General pointed with his pencil to a small black mark not far from the water. "What's this thing?" he inquired.

"I'm just coming to that," answered Biggles. "The nearest road, a second class road, is nearly three miles away, although from it there is what appears to be an overgrown track, originally an accommodation road, no doubt, leading to the building you just put your finger on. That is a windmill. As you probably know, windmills are a common feature in Norfolk. In passing I might mention—although it hasn't much bearing on our case—that the land near the windmill was once under cultivation. If you examine the photograph closely you can just see faint lines marking out what seem to be squares. Originally those lines were dykes. Apparently the land didn't pay for farming, or it may have been ruined by flood water—but we needn't bother about that." Biggles lit a cigarette.

“Originally, too, I suspect that Grimston Broad was connected by a waterway to the River Yare,” he continued. “You can see the line of rushes following the old river bed—or it may have been a canal. That interests us because it means that the windmill could, if it wished, employ water transport, and that is borne out by what seems to be the remains of a large boathouse—here.” Biggles pointed to a dark spot at the extreme end of the broad, where the water approached nearest to the windmill. “The place is a ruin, or it appears to be,” he went on. “I looked at it very closely. It appears small in the photo, but when it was in order it could have accommodated a barge; and even now, assuming that it isn’t an absolute ruin, it could easily accommodate an aircraft of the folding-wing type.”

“Aren’t you drawing rather a long bow?” queried the General dubiously. “I mean, aren’t you rather trying to make the place fit what we would like it to be?”

Biggles smiled. “Possibly. But I’m only telling you what I see; and that is supported by my final observation, which is this. On the face of it, these buildings—the windmill and the boathouse—haven’t been used for years. As a matter of fact, they are both in use now, or they were until recently. There is no actual track leading from the windmill to the boathouse. Doubtless there was one years ago, but it is now overgrown with long grass; but from topsides long grass can tell quite a story. For instance, I can tell you that the grass was disturbed as recently as this morning. It was wet early on, and foggy, you remember? Fog or mist leaves grass loaded with water. If you disturb the grass the water falls off, so that from the air it shows up as a different colour. You can often see that on the grounds if you walk across a field of wet grass; from the air one sees an unmistakable track. This morning somebody walked from that windmill to the boathouse, or *vice versa*. My final point is, perhaps, the most important. There is, in that old boathouse, a piece of machinery of some sort. For a distance of thirty or forty yards in front of it the water is of a slightly different shade to the rest. That is caused by oil on the water. If there is oil there then we may take it that a machine of some sort isn’t far away.”

“Ah,” breathed the General. “That makes a difference. It begins to look as if this might be the place we’re looking for.”

“It’s the most likely place I could find in the short time at my disposal,” replied Biggles.

“You didn’t see anybody moving about near the windmill?”

“Had I done so I should have dismissed the place from my mind instantly,” answered Biggles, smiling faintly. “Wolves don’t walk about in

the open when hunters are on the trail.”

“True enough,” agreed the General. “Then you saw no sign of life at all?”

“None, which again is a factor on our side,” returned Biggles. “I am taking the expression ‘signs of life’ literally. On or around most of the broads you will see a certain amount of wild life, particularly birds. The fact that there was not a single bird, not even a gull, near the windmill or the boathouse, supports my argument that someone is there, or has been there. Whoever it was disturbed the birds. It is quite possible that someone was moving about right up to the time of my arrival; but as soon as he heard aircraft approaching he would take cover, naturally—or we can assume he would if he was up to no good. If the windmill was occupied by a miller it would seem reasonable to suppose that the sails would be revolving, as there was quite a fair breeze; but they were not. The place looked abandoned, but in my opinion someone is there, or had been there this morning. I needn’t remind you that during the war a lot of places looked abandoned when, in fact, they were far from it. Well, sir, there it is. I think that’s all I have to say.”

“In your opinion, this place is worth exploring?”

“Definitely. If you like I’ll keep an eye on the place from the air for a day or two, but it doesn’t necessarily follow that I should get results because even if the Wolves are there they would be most unlikely to show themselves. In all probability they operate only after dark.”

“In view of what has happened during the past twenty-four hours I imagine the Wolves must be pretty busy,” murmured the General. He thought for a moment. “I’ll tell you what I think is the best plan, Bigglesworth. I’ll get Captain King to go and have a look round this place right away. It shouldn’t take him long to ascertain if there is anyone there or not. If we find we are on a false scent I’ll get in touch with you in the morning and you can resume the reconnaissance, if we tackle every possible place in turn sooner or later we ought to find what we’re looking for. Naturally, we will start at Objective A, as it is the most promising.”

Biggles got up. “I think that’s your best line, sir. I’ll leave the photographs with you. You can study them, and so get the lay-out of the place at your finger-tips before you start operations. I may fly over to have a look round as soon as it gets daylight, otherwise I won’t take any further action until I hear from you.”

“Very well—we’ll leave it at that,” agreed the General. “Thanks, Bigglesworth, I’m much obliged for your cooperation.”

“That’s what we’re here for, sir,” returned Biggles, taking his departure.

As soon as the door had closed behind him the General turned to Gimlet. “Well, how do you feel about having a look at this place?” he suggested.

“I think the sooner I’m on my way the better.”

“Good. I’d better stay here where you can get in touch with me should it become necessary. If you need anything, let me know.”

“We’ll see how it pans out,” asserted Gimlet.

The General looked at his watch. “The time is now seven o’clock. By taking one of the fast cars you ought to be on the spot somewhere about ten.”

“Unless anything goes wrong, or if we draw a blank, we ought to be back by daybreak,” said Gimlet. “If the Wolves are there—well, if we do nothing else we’ll stir the devils up and keep them on the move. What do you say, corporal?”

Copper grinned. “Every time a coconut, sir.”

Gimlet rose. “All right. We’ll see about putting our stuff together.”

“Just one last reminder,” said the General quietly. “There is no need for me to tell you what you are taking on. If you *should* run into a pack of Wolves don’t hesitate to use your guns. Regard the operation as a military one rather than a police job. I’ll go so far as to suggest that you imagine the war is still on, and that your task, as commandos, is to take a Nazi military post. Whatever happens you can rely on my support. Any Wolves you find will not submit to arrest, you may be sure of that. They will do their utmost to kill you. Failing that—as we have seen—they will kill themselves. If you can take prisoners without incurring unnecessary risks—well, do so; but in a business of this sort, my policy would be to shoot first and ask questions afterwards. In the interests of those fellows who have been sentenced to death for doing their duty—indeed, in the interests of society—these fanatics must be wiped out, and I don’t care how you do it. Nothing could be too bad for them. Already they have blood on their hands. See that they don’t get more. That’s all. Good luck.”

“They’ll get from me what they gave other people,” declared Gimlet grimly.

“That goes for me, too—my oath it does,” muttered Copper.

“All right,” concluded Gimlet. “Now we’ve got that clear, let’s move off.”

## “LIKE OLD TIMES”

IT was shortly after ten when the police car cruised quietly into the hamlet of Reedsholm. A few lights showed, but for the most part the villagers had evidently retired for the night. Gimlet, who was driving, did not stop, but taking the secondary road pointed out by Biggles, went on with dimmed lights through a flat, dreary landscape, for another mile before slowing down to walking speed.

“We’re getting near enough,” he remarked. “Better not get too close. Keep your eyes open for somewhere to park the car—either side, doesn’t matter which, but we must put it out of sight if we can.”

A good parking place was not easy to find, for the country was open, and being windswept could boast of few trees; but after going on for half a mile or so Cub spotted what Gimlet presently agreed was an ideal place. A farm track branched off from the road, and a short distance from it plunged through a thicket of stunted birches and gorse. In the middle of this the car was stopped and they got out. Short of anyone actually walking down the track, an unlikely occurrence at that time of night, the presence of the car would not be suspected.

Looking round as he stepped out Cub decided that the night was well suited to their purpose. A young moon and occasional clusters of stars played hide and seek behind a high layer of cirrus cloud that was drifting up slowly from the west, so that while it was dark there would be just sufficient light to enable them to find their objective without the aid of flash lamps.

As far as the landscape was concerned, nothing more dreary and depressing could be imagined, thought Cub, as he gazed around. The country was practically flat, without a conspicuous landmark of any kind. On one side of the road it appeared to be mostly gorse and heather, with an occasional silver birch, stunted and twisted by the wind. To the left, the direction they would have to take, the land fell away slowly to a wilderness of marsh, a vast area of coarse grass broken only by growths of bullrushes, with here and there small pools of water, the result of recent rain, lying pale and stark under the moon. Every hollow, no matter how small, was draped in dank mist. Not a light showed. Not a sound broke the sullen silence. A more melancholy spectacle could not have been visualised, decided Cub, as he turned away to help with the equipment.

“Blimy! This *is* like old times,” murmured Copper softly, as he fingered a Sten gun affectionately. “Do you think we shall need this, sir?”



“We’ll take it to be on the safe side,” answered Gimlet. “You haven’t forgotten how to handle one, I hope?” he added slyly.

“There are some things you don’t ever forget, sir, and this is one of ’em,” answered Copper simply. “What say you, Trapper, old pal? Am I right?”

“*Tch!* Every time,” agreed Trapper.

“Are you goin’ ter take yer bow-and-arrer?”

“It may come in useful,” asserted Trapper softly.

“Better take a rifle as well,” ordered Gimlet. “What about you, Cub?”

“I think I shall be able to hold my own with my thirty-eight,” replied Cub.

“All right; then as you haven’t much to carry, you can hump these along,” requested Gimlet, passing a small but heavy bag.

“What’s in here, sir?” inquired Cub.

“Grenades,” returned Gimlet. “I thought we’d better have a few with us in case we have to do any winkling. It’s always a good thing to have any tools you are likely to want with you—one doesn’t always have time to go home and fetch them.”

In a few minutes they were ready to march. Gimlet locked the doors of the car and made an unhurried survey of the landscape. Then he looked at his watch. “The time is now ten-thirty,” he announced. “We have an hour’s march in front of us. I daren’t risk taking the car any nearer in case the enemy has scouts out, and over these damp marshes sound travels a long way on a still night. It’s an even chance that the whole thing may turn out to be a flop, but it’s better not to look at it that way. Bigglesworth knows what he’s talking about, so we’ll behave as if we knew for certain that the enemy is in force at the objective. In fact, we’ll act as though we were in Germany with the war still on. No noise, and no more talking than is necessary, and then speak in whispers. If we draw blank—well, we shall have a good laugh about it. If we are on the right track there’ll be nothing to laugh about. Our best chance will be to spring a surprise, and then hit hard and fast. All right. If we’re all ready let’s move along. The idea is to keep parallel with the road until we strike the track that leads to the windmill. If we tried marching on a compass course across this marsh we might find ourselves bogged. Let’s go.”

In single file and in silence, with Gimlet leading, the party set off. Cub took second place and Copper brought up the rear.

More than once during the march that followed Cub found it hard to convince himself that this was really happening. Everything conspired to

make it seem like a dream—the gloom, the silence, the lack of colour, the vague outlines of the landscape and the apparent lack of anything solid. Together these created an atmosphere of unreality not easy to dispel. More difficult still did he find it to believe that this was happening in England. It was something that belonged to the past, to the period known as the War, a curious interlude in his life that was already becoming a memory. It was as though he was in some strange way living something over again, something that had already happened—which in a way was true, for he had made several such marches, with the same companions and in similar circumstances. Instinctively nerves became keyed up, each one super-sensitive, ready on the slightest provocation to play tricks with the imagination. Commonplace features that occurred by the wayside, features that would pass unnoticed or ignored in the broad light of day, became distorted, became objects of suspicion, of apprehension and of fear. A tuft of gorse became a crouching man, and the rustle of bullrushes, moved by an imperceptible breath of air, became the swish of enemy feet advancing through long grass. It was an eerie sensation too, this marching, marching, marching, moving over the ground without seeming to get anywhere—for one aspect of the landscape was as another—towards an objective which, still unseen, lurked somewhere in the mysterious distance ahead. It seemed hours before Gimlet held his right hand high and the party came to a halt.

Turning left Gimlet gazed steadily for some time, and then pointed to what appeared to be a long strip of grey material lying across the marsh, perhaps a quarter of a mile away. “That’s Grimston Broad,” he whispered. “The windmill is a trifle to the right. We should soon see it against the sky. We’ll have a look at the boathouse first. That may tell us something. I think we might try a straight march now. If we strike a wet patch we shall have to make a detour. Keep your eyes skinned.”

Copper was staring into the gloom. “There’s no light at the windmill or we should see it.”

“If they’re there they’ll have the place blacked-out for fear of attracting attention,” returned Gimlet. “Let’s move on. Open out a bit—say, to intervals of ten yards.”

The march was resumed, in the same order, with even more caution, Gimlet stopping frequently to survey the landscape, crouching when the moon sailed clear of the clouds. Cub also examined the ground around methodically, but could not make out a movement of any sort. In the heart of the lonely waste the silence seemed even more intense, and such sounds as were audible from time to time were so out of place, and so distant, that they

might have belonged to another world. Once it was a church clock striking the hour of eleven, and, shortly afterwards, the whistle of a locomotive.

Before they had gone very far the gaunt sails of the windmill slowly took shape against the sky, like black arms upflung in a sinister 'stop' signal. The actual boathouse could not be seen because a straggling clump of osiers, near which it was situated, intervened. Making no more noise than shadows, the party moved nearer and ever nearer to it, and it was during a halt, when they were no more than a hundred yards away, that a minor incident occurred which, for uncanny effect, surpassed anything in Cub's experience.

It began when the silence was stabbed by a sound that can best be described as a *honk-honk*. Cub thought it was a motor car sounding its horn, and he went flat, as did the others. Peering over the fringe of grasses in front of his face he stared in the direction of the sound, expecting to see a vehicle. He could see nothing, yet a moment later the sound came again, closer this time, a single *honk*. This time it came from somewhere in the air. Listening with every nerve strained and muscles tense, Cub soon became aware of another sound, a musical swishing hum that rose and fell with machine-like regularity. It seemed to approach so quickly, and was now so close, that instinctively he ducked; and then, as he realised suddenly what it was, his nerves relaxed and drama came near to comedy. Suddenly out of the tenuous mist, to swing overhead not twenty feet above, appeared a skein of geese flying in perfect V formation. As the flight passed over the leader let out another *honk-honk*, and after the utter silence the sound was so loud and so incongruous that Cub could have laughed. The weird noise receded swiftly and the birds were soon lost to sight.

Gimlet raised himself and gave the advance signal.

The next five minutes would be, Cub knew, the critical time. If a sentry was on the watch, or should there be anything in the nature of an automatic alarm signal set, it was now that their presence would be discovered. Time seemed to stand still. The forward movement became slower and slower. Gimlet, who was ten yards ahead of Cub, sometimes stopped and spent a full minute staring at the boathouse, which could now be seen, not clearly, but rather as a confused dark mass with its outline broken up by straggling osiers. At a distance of perhaps a dozen paces Gimlet signalled to the others to join him.

When the party had mustered he breathed: "I'm going on alone now. I can't hear anything, and there are no lights that I can see, but it wouldn't be safe to take too much for granted. Cub, you'll stay here. Trapper will stay with you. Copper, find yourself a position out of sight between the boathouse and the windmill. If anyone is here, and bolts, that's the way he'll

go. Stop him, but avoid shooting if possible. The more silently we work now the better chance we shall have. If trouble starts in the boathouse you'd better come in. If all remains quiet stay where you are till I come back. Is that clear?"

"Clear enough, sir," whispered Copper.

Without speaking again Gimlet moved like a wraith towards the boathouse. Cub was able to watch him for a minute, then the shadow merged into the dark silhouette of the building. His heart began to beat faster now, as it always did on such occasions. He was very conscious of it, but there was no way of steadying it. Each tiny sound, magnified out of all proportion by the situation, reacted on it as on a delicate instrument. There was nothing unusual about this, of course. Suspense is always a greater strain than action. Ten minutes passed—it seemed much longer—and then he saw Gimlet coming back. He was walking upright so he knew there was no immediate cause for concern. Indeed, an unpleasant feeling of disappointment, that they had drawn a blank, that this was all a wasted effort, surged through him. This emotion was soon corrected, however.

"Fetch Copper," commanded Gimlet curtly, as he came up.

In a minute Cub had carried out the order, and Gimlet led the party into the osiers. "Now listen carefully," he said softly. "I think we're on the right track. There's nothing in the boathouse, but it has been in use quite recently. It has a feeling, a smell, as if people were in there not long ago. It isn't a ruin. It may have been one some time ago, and it still looks like one from the outside, but the inside has been repaired and it is now snug and watertight—and light-proof. The water—that is, the lake—comes right in, and there are recent footsteps in the mud on either side. There's a big store of oil and petrol, which may be aviation spirit—I don't know. The place is being used either for a motor boat or an aircraft—at least, I can't see how it can be anything else. There's an entrance on the landward side but the door's locked. The gable end overhanging the lake is open and I was able to get in by wading. There's nobody there at the moment."

"Then it's no go, sir," muttered Copper.

"Not so far as this place is concerned. Whatever type of vehicle is using the place it isn't there now, and without any idea of how long it is going to be away I don't think it would be advisable to sit here and wait for it to come back. We'll try the windmill."

Cub, who happened to be gazing in the direction of the building, stiffened suddenly. "*Ssh!*" he breathed, catching Gimlet by the arm to add weight to his warning.

They all stood motionless for several seconds. Then, as nothing happened, Gimlet said quietly: "What was it? Did you think you saw something?"

"I saw a flash of light," answered Cub. "It may have been a window or it may have been a door opening, I couldn't have been mistaken. There's somebody there."

"Stand fast," breathed Gimlet.

They heard a man approaching before they saw him. He stumbled over something and cursed. An electric torch showed for a moment before being switched off again. Then a dark figure separated itself from the black mass of the windmill and the matter was no longer in doubt. A man was coming down to the boathouse. Before he reached it he stopped and looked back. The reason became apparent when a second figure appeared, hurrying, following the same track. He overtook the first man and they continued together. Even more important than their appearance was the fact that they spoke in low tones, and the language they used was not English. It was German. Cub recognised the sound of it although he was not able to distinguish the actual words. Hardly daring to breathe he waited to see what Gimlet would do.

Gimlet did nothing. He might have been a block of stone for all the movement he made.

The two men reached the landward side of the boathouse. A key scraped in a lock. A chain clinked. A door rasped as it was pushed open and the men disappeared from sight.

"We could have grabbed those two," breathed Copper.

"We shall get them with less noise where they are," averred Gimlet. "Before I start knocking people about I want to be sure that they're the people we're after."

"They were talking German," said Cub softly.

"So I heard. But they might be a couple of German prisoners, posted here for land work, sent out by a farmer to do some job or other. There are plenty of German prisoners about."

"I'd forgotten that," confessed Cub.

"We shall soon tell from their conversation what they are," asserted Gimlet. "If we decide to nail them we shall handle them better where they are than outside. They didn't lock the door behind them or we should have heard it. Let's go and see if we can find out what they're doing; that will be the guide to our future actions. Quietly."

This conversation had, of course, been carried on in voices so low that only those for whom they were intended could hear them.

Gimlet moved forward and the others followed. From a distance of five yards they learned all they wanted to know for the men, behaving as though they were sure they had nothing to fear, made plenty of noise and spoke in ordinary voices as they went about whatever task they had come to do. The language was German, which was as well known to Cub as his own tongue.

Said one, with a short laugh: "I'd rather be here in the middle of these damned Englanders than sitting at home being told what I can do by the swines, even if there is a risk."

"There is no risk here," replied the other. "For us this is the safest place in the world. Why should anyone come here? I only wish the Fuehrer was here to see how his Wolves still sharpen their teeth on English bones."

The conversation was continued on these lines, until Gimlet, who could also speak German, nudged Cub, and laying a finger on his lips moved slowly towards the door.

At this moment a new sound was borne on a slant of wind to Cub's ears. It was not loud, but it was significant. It was the whine of a gliding aircraft, surprisingly close. Apparently the sound was also heard by the two men inside, for one of them said sharply. "So! Here they come. Get the lights on, Karl."

There was a swift movement inside the boathouse, and a split second later the reeds that lined both sides of the lake were illuminated by a pale, ghostly light. Cub knew enough of aviation to realise that these were boundary lights that had been switched on to mark the landing area.

Gimlet evidently realised it too, for he swung round and whispered tersely: "That machine's coming here. We've got to get these two before it lands. Trapper, stand fast to stop either of them getting back to the windmill. Corporal, you take the water entrance, and get them if they try to bolt out that way. Come on, Cub."

Gimlet moved swiftly towards the door.

Overhead a shrill whine announced that the aircraft was nearly down.

## OBJECTIVE A

CUB'S paramount sensation as he stepped forward with Gimlet was one of curiosity to see what the men inside were doing. Of course, he experienced that tingling sensation that usually precedes an offensive action, but this feeling only had the effect of putting him on his toes, as the saying is. He had left the bag of bombs in the grass because this was obviously an occasion when they would not be needed, but he had his thirty-eight in his hand, not so much because he intended using it—unless he was compelled to do so in self-defence—as because it gave him confidence.

They reached the door. It was ajar. Gimlet gave it a gentle touch with his foot and the scene inside was revealed, in the light of a small electric lamp, as clearly as a picture thrown on a screen. One of the men, the nearer, was bending down doing something to a rope. The other was standing at the far end of the building gazing up into the sky, apparently watching for the aircraft to appear. It was this man who saw them first. He may have heard a sound, or caught a movement out of the corner of his eyes; or perhaps it was sheer instinct that made him swing round suddenly; but turn he did, and at once saw Gimlet, who was already inside and still advancing.

The man's reaction was the natural one. He let out a sharp cry of alarm and his hand flashed to his pocket. From this moment things happened faster than they can be described.

On hearing the cry, the man with the rope looked up. How much he saw is questionable, for the next instant he went flying backwards as Gimlet's foot came in contact with his chest. Gimlet did not stop. He took two jumps forward, side-stepped, and hurled his revolver into the face of the second man, who by this time had drawn a pistol although he had not had time to raise it. Gimlet's revolver found its mark and sent the man reeling. The Nazi's pistol exploded with a dull *whoof*. The charge, whatever it was, struck the ground, sending mud flying in all directions. Before he could use it again a tall figure loomed up behind him. There was a thump, a gasping intake of breath, and the Wolf collapsed like an empty sack.

Cub only saw this in a detached sort of way, because his attention was occupied by the man Gimlet had kicked over. He was not badly hurt, it seemed; but taken entirely by surprise his actions were defensive rather than offensive. He had fallen on the muddy bank with his legs in the water; he tried to get up, at the same time scrambling away from Cub, who made a rush at him. Cub's haste was his undoing. He, too, slipped on the mud, and

sprawled flat on the man already there. The result was a wrestling bout which lasted for perhaps ten seconds, at the end of which time Gimlet took a hand in the affair. Cub did not see exactly what happened, but feeling his opponent go limp he scrambled quickly to his feet to see Gimlet bending over him.

There was no time for explanations, nor even for an examination of the field of conflict, for Copper in a hoarse whisper announced that the aircraft was down on the water. Actually, Cub was aware of this, for he had heard the swish of the keel and the surge of water as the machine landed.

Gimlet gave his orders. He called Trapper. Then he said, "Get those fellows trussed up. Put something in their mouths to keep them quiet in case they come round, then dump them in the osiers. Make it snappy. We've only got two minutes." Having said this Gimlet strode to the end of the boathouse that overlooked the lake. Cub followed him to see the machine only forty yards away, surging slowly under short bursts of throttle towards the place where they stood.

Noticing Cub beside him, Gimlet told him sharply to take up a position at the other door and watch the direction of the windmill. The wisdom of this was evident, as Cub perceived. It was not the moment for they themselves to be surprised by an attack from the rear. He took up his stand, while Copper and Trapper, having tied up their men, dragged them with scant ceremony into the osiers, where they left them.

By the time this was done a voice was hailing from the aircraft, and it was evident that the affair, far from being finished, had barely begun. As far as Cub was concerned two things were conspicuously clear. The first was that they were now definitely committed to the undertaking, no matter how long the odds were against them. Whether they liked it or not they would have to go on. The second was that the two men who had come down from the windmill had known about the arrival of the aircraft. Their job was to handle it and bring it to its mooring. Much depended now on how many people there were in the machine, passengers and crew. However, there was no time to indulge in speculation on this point.

Gimlet gave his orders as quickly as the circumstances demanded. Copper and Trapper were instructed to take cover inside the boathouse; they were to watch events, and provide assistance if and where it was most needed.

"They'll know we're not part of their organization as soon as they clap eyes on us," said Cub.



“I’m well aware of it,” answered Gimlet. “All we can do is keep in the shadow as far as possible so they don’t get a clear view of us until they’re all out, by which time we shall be able to see what we’re up against. There may be only one man—the pilot. If so, it should be easy.”

Cub said nothing, but he was thinking fast. From the size of the machine, a flying-boat, it could quite easily hold half a dozen people, and if that turned out to be so, the scrimmage that would inevitably occur in the boathouse was going to be a grim business, particularly if shots were fired. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish friend from foe, and both parties might well cause casualties on its own side. However, there was no time to take measures to prevent this. There was no time to do anything, for the machine, still moving slowly, had reached the boathouse.

A cockpit cover scraped as it was thrown back. The pilot stood up. Cub, standing well back in shadow, could see his silhouette against the sky.

“Are you there, Karl?” called a voice, speaking in German.

“*Ja*,” answered Cub.

“Then why don’t you show a light, you fool?” demanded the pilot irritably. “You know who I’ve got on board. Let’s have a little efficiency.”

So the pilot was not alone, thought Cub swiftly, as he switched on his torch and directed the beam full on the pilot more with the intention of dazzling him than for any other reason.

“Be careful where you’re flashing that light,” protested the pilot, who seemed a bad-tempered fellow. “Catch!” A rope swished through the air and hit Cub in the face. However, he caught hold of it, took in the slack and drew the aircraft in. By this time Gimlet had also switched on his torch, so that while those inside the boathouse were in black shadow the aircraft was bathed in light. This, of course, was a tremendous advantage to those behind the torches.

“Haul away,” ordered the pilot. “What are you waiting for?”

Cub had to put his pistol in a pocket in order to use both hands on the rope. Gimlet came to his assistance and they backed to the far end of the boathouse dragging the machine with them.

“All right, that’s enough,” said the pilot curtly, and without giving any warning of his intention, jumped down, landing almost on top of Cub, so that when he looked up their faces were less than a yard apart. For a split second they both stood still, the Nazi and Cub, staring at each other. Cub saw suspicion then fear leap into the Werewolf’s eyes. His lips parted and he sprang back, his hand going to his pocket. He may have forgotten that there was another man in the boathouse. At any rate he did not see him. He never

did see him, for Gimlet, who had taken a swift pace forward, brought his revolver down on the helmeted head and the man collapsed without a sound.

“Get him out of the way,” said Gimlet in a low, tense voice, and without waiting to see the order obeyed strode to the cabin door and opened it.

Copper darted forward, picked up the unconscious man and carried him out of sight.

With what interest Cub watched the cabin door can be better imagined than described. He stared, fascinated, wondering what was going to happen next. In particular he wondered what Gimlet would do, and what he was expected to do. No order had been given, nor could be given. It was one of those occasions when every member of the party would have to act on his own initiative.

Gimlet held the door wide open and stood behind it. At first Cub thought this was a curious thing to do, but then he saw the reason for it. Gimlet wanted to ascertain the numerical strength of the enemy before he tackled him; and just what form the attack would take would depend on the number of men they had to deal with. He turned the beam of his torch on the muddy bank so that those inside could see where to put their feet.

A man stepped out of the aircraft—a youngish man. In his left hand he carried a black portfolio. Having alighted he turned and held out a hand to someone inside. A second figure stepped out—this time a heavily-built man in a fur coat.

“Two,” counted Cub, praying fervently that there would be no more.

Another man jumped out—again a young man.

“Three.” The number registered itself on Cub’s brain. He was holding his breath under the strain of watching the drama unfold.

To the third man, yet another one inside handed out two suitcases.

As the fourth figure emerged, to Cub’s unbounded relief he closed the door behind him, indicating that he was the last.

All four passengers were standing where they had alighted, like four sheep waiting for a shepherd to guide them. It was clear that they had no suspicion of anything wrong. Said the man in the fur coat, speaking in a deep commanding voice: “Where is the pilot? What is he doing? Why does he leave us standing here?”

Gimlet answered the question. Speaking from behind them he spoke in German, and there was a brittle quality in his voice that made Cub’s nerves jump.

“Everyone will raise his hands above his head and stand quite still,” ordered Gimlet.

The words were received with a sort of shocked silence. None of the men moved. It was almost as if their brains had failed to comprehend the order. The only sound was a soft squelch of mud as Cub, pistol in hand, walked two paces nearer. The beam of his torch, held in his left hand, threw the picture into sharp relief.

“Any man who has not raised his hands in three seconds will be assumed to be resisting arrest, and will be shot forthwith,” went on Gimlet relentlessly.

Very slowly one man raised his hands. Another followed, and after a short interval, another. Only the man in the fur coat had not moved.

“Is this a military force?” he inquired.

“It is,” answered Gimlet.

“Then in the event of surrender I shall be entitled to the privileges of a prisoner of war?”

“There is no war apart from the one you have thought fit to wage,” returned Gimlet grimly. “You are entitled to nothing.”

Cub drew a deep breath. Things were, he thought, going well. And they may have continued to go well had there not at this juncture been an interruption. From somewhere not far away there was a scuffle and a cry of alarm, cut off short. Cub learned subsequently that a man had come down from the windmill, possibly to greet the new arrivals. Copper, who was watching, saw him coming, waited for him and knocked him down, although unfortunately he did not succeed in doing this without a certain amount of noise. Considering everything the noise was negligible, but it was enough to be heard by those inside the boathouse. As far as the prisoners were concerned it seemed to break a spell. Perhaps they thought that assistance was at hand. Be that as it may, as if actuated by a single brain the group broke apart and each man made a dash for liberty.

Gimlet’s gun roared twice. Sparks streamed, smoke swirled. There was the vicious *whoof* of a gas pistol. Mud spattered. A lump struck Cub in the face, causing him to wince and drop his torch. A dark figure loomed up in front of him, an arm swinging as if to strike. Cub fired from the hip and the figure sprawled forward, knocking him down. In the flash of his pistol he caught a fleeting glimpse of someone jumping into the aircraft. As he scrambled up there was a splash, and another splash, followed by the thud of running feet. Came a shout, a shot, and the vibrant twang of Trapper’s bow.

Gimlet appeared, dripping water. Dashing past Cub he went on to the door. Cub followed. Trapper appeared.

“Did you get him?” Gimlet fired the question.

“Okay, sir—he’s down,” answered Trapper dispassionately.

Gimlet swung round, sweeping the floor of the boathouse with his torch. Two figures lay sprawled on the mud. He picked up the black portfolio that lay near one of them. “There’s another one somewhere,” he said sharply.

“He’s in the machine,” informed Cub, remembering what he had seen.

They all looked at the aircraft.

“Look out! Down!” snapped Gimlet, and they flung themselves flat.

They were only just in time. A machine-gun roared, making a terrible noise in the confined space, and a stream of bullets swept over them. A pile of petrol cans at the back of the boathouse came down with a crash. Cub could see the weapon that caused the mischief projecting from a cabin window. He fired at it without effect. Then Copper’s Sten gun came into action, tearing wood, fabric and strips of metal from the side of the machine.

“Outside! Run for it!” yelled Trapper suddenly.

Cub was already halfway to his feet, for he had seen what was about to happen. A stench of petrol filled his nostrils. Blue flames danced in the air as the vapour, ignited by the flash of Copper’s gun, took fire.

There was a wild rush for the door. Again they were only just in time, for hardly were they outside when there was a dull explosion, and in another second the boathouse was a blazing furnace.

Copper moved towards it.

“What are you going to do?” demanded Gimlet.

“Get those fellows out.”

“Stay where you are. No one could go into that hell and live.”

This was obviously true, for they had to back farther and farther away from the fierce heat.

“It’s no use wasting time here,” said Gimlet curtly. “The cat’s out of the bag. The windmill must be buzzing. Let’s see what’s happening there. Cub, fetch the bombs. We’re likely to need them now.”

Cub ran to the osiers and returned with the bag.

“Open order, and swing away to the right so that we haven’t the light of the fire behind us,” commanded Gimlet. “Keep going until we run into opposition, then take cover. Shoot at anyone you see. The only people here beside ourselves are Wolves and that windmill is the den.”

As a matter of detail, in this statement Gimlet was not entirely correct, as was made evident when a voice, rich with honest Norfolk brogue, suddenly shouted. “What do you fellers think you’re a doin’ of, eh? Come on, I want you, and you’d better come quiet like.”

Out of the smoke that was drifting across the landscape stepped a policeman, evidently the local constable.

Cub smiled, for anything more utterly incongruous could hardly be imagined. What amused Cub was the police officer’s calm self-assurance as, single-handed and unarmed, he stepped forward to arrest four men.

“Well, strike Old Riley!” cried Copper delightedly. “I’ll take my oath that couldn’t happen nowhere else but in this country.” To the constable he said: “What do you reckon you’re goin’ ter do, old cock?”

“Quit fooling, corporal,” snapped Gimlet, curtly.

“What’s a-goin’ on ’ere?” demanded the constable, taking out his notebook.

“You won’t want that,” Gimlet told him. Speaking quickly, in a few words he told the constable what was happening and showed his special police authority. Noting a double row of medal ribbons on the blue tunic he asked the policeman if he would help them with the operation.

“Have you got a spare rifle, sir?” asked the constable simply.

“He can have mine,” offered Trapper. “My two six-guns and the bow will be enough for me.”

The policeman took the rifle.

Gimlet turned towards the windmill. “Let’s get ’em out,” he ordered. “Keep your heads down. Come on.” He set off at a run.

## OPERATION COMPLETE

AS the party, now increased to five, swung out of the line of the fire and then advanced on the final objective, it became apparent that the windmill was occupied and that those within had observed the fate of the boathouse. Apart from the noise of the shots this could hardly be otherwise, for the whole area was bathed in a lurid glow, so that even the ancient arms of the windmill became fingers of fire. Nevertheless, thought Cub, it seemed unlikely that those in the windmill could know just how all this had come about, and what was even more satisfactory, they had lost their aircraft, so that should anyone succeed in getting away from the mill he would have no means of leaving the country. As they approached the mill a small group of people could be seen standing outside; indeed, one or two actually started towards the fire; but they retired hastily when they saw strangers approaching. Then they all disappeared from sight—presumably into the mill.

Gimlet now veered off to the right. His object in this, he told Cub who was nearest, was to cut across the old track leading to the road, in case there was any sort of motor vehicle at the mill. He did not think there was; at any rate, if the Wolves possessed a car it had been very little used, or wheel marks would have been observed by the pilots who had made the reconnaissance. Anyway, he was taking no chances. As they reached the track a missile of some sort thudded into the ground not far from Cub. Gimlet heard it and brought the party to a halt, telling them to keep flat but not to bunch together.

“There’s too much light,” he averred. “If we try to get any closer we shall be seen, and once they locate us they’ll do something about it. Watch out for gas; if you notice anything that looks or smells like it, let me know. We shall be able to move nearer when that confounded fire dies down a bit. Copper, get a little over to the left; Trapper, work a bit to the right, to cover the rear of the building in case anyone tries to bolt from the far side.”

With these arrangements made the party rested, waiting for the flames of the burning boathouse to subside. Already they were not so fierce as they had been, for the structure of the actual boathouse was already consumed; what light remained was mostly caused by burning oil and petrol that floated on the surface of the water. This did not last long, although occasionally a group of dry reeds, touched by the creeping flames, burst into a minor fire, to illuminate the scene for a moment with disconcerting clarity. Watching

the mill, more than once Cub thought he saw a movement in the upper part, but not being sure he did not waste ammunition. In the ordinary way, he thought, the operation of taking the mill would have presented no great difficulty, but having seen something of Werewolf methods he was afraid they might have some secret weapon which would take effect before they were aware of it. There was, too, a risk of gas, but he perceived that the employment of this would not be easy on account of the gentle breeze that sometimes stirred the grass. Either by accident, or design on Gimlet's part, they were on the upwind side of the mill, and any gas released would drift away from them.

By the end of a quarter of an hour the fire had so far died away that what little light remained was unimportant. Gimlet called Cub to him, and having told him to keep handy in case he needed the grenades, passed the order to advance.

"What do you think they're doing in there?" Cub asked him.

"I should say they're trying to make out how many there are of us here before they decide whether to bolt or fight it out," answered Gimlet. "They must know they've lost the aircraft. Whether or not they have any other mechanical transport remains to be seen."

"Hello—what's happening now?" asked Cub suddenly, as smoke, increasing in volume, appeared from the lower part of the mill to drift away before the breeze. "Can they have set the place on fire?"

"More likely they're burning secret documents or something of the sort," replied Gimlet. "Unless . . . unless they're putting up a smoke screen to cover a get-away," he added quickly. He called urgently to Copper and ordered him to move nearer to the smoke and open fire if he saw a movement.

They waited for Copper to crawl forward to his new position; and hardly was he in place when through a thin film of smoke Cub saw a car, or a vehicle of some sort, back away from an outbuilding, turn, and then move off, travelling down the line of smoke. He shouted a warning to Copper, but he needn't have bothered. Apparently Copper had seen what Cub had seen, for he made a dash forward to a fresh position from which he could enfilade the smoke trail. The moment he stopped, his Sten gun began its vicious chatter, firing short bursts, the tracer bullets with which it was loaded cutting a white line from the muzzle into the smoke. He made another dash forward and fired again. This time the effect was apparent. A car, swaying drunkenly, appeared from the smoke, and running off the old track which it had been following, sank axle deep into the soft ground of the marsh. Copper gave it

another burst, raking it from front to rear, although there was no sign of life in it. At any rate, no one attempted to get out.

“That’s the green car!” called Cub, recognising the vehicle by the shape of the body.

“Aye, and I reckon I’ve scratched a bit more of the paint off it,” returned Copper.

Gimlet spoke to them. “Start moving towards the mill. Keep low. Fire at anything you see moving.”

The attack advanced slowly, converging on the objective. Once Copper’s gun stuttered a brisk burst. There was a tinkle of splintering glass. “You keep your ’ead inside, chum,” he advised some person unseen by Cub.

At a distance of about forty yards Gimlet stopped again. Cub wondered what he would do. He also wondered what the people in the mill were doing; he felt they ought to be doing something, although the difficulties of defence were evident. The attackers could see their objective owing to its bulk, but those inside the mill could not see the attacking force in the darkness. Therefore, any shooting that they did would be guess work. It may be that they thought they could hold the building until daylight, when, of course, the advantage would swing round to their side, for they would then be under cover while the attacking force would find itself in the open, in full view.

Gimlet started crawling forward again and Cub kept near him. An occasional shot was now being fired from the windmill, but Gimlet gave orders that the fire was not to be returned because the flash of weapons would reveal their positions. What disturbed Cub more than the reports of gunshots was the occasional *whoof* of a gas pistol. But either these weapons were non-effective at long range or else they were entirely local in their effect, for no results could be observed.

“Pass me the bombs, Cub,” ordered Gimlet. “I’m getting chilly. We’ll make an end of this business.”

Taking the bag containing the bombs Gimlet selected two grenades—one a ‘sixty-nine’ concussion bomb, and the other an incendiary. “You stay where you are, but cover me if anything starts,” he told the others. Then, cupping his hands round his mouth, he shouted: “Hi! You, in the mill! I’ll give you five minutes to come out with your hands on your heads!”

There was no answer—unless a single shot fired blindly from the upper part of the mill could be called an answer.

Gimlet waited five minutes by his watch—a weird, uneasy period. At least, so thought Cub, to whom the whole thing still wore an atmosphere of



unreality.

“Time’s up!” shouted Gimlet. “You’ve had your chance!”

Before he could move, a door in the windmill was flung open, leaving a bright rectangle of yellow light. Against it a man could be seen running, crouching as he ran. One man at least had had enough, thought Cub. However, he did not get far. Several shots were fired from the mill in quick succession and the deserter fell. He did not get up.

When Cub looked back for Gimlet he was no longer there. Again came a period of waiting, of suspense, of brooding, sinister silence. A few minutes passed. Then the hush was broken by a crash of glass, followed an instant later by an explosion, muffled, but violent.

“That was Gimlet tossing in a pineapple,” Copper told Cub dispassionately.

A few seconds passed; then came another explosion, this time not so loud. A white incandescent glare lit up the inside of the mill, showing unsuspected cracks in the woodwork. It grew brighter and brighter as the incendiary bomb flared up. It took on a yellow tinge, the yellow turned to orange, and then to dull red. A mighty cloud of smoke began to drift away from the mill.

Copper crawled closer to Cub. “Looks like ’es’ done it,” he observed without emotion. “She’s on fire. That old wood’ll burn like straw. I’d say the Wolves ’ave ’ad it. Any that didn’t get knocked out by the concussion of that sixty-nine will look like kippers in about five minutes—unless they bolt. You can’t stay in the smoke of a phosphorous bomb and stay alive. Don’t I know it!”

A man dashed out of the building, bending low, his figure cast into bold relief by the brightly illuminated smoke. A revolver crashed a single shot. The man fell.

“That’s one for Trapper,” said Copper evenly. “Well, they asked for it, the skunks. Who did they reckon they were, comin’ over ’ere knocking our fellers blocks off? Let’s get a bit nearer. Ah! No you don’t.” Copper’s final remark was addressed to two more figures that sought safety in flight. His gun stammered its dreadful message. The figures spun, fell, and lay still.

The windmill was now well and truly alight, a terrible spectacle with the flames leaping skyward and the woodwork crackling like dry kindling. It turned night into day. A man jumped from one of the top windows and landed on the outbuildings with a fearful crash.

“I reckon ’e won’t need no doctor,” remarked Copper.

“Don’t be so callous,” chided Cub, who, now that the battle was won, could not help feeling a passing qualm for the losers.

“Callous!” cried Copper indignantly. “I like that. You ’eard what Gimlet said? What’s the use of strokin’ a mad wolf?”

Cub could see Gimlet kneeling on the grass not far away so he went on and joined him. Trapper was a little to the right, crouching low so that he could see under the cloud of slowly drifting smoke in case a Wolf should attempt to use it for cover. The constable was a short distance to the left, rifle at the ready.

From a distance of thirty yards they stood and watched the end. It would not have been safe to go nearer, for explosions occurred from time to time inside the doomed building, throwing clouds of burning splinters high into the air.

“They must ’ave ’ad a fair store of bombs and ammunition in there,” remarked Copper. “There can’t be anybody left alive.”

“I fancy my first bomb must have knocked out anybody on the ground floor,” opined Gimlet.

Together they stood and watched the end. As Gimlet said, there was nothing else to do. After about five minutes Copper let out a shout and pointed down the track. Looking in that direction the others saw a strange procession approaching.

“What on earth’s all this!” exclaimed Gimlet wonderingly.

“Looks like the N.F.S.,” answered Copper. “Trust the fire brigade to turn up. What a hope they’ve got. Someone must have spotted the fire from the village.”

They walked over to the new arrivals. Gimlet did not interfere when the firemen ran a hose down to the lake.

“They’ll be able to get in a bit of practice, anyway,” observed Copper cheerfully. “What do we do next, sir?”

Gimlet pocketed his revolver. “I think we might as well go home and let the General know what has happened,” he replied. “There’s nothing more we can do here, and I’m beginning to feel as if I could do with a few hours in bed. The constable can take charge of things until the General arrives to clear everything up. I imagine he’ll come along as soon as he hears about it. Well, there is this. Quite a lot of fellows with death warrants in their pockets will be able to breathe more freely now.”

Gimlet called the constable and thanked him for his support; he told him to say nothing about what he had seen, and invited him to take charge until

the security police arrived from London.

This the constable promised to do.

Leaving him standing there, a lone guardian of the law, they walked slowly back to the car. Little was said. There was not, after all, very much to say.



The destruction by fire of the Grimston mill, and the extermination of the enemy fanatics that occupied it, was the end of the Werewolf attempt to create a reign of terror in Britain, as had been done elsewhere in Europe. Not a word of the story appeared in the newspapers, the authorities deciding that it was better to leave the promoters of the organization in Germany to guess the fate of their accomplices.

As far as is known there were no survivors. From certain remains found, and documents in the portfolio which Gimlet had picked up in the boathouse, it seemed that the General's early remarks about the identity of the big Nazis behind the conspiracy were nearer to the truth than he may have supposed at the time. No fewer than four of the men who died in the boathouse, or in the mill, were on the list of Nazi war criminals. Apparently they thought that they were safer in Britain than in their own country, where the search for them was being prosecuted with greater diligence. One of these was Wenson, or, to give him his proper name, the notorious Hugo Stresser. The man in the fur coat was another of those mentioned by the General. This was Karl von Runtz, and it was to him that the portfolio belonged. There was reason to suppose that he was the head man of the movement, or as Copper would say, the King Wolf. From papers found in the portfolio it seemed probable that he had come over to straighten things out following the confusion caused by the raid on the London headquarters. If this was so, then he had reached Britain just in time to be caught in the round-up, in much the same way that Wenson had fled from London, only to perish in the flames of the old Norfolk mill.

That is as much as Gimlet and his comrades were told at the time, beyond the fact that the contents of the portfolio enabled the police of certain liberated countries to do a little cleaning up on their own account, rumours of which trickled through from time to time to Lorrington Hall, where the comrades were enjoying a well-earned rest, made all the more pleasant by a useful cheque received from the Home Office for "services rendered."

“Just what do you reckon they mean by services rendered?” inquired Copper, as he carefully folded his share and put it in his wallet. “I don’t remember rendering anything. I did the job I was asked to do and a cove can’t do more than that. Am I right, Trapper?”

“*Tch!* Every time,” agreed Trapper.

“That’s probably what they mean,” said Cub smiling.

THE END

## TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

Some illustrations were moved to facilitate page layout.

[The end of *Gimlet Mops Up* by W. E. (William Earl) Johns]