

## CODE NAME: ANGEL

*Bayeux, Normandy, Northern France, Thursday, May 4<sup>th</sup>, 1944, 8:01 PM*

“The code phrase will be ‘Pardonnez-moi, mademoiselle, mais puis-je vous acheter une tasse de café?’ Your response will be ‘Oui, bien sûr, monsieur, il me plairait une tasse avec vous.’”

“Understood, Bulldog. Ending transmission.”

British intelligence agent Janine Lindenhurst, code name Angel, felt a brief stab of envy for her handlers across the English Channel in Southampton. They were safe and out of reach of the Germans.

She checked her watch and cursed: a minute after eight. She was out of time. She’d been using the radio here, in an abandoned row house on the Rue Royale, for almost thirty minutes, and it was past curfew.

Lindenhurst closed the suitcase and glanced out the small window next to the dusty table at which she sat. Outside, the sky was already dark. Heavy clouds over the Channel, just visible over the spires and rooftops of Bayeux, were moving in. Flashes of lightning lit up the roiling sky and the churning water beneath. Good, she thought. That lightning made it less likely the Gestapo had intercepted her broadcast.

That thought brought another, less welcome one: Gazelle. Gazelle was the code name of a fellow Special Operations Executive agent, real name Tom Clarke, in nearby Vierville. He had disappeared ten days ago, failing to appear at a prearranged meet, and neither she nor Southampton had heard from him since. In all likelihood one of his broadcasts had been triangulated and the Gestapo had grabbed him up. Lindenhurst didn’t want to think about where he was now and what the Germans were inflicting on him. She could only hope that Clarke’s survival training was enough to see him through. She was skeptical, not because Clarke wasn’t strong, but because what she knew of the Gestapo’s horrific interrogation methods made her think that no amount of training could prepare a person to withstand them.

Lindenhurst left the house by a rear entrance and walked two blocks to where she’d left her bicycle. She lashed the suitcase to it and rode through the narrow, medieval streets toward the boardinghouse where she was staying. The sidewalks, which would have been full of people under normal circumstances, were dark and empty. France had been under Nazi rule for four years, and most of the French citizenry were too afraid to go out unless they had to. It broke her heart. She’d loved France ever since visiting it as a child. At university, she’d majored in French literature, traveling across the Channel at every opportunity and falling in love with the

country and its people. Now, the barbaric Nazis seemed to have choked the life out of this magical place. It made her sad and furious, but she took some comfort in the knowledge that not *all* French citizens were cowed by the Germans. The Resistance, composed of people far braver than Lindenhurst could ever be, worked tirelessly to undermine the Nazi regime, often paying an awful price for it. She loved and admired them, and had joined the SOE to aid them in any way she could.

“Halt!” cried a voice behind her. Startled, Lindenhurst almost crashed her bicycle.

The owner of the voice was a German soldier with insignia indicating a corporal. He was young and had a spray of freckles across his nose. Still, young or not, he was a German, and therefore dangerous. Lindenhurst composed herself, putting on an expression of innocent bewilderment.

“What’s wrong, sir?” she asked in fluent, accentless French.

The young soldier walked over to her. “You are out past curfew,” he replied, also in French but broken and heavily accented. “No civilians on the streets past eight o’clock.”

Lindenhurst’s eyes widened. “I didn’t know, sir! I’m new in town. I just arrived two days ago from Paris.”

“They have a curfew in Paris, too,” the corporal said. Lindenhurst saw with dismay that he was eyeing the radio case. It was covered with customs stickers and dents and scuffs, and looked like ordinary luggage. She forced herself to remain calm.

“Oh, yes, sir, but it doesn’t begin until nine,” she said, praying the soldier didn’t know that the curfew in Paris was the same as it was here.

“Hm,” he grunted. “What’s in the case, may I ask?”

“Oh, you know, the usual lady things. Makeup, hairbrush, mirror, bras, panties.”

The young soldier’s face reddened, and she realized he was embarrassed by her frank mention of women’s undergarments. In a flash of inspiration she said, “Oh, and my supplies for my monthlies are in there, too. Absorbent pads, tampons, that sort of thing.”

“*Ja, ja,*” said the corporal, his face so red now it almost glowed. “Fine, yes, very good.” He stepped away from the case as if it were radioactive. “Be on your way, *Mademoiselle*. Do not forget the curfew again.” He waved curtly and walked away.

Nearly weeping with relief, Lindenhurst mounted her bike and pedaled off in the opposite direction. Her arms were trembling so badly she almost tipped over while rounding the corner into the street where her boardinghouse was.

*Just calm down, girl, she thought. You're fine, and that German kid didn't suspect a bloody thing.*

But she wasn't totally convinced of that. Yes, the soldier had been young, and embarrassed by the fictional contents of her case, but that didn't mean he was stupid. He might still report finding a suspicious woman out after curfew who had seemed a little too innocent.

She banished these thoughts. There was nothing for it, and worrying would only distract her.

Lindenhurst arrived at the boardinghouse, a centuries-old three-story structure. She locked her bike, unstrapped the radio case and carried it to the rear door that led into the cellar. The door's padlock hung open; the landlady had forgotten to lock it again. Lindenhurst entered and ascended a flight of stairs into the kitchen. From there, she mounted another stairway to the second floor.

In less than a minute she was inside her own room with the door locked. She lit a gas lamp on a small table and turned the flame down to a dim glow. With a sigh of relief, she dropped the case, undressed, and sat on the edge of the bed. It was warm and close in the small room, but she hardly noticed through her exhaustion.

Suddenly, without warning, she was weeping. Sobs shook her shoulders and fat tears ran down her cheeks. She hung her head and let it all out.

When the storm had passed, she felt better, washed clean of tension. She collapsed onto the bed and was asleep in seconds.

*Friday, May 5<sup>th</sup>, 1944, 8:20 AM*

Major Hans-Friedrich Becker, commandant of the Bayeux garrison, was in a foul temper.

He sat at the massive mahogany desk in the grand study of what had been the mayor's mansion, commandeered by the German Army and converted into the garrison headquarters. He drummed his fingers on the glossy wood and stared at the massive portrait of the Führer on the far wall. Major Becker was a man who demanded perfection even in ordinary things, and he was staging a grand reception tomorrow that was far from ordinary. Hitler's dark eyes seemed to glower at him with a warning: *Do not make a fool of yourself, Major. The Eastern Front has plenty of room for foolish officers.* He shivered. The stories coming back from the eastern war with the Soviet Red Army were nightmarish.

The reception, to be held in the ballroom of this very building, would be a gala welcoming for Reichsmarshal Hermann Göring, the head of the German military and

a member of the Führer's inner circle. Göring was touring France's coastal defenses, ensuring they were up to the task of repelling the Allied invasion everyone knew was coming soon. Becker didn't know *where* the invasion would come, and he suspected that not even Hitler knew for certain. The northeastern Pas-de-Calais region made the most sense, for that was the narrowest point across the Channel from England, but there were other points along the coast that were possibilities.

Becker knew that whatever impressions the Reichsmarshal took from his visit would end up in the Führer's ear. He had therefore ordered all civilians to attend the reception in their best formal dress, upon pain of arrest. Arrivals would be checked off at the door. Anyone whose name was left unchecked would get a visit from the Gestapo.

His thoughts were interrupted by a knock at the heavy oak door that communicated between the study and the hallway beyond.

"Enter!"

The door opened and a lieutenant stepped in.

"Sir, the listening post intercepted a transmission yesterday that you should see. I have it here." He handed Becker a sheet of paper.

Becker began reading, and by the end of the report his heart was pounding and his fist clenched with excitement.

The report read:

TRANSMISSION INTERCEPTED THURSDAY, 4 MAY, 8:01 PM. LIKELY ORIGIN:  
VICINITY OF RUE ROYALE. DECODED TRANSCRIPTION FOLLOWS:

*FEMALE BRITISH VOICE: "Bulldog, this is Angel."*

*MALE BRITISH VOICE: "Angel, Bulldog. Transmission clear. Please confirm you have the package."*

*FBV: "Confirmed. Package received yesterday via parachute drop."*

*MBV: "Excellent. Your Resistance contact needs it within one week. He will contact you. He must have time to distribute copies to the appropriate cells well before Overlord commences if they are to carry out their missions behind the lines."*

*FBV: "Understood, Bulldog. What's the code phrase?"*

*MBV: "Pardonnez-moi, mademoiselle, mais puis-je vous acheter une tasse de café? Your response will be 'Oui, bien sûr, monsieur, il me plairait une tasse avec vous.'"*

*FBV: "Understood, Bulldog. Ending transmission."*

END REPORT.

Becker stared at the report for so long that the lieutenant finally cleared his throat politely. Becker nearly jumped. He'd forgotten the man was there.

"Dismissed," Becker said. The junior officer saluted and left the room, closing the door behind him.

*Good God, Becker thought. Operation Overlord.*

That was the code name for the Allied invasion of France. This report indicated that there was a British agent somewhere in Bayeux, in *his town*, who held vital information about it for the Resistance. Becker knew the information had to be logistical: troop strengths, weapon types, and, most importantly, landing points and timings. Becker was likely within reach of the Holy Grail of the Western Front war effort: the location and date of the invasion. Such information would help the defense effort immeasurably, and bring Becker a juicy promotion in the bargain.

First Becker needed to catch the agent code-named Angel before the Resistance contacted her. He briefly considered having the Gestapo do a house-to-house search, then dismissed it as too time-consuming: Angel would flee before she could be arrested. He had to locate her without alerting her in the process.

How to discover the identity and location of Angel without scaring his quarry away? British spies were notoriously difficult to catch. He had caught one two years earlier, after months of work. But Becker could take pride in the fact that the spy was now languishing in a concentration camp somewhere.

His train of thought was interrupted by another knock. Exasperated, he yelled "Enter!"

The door opened, and the same lieutenant stepped in. He was accompanied by a corporal who looked terrified. The boy-Becker could hardly call him a man-had a spray of freckles across his nose.

"Sir," said the lieutenant, "Corporal Horst here reports encountering a civilian woman yesterday, after curfew, while on patrol on the Rue Royale."

Becker frowned. "And? Why are you bothering me with trivialities?"

“Sir, Horst reports she was on a bicycle with a suitcase strapped to it. It was approximately the size of the radio cases we’ve confiscated during previous arrests. I felt it should be reported directly to you.”

“At what time did you see her, Horst?”

“Ten minutes past eight, sir,” said Horst. “I checked my watch.”

“Describe her.”

“Yes, sir. Mid-thirties, perhaps five-foot-six, slim build. Tweed trousers and a white blouse. Shoulder-length blonde hair. Fluent French. Mole on her right cheek.”

*Hello, my Angel*, thought Becker. “Of course, you inspected the contents of the case?”

Horst blanched.

“Answer my question, Horst! Out with it, man!”

“No sir, I didn’t,” said Horst in a small voice.

“What?!” Becker cried. “Why in God’s name did you fail to perform such a routine task? Answer me, *corporal!*”

“Sir, she said she had...womanly items in it...”

“*Womanly items?*” Becker shouted. “Idiot! Do you realize this woman was probably a British spy and had a radio in that case? I will personally see that you are freezing on the Eastern Front by month’s end, boy!”

Horst gasped. “But, sir....no...please...” he whispered.

“Get out of my sight, both of you,” Becker said.

When they had gone, Becker allowed himself a triumphant smile. A woman, out past curfew with a radio-sized case, in the area where the intercepted transmission had originated, just minutes after it ended. It had to be Angel.

And now he had a physical description. Tomorrow, at the reception for Göring, Becker would clip this Angel’s wings. He would pose as her contact, and once he had the package in hand, he would arrest her. And he would make sure Göring saw everything.

Still smiling, Becker began to draw up an order transferring Corporal Horst to the front lines in the east, where the boy would likely be dead before the month was out.

*Saturday, May 6<sup>th</sup>, 1944, 6:23 PM*

Lindenhurst stood in her room contemplating the contents of an open wardrobe. It contained a few pairs of trousers and some blouses and skirts. It also held the dress she planned to wear tonight to the reception. It wasn't her style: bright red, plunging neckline, showed entirely too much leg. But it was her only choice. Attendees had been ordered by the garrison commander to dress formally. Not doing so would attract attention. So Lindenhurst had borrowed the dress, along with a pair of heels, a fur stole, and black gloves from another boardinghouse resident.

She sighed. She hated dressing up. But not going was out of the question; that would trigger a search. She knew little about Becker, had never even seen him, but apparently he was fanatical about putting on a good show.

It crossed her mind, as she shed her day clothes and began to wriggle her way into the dress, that her Resistance contact might reach out to her at the reception. It would be a crowded event with lots of noise, a good setting for a meet.

Once she had the dress on, she draped the stole around her shoulders and slipped the gloves on. She checked herself in a mirror mounted on the wall, and had to laugh. She looked absurd, like an English country girl playing the big-city sophisticate.

The last item was the most important: a narrow black leather belt. This she had not borrowed. It had come with her to France from SOE headquarters in London. The buckle was a small brass rectangle with a removable back. Lindenhurst opened it, revealing a compartment containing a flat paper package held together with tape. She tipped the package into her palm.

It felt heavy, because Lindenhurst knew what it contained: vital information about the Allied invasion of northern France. Landing sites, routes leading away from the beaches, locations of key bridges...and the date and time of the invasion. In German hands, the information would result in the failure of the assault and the needless deaths of thousands of Allied soldiers. But in the hands of the Resistance it was gold. It would allow them to work behind the lines, undermining the Nazi war machine at key points and providing diversions. In short, delivery of the package to the right person could mean the difference between the success and failure of the largest seaborne assault in human history.

*7:31 PM*

Hans-Friedrich Becker was getting worried.

Not because of how the reception was going. It was going splendidly: the ballroom was crowded with French civilians and German soldiers, all dressed in their finest. Reichsmarshal Göring dominated the room. He was a large man with a great belly and a broad, peasant-like face with a perpetual grin. One could mistake him for a simple country farmer. But Becker knew the keen and ruthless mind that lay behind those cheerful features. Göring seemed to be enjoying himself, holding court in a cluster of German officers.

Becker was worried because he hadn't spotted Angel. The night was young, but he'd hoped to find her right away. He told himself to be realistic; over three hundred people were packed into the ballroom. She was here, he told himself.

Becker mounted a marble staircase to get a better view of the room. At the top, he turned and look down.

And there she was, halfway up the stairs behind him, less than twenty feet away.

Mid-thirties. About five-foot-six if one subtracted her high-heels. Slim build. Shoulder-length blonde hair. She wore a red dress, a fur stole, gloves, a fashionable belt. And there was a mole on her right cheek.

Becker wanted to shout in triumph, but remained calm. He needed to approach her and speak the code phrase, which he had memorized. In anticipation of finding Angel, he'd worn a civilian suit and tie instead of his uniform.

Becker looked out over the room and made sure Göring was still nearby.

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Lindenhurst stood halfway up the stairs and scanned the room for what seemed like the hundredth time. Nobody had made contact yet, but there was still time, and she told herself to be patient.

A man in a dark suit was coming down the stairs toward her. She moved to let him pass, but he stopped on the step above hers. She looked up at him. He was very tall and had an athlete's trim build. His jet-black hair was combed back neatly. He returned her gaze. After a moment, the man leaned in and put his lips next to Lindenhurst's ear. He smelled of woodspice cologne.

"Pardonnez-moi, mademoiselle, mais puis-je vous acheter une tasse de café?" he whispered.

Time slowed to a crawl. The noises of the reception faded into the background.

She answered: "Oui, bien sûr, monsieur, il me plairait une tasse avec vous."



“Very well,” said the man. “Do you have it?”

Lindenhurst nodded, and reached for her belt buckle.

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Becker needed every ounce of resolve he possessed to refrain from grabbing the woman and stripping her naked to find the package. Her hand went to her belt buckle...and froze.

*Give it to me, damn you!* Becker thought. But she remained still as a statue, looking down at the floor with a thoughtful expression.

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*Calmly, calmly,* Lindenhurst told herself. *Breathe, girl.*

Her hand still on the buckle, she stared at the floor. Specifically, she stared at the man’s shoes. They were brand new, and looked expensive. Black leather, polished to a high gloss. Not a crease or scuff mark.

No French civilian had expensive new shoes. The hardships of occupation were many, one of them being a scarcity of fine new clothing.

Only the Germans owned fine shoes like these.

Her heart pounded so hard she was afraid the man might hear it. She willed herself not to sweat.

“Is something the matter, *Mademoiselle?*” asked the man with genteel concern that made Lindenhurst’s skin crawl.

Without another thought, for more thinking would only paralyze her, Lindenhurst lashed out with the point of her right shoe and kicked the man squarely in the crotch of his tailored trousers.

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White-hot pain exploded from Becker’s testicles and bloomed through his belly. He shrieked and doubled over, dimly aware that Angel had fled down the stairs and out of the ballroom. The crowd went silent, everyone staring at him.

And there was Göring, Becker realized with growing fury, regarding him with raised eyebrows and a contemptuous smirk.

Ignoring his aching belly, he leapt down the stairs and charged out of the ballroom. Three of his officers broke from the crowd and followed him. They were in uniform and carried their sidearms. Becker grabbed one from its owner's hand.

"You all saw her!" he yelled. "I want her taken alive! Any man who kills her will die himself when I put a bullet in his head!"

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Janine Lindenhurst ran for her life, in bare feet, over the cracked cobblestones of Bayeux.

She was two blocks away from the mansion when the yelling began behind her, coarse German voices that froze her blood. It sounded like at least three, maybe more.

She caught a toe on a cobblestone and almost went down, stumbling a few steps. She ignored the pain and ran faster. The voices were getting closer. She could hear their footsteps smacking on the stones.

"Halt!" shouted one of them. "Stop or you will be shot!"

Lindenhurst reached an intersection and turned. She was heading for the boardinghouse. If she could duck in there undetected, there was a chance they wouldn't find her right away. It might leave enough time to plan an escape from Bayeux.

A shot rang out. She winced reflexively and heard the distinctive snapping sound of a bullet passing close by.

"The next one will be in your head!"

Lindenhurst kept running.

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Becker's pistol shot had no effect except to make Angel run faster. Incredibly, she was increasing the distance between them. He resisted an urge to put a bullet through her back. He wanted her alive so that he could take out his retaliation slowly, in the mansion's basement, where the interrogation rooms were. He savored the image of her hung from the ceiling by her wrists, his men breaking her bones with heavy clubs, listening to her grovel for mercy, debasing herself completely to make the beating stop. He had seen it many times before, had administered the torture himself more than once, but he would take special pleasure in seeing this one suffer. She had failed to hand over the package and

humiliated him in front of Reichsmarshal Göring. Her agony would be exquisite and prolonged.

She was three blocks ahead now. Becker and his men were panting hard.

“Move! Move!” he yelled. “Faster!”

Suddenly, Angel disappeared.

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Lindenhurst bolted down the narrow alleyway, a shortcut from the street to the rear of the boardinghouse. Her feet throbbed and her breath came in burning gasps, but she could see her building ahead. The rear door to the cellar was closed. She prayed the landlady had forgotten to lock it.

She stopped outside the door, a plain affair with peeling white paint. Lindenhurst saw with dismay that a heavy padlock hung from the hasp.

Refusing to let panic cloud her thinking, she examined the hasp. It was attached to the door with three screws. Two of them were loose, their heads sticking out a half-inch. In a few seconds she had removed them. With only one screw holding the hasp to the door, it took little effort to tear that end of it loose completely, leaving it hanging from the doorframe with its padlock. She would have to hope the Germans didn't notice it.

She could hear them, but couldn't tell if they were in the alley yet. She opened the door, slipped in, and closed it.

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“Major! I think she went this way.”

One of Becker's men was pointing down a narrow alley hidden behind a stack of vegetable crates. The rest of them, charging down the street, had missed it.

“Good man!” said Becker. “You'll get a promotion for this. Follow me.”

The four of them entered the alley. It stank of rotting fish, and was enclosed on both sides by ancient brick structures. There was no sign of Angel.

“She didn't go far,” said Becker. “She must have entered one of these buildings.” But he saw no sign of forced entry on any of the doors or windows.

Up ahead, a small movement caught his eye. It was a door closing at the back of an old, three-story house. He pointed to it.

“There.”

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Lindenhurst stood in the dark cellar, leaning against a cool stone wall, catching her breath. Her feet were swollen. Her lungs burned. She listened, but heard nothing from the alley outside. She only allowed herself a minute to rest, then headed up the stairs to the kitchen.

The house was silent; the other boardinghouse guests were apparently still at the reception. Lindenhurst headed for her room upstairs. She needed to change into more practical clothes and then escape from Bayeux. There was a Resistance safe house west of town where she could hide until another arrangement was made to deliver the package. Right now, though, she had to keep it out of the Germans' hands. If they found her, and got the invasion details...she wouldn't let herself continue that line of thinking. It was too horrible to contemplate.

She changed quickly into tweed pants and a blouse. She removed the buckle from the belt, put it in a breast pocket, and buttoned the flap over it. Then she grabbed the case and quietly began to make her way back downstairs.

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Becker crouched in the shadows next to the kitchen's huge icebox. His men were similarly hidden in other places in the kitchen.

He heard Angel begin to descend the stairs, treading quietly. Clearly she didn't know they were in the house, or she would have tried to flee by another route. He signaled to his men to be ready.

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Janine Lindenhurst stepped into the darkened kitchen. Immediately she knew something was wrong: the room smelled of woodspice cologne.

She threw the radio case into the face of the first man who tried to grab her. He screamed and stumbled across the kitchen, blood spraying from his nose. Then the man from the reception appeared and raised the butt of his pistol to club her. She pushed him away and tried to slam her knee into his crotch, but he was too fast. He sidestepped and she was thrown off balance. In a moment one of the others had her in an armlock from behind.

She was caught.

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Becker stood before the trapped Angel. Her hair was a sweaty mess, and her face a mask of contempt.

"To hell with you, fascist bastard," she said in English.

"Wrong," he replied in the same language. "It is you who are going to hell, Angel." He brought his pistol-butt down on her head. She collapsed without a sound.

*Buchenwald Concentration Camp, Germany, Monday, August 10<sup>th</sup>, 1944, 2:31 AM*

Janine Lindenhurst could not sleep.

The hard boards of the bunk, the sweltering humidity in the barracks, the moans and cries of other inmates – these she had adjusted to. But even after three months in the camp, the raging hunger was something she still could not bear. It was a beast inside her, hollowing her out bit by bit. She sometimes wondered how far a person could fall, physically and morally: she had already stolen a piece of stale bread dropped by a girl who could barely walk. Lindenhurst had grabbed the fragment and wolfed it without a second thought. She sometimes recalled the three weeks she spent in a Gestapo cell in Bayeux with, incredibly, a degree of fondness. They had beaten her senseless, broken her bones, nearly drowned her, made her tell them everything she knew. But at least then she had not been hungry. She had thought she was, but those little belly rumblings were nothing compared to the monster that now clawed at her guts day and night. She could circle her calves with the fingers of one hand now.

"You can't sleep either?" said a voice below her.

She peered over the edge of her bunk, which was on the second tier, and looked down. A grinning skull lay there. It had mottled skin stretched over its curves and angles. The skull's eyes were wide and gleamed in the dark. "I'm Joanna. From Berlin. They just transferred me here from Bergen-Belsen yesterday. It's supposed to be a lot better here. That's right, isn't it? It's a lot better here?"

Without hesitation Lindenhurst said, "Yes, of course, much better."

"I knew it, I just knew it." She paused. "I have news from the war."

"What is it? Tell me!"

"My uncle bribed a guard at the other camp to tell me about it. There was a big invasion. Normandy. On June 6<sup>th</sup>."

“Yes?” said Lindenhurst. “What was the result?”

Joanna sighed. “It failed. Repulsed with huge losses. The soldiers didn’t make it past the beaches. It will be another year or more before they can try again.”

“Oh, God...” Lindenhurst whispered. “Oh, my God.”

“Somehow the Germans knew exactly when and where the invasion would happen. They concentrated all of their strength there. The Allies didn’t have a chance. It was a catastrophe. The German tanks were...”

Lindenhurst didn’t hear the rest.

After a time she drifted into a profound sleep, deeper than any she had ever known. And she dreamed of wonderful things. She dreamed of Sunday dinners back in England: roast beef and mashed potatoes and good British ale, and sweet raspberry tarts for dessert.

*Monday, August 10<sup>th</sup>, 1944, 7:03 AM*

Later that morning, the body of inmate 23647, Janine Anne Lindenhurst, was taken from the women’s barracks and tossed onto a pile of corpses behind the building. It sat there for a week, decomposing in the hot August sun into a bloated and stinking mass, before it was wheeled to the camp’s crematorium and burned with dozens of others. In the ovens, her ashes mixed together with those of others, floated up the crematorium’s brick chimney, and were carried away on the wind.