

# Theater of War

## Act One

*"Every Man Must Play a Part"*

A  
Hogan's Heroes  
Story

*E. M. Seifert*



# Theater of War

## Act One

by *EM Seifert*

is set in the universe of *Hogan's Heroes*.

This story is the first in a series of "Acts".

Special thanks to Carol Walker for her helpful advice.

"I hold the world but as the world, Gratiano;  
A stage, where every man must play a  
part . . ."

—W. Shakespeare

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Act One

Scene One



## Act One

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It was a cold day, overcast, nasty, in November of 1944. The location was a prisoner of war camp near the town of Hammelburg, not far from the city of Dusseldorf in western Germany.

Colonel Robert Hogan, the senior POW officer, walked across the compound of Stalag Luft 13 after lunch. Hogan, a tall, dark-haired man in his late thirties, glanced up at the sky. *Probably start to snow later. Well, let's see what old Klink's up to. Might learn something interesting.*

Hogan walked up the stairs leading to the Kommandant's office. Hilda, the camp secretary, wasn't at her desk. Pity. The beautiful girl brightened up the place.

Hogan knocked on the Kommandant's door and, as usual, walked in without waiting for a reply. Colonel Wilhelm Klink, the commandant of Stalag Luft 13, a tall, lean man with a receding hairline and a monocle on his left eye, was sitting at his desk, staring at a piece of paper.

"Afternoon, Kommandant!" Hogan said cheerfully.

Klink looked up slowly, very slowly.

"Nasty day, isn't it?" Hogan continued, oblivious to Klink's lack of response. "Should snow later on."

"What . . . Oh . . ." Klink made a visible effort to rouse himself. Then his eyes dropped to the paper again. "What . . . What do you want, Colonel Hogan?"

"Just dropped in for a chat," Hogan said. "But if you're busy?"

Klink failed to respond.

His strange behavior finally got through to Hogan. "Are you all right, Kommandant?" Hogan asked.

"You don't really care if I am or not, do you, Hogan?"

Hogan was taken aback by the toneless question. He fumbled uncharacteristically for a response. "I, uh —"

"Please," continued the weary voice, "don't bother to lie. No, all you see is the uniform. That's all the world ever sees —"

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uniforms, targets, strategic missions. Not the people. No, never the people.”

“Kommandant?” Klink was making Hogan decidedly uneasy.

“Colonel Hogan,” the blue eyes turned to him, “for once, can you see past the uniform? Past the fact that I am a German, a man you probably despise, possibly hate? Past everything you assume about me?”

“I, uh . . . ”

“Then, please, Colonel Hogan, leave. I am asking you as one man to another. Please, leave. Now.”

“I . . . ” Hogan was at a loss for words as he stared at Klink. Klink’s eyes had dropped back to his desk; he looked surprisingly tired.

“Yes, sir,” Hogan finally said. He walked to the door. “If you want anything . . . ” But Klink had stopped listening to him. Hogan shook his head and left.

His men were waiting for him in his office, still listening in on the coffeepot that was the receiver for the bug in Klink’s office.

“Hilda just came in; Klink sent her home,” Corporal Peter Newkirk, an Englishman, reported.

“Yeah. And told Schultz he wasn’t to be disturbed for any reason,” Sergeant Andrew Carter, the American explosives expert, added.

“What’s up, Colonel?” Sergeant James Kinchloe, a tall black man with a mustache, asked.

“I have no idea. I’ve never seen him like this before,” Hogan admitted.

Glass clinked in Klink’s office.

Sergeant Richard Baker, another black American, grinned. “Starting a little early, aren’t we?” He started as the sound of shattering glass came from the office.

Then a sound they had never heard before. One that startled and even shocked them.

“Colonel,” Corporal Louis LeBeau, a diminutive Frenchman, finally said. “Klink’s . . . crying?”

Hogan looked unusually sober. “Turn it off.”

It was dark, nearly time for lights out when Hogan walked

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across the compound to Klink's quarters. As Hogan had expected, it had started to snow — a good, steady snow. Klink stood on his porch, watching the snow. Or at least staring out at it.

"Evening, Kommandant," Hogan said. He really wasn't sure why he was here. But, for some reason, he felt he had to be.

"Colonel Hogan." Klink's voice was neutral.

"Should get a few inches out of this," Hogan said conversationally.

Klink seemed to notice the snow for the first time. "Yes."

"When I was a kid, I loved it when it snowed like this," Hogan said after a while, just to end the silence. "My parents didn't."

"No." An odd voice. "Adults forget the wonder of it all too quickly."

Hogan was running out of things to say. "Uh, yeah." What the hell was he doing here anyway? Whatever Klink's problem was, it wasn't any of Hogan's concern. But Klink's behavior had gotten to him in a way he'd never expected. Annoyed with himself and Klink, Hogan prepared to leave.

"Do you know any children, Colonel Hogan?" Klink asked suddenly. "I mean, really know them?"

"No, can't say that I do." He glanced at Klink's sharp profile. "Do you?" This was the craziest conversation.

"Yes. Several. One was my younger sister."

"You have a sister?" Hogan knew little about Klink's family. Except for the odd bits of information he'd picked up, Hogan never bothered to learn about them. It wasn't important. Unless it fit in with a scheme of Hogan's, personal facts about Klink were never important.

"Yes. She is much younger than I. I was eighteen when she was born."

Hogan grinned. "Must have been a shock."

"Yes. A very pleasant one. She was such a beautiful child. Bright blue eyes, long blonde curls." Klink's voice had a quality in it Hogan had never heard before. "And she had a laugh that lifted your heart."

Hogan turned to watch Klink more closely.

"I wasn't home much, of course; I was already at the Academy. But whenever I did get home, she always would run



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out to greet me.”

“And big brother doted on her.”

A small smile. “Dote is an understatement. I adored her. She was everything I could never be — beautiful, lively, a joy to everyone. You won’t believe it, Hogan, but she adored me too. I could do no wrong in her eyes.”

Hogan hid his grin.

A wistful sigh from Klink. “As all children do, she grew up. Into a beautiful woman. Beautiful, intelligent, generous. All the young men were crazy about her. But no one was good enough for her. Until . . .”

“Until?” Hogan prompted, oddly reluctant to end Klink’s reminiscing.

“Finally, someone was good enough for her. He comes from an excellent family; he is strong, handsome and gentle. He is a little older than she is. But he loves her. And she loves him.”

“An officer?”

Klink shook his head. “By default only. He is a doctor. The kind all doctors should be. He really cares for his patients. It doesn’t matter who you are, what you do, if you are sick or hurt, he will care for you. He really is worthy of Therese.”

“Lovely name.”

Klink nodded. “They married, and, in time, had a son. A little boy named Wilhelm.”

Hogan was amused. “After the uncle?”

“Ridiculous, is it not, Colonel Hogan?”

“Oh, I don’t — ” Hogan began.

And was ignored. “Like his mother all over again. The same big blue eyes, the same blond curls. And a smile to melt your heart. Always running out to greet me whenever I could visit. All the innocence and joy of a child in one small boy. Everything was a cause for wonder — a flower, a snowflake. Everything and anything.”

“Bet you can’t wait to see him again,” Hogan said brightly.

Klink’s face lost all expression. “I will never see him again, Colonel Hogan.” His voice had lost all feeling. “He was killed in an air raid earlier this week.”

Stunned, Hogan stared at him.

“I received the letter today.” Klink rubbed his eyes with a

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hand. "They call them strategic targets, Colonel Hogan. It doesn't matter if it is London or Tokyo or Berlin. Just points on a map," Klink continued in the same dead voice. "Someone far away decides it should no longer exist.

"I wonder how long wars would last if people really knew what they were destroying. Or do they even care? After all, what is so important about a five-year-old little boy compared to the ambitions and slogans of grown men?" Pain broke the deadness in his voice. "The only thing he ever did was bring joy to the people who loved him."

"Colonel," Hogan said in the darkness, "I don't know what to say."

A deep sigh. "There is nothing to say, Colonel Hogan. An accident of war. You know, you Americans are really very lucky. This, at least, does not touch you."

"I'm very sorry, Colonel Klink."

Something in his voice made Klink look at him. "Colonel, for the first time, I believe you mean it."

"Colonel, for the first time, I do."

The shiny eyes looked away. "Thank you, Colonel Hogan."

A long, oddly companionable silence. Then . . .

Klink roused himself. "Colonel Hogan, it is nearly time for lights out," Klink reminded him in that strangely neutral voice.

"Yes, sir. Good night, sir."

"Good night."

Newkirk grinned as Hogan entered the barracks. "Well, Colonel, what's with old Klink?"

"Another girl jilt him?" LeBeau asked.

"Or maybe," Carter began flippantly.

"Knock it off!" Hogan ordered roughly and walked into his room.

Startled silence followed him.

Hogan sipped the remains of his cold coffee as his men filed in quietly and closed the door.

"Colonel," Kinch began, "we didn't mean anything by it."

"Yes, you did," Hogan retorted angrily. "And so did I. Klink's right. All we see is the uniform. Something to hate or poke fun at. Nothing real. Just an illusion."

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“Colonel, what’s wrong?” Kinch asked quietly.

“I found out what’s wrong with Klink.” Hogan stared into his coffee mug. “His five-year-old nephew was killed in an air raid earlier this week; he found out this morning.”

“Klink? A nephew?” from Newkirk.

“Gosh,” from Carter, “that’s too bad.”

“Tough luck,” from Kinch. “But, Colonel, that’s what happens in a war.”

“That’s what Klink said,” Hogan said gloomily. “An accident of war. Where no one sees who gets hurt.” He looked at his men. “But people do, don’t they? Even five-year-old little boys.”

“We don’t make the rules, Colonel,” Baker said.

“No, we don’t.”

“Colonel, something else is bothering you, isn’t it?” Kinch observed.

“Yeah, there is,” Hogan admitted. “For the first time, I saw Klink as a person. I mean, really saw him as a person. Someone who feels and can be hurt. We even had what might be called a real conversation. Up to now, he’s been nothing more than a caricature in a uniform.”

“Klink is a caricature,” LeBeau said positively.

Hogan shook his head. “Not today, he wasn’t. He seemed different somehow. I don’t know. It’s as though what we see everyday isn’t really him.”

“There could be another explanation, Colonel,” Kinch said quietly.

Hogan looked at him.

“Like you said, for the first time, you saw Klink as a person. Maybe that’s what’s spooking you,” Kinch said. “Maybe you, we, don’t want to. It might make things harder for us. I mean we use him all the time.”

Hogan nodded. “Yes, I do, don’t I?” he said softly. A long pause. Then, “Like the man said, an accident of war.”

“If it’ll help, Colonel,” Newkirk said, not quite understanding Hogan’s concern, “think of all the kids they murdered. You don’t see him caring about them, do you?”

Hogan shook his head. “Guess not.” Then he roused himself. “Time for lights out in a minute,” he said. “You’d better hurry up.”

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Good nights sounded from his men.

“Good night,” he echoed as the door closed behind them.

Hogan put his cup down and pulled off his jacket. Undoing his tie, he walked to the window and opened the shutter for a moment. Lights were going down around the compound, except in Klink’s quarters. He closed the shutters tightly, for a moment wondering if Klink would get any sleep tonight.

Then he shrugged. Getting sentimental in his old age, that’s what it was. Nothing more.

He didn’t want to think what else it might be. He didn’t want to think about how things seemed to be getting better between Klink and him. Better since that day after Hogan had again bested Klink, though, of course, Klink didn’t know it. The day after that Gestapo major had left, after clearing Hogan of a sabotage job<sup>1</sup>, which of course, he had done. Klink had laughingly told Hogan about it. Hogan, naturally, was outraged, managing to get an undeserved apology out of Klink. Then came Klink’s startling, spontaneous comment that he “liked” Hogan. Oddly, Hogan had been pleased by the comment. Not that it mattered what an idiot like Klink thought of him. But it had pleased him.

Weird. Why should he care what Klink thought? He never had, never in all this time. Then again, why shouldn’t Klink like him? After all, he was a likable fellow. Unlike Klink.

Poor Klink. He really was a fool. A naive fool. Not realizing what a perfect tool he was. So easy to manipulate, to use. So easy to get rid of. He almost felt sorry for Klink. He almost . . .

A cold wave washed over him. No. He felt nothing for Klink. Nothing but contempt.

Nothing . . .

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<sup>1</sup> “Hogan’s Double Life”

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– Two –

*Just a few weeks until Christmas*, Hogan thought. *Another Christmas here*. A sigh. He had hoped the war would be over by now. But it wasn't. The Germans were still far from dead, still fighting with all the skill and ingenuity they possessed. It wasn't over yet. Not by a long shot. Still more work for his group of men. And, unfortunately, more prisoners as well.

"Company coming," Newkirk said softly beside him.

A car turned inside the gate and approached Klink's office.

"Set up the coffeepot," Hogan said. "I'll check our visitor out."

Klink had come out of his office and seemed genuinely pleased to see his visitor. A captain. Wehrmacht. Klink and his visitor embraced. There seemed to be real warmth in the greeting.

"Kommandant!" Hogan called as he approached. "Do you have a minute?"

"Colonel Hogan." Klink wasn't too pleased to see him. "Can it wait until later?"

"Sure, no rush," Hogan said amicably. "I'm not going any place."

Intense brown eyes peered at him out of a pleasantly handsome face. A faint twinkle of humor was in their depths.

"Very funny, Hogan," Klink said. "Dieter, I'd like you to meet Colonel Robert Hogan, the senior POW officer. Colonel Hogan, my brother-in-law, Captain Dieter Müller."

Hogan raised a brow. This pleasant, intelligent-appearing man related to Klink? "How do you do, Captain?"

The handshake was firm, friendly. "I am well, Colonel. I hope Wilhelm is treating you the same."

The interest in Müller's eyes seemed real. "Can't complain. He won't let me," Hogan added to Klink's annoyance.

Müller smiled faintly in response.

"Dieter is a doctor, Colonel Hogan. Perhaps he will visit the infirmary later," Klink said.

"Yes. I would like that very much."

"Very generous, Captain," Hogan said.

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“Not at all. It is simply my duty as a physician.”

“Now, if you have nothing else, Colonel . . .” Klink started.

“No, nothing. Nice meeting you, Captain.”

“And you, Colonel.”

Hogan went back to his room. His men, save for Kinch, were already listening in.

“Friendly sounding chap,” Newkirk observed.

“He’s Klink’s brother-in-law. A doctor.”

Kinch came in. “Colonel, the underground said to contact a new man in the area. Name’s Dieter Mü ller.”

Hogan looked at him in surprise. “Are you sure?”

“Yup. Captain Dieter Mü ller. What’s wrong, Colonel?”

“He’s already here; he’s Klink’s brother-in-law.”

Klink handed Mü ller a glass of brandy and sat down behind his desk. “How is Therese?” His voice sounded a little different to the eavesdropping men.

“As well as can be expected,” Mü ller said. “Christmas . . . Christmas will be difficult.” He looked at Klink. “Can you get away?”

Klink shook his head. “Nein. With the war the way it is — ”

“The war!” Mü ller interrupted vehemently. “The war! It killed my son! Murders thousands of people every day. Destroys countries. And for what?!” There were tears in his voice.

Klink chose his words carefully. “It will end.”

“When? How many more children must die? How many more parents must cry for their babies?”

“Dieter, don’t!” Klink’s voice was soothing. “Stop tormenting yourself. It will end.”

“Not if left to those,” an ugly expression, “in Berlin.” The hate in Mü ller’s voice surprised the listening prisoners. “Well, I am not leaving it to them any longer!”

“What do you mean?” Klink asked slowly, deliberately.

“I mean I am going to do everything I can to end this madness, Wilhelm. Help anyway I can.”

“Help who?”

“The resistance, Wilhelm. And I want you to join me.”

His statement took Klink and the listeners by surprise.

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“Dieter, you are talking of treason.”

“I am talking of ending this insanity brought on by a madman.”

“That ‘madman’ is your Führer, Dieter,” Klink said carefully.

“My what?” Müller stared at Klink. “Wilhelm, what is the matter with you? You sound like one of those damned Nazis.”

“Dieter, please.” Klink sounded tired.

“Please, what? You once hated everything the Nazis stood for.” Brows were raised among the eavesdroppers. “What has happened to you?”

Klink stayed silent.

“Join me,” Müller pressed. “Come with me to see these people. As the Kommandant of a prison camp, you could be of great help.”

“He already is,” Hogan said with a grin.

“Dieter, this is mad. The Gestapo is suspicious of everyone, everything. If you are caught . . . Think, Dieter! You can destroy everything — your career, your home, your family.”

“You are afraid!” Müller accused.

“Of course, I’m afraid!” Klink stood, angry. “You should be, too! These are dangerous times, Dieter. Leave politics and resistance to those who know best.”

Müller stared at him. “Mein Gott, they’re true. All true. I didn’t want to believe it.”

“Believe what?”

Müller stood and faced him. “All those stories. Klink, the ineffectual, spineless fool — ”

“Ouch,” from Carter.

“Whose only claim to any talent is that no one has ever escaped from this camp,” Müller continued damningly. “But, in all other respects, a hopeless incompetent.”

Klink turned away from him, his face a frozen mask.

“If Therese ever knew . . . ” Müller’s voice was quiet. “She adores you. You were always her big brother. You were brave, strong. You knew everything, could do everything.” He shook

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his head. "If she could see you now, as you really are."

Silence from the man at the window.

"It would kill her," Müller finished softly.

"Dieter, please." A very tired voice.

"I won't say anything to Therese." Müller slipped on his coat. "I can't destroy her image of you. But . . . Perhaps it is best that you don't see her."

Klink turned to him. "Dieter, don't do anything foolish. Please."

"Why?" Müller challenged. "Will you turn me in to your precious Nazis?"

Klink went white. "I think," he sought to control his voice, "we should stop. Before too much is said."

"It has already been said, Wilhelm." Müller said contemptuously. "God willing, I will be back in a day or two to see your prisoners. But I have no desire to see you again, Wilhelm. Goodbye."

The listeners heard the door slam.

"Gee," Carter said, "I almost feel sorry for Klink."

"Yeah," Kinch said. "His brother-in-law gave it to him. But good!"

"Well, he deserves it," LeBeau sneered.

"So," Baker asked, "how do we contact him?"

"Tonight. At his hotel," Hogan said.

Newkirk grinned. "Is he going to be in for a surprise!"

\* \* \* \* \*

There was a knock on the door as Dieter Müller started to take off his jacket. Frowning slightly, he went to the door. "Who is it?" he called.

"Herr Doktor," said a voice, "there is an emergency. We must speak to you."

Surprised, Müller opened the door. He was shocked to find Colonel Hogan standing there in civilian clothes. Before he could say a word, Hogan pushed his way into the room along with one



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of his men and closed the door.

“Colonel Hogan!” Müller finally found his voice. “What are you doing here? How did you get out of camp? Did you escape?”

“Not exactly,” answered the American. “I understand it never snows in Munich.”

Müller stood frozen for a moment. Then his numb brain remembered the response. “Only when the sun is out.”

Hogan grinned at him. “Stupid codes, aren’t they?”

Müller couldn’t say a word, his mind still trying to grapple with Hogan’s presence.

“Does anyone know you are here, or not in camp?” he finally managed to ask.

“You mean, Klink?” Hogan’s voice was disparaging.

Müller nodded.

“Don’t be ridiculous.”

Müller shuddered as he grasped the full implication of Hogan’s statement. “You . . . You are in the habit of wandering in and out of camp.”

Hogan nodded.

“And, no one, the guards, no one knows — ”

“We have a very nice little setup,” LeBeau said.

Dieter Müller sank into a chair. The stories he’d heard became even more horrible. What had happened to the man he’d thought he had known? What?!

“We understand that you want to help,” Hogan was saying.

“What? Oh, yes.” Müller visibly shook himself. “Yes, I do.”

“You know it could be dangerous?”

A nod. “It is dangerous everywhere.”

Hogan smiled. “Okay. Tomorrow night at 2300 met us at the north end of town, just past the signpost. Wear something unobtrusive.”

Müller nodded.

“Good.” Another smile. “Until tomorrow then.”

“Until tomorrow.”

And Hogan and his man were gone, leaving behind a very shaken Dieter Müller.

\* \* \* \* \*

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The Stage changed the frequency on the radio set atop the bookcase before sitting down in the old, comfortable chair beside it.

The night's operations had gone better than he'd anticipated. It had required a great deal of planning to coordinate the fifteen separate strikes against military targets in Germany and France. Two of the raids had been carried out in conjunction with British and American units. Those hits were the ones that pleased him the most. Thus far, the Allies had been reluctant to coordinate their activities with local resistance units. The success of the night's missions should lead to more cooperative ventures between the Allied armies and the resistance. He hoped.

The success of the operations would also add to his already mythic reputation. He had made certain that there was no doubt that the Stage had been responsible for the strikes; he had allowed himself to be impersonated in half a dozen locations to further confuse his enemies. He permitted himself a smile. After all these years, he still enjoyed confounding the leaders of the so-called master race.

His smile faded as he listened to one of the underground units' messages.

So, Papa Bear had decided to go ahead with the meeting, despite his warning. It didn't surprise the Stage. Very little that Papa Bear did surprised him any more.

He glanced down at the book in his hand. Tacitus had lost its appeal. He returned the book to the shelf, and pulled out another one. A glance at the title. No, not *Divina Commedia*; the horrors he saw were even worse than the hell imagined by Dante. He returned the book to the shelf, pulled out one of Moliere's comedies, and changed the frequency on the powerful radio.

The Stage listened more closely now. This was the enemy's frequency. Code, of course, but one he knew quite well.

He stiffened in surprise. So, the SS knew about the meeting of the two groups. Knew and would attend.

*Damn!*

The book lay forgotten on his lap. It sounded as if, this time, the SS had planned well. Papa Bear and his men had managed to evade capture in the past; this time, he wasn't certain they

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could. A very valuable underground unit could well be taken. Along with innocents who had nothing to do with it.

The Stage started to reach for the radio, to order Papa Bear to cancel the meeting.

And changed his mind. It had been a long time since the Stage had been seen around Hammelburg. Perhaps a personal visit was long overdue. A thin smile. As was the lesson about to be taught to a certain, rather impudent, American colonel.

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– Three –

There was no moon this cold November night. None.

Dieter Müller shivered in the darkness as he followed Hogan and his black-clad men to the meeting. The gun in his hand felt strange. He had not wanted to carry it, but Hogan had insisted. Be prepared, Hogan had said, sounding like a boy scout.

Doubts began to crowd Müller's mind. Doubts that vanished whenever he thought about his child — that cold, angelic little face on the table. And then Therese's face. So white, so empty, as she stared at her son. Even now, pain slashed through him as he thought of his young son. That was why he was here. To do something, anything.

A clearing. A small fire in it. A handful of people waited around it.

Colonel Robert Hogan, code name Papa Bear, wasn't too happy to see the fire. "This isn't a picnic," he said angrily.

"It is cold," said one of the men.

"Put it out anyway!" Hogan ordered in disgust. This was a new group. An inexperienced group. Too new, too inexperienced.

"Are we all here?" Hogan asked as the fire was doused.

"Yes," murmured a man.

And all hell broke loose.

Müller watched in shocked horror as a dozen armed, uniformed SS soldiers showed up. The weapons were pointed at them, at him. He heard Hogan's curse.

Müller wasn't too sure what happened next. All he knew was that, suddenly, from the side, something opened fire on the SS soldiers.

"Run!" commanded a voice.

People scattered, guns firing.

A soldier appeared in front of Müller. Müller knew he had to fire. He tried to remember that this was one of those faceless monsters he had vowed to destroy. But this man had a face — grim, white.

And Müller knew he couldn't fire. He had spent too much of

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his life trying to save life; he could not take it.

A shot from his side; the soldier crumpled.

“Run!” commanded a masked man in black.

Mü ller ran; the man followed.

A hissing gasp behind Mü ller.

Mü ller half turned to the man following him, but found himself pushed ahead. He heard shots behind him as the man fired.

On through the dark woods and Mü ller found himself back at the car. The man was beside him. Then Hogan and his men broke through the trees.

“Get in the car!” Hogan ordered.

The masked man was already behind the wheel. The others had barely gotten inside when the car started off into the darkness.

After a few kilometers, the car stopped.

“You really should chose your allies more carefully, Papa Bear,” the man in the mask chided.

Hogan looked at him closely for the first time. “Stage?” His voice was incredulous.

“I see you remember me. I am flattered,” was the dry reply. The door opened and the Stage got out of the car.

Mü ller noticed the blood on his right sleeve. “You are hurt!”

A glance at the red stain. “A scratch. Nothing more.”

“I am a doctor,” Mü ller began.

“Perhaps it would be better if you remained so,” the voice said gently. “I fear you are not a very good soldier.”

“Nein,” Mü ller said, accepting the reprimand. “I thought I could be, but I cannot.”

The masked head nodded. “As for you, Papa Bear, I would suggest you heed warnings given you in the future. I may not be around the next time.”

Hogan chafed under his reprimand. “I can take care of myself.”

A dry, “So I see. Until the next time, Papa Bear.”

“Stage,” Hogan said, more contritely, “thanks.”

A faint smile. “You are welcome. Goodbye, Papa Bear.”

The man disappeared into the woods.

“Who . . . Who,” Mü ller’s voice was shaking, “is he?”

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There was sudden awe in Hogan's voice. "The Stage. One of the most important resistance leaders in Germany. I didn't know he was in the area."

"He is not from around here?" Müller asked.

Hogan shook his head. "He gets spotted all over Germany. Always in that mask. Supposedly only a handful of people know who he really is."

"I have heard stories," Müller said slowly.

"You and everyone else," Hogan said. "Well, this has been quite an experience, Doctor. Care to try it again?"

Müller shook his head. "I think I will do what I know best, and that is being a doctor. I will help who I can, but I think I will leave the rest of it to those who know better."

Hogan nodded. *Funny, that's what Klink said.*

Hogan slid behind the wheel and started the car. Slowly, it disappeared into the night.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was a somber Dieter Müller who climbed the steps leading to Kommandant Klink's office. He walked into the office and knocked on the inner door.

Colonel Wilhelm Klink opened the door.

After an awkward silence, Müller asked, "May I come in?"

Klink stepped back and gestured a welcome. He closed the door and followed Müller inside.

Müller looked uneasy.

Klink broke the silence. "Are you finished with the prisoners' examinations?"

"Ja. Here is the report. I found no serious health problems. Considering the conditions, the prisoners are in excellent shape."

"Good. You are leaving now?"

Müller nodded.

"Then there is nothing more to do. Or say."

Müller faced him. "Yes, there is . . . I wish to apologize."

Klink turned away. "For what?"

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“For . . . ” Mü ller cleared his throat. “I think I understand a little of what motivates you, Wilhelm, and others like you. You survive. And,” a deep breath, “last night, I realized how important that is.”

Klink turned back to him. “In what way?”

Hogan, listening in, stiffened. What would Mü ller say about last night?

“I made contact with a resistance group, Wilhelm,” Mü ller was saying. “More than one. Only the SS knew about the meeting as well. But for the courage of one man, I might have been caught or killed. I realized then what I had risked. And how foolish I was. I am not a soldier, Wilhelm. I am only a doctor in a uniform that has no meaning for me. As such, I am a liability to others. I had a gun in my hand and realized I could not shoot.”

“A doctor should save lives, Dieter,” Klink said. “Not take them. And you are an excellent doctor.”

“Danke, Wilhelm. I haven’t changed my mind about the resistance or the way to end this war.”

“I didn’t think you had.” There was an odd humor in Klink’s voice.

“But I realize that I must leave it to others better suited than I. A brave man was injured because of me. I won’t risk that again.”

“I’m sure that is the wisest thing.”

Mü ller laughed. “I was right, Wilhelm. You are a realist and a survivor . . . ”

Silence for a while. Then . . .

“I . . . I have decided to take Therese to my grandparents. As you know, they live near the Swiss border. It is much safer there.”

“An excellent idea.”

“There is a hospital where she can work. Perhaps in time, there will be another child to show us how beautiful life can be.”

“I hope, and pray, so, Dieter.”

“And I pray Uncle Wilhelm will visit often.”

“I will probably out stay my welcome. A drink before you leave?”

The listening men heard Klink pouring something into a glass.

## Act One

“To Therese,” Klink said quietly.

“And to the men who love her.”

After a few moments . . .

“Take care of yourself, Wilhelm,” Mü ller whispered softly.

They heard the door open.

“Write, if you can,” Mü ller was saying as they left the office together.

Hogan left his office as well, watching as Klink walked Mü ller to his car.

Klink was leaning on the open window, still talking to Mü ller. “Give my love to Therese,” he said loudly, grasping Mü ller’s hand.

Mü ller nodded; behind Klink, he could see Hogan approaching. He started the car. “Auf wiederseh’n, Wilhelm.”

Klink stepped away from the car. Mü ller, raising a hand goodbye, drove slowly away.

Hogan waved as the car passed him.

“Pleasant fellow,” Hogan said as he reached the Kommandant.

“Yes, he is,” Klink said, watching the car pass through the gates. “And an excellent doctor. He says your men are in excellent shape.”

Hogan grinned. “I thought you said he was an excellent doctor.”

The jest failed to get the usual rise out of Klink. Instead, he smiled faintly as he turned to go back up the stairs.

Hogan glanced at him, surprised by Klink’s good humor. Then a shake of his head as he went back to the barracks.





Act One

Scene Two



## Scene Two

— Four —

Kommandant Wilhelm Klink grimaced as he read the report in front of him. Another forty prisoners were expected in camp today. Another grimace. Stalag 13 was one of the smallest prisoner of war camps in Germany. Yet there were nearly fifteen hundred men in the camp already — over two hundred more than the camp was supposed to hold. But it was like that in camps all over Germany. Ever since the Allied invasion, prisoners poured into the camps by the thousands. Klink did not like it one bit. Hogan would like it even less.

Hogan.

Klink rubbed his forearm absently and stopped. He also stopped the thought that was surfacing, the thought about the unusual rapport Hogan and he had developed in the days since his nephew's death.

No. He couldn't afford to think about that right now. Besides, when Hogan found out about the additional prisoners . . .

"Fraulein Hilda," Klink called.

"Jawohl, Herr Kommandant," the pretty girl answered.

"Have Schultz find Colonel Hogan, bitte," Klink ordered.

"Jawohl, Herr Kommandant."

No, Hogan would not be happy at all.

Klink picked up the next report on his desk. He skimmed it, and went cold. Another prisoner would be arriving. Slowly, he put the report down. Then he stood and walked over to the window. He stared out at the harsh winter day. This he did not need. He removed the monocle from his left eye and rubbed his eyes. He was tired. Very tired.

A knock on the door.

"Come in."

"You wanted to see me, Kommandant?" Hogan asked cheerfully.

Klink knew why the American was so cheerful this morning. He had heard about the explosion at the weapons' factory last night. Well, perhaps Hogan's good mood would assuage the news

## Scene Two

about the new prisoners.

Klink turned away from the window and walked back to his desk.

Hogan watched Klink closely as he sat. Hogan noted briefly, if dismissively, how tired Klink looked.

Klink got to the point. "We are getting another forty or so prisoners today."

The smile disappeared. "You can't be serious."

"Unfortunately, I am," Klink said.

"This camp is already overcrowded," Hogan argued.

"I am well aware of that."

"And you're still going to take them?!"

Klink let the anger show. "You make it sound as if I have a choice! Since the Allied invasion, there are more prisoners than ever. All of the camps are badly overcrowded, not just this one."

"And where do you expect to put them?"

"Wherever I can. The guards are looking for space in all of the barracks. It would make things easier for everyone if you helped," Klink added pointedly.

"Yes, sir!" A sarcastic tone and a bare attempt at a salute as he turned away.

"Colonel Hogan."

Klink's voice stopped him as he reached the door.

"There is something else I need to talk to you about."

"What . . . sir?" Hogan's tone was belligerent.

An inward sigh as Klink picked up the last report he had read. For an instant, he considered giving it to the American.

"There is another prisoner coming today," Klink said slowly. "A special one."

His tone finally got through Hogan's anger. "How special?"

"He," Klink glanced at the report, "has a reputation as a troublemaker."

Hogan's brows rose.

"Not to other prisoners, but to the guards."

"Good for him!"

Klink ignored the interruption. "He also makes a habit of trying to escape."

Finally, Hogan looked interested. And less than happy.

"He has been in and out of nearly a dozen different camps,"

## Scene Two

Klink continued. "He always gets caught, but with each escape, he gets more troublesome."

Hogan was surprised to see the uneasy look in Klink's eyes.

"Colonel," Klink said softly, "he is being sent here as a last resort."

"What do you mean, 'last resort'?" Hogan asked suspiciously.

"Simply that the SS is tired of dealing with men like him. They have agreed, reluctantly, to let him come here because of the reputation of this camp." Klink noted the amused expression in Hogan's eyes and, for an instant, wished he could share the joke. "But," Klink's expression grew unusually somber, "if he escapes from here, or even attempts an escape, he will be sent to a concentration camp."

A look of surprise on Hogan's face.

Klink wondered bleakly if Hogan knew what being sent to a concentration camp really meant. Somehow, he didn't think so.

"Colonel," Klink added, "I would not wish that fate for anyone."

Hogan couldn't hide his surprise at the implied warning.

"So, please, Colonel Hogan. When he arrives, I suggest you have a talk with him. For his own sake."

Hogan nodded. "All right, Colonel. I will."

"Good."

"When will he get here?" Hogan asked.

"I don't know; sometime today."

"All right, Kommandant. Any more pleasant news?"

Klink shook his head. "No." God, he was tired.

Absently, Klink returned Hogan's usual sloppy salute. His eyes returning to his desk, he missed the slightly puzzled expression on Hogan's face as the American looked at him before leaving.

The day turned out to be as bad as Klink had expected. The forty prisoners, forty-three to be exact, arrived a little after noon. Their processing was a long, drawn-out disaster from start to finish. Most of the guards he now had were inexperienced, the war taking away most of the men who could be used for combat. Complete chaos ensued as the new prisoners arrived in two trucks.

## Scene Two

Hogan looked as annoyed as Klink felt about the mess. And every chance he got, Hogan complained, loudly, about it. Nor were the other prisoners happy. The new arrivals made for even more cramped quarters for everyone.

Klink wondered if he could get a new barracks built. Considering the crowding at the camp, Hogan just might agree to the idea. The question was, where to get the money for the job? He didn't think Hogan would agree to do it for free. Maybe a trade of some sort. But with what? At this stage of the war, the camp had few luxuries to bargain with.

Klink removed the monocle from his eye and rubbed his tired eyes as he sat down at the desk.

The telephone on his desk rang.

"Kommandant Klink," he answered brusquely. "What? . . . Oh, yes. Send the truck in."

The troublesome new prisoner had arrived with the SS.

Klink sighed. The sight of the SS would not help ease the tension in the camp. He just hoped it wouldn't aggravate it even more. He stood and walked to the outer office.

The truck was coming into the compound, attracting curious glances from both prisoners and guards. Hogan, talking with some of the new arrivals, noticed the truck as it approached Klink's office. Klink, at the window, watched its approach.

The truck stopped. A trio of SS men, armed with machine guns, jumped out first. Then a captain. Then the prisoner.

Klink felt a chill that had nothing to do with the cold winter day. The prisoner was shackled.

Klink could see Hogan's face as the American caught sight of the chains. Klink winced, anticipating Hogan's reaction as Hogan headed toward the office. Maybe he could defuse the situation.

Klink left his office, walking out onto the porch. The cold wind blew right through his uniform. He managed to control the shiver that shook him.

The captain walked up the stairs to meet him. "Heil Hitler!" A loud, correct greeting.

Klink's greeting was underwhelming. "Remove the chains," he ordered before the captain could say anything.

"Kommandant," the captain said, "this man is a dangerous prisoner; he needs to be kept in chains."

## Scene Two

"Maybe in your custody, Hauptsturmführer," Klink said. "But he is in a Luftstalag now. We do not chain prisoners here. Remove the chains." His tone brooked no argument.

Hogan almost admired Klink's behavior at that moment. When Klink wanted to, he sounded as decisive as any officer.

Reluctantly, the captain seconded Klink's orders and the chains were removed.

"I have some papers for you to sign, Kommandant," the captain was saying as he pulled a packet from his pocket.

Klink took the packet and glanced through the papers. "They seem to be in order."

The captain handed Klink a pen with an ironic smile. Klink signed the papers without a word.

"I would suggest you keep him in solitary confinement, Kommandant," the captain said dryly.

"Ja," Klink matched his tone, "I expected you would. But, as I said before, Hauptsturmführer, this is a Luftstalag."

The captain grinned humorlessly. "So you said, Kommandant. Well," he turned to the prisoner, "after he escapes from here, or tries to, he will find the treatment at the next camp far more interesting." He glanced back at Klink. "Good day, Kommandant. I expect to see you soon. Heil Hitler!"

Klink raised his hand in the salute without saying a word. He glanced briefly at the prisoner who was looking around, his hand nervously rubbing his wrists.

"Schultz!" Klink called.

Portly Sergeant Hans Schultz appeared. "Jawohl, Herr Kommandant!"

"Escort the prisoner to my office."

Klink turned his back to the prisoner and walked into his office. He missed the bitter look directed at him by the new prisoner.

Klink studied the file on the new prisoner.

Anthony Martinelli, sergeant U.S. Army, age 30, married with one child. A prisoner since late 1942, captured during the early American campaigns in North Africa. In and out of a succession of POW camps ever since. With each change in camp, his reputation for causing trouble increased. Justifiably so.



## Scene Two

An inward sigh. The last thing he, and the camp, needed.

Klink went into the speech he gave every incoming prisoner. He knew how ludicrous the speech often sounded. But right now, he didn't care. He knew that Hogan would give his own speech. As long as the prisoners listened to that one, Klink didn't care what they thought of his.

Klink glanced up at Martinelli, his eyes meeting the prisoner's. And blinked in surprise. The malevolence in Martinelli's eyes startled him. But he recovered as Hogan came in. Klink barely listened to the exchange between the two men. Then he dismissed them. As they left, Klink hoped that Martinelli would behave himself. He also hoped that Hogan could keep him in line.

## Scene Two

– Five –

Colonel Robert Hogan watched Sergeant Anthony Martinelli cross the compound. Martinelli had been here for three days now. He seemed to be a loner, forming no ties with any of the other men in the camp. Of course, he hadn't been here that long yet.

So far, Martinelli was staying out of trouble. Except for their initial contact, Hogan hadn't had a chance to talk with him. And all he did then was to warn Martinelli not to think of escaping. Unfortunately, the other forty-three new arrivals had kept Hogan occupied during the day. And a couple of nighttime extracurricular activities kept him busy at night. But now was a good time for a chat.

Martinelli was staring at the road running just outside of the camp. He heard Hogan's approach and turned.

Hogan smiled as Martinelli saluted. "You can drop the saluting, Sergeant. We're pretty informal around here."

"So I see."

"What do you think about our home away from home so far?"

Martinelli shrugged. "Seen one camp, you've seen them all."

Hogan grinned. "Oh, I don't know. We think our little camp is kind of special."

Martinelli failed to smile.

"So, are you settling in?" Hogan asked.

Another disinterested shrug. "Guess so."

"That's good," Hogan said heartily. "We don't pretend it's the Ritz or home. But it'll do for now."

"Yeah. If you say so, Colonel." Martinelli's voice was almost sullen.

Hogan glanced at him sharply. "Look, Sergeant," Hogan said quietly. "I know you've got a reputation for being a maverick. But as I said when you got here, what we're doing here is important. You do understand that, don't you?"

"Like I said, Colonel, if you say so."

Hogan felt frustrated. "Martinelli, Klink says this camp is

## Scene Two

your last chance,” he said with some annoyance. “If you try anything funny, they’re going to send you someplace a lot less pleasant.”

“Oh, they will, will they?” Martinelli’s voice sounded almost threatening as he watched Klink walk across the compound. “Tell me, Colonel, do you always listen to Klink?”

Hogan’s pride was hurt. “Only when he makes sense. And that doesn’t happen too often.”

Klink was approaching them. Hogan’s annoyance showed on his face; he had wanted to talk to Martinelli some more.

“Colonel Hogan.” Klink saluted him and turned to Martinelli. “Sergeant.”

Martinelli’s salute was a lot more professional than Hogan’s.

“Settling in, Sergeant?” Klink asked pleasantly.

“Yes, sir.” Martinelli’s voice was neutral.

“Good.” Klink turned to Hogan. “I’d like to talk to you, Colonel Hogan.”

“Yes, sir.” Hogan wasn’t too pleased at the interruption but he walked beside Klink along the perimeter wire.

“Colonel Hogan, the barracks are rather crowded right now.”

“That’s an understatement.”

“There is space in the compound for another two buildings. Possibly more,” Klink said.

Hogan glanced around at the camp. “Yeah, I guess so.”

Klink looked at him. “I’d like to build those barracks, Colonel.”

“You?” Hogan was blunt. “Or us?”

“We could make it a cooperative effort,” Klink suggested pleasantly.

“And what do we get in return?”

Hogan was not going to make it easy, was he? Klink strove to keep his voice pleasant. “More space.”

“And that’s it?”

“Colonel,” Klink’s voice became neutral, “I have little left to bargain with. The supplies in your Red Cross packages are better than anything I can give you. Building the barracks will ease the crowded conditions. What else do you want?”

And so it began. The bargaining continued for about ten minutes. When it ended, neither man looked completely satisfied but both knew it was the best that they could do.

## Scene Two

Klink walked back to his office. At least, the barracks would be built. A cold breeze ruffled his coat and he shivered as he walked up the stairs. Then he stopped. Something was . . .

He turned and looked around the compound. Everything looked normal — the guards in the watchtowers and patrolling the compound, the prisoners milling around. A football game had started in the large open area near the gate. Everything looked fine.

*Then what . . . ?*

Klink froze as his eyes accidentally met Martinelli's. He blinked in surprise. And looked again.

No, it was gone. Or had it ever existed? The pure hate he'd thought he'd seen in those eyes. Klink knew he was disliked heartily by most of the men, maybe even hated by some of the men in the camp. But he had never seen . . .

He shook his head. His imagination was running overtime. He was too tired to see straight. Maybe he should just forget about doing any more work this afternoon and get some sleep. Gruber should be able to handle things. Yes, that's what he would do.

But it was not to be. The phone rang incessantly. Suddenly, everything required his personal attention.

The day dragged on. Dinner was on a tray in his office, half of it left uneaten. Finally, near ten that night, he finished. And had Schultz bring the car around.

Hogan glanced curiously out the window as Klink and Schultz drove out of the camp. A faint smile. Klink was turning into a night owl lately. Oh well, it left them free from troublesome spot inspections. He grinned as he headed for the tunnels that lay beneath the camp.

## Scene Two

– Six –

It was during the building of the first barracks that the first attempt was made. Supplies had been coming into camp regularly. The prisoners' work details also made forays into the woods for lumber. There was a constant milling around of men, guards and prisoners. Even Hogan had trouble keeping track of everyone.

Hogan and a group of twenty men were in the woods, cutting trees. Hogan was none too happy about having to get the wood this way, but Klink's attempt to get it from town met with little success. The townspeople were reluctant to extend any more credit to the camp, and neither Klink nor Hogan could blame them. Everyone, except the men in Berlin who ran things, could see the writing on the wall. Everyone seemed to know it was just a matter of time before the war would be over. Then what good would promises of payment from the military be?

There were only three guards watching the men. Schultz and two newer guards. Hogan nearly laughed at them. They were little more than children. He sobered up quickly. They were nervous children, armed with machine guns. And a lot more dangerous than the older men who were brought in to watch the prisoners.

Martinelli was on the work detail when he decided to slip away. Fortunately, it was Schultz who caught him. Otherwise, someone might have gotten hurt. Otherwise, Klink would have been told. Hogan managed to convince Schultz that no one need mention what had happened. Schultz, reluctantly, and with help from a bribe, agreed.

The second attempt wasn't as easily handled. There had been an accident in raising the frame of the first building. It wasn't a serious accident, but it attracted the attention of everyone, including the guards. And it left a blind spot in the wire. Before anyone could stop him, Martinelli was there, cutting his way through.

Klink spotted him.

## Scene Two

*Klink*, Hogan thought with disgust as he followed Martinelli up the stairs. *Of all the dumb luck.*

Hogan listened as Klink went into his song and dance about nobody ever escaping from the camp. And waited to protest the thirty days in the cooler that Klink would impose for the attempt. To his astonishment, Klink didn't order the thirty days. In fact, he didn't order any time in the cooler.

Hogan stared at Klink as Martinelli was led out. "All right, Kommandant." Hogan leaned on the desk. "What's going on? You've thrown men into the cooler for a lot less."

Klink looked at him with faint amusement. "You're objecting to my leniency?"

"Yes!"

"Sit down, Colonel," Klink requested pleasantly.

Hogan sat, suspicious; Klink was being too nice.

Klink saw the suspicion. Part of him was amused, part of him was resentful. Klink removed his monocle and rubbed his eyes.

Klink was tired, Hogan noted. Well, if Klink would stop playing around after dark, he wouldn't be.

Klink looked at him with an unusually sober expression. "Colonel Hogan, keep an eye on him. Please, for his own sake."

"Isn't that your job?"

"Hogan, please." Klink wasn't in the mood. "I warned you what would happen if he escapes. The Gestapo is keeping an eye on him. They are scrutinizing all of my reports. If I lock him in the cooler, I would have to include the incident in my report. Frankly," Klink's eyes met Hogan's, "I don't want to. As far as I'm concerned, this never happened. But, I warn you, I can't, and I won't, ignore any more attempts. So, talk to him. Make him see sense."

"I'll try."

"You'd better do more than try," Klink said sharply.

"Yes, sir!" Hogan, stung by Klink's order, stood.

Klink looked at him; the American's face was belligerent. An inward sigh. Their recent goodwill seemed to have disappeared. If anything, their relationship harkened back to the early days of their acquaintance. Maybe he could say something, do something. But what?

"Colonel Hogan," Klink's voice softened, "please. Believe it or

## Scene Two

not, I do not wish him harm. He can stay here, safely. But he must cooperate. I can't deny that this is a prison; none of us can. But please, try to make him understand. For his own sake."

Hogan looked at Klink. And unbent a little. Angry about the conditions in camp, he knew he was picking on Klink. Even he was forced to admit, Klink had no control over events. As for Martinelli, Klink seemed to want to help him.

"All right, Kommandant," Hogan said. "I'll do my best."

"That's all I ask, Colonel. Dismissed."

A salute and Hogan left.

*Do your best. A sigh. Will it be enough?*

## Scene Two

– Seven –

Colonel Wilhelm Klink walked into his living quarters after the prisoners' lights-out. He wasn't through working yet, but at least he could get more comfortable. He pulled off his tie, slipped off his uniform jacket, and laid them on the back of the sofa. After pouring himself a drink, he undid the suspenders, laying them on top of the jacket. Carrying the drink to the table, he undid half of the buttons on his shirt. Pity he couldn't work like this in the office but it was hardly regulation attire.

Klink sat down at the table and began leafing through the piles of paper. A grimace. Desperate battles going on in the war and it seemed that the General Staff had nothing better to do than demand more reports. Ah, the joys of being a soldier.

Joys. Joy had nothing to do with it. Especially lately. But it had taught him skills that were rather handy to have. A faint smile. Even if they were being used in ways many of his instructors would have disapproved of.

Enough delay. That pile of paper wasn't going to get any lower. He drained the last of his drink and started.

Colonel Robert Hogan glanced briefly toward Klink's quarters as he closed the shutters. The lights were still on. Looked like Klink had more work to do. He almost felt sorry for Klink. And grinned. He had always hated paperwork. One of the few advantages of being a prisoner was that he never had any to do. One of the disadvantages was that he always seemed to have enough work. Time to hit the old tunnel again.

In the bathroom, Klink dried his hands, and went back into the living area. The unfinished pile of paper on the table was still larger than the finished stack.

A sigh. Should he give up and go to bed? Or should he continue attacking that mound? For some reason, it never seemed to get any smaller.

The decision was made for him. Tired and feeling secure in his



## Scene Two

quarters, he didn't hear the faint step behind him. Something blunt crashed down on the back of his head, and he fell to the floor soundlessly.

Holding a gun over Klink's prone body, Martinelli grinned maliciously.

Kommandant Wilhelm Klink slowly raised his head and winced. The back of his skull ached ferociously. He tried lifting his hand to his head. And failed.

He snapped awake, fully alert now, despite the pain. He suddenly realized that he was standing, and that his wrists were bound and caught by a plant hook from the ceiling. He'd forgotten the hook was even there. He was just standing, he noticed, his arms beginning to ache from holding the weight of his body. He shifted position slightly, easing the strain on his arms. A look down. Martinelli sat across from him on the sofa arm, smiling.

Klink felt a chill as he saw the smile. He had seen looks like that before. His eyes met Martinelli's, and he had to suppress a shudder. Martinelli's eyes were aflame with hatred and something else. Klink was afraid to call it madness, but he knew that's what it was.

"I'm glad you're awake, Kommandant," Martinelli said in a mocking voice. "I was afraid I'd have to throw water on you. It's really too cold for that, isn't it?"

"What?" Klink cleared his throat and tried again. "What do you want?"

Hogan would have been surprised at the calmness in his voice. So would anyone else who claimed to know him. But Klink was too tired and, he knew, in too much danger to play games with Martinelli.

"What do I want?" Martinelli asked rhetorically. He stood. "That's an interesting question. What do I want?" He walked over to Klink and leaned over, his mouth inches away from Klink's ear. "What do you think I want, Kommandant?" His voice was biting, satirical. "I want out of here. And you're going to get me out."

"Don't be a fool, Martinelli," Klink started.

Martinelli's face contorted; his hand lashed out, catching

## Scene Two

Klink in the face.

Klink's head snapped back. Pain from the blow and the ache in his skull clouded his vision for a moment. Then, tasting blood on his lip, Klink looked at Martinelli, seemingly unafraid.

Martinelli stepped back in surprise. That was the last thing he'd expected from Klink. Then he grinned; Klink shuddered at the expression in Martinelli's eyes.

"All right, Kommandant," Martinelli said, picking up Klink's tie. Using it, he gagged Klink. Tightly. "If that's the way you want it, that's the way it will be."

Klink shivered, more afraid now than he had been in a very long time.

Martinelli slipped off his belt and began.

"Colonel Hogan!" Corporal Jenkins, one of the men from Barracks 12, called down the tunnel.

"In here!" Hogan answered.

The short, thin man hurried to him. "Sorry to bother you, Colonel," Jenkins said apologetically. "But have you seen Martinelli?"

"Isn't he in your barracks?"

Jenkins shook his head miserably. "No. And no one seems to know where he is."

"Oh, great," murmured Newkirk.

"I saw him at evening roll call," Carter said.

"So did I," said LeBeau. "He must be in one of the other barracks."

"Possible," Hogan said. "Have you checked?"

Jenkins shook his head. "I thought I'd check with you first."

Hogan was annoyed. "Well, get going. Use the tunnel. Baker, Carter, LeBeau, check the places the tunnel doesn't go."

A chorus of "yes, sirs" echoed in the tunnel.

"He's got to be here," Kinch said reasonably. "We'd have heard if he tried to get out."

"Maybe," Hogan said pessimistically.

"He doesn't know about the tunnels, does he, sir?" Newkirk asked.

Hogan shook his head. "No. I was going to tell him tomorrow. He's been behaving himself lately."

## Scene Two

“So he’s got to be in here,” Kinch said.

“Yeah,” Hogan agreed. “But where?”

Martinelli downed most of the drink he held. Then he stood and walked over to the man still hanging from the hook in the ceiling.

“Hey, you,” he said derisively. “Ready to help me?”

The back of his shirt ripped, Klink lifted his aching head, his gaze meeting the mad eyes. His head shook.

Martinelli’s face contorted and he threw the remains of the drink in Klink’s face. Klink blinked the liquid out of his eyes. Then Martinelli’s fist slammed into his unprotected midsection.

Klink groaned, his head dropping, unable to double up. After a moment, he faced Martinelli, still seemingly unafraid. Another vicious blow and Klink’s head snapped back, the side of his lip beginning to bleed again.

“How does it feel to be a prisoner, Kommandant?” Martinelli spat. “To know that your whole existence depends on me?” He laughed. “Ready to help me, Klink?”

Klink shook his head.

“All right, Kommandant,” the same derision in his voice. “Let’s start again, shall we?”

Martinelli picked up the belt and walked over to Klink. The belt swung toward Klink’s unprotected back again.

Hogan was worried. They had looked in every conceivable place in the camp and still no Martinelli.

“Maybe he got into the tunnels,” Carter suggested hesitantly.

Hogan thought it unlikely. As far as he knew, no one had told Martinelli about the tunnels. But, just in case, he had his men search there. And outside the camp as well. It had snowed most of the day; if Martinelli went outside, there would be prints.

“Nothing,” Newkirk said in disgust later. “The only prints out there were from a rabbit.”

“There must be some place we missed,” Hogan said. “Did you check the library? Assembly hall? Recreation hall? Supply hut?” He continued to catalog all the places in the camp.

“We even checked the guards’ barracks,” Baker said. “No sign of him.”

## Scene Two

“Well, check again!” Hogan ordered. “Every place, top to bottom! He’s got to be here!”

“And if he’s not?” Kinch asked quietly.

Hogan shrugged. “Then Stalag 13 has finally had an official escape. But I’ll be damned if I know how it was done.”

His blood-tinged shirt now in tatters, his wrists still bound, Kommandant Wilhelm Klink lay unmoving on the floor.

Martinelli stepped over Klink’s prone body and went to get himself another drink. He was surprised at Klink’s resistance, but not altogether unhappy. He was finally getting back at the bastards for the years they had him locked up. For all the beatings and solitary confinement and bad rations he had endured at their hands.

“Nothing personal, Klink.” Martinelli gulped the brandy down. “You,” he addressed the stirring man, “just happen to be the lucky stiff in the way.” He swayed a little as he walked over to Klink. “Hey, you!” He poked at Klink with a boot. Klink winced as the poke became a kick. “You! I’m talking to you.”

Klink’s bloodshot eyes opened on Martinelli’s grinning face.

“That’s better, Kommandant.” He knelt beside Klink. “Ready to help now, Kommandant?”

Klink didn’t bother shaking his head. He had to conserve his strength as much as possible. The pain and fatigue were wearing him down. He had to hold on long enough for someone to notice that something was very wrong here.

Dawn. He had to hold on until dawn.

“My, my, my, aren’t you the stubborn kraut?” Martinelli grinned. “You know something, Klink. I really don’t mind. No, not one little bit.” He reached for the belt again.

Hogan was frustrated. Martinelli was nowhere to be found; they had searched everywhere.

*No. Not everywhere.*

Hogan straightened up. It wasn’t possible. But still . . .

He went to the door of the barracks and opened it. It was still dark outside. But the guards had changed. Schultz should be around any minute. And there he was.

“Schultz!” Hogan called.

## Scene Two

Surprised, the rotund sergeant hurried over. "Colonel Hogan, it is too early for you to be out of the barracks."

"I'm not out," Hogan said reasonably. "But I want you to come inside."

"Why?" the sergeant asked suspiciously.

"Just get in here!" Hogan ordered.

Schultz reacted to the tone of command in his voice and stepped inside. "What do you want, Colonel Hogan?"

"Schultz," Hogan got straight to the point, "Martinelli's missing."

"What do you mean missing?"

"I mean missing. As in not here, gone, bye-bye."

"You mean escaped?" The large sergeant was outraged.

"I didn't say that," Hogan appeased him. "I just mean we can't find him. And we've been searching all night."

Schultz didn't bother asking how they searched when the prisoners had been confined to the barracks.

"Except . . ."

"Except?" Schultz asked.

"Obviously, we couldn't search Klink's quarters," Hogan said nonchalantly.

Hogan was surprised at the alarm on Schultz's face. "You think he's there?"

Hogan shrugged.

There was fear in Schultz's eyes; he had seen the glint of madness in Martinelli's eyes as he looked at Klink.

"You, come with me!" he ordered Hogan.

A bit surprised at Schultz's manner, Hogan followed the German out of the barracks.

Schultz opened the door to Klink's quarters quietly. "Kommandant? Kommandant?" he called.

Hogan was surprised to find all the lights still on in Klink's quarters. It appeared that the Kommandant had worked all night long. 'Course, he could have fallen asleep as he worked. But where was — ?

Hogan and Schultz stepped into the living room and stopped in shock.

Wilhelm Klink, his shirt gone, lay face down on the floor, his

## Scene Two

wrists bound. Ugly, discolored bruises and reddish welts covered his back and arms. Pain and fatigue etched his unshaven face.

Hogan shivered. Never had he expected to see Klink like that.

“Kommandant!” Schultz cried and started toward him.

Klink’s bloodshot eyes opened.

“Hold it!” A voice ordered loudly and Martinelli stepped into view, holding a gun on them. “Drop the rifle, fatso!”

Schultz nervously complied.

Hogan’s eyes stayed on Klink’s bruised body. “What have you done?” was his whispered question.

Martinelli glanced at Klink dismissively. “He doesn’t want to help me get out of camp. I’m trying to convince him. But he doesn’t convince easily. In fact,” Martinelli took a step toward Klink, “he needs some more persuading.”

Hogan’s mouth was dry as Martinelli walked over to Klink. “Don’t,” Hogan heard himself saying in a voice filled with horror. “Don’t hurt him.”

Klink’s pain-filled eyes lifted to his face.

“Why, Colonel,” Martinelli mocked, “I didn’t know you cared. I would have thought this would be your favorite fantasy. Having this,” an ugly name, “in your hands, free to do anything you like with him.”

Hogan shuddered. Martinelli was mad, totally mad.

Martinelli kicked Klink in the side; a groan from the beaten man on the floor.

“No!” Hogan whispered, suddenly very afraid. “Don’t hurt him. Please!”

Martinelli’s face twisted. “Then talk to him, Hogan. Convince him to help me get out of here. Before I get really angry.” He picked up a knife lying on the table.

Hogan slowly walked over to Klink and knelt beside him. He didn’t know what to do; he’d never seen anyone who had been beaten, who had been hurt, like this. Hesitantly, he touched Klink’s bruised shoulders. Klink flinched away from his unwittingly painful touch.

Hogan persisted, pulling Klink off the floor, turning him over. Those unfamiliarly pained, bloodshot eyes were on Hogan’s face.

Hogan held Klink by the shoulders, Klink’s head resting on his arm. Hogan pulled out his handkerchief and wiped the sweat off

## Scene Two

Klink's face. He dabbed at the blood still at the corner of Klink's cracked lips.

"Kommandant?" Hogan whispered, his eyes straying to the small sweat-matted hairs on Klink's chest.

And caught his breath. Thin lines of blood crisscrossed Klink's torso. Hogan shuddered. Apparently, they had interrupted Martinelli as he was starting with the knife.

"Kommandant?" he repeated.

Klink stayed silent, his pained eyes intent on Hogan's face.

"Kommandant, help him," Hogan said softly.

Klink cleared his parched throat. "I . . ." His voice broke. After a moment, he tried again. "The only way," he swallowed, "out of here is . . . with me. If he does that . . . both he and I . . . are dead."

"No!" Martinelli yelled with mad desperation. "You're my shield! They won't kill you!"

Klink's eyes met Hogan's. "Even if that were true, do you think he would let me live?"

Hogan glanced at Martinelli and saw the truth in his mad eyes. "If he takes me too," Hogan looked at Klink, "then he can't, he won't, kill you." Faint surprise in Klink's bloodshot eyes. "Or," Hogan said coldly, "do you want him to start on someone else?" He glanced at Schultz's ashen face.

Klink studied Hogan's set face. "All right, Colonel. I'll take the chance, if you do," he said faintly.

Martinelli grinned. "Well, Kommandant, you do have some sense after all." He turned to Schultz. "You, fatso. Get the Kommandant's car. Drive it to the front gate and leave it there. Then come back. And no funny business."

Schultz glanced at Klink who nodded tiredly. He left quickly.

Hogan, still holding the beaten Klink, helped him sit up. Taking care not to touch Klink's bruised back, Hogan helped him to his feet. Staggering, he led Klink to a chair at the table. As Klink sat, Hogan started to untie the rope around Klink's bruised wrists.

"No!" Martinelli stopped him. "He stays tied."

Hogan stopped what he was doing.

Klink leaned his elbows on the table, his head dropping down to his clenched hands.

## Scene Two

Hogan started for the kitchen.

"Where do you think you're going?" Martinelli demanded.

"I'm getting him some water," Hogan answered tightly.

"I didn't know you were such a kraut lover," Martinelli ridiculed.

Hogan just stared at him.

"Go ahead. But no games or the Kommandant," Martinelli gestured with the knife, "pays."

Hogan nodded and went into the kitchen. He returned carrying a glass of water and a damp towel.

Klink took the water from Hogan with a grateful look. Then, taking the towel, he wiped the blood and sweat off his face. Dropping his aching head onto his hands again, Klink sat quietly at the table, harboring his all too fragile strength.

Hogan watched Klink with barely suppressed horror. For the first time in their long acquaintance, he felt admiration, real admiration, for Klink. He had never dreamed that Klink could withstand any kind of abuse, especially for so long. Admiration and . . .

Then he recoiled. No. He felt nothing for Klink. He couldn't.

The door opened; it was Schultz. "The car is at the gate," Schultz said in a trembling voice, his eyes on his kommandant.

"Good." Martinelli gestured with the gun. "You in front, Kommandant. Then me. Hogan, you stay real close but not too close. All of you remember, one false move and the Kommandant here is a dead man."

Klink rose tiredly to his feet, followed by Hogan.

Schultz, forgotten, went after them, picking up Klink's overcoat as he passed by.

It was nearly time for morning roll call so most of the prisoners were already in the compound. So were most of the guards.

"Look!" LeBeau cried. "It's Martinelli!" He hadn't seen the gun yet.

"Yeah," from Kinch. "But look at Klink!"

Slowly, both prisoners and guards turned to look with uneasy



## Scene Two

expressions at the small procession. Captain Fritz Gruber<sup>2</sup>, Klink's second-in-command, hurried over to them and backed off at Klink's order.

It was Klink's appearance that shocked them the most. Despite the bitter cold and snow, Klink had no jacket, no shirt. Horrible bruises and welts marred his back and parts of his arms. His chest was streaked with sweat and, some nervous swallows, blood; his wrists were bound before him. His unshaven face was lined with fatigue and something else that most were afraid to name.

"My God," Baker said softly, "what happened to him?"

"Martinelli?" Carter couldn't believe it.

The walk from Klink's quarters to the gate seemed interminable. Guards and prisoners moved out of the way with stunned expressions.

Once, Martinelli, unhappy with Klink's slow pace, pushed the Kommandant forward. Klink tripped, falling to the snow covered ground. Exhausted, he lay in the snow, shivering. Some of the prisoners near him moved instinctively, wanting to help him. Martinelli waved them away with the gun, and prodded Klink with his foot. The prod became a kick; the men nearest them shuddered.

"I said up!" Martinelli ordered.

Moving with painful slowness, Klink pushed himself off the snowy ground. The watching men could see the effort it took for the Kommandant to raise himself to his knees. Impatient, Martinelli reached down and yanked him up by the arm. They saw Klink wince as Martinelli pulled on his sore muscles. Martinelli then thrust the Kommandant forward again. Klink, followed by the others, staggered toward the gate.

They reached the gate; Klink's staff car was just beyond it. The guards, the prisoners, no one knew how to react. Slowly, the gates swung open. Just a few feet more, and they would be out of the camp.

Martinelli grinned, sensing victory as they passed through the gates.

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<sup>2</sup> "Don't Forget to Write"

## Scene Two

Klink glanced at Martinelli's face, seeing the madness. He knew Martinelli and Hogan were fooling themselves if they thought they could get away with this. Klink had no illusions about his importance, or lack thereof. The first group of SS men they'd encounter would attack the car. Even if they managed to avoid that trap, Klink had no illusions about Martinelli. Despite Hogan's presence, Martinelli would kill him. This was the only place to stop the inevitable.

"Sergeant," Klink said softly, urgently, "there's still time. Don't go through with this."

"And do what?!" Martinelli demanded. "Get sent to another hole?"

"No," Klink said forcefully. He had to convince the man, for Martinelli's sake as well as his own. "I can keep you here."

"Locked up." Martinelli was bitter.

"Alive!" Klink urged. "The war won't last forever. You have a family, Martinelli. You can go back to them. But not if you do this."

Martinelli snarled. He raised his gun, intending to hit Klink with it. To everyone's surprise, especially Hogan's, Klink grabbed Martinelli's wrist, forcing the gun up. Everyone watched, frozen, as the two men struggled with the gun.

*Klink should win, Schultz told himself. He should, he must.*

His bound wrists made it difficult for Klink to hold on. He was also too tired and in too much pain. But even so, he could have wrested the weapon away, except for an accident. A log, hidden by the night's snow, tripped him. Klink was unable to keep his balance or his grip on the gun. He fell, landing on his bruised back.

Martinelli smiled. The gun aimed. Klink saw his death in Martinelli's eyes.

A burst of machine gun fire shattered the silence. Martinelli, astonishment on his face, was cut in half by the deadly fire and fell on the other side of the log.

Klink, who had covered his face when the barrage started, rose painfully to his knees, splattered with the American's blood. His stomach twisted at the sight of Martinelli's body. In the background, he could hear others gagging and retching.

Klink's eyes stayed on the American's face. For the first time,

## Scene Two

a kind of peace had settled on Martinelli's face. Infinite sadness was on Klink's.

Hogan knelt in the snow on the other side of Martinelli.

The first violent death in the camp's history.

Klink raised his eyes to Hogan's face. There was compassion and sympathy in Klink's eyes.

There was anger and hate in Hogan's. And all of it directed at Klink.

For an instant, there was stunned disbelief and hurt pleading in Klink's eyes. Then, slowly, the life drained out of the blue eyes. Now, the truth was out. Now he knew how Hogan really felt about him. Instead of drawing them together, this death pushed them further apart.

Klink dropped his eyes first. He was cold from a cold that had little to do with the freezing weather or the snow.

Footsteps approached and stopped beside Klink. Slowly, his eyes lifted to the smiling face of the SS captain.

"I told you we would meet again soon, Kommandant." A contemptuous glance at Martinelli. "So die all who oppose the Third Reich."

Klink ignored him, his eyes falling to Martinelli again. What a waste. A totally unnecessary waste. Martinelli's only crime was that he was on the wrong side. And, unfortunately, the prisons he had been locked up in had led to his madness.

"I am very sorry, Colonel Hogan," Klink said in a low voice, feeling he had to say something. He felt rather than heard Schultz walk up behind him as he looked at Hogan again.

"Bastard," Hogan said softly, his hate-filled eyes lifting to Klink's face.

Klink felt nothing as he heard Schultz's gasp at Hogan's curse. There was nothing inside of him left to feel any more. Klink dropped his gaze again. This time, his head drooped, his body slumped. It was too much. The pain, the cold, the fatigue, Hogan's hate. He couldn't take any more.

Alarmed, Schultz knelt awkwardly beside Klink, draping the overcoat over Klink's shoulders. His arms still around the bruised body, Schultz helped Klink to his feet.

It was over.

Klink broke away from Schultz's caring embrace. His eyes on

## Scene Two

the ground, his hands still bound, he walked slowly back into the camp. Only his will kept him going. He had to make it to his quarters.

Men, both prisoners and guards, saw the pain, saw the fatigue, and turned away uneasily.

Somehow, he dragged his body up the stairs, ignoring Schultz's helping hand. Into the room where he had been beaten by Martinelli. Gruber, his face white, waited there. Klink's eyes swept over Gruber and lifted to the table. The papers were still there, still waiting to be done.

Klink took a step into the middle of the room. Then his eyes closed. Schultz caught him before he hit the floor.

## Scene Two

– Eight –

The days that followed were grim. The weather turned bitterly cold and snowy. General Albert Burkhalter, Klink's superior, came to the camp shortly after hearing about the attempted escape and Martinelli's death.

"Herr General," greeted Hauptmann Fritz Gruber nervously as he saw Burkhalter's set face.

"Where is Klink?" Burkhalter demanded.

"In bed, Herr General," replied the clearly unhappy captain.

"Oh, he is, is he? We will see about that."

Burkhalter walked into the living quarters. Schultz was there, standing guard by the bedroom door.

"Out of the way, Sergeant," the general ordered.

Schultz didn't argue. He opened the door and turned on the light. He had no fear of waking Klink; the Kommandant was too exhausted.

"All right, Klink," Burkhalter began as he walked into the bedroom, "get up this . . ."

Burkhalter stopped. The blanket didn't cover Klink's bare back. His shocked eyes flitted over the bruises and welts covering the Kommandant's back; Klink's arms and wrists were also bruised. A glance at Klink's face; there was visible exhaustion on the unshaven face. After a moment, Burkhalter turned and left the room. Schultz turned off the lights and closed the door.

Burkhalter was uncharacteristically shaken. "I was not told. What happened?"

Stiffly, Gruber told his superior all that he knew.

Burkhalter sat down. "He was beaten for several hours?"

"Jawohl, Herr General," Gruber said nervously.

"And no one heard anything?"

"The guard on duty that night is a little deaf, Herr General," Schultz said apologetically. "And it was snowing heavily that night. No one knew anything was wrong until Colonel Hogan and I came in here and," he shuddered, "found the Kommandant on

## Scene Two

the floor.”

“I see,” Burkhalter said. And stood. “Have you taken statements from the witnesses?”

“Jawohl, Herr General,” Gruber said. “They are in the office.”

“I wish to see them.”

“Jawohl, Herr General.”

Burkhalter followed Gruber out.

Burkhalter closed the file soberly. “This Martinelli was mad,” he said in an almost hushed voice, “to think that he could get away with it.”

“Jawohl, Herr General,” Gruber said.

“As for Kommandant Klink, I would not have expected such fortitude from him,” Burkhalter said softly. “Nor such courage.” A pause. Then almost reluctantly, “His behavior cannot be faulted. He took a calculated risk in trying to disarm Martinelli. Unfortunately, it failed. If it had not, Martinelli would still be alive. As it is . . .” A shrug. Burkhalter stood. “I am satisfied, Hauptmann,” he said. “You are in charge until the Kommandant recovers.”

“Jawohl, Herr General.”

Burkhalter walked to the outer office. A glance at the door leading to Klink’s living quarters. “Who would have believed it?” he murmured in a low voice and shook his head in amazement.

Burkhalter walked out into the snow. His cold eyes swept the compound. Work was still continuing on the new barracks.

Gruber noticed his glance. “The Kommandant is having two more buildings built, Herr General. To house the extra prisoners.”

Burkhalter nodded. “An excellent idea. The Kommandant is showing unexpected talents, Gruber.”

Gruber wasn’t sure how to respond. “Jawohl, Herr General.”

Burkhalter got into his car, still shaking his head in reluctant admiration. Perhaps there was still hope for Germany if a nincompoop like Klink could manage to behave in an intelligent fashion once in a while. A silent sigh. But he doubted it.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Scene Two

Klink stayed in his quarters for the next few days. After his collapse, he slept for nearly twenty-four hours.

Hogan stayed away for the three days Klink stayed in bed, refusing to see the Kommandant. Schultz had hoped the American would visit, had hoped Hogan would take back the curse he had flung at Klink.

But it was not to be. Martinelli's death had embittered Hogan in a way Schultz had not thought possible. When Hogan had pleaded with Martinelli, Schultz felt an odd elation despite his pain at seeing Klink like that. He had thought it meant that Hogan had learned to care about Klink after all. Instead, when Martinelli died, Schultz's hope died as well.

As for Hogan . . .

He seemed alienated from his men as well. Not on the surface. Not that anyone told him. But Schultz could see that the harsh opinion that Hogan had of Klink did not exist among most of the other prisoners. While regretting Martinelli's death, they didn't shut their eyes to what he had done. They remembered the bruises and the blood and the brutality that Martinelli had clearly enjoyed. As for Klink, they saw the courage and sorrow beneath the pain. And, for the first time, many of them found themselves thinking favorably of the camp Kommandant.

But not Hogan. And Schultz couldn't understand why.

\* \* \* \* \*

Klink was back in his office for the first time since Martinelli's death. He was his usual, impeccably dressed self. The fatigue that had lined his face seemed to have faded. But nothing else had changed.

Klink frowned at the latest report. He was to expect another twenty prisoners. This would push their total count to over fifteen hundred men. Fifteen hundred.

Klink stood and went over to the window. It was snowing again. Despite the weather, there was a detail of prisoners in the woods, cutting down trees. He had given his permission, knowing that he couldn't supply the barracks with enough heat.

## Scene Two

Even his men were hurting. In the distance, he could see another group cutting trees, a group of guards.

Hogan was approaching the office. With a sigh, Klink went back to his desk. He hoped he could find out what was bothering the American.

But it was not to be. Klink had no idea how the discussion about purely routine matters deteriorated into an acrimonious argument. An argument without any of the hidden humor associated with most of their past fights.

Klink sought to keep his temper and failed. Hogan didn't even bother trying. Later, Klink couldn't remember what the argument was about.

Except for the end. He couldn't forget the end.

Somewhere along the way, Klink exploded and mentioned the real problem they had to face. "I did not kill Martinelli!" he shouted. "No one in this camp did!"

"It wouldn't have happened if you hadn't interfered!" Hogan shouted back.

Klink sought to regain control. "Martinelli was a sick man, a very sick man. Did you really think he would keep his word? He would have killed both of us without a second thought, and anyone else who got in his way."

"Well, we'll never know, will we?" Hogan said bitterly. "Thanks to you!"

Hogan stormed out of the office into the snow. Klink, ignoring the weather, went after him.

"Hogan! We are not finished yet!"

There were startled looks from both guards and prisoners at the two men.

"Of course, Herr Kommandant!" Hogan turned back to Klink, his voice bitingly sarcastic.

"Tell me, Hogan," Klink demanded loudly. "What upsets you the most? The fact that Martinelli is dead? Or that I am still alive? Perhaps you would have preferred that he had killed me."

The words slipped out, "Perhaps I do."

Klink straightened, his face expressionless, as the men standing nearby looked aghast.

Hogan turned away. This time, Klink didn't stop him.

Hesitantly, Schultz came up behind Klink, a worried look on



## Scene Two

his face. "He didn't mean it, Herr Kommandant," Schultz said softly. "He is still upset. Death is too new to him. That is all."

"Nein," Klink said in a quiet voice. "I think this time he does."

"Please, Kommandant," Schultz's voice dropped even lower. "Please, tell him."

Klink's eyes followed Hogan across the snowy compound. Then he straightened even more. "Tell him what?"

Schultz sighed. "Nothing, Herr Kommandant. Nothing at all."

## Scene Two

– Nine –

The days passed. Thanksgiving had come and gone; Christmas would be here in a few short weeks.

But it didn't seem like the Christmas season. Not for the prisoners or the guards. For the prisoners, it meant another Christmas away from their families, another Christmas in a prison. For the guards, they were also away from home, and for the younger guards, it was their first Christmas away from those they loved.

As for the war, neither side had any real cause to celebrate. There seemed to be a stalemate on all fronts. Who knew when it would finally end.

*It wouldn't have been so bad, Kinch thought, if things were back to normal.*

But they weren't. In the past, both Klink and Hogan seemed to enjoy their arguments. Both sides could see the humor in the odd situation. But not now. Relations between the two men were tense, an uneasy truce where both avoided aggravating the other. Their meetings were coldly formal, with no feeling behind them. Hogan's bitter words still stood between them. And no one had any idea how to resolve the situation.

Schultz came in for a head count before lights out. Hogan made an appearance and then disappeared into his room.

LeBeau handed the German sergeant a cup of coffee. "So how's things going, Schultzy?" LeBeau asked cheerfully.

Schultz waved his hand.

"That good, huh?"

Schultz nodded.

"It'll blow over," Carter said optimistically. "After all, they've gotten into some bad arguments before."

Schultz shook his head. "Colonel Hogan has never wished the Kommandant dead before."

"He didn't mean it, Schultz," Kinch said quietly.

Schultz looked at him. "Then why is he letting this go on?"

## Scene Two

“The truth?”

Schultz nodded.

“I really don’t know.”

“Ah, it’ll end,” Carter repeated. “You’ll see. Everything will get back to normal.” But even he knew it never would.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Hogan saw the disbelief, the hurt pleading in Klink’s eyes. Then the life went out of the blue eyes and Klink’s eyes fell from Hogan’s hate-filled gaze.*

*“Bastard,” Hogan heard himself saying, his eyes lifting to Klink’s face.*

*Again, Klink broke the gaze. This time, his head drooped, his body slumped.*

Hogan stirred, turning over on his side.

*Hogan watched as Klink’s tied hands pushed on the log. With an effort, Klink stood, swaying as he did so. He stepped away from the log. But Klink’s feet gave way, and he sank to his knees, shivering in the deep snow.*

*Hogan stood, watching him.*

*Klink tried once again to stand but couldn’t.*

*Hogan took a step toward him.*

*Another effort by the Kommandant. Hands on his knees, he pushed up, trying to rise. Instead, he fell on his side into the snow. His pain-filled eyes lifted to Hogan.*

*Hogan just watched him.*

*Klink’s bound hands clawed at the snow, trying to push himself up. Hogan saw the pain and the exhaustion on Klink’s face. Klink’s eyes were pleading, pleading for his help.*

*Hogan turned away from the fallen man. A glance back at Klink.*

*The hurt in Klink’s eyes . . .*

*Hogan turned away deliberately. Out of the corner of his eye, Hogan saw Klink’s head droop.*

*There was still time. Time to go to Klink and take the beaten*

## Scene Two

*man in his arms.*

*But he didn't. Another step away.*

*Klink tried to move, tried to get up. And couldn't. Klink's eyes closed and he crumpled into the deep snow.*

*Hogan kept on walking.*

*No, Hogan moaned softly. That's not what happened. No. It didn't happen. It didn't . . .*

*His eyes opened there was a tight knot in his throat.*

*A dream. That's all. Just a dream. It didn't happen. It didn't.*

But it could have. It would have if Schultz hadn't helped Klink. He would have left Klink. Turned his back on those pleading eyes and the pain. Ignored a man he had known for years. Ignored him. Left him lying in the snow. As if he didn't even exist.

So? Klink was nothing. Nothing, but a tool. A thing to be used, discarded. That's all Klink was. That's all he had ever been.

*Don't hurt . . .*

No. Klink was a tool. It didn't matter what happened to him. It didn't . . .

\* \* \* \* \*

Hogan looked at the message from the underground again. A really important mission was in the works. But the Gestapo was getting suspicious. Something needed to be done to divert their attention from certain individuals. Something big.

And he knew exactly what it would be.

They stared at him in surprise when he told them his plan.

"Well?" Hogan demanded.

"Well," Carter began and stopped. He couldn't think of anything to say.

"Well, sir," began Newkirk. "It's like this." He, too, stopped.

"It will definitely get the Gestapo interested," LeBeau said brightly.

"Yeah," Baker said. "It'll definitely do that."

## Scene Two

“Right!” Hogan said, grinning. “They’ll forget all about the others. At least long enough for them to get out.”

“Yeah, Colonel. But . . .” from Kinch.

“But?” Hogan didn’t sound too happy.

“But,” Kinch spoke up anyway, “we’ve always protected Klink. Now you want the Gestapo to pick him up.”

“Just overnight,” Hogan said with seeming disinterest. “He’ll get sprung the next day. Maybe.”

Startled looks from his men.

“Just kidding. He’ll be out of our hair that night and divert suspicion from the underground people.”

“Yeah, I guess —” Carter began.

“Good,” Hogan said firmly. “We’re agreed. I’ll get it arranged.” Hurriedly, he left the area.

The others glanced at Hogan’s departing back.

“I don’t like it,” Newkirk said quietly. “I know Klink’s a bloody fool. But turning him into the Gestapo doesn’t seem cricket. The way they are now . . .” His head shook.

“Well, why didn’t you say anything?” LeBeau asked.

“Why didn’t you?” Newkirk retorted.

“It wouldn’t have mattered anyway,” Kinch cut into the impending argument. “He wouldn’t have listened to us.” Kinch shook his head in frustration. “This whole thing has gotten way out of hand.”

“And I think it’s going to get a lot worse,” Baker murmured.

The others nodded in agreement.

*Klink stripped, his wrists bound, bruises and welts covering his back and arms. Pain on his face . . .*

*Don’t.*

*A kick in Klink’s side . . .*

*Don’t hurt . . .*

*Sweat on Klink’s face, blood on his lip . . .*

*The knife in Martinelli’s hand . . .*

*Pained eyes on Hogan’s face . . .*

*Bitter cold, snow . . .*

*Klink in the snow . . .*

*Hurt, pleading eyes . . .*

*Bastard . . .*

## Scene Two

*Prefer that he had killed me . . .*  
*Machine gun fire . . .*  
*Klink fell . . .*  
*The blood . . .*  
*Kommandant . . .*  
*Hogan lifted him, Klink's blood staining his clothes.*  
*Kommandant . . .*  
*Prefer he had killed me . . .*  
*Kommandant . . .*  
*Killed me . . .*  
*Kommandant . . .*  
*Pain-filled eyes on Hogan's face . . .*  
*Killed . . .*  
*The eyes closed . . .*  
*They would never open again.*

"NO!" Hogan screamed, awake with a start. "NO!"

The door opened. Kinch stood there, concern on his face, the others behind him. "Colonel?" Kinch was asking. "Are you alright?"

Hogan stayed in the shadows. "Yeah." His voice was husky. "I'm fine. Just a dumb dream. Go back to bed."

"Are you sure, Colonel?" Kinch asked.

Pride stung his voice. "Of course, I'm sure. Get out of here. All of you."

"Sure, Colonel." Kinch still sounded concerned. "If that's what you want."

"It is." His voice was brusque.

"Good night, Colonel."

"Good night."

The door closed behind them.

Damn Klink. All these dumb dreams. Making him feel sorry for Klink. Making him feel . . .

No. He felt nothing. He couldn't feel anything.

*Don't hurt . . .*

No. Stop it. Klink means nothing to you. He is nothing.

Nothing.

## Scene Two

– Ten –

It was a cold, sunny day when the SS car turned into the camp. They stopped at the main gate, but instead of allowing the guard to call Klink, they warned him not to. Too frightened to do anything but nod, the guard complied.

Hogan saw the car head for Klink's office. "Party's about to begin," he murmured almost gleefully. "Let's listen in."

Exchanging glum looks, his men followed Hogan into his room.

Klink was at his desk, working on more reports. Intent on his work, he barely noted the distraction in the outer office. The door opened without a knock. Surprised, he glanced up. A Gestapo lieutenant and three armed SS soldiers stood there, machine guns aimed at him. Behind them, Hilda had a half puzzled, half frightened expression on her face.

Seeing their expressions, Klink knew that his worst nightmare was about to become a reality.

But his voice hid his fear. "It is customary to knock, gentlemen," Klink said.

Listening in, Hogan was surprised at Klink's calmness. Of course, the SS hadn't said anything yet.

The young lieutenant almost looked embarrassed. "I am afraid, Herr Kommandant, that you will have to accompany us to Gestapo headquarters."

"May I ask why?" Klink was faintly surprised that the men in the office didn't hear his pounding heart.

"There are some questions that must be answered, Herr Kommandant. An accusation has been made against you." Still the polite tone.

Klink wondered when the politeness would disappear. "An accusation?"

"Jawohl, Herr Kommandant. You are accused of being a resistance leader."

Wilhelm Klink knew total fear for one of the few times in his

## Scene Two

life.

In his room, Hogan grinned, anticipating Klink's reaction. His men looked at him worriedly.

"I see."

Hogan stopped grinning as he heard Klink's calm voice.

Klink rose slowly, carefully from his chair. He didn't want to alarm the soldiers. He couldn't risk a shooting in the office; it would be suicide, and Hilda might get hurt. And outside, there was a chance that the prisoners or guards would be hurt or killed. He had to go with them.

"Well," his voice was still calm, "I am certain this is all a mistake. I have no objections to answering any questions."

In his room, Hogan was puzzled. Klink should have been protesting loudly, getting himself into deeper trouble. Instead, he was quite calmly agreeing to go with them. Why?

"May I talk to my aide, Hauptmann Gruber, before we leave?" Klink asked the young lieutenant.

"Of course. Only," menace crept into the politeness, "be very careful of what you say, Herr Kommandant."

So, the politeness was only skin deep. "Fraulein Hilda," Klink said, "please ask Hauptmann Gruber to come in."

Hilda, looking increasingly worried, left the office.

Within moments, Gruber, who had been waiting outside, came in.

"Hauptmann," Klink said with unaccustomed dignity, "these gentlemen have some questions for me. I should be back by tomorrow. Please take care of things until then."

Gruber saluted. "Jawohl, Herr Kommandant."

Klink slipped on his overcoat. The polite lieutenant helped him.

Hogan was waiting outside when Klink and the SS men appeared on the porch. He walked over to the office as Klink started down the stairs.

"Going somewhere, Kommandant?" Hogan asked innocently.

Klink glanced at him sharply; Hogan hadn't been this pleasant since Martinelli's death.

Their eyes met. Hogan had an almost gloating look on his face, seeming to relish Klink's predicament.



## Scene Two

And Klink knew.

Anger showed in Klink's eyes, but his expression was devoid of feeling.

Schultz saw the anger in Klink's eyes, and saw who Klink was looking at. He also saw the barely concealed satisfaction on Hogan's face.

Schultz went white. Hogan was responsible for this. Hogan had turned Klink in to the Gestapo.

Klink's eyes stayed on Hogan.

Hogan stepped back, astonished at the expression in Klink's eyes. There was no fear, no panic, in the icy blue eyes. Only anger. And contempt.

Then Klink turned away, his eyes flitting over Hogan as if he didn't exist. Without a word, Klink got into the waiting car.

Amid an unusual silence, the car drove out of the camp. Slowly, prisoners and guards drifted away from the area. Even Hogan's men, looking disturbed, left.

Hogan stood alone.

"We should have stopped him," Carter was saying as they sat down at the table.

"How?" Newkirk asked tiredly. "None of us could have talked him out of it."

"How do you know?" The normally genial Carter was upset. "We didn't even try."

"Well, I didn't see —"

"All right!" Kinch interrupted. "It's too late for that. It's done!"

The door opened.

Hogan came in; even he didn't look happy. Klink hadn't reacted at all as he had expected. Hogan glanced at the glum faces of his men. Avoiding their eyes, he went to the stove and picked up the pot of coffee. He poured himself a cup.

The door opened.

Hogan glanced at the newcomer. He nearly dropped the cup he held. It was Schultz. A Schultz he had never seen before.

"You are a fool! A blind, arrogant fool!" A harsh, biting voice they had never heard before.

It made Hogan angry. "You're forgetting yourself, Sergeant!"

## Scene Two

Rank the refuge of a man who knows he did something wrong.

“And what did you do?” Schultz asked angrily. “He is an officer, the kommandant of this camp. And your superior! Even if you think he is worth nothing because he is a German! He is also a man who has tried to do his best for you and the other prisoners here. He has never, Colonel Hogan, *NEVER*, done you any real harm! And you repay him by turning him in to the Gestapo! I would expect such a thing from the Nazis, Colonel Hogan.” Schultz’s voice nearly broke. “I have never thought such a thing of you.

“Why?!” Schultz’s voice was anguished. “Why did you do such a thing?”

Hogan turned away, unable to bear the look in Schultz’s eyes.

Schultz brought up the forbidden subject. “Because Martinelli died?”

Hogan’s back straightened.

“Martinelli was mad!” Schultz continued. “You saw what he did to the Kommandant. You know what else he would have done to the Kommandant. You even begged Martinelli not to hurt him.”

Hogan moved restlessly, not wanting to remember. The others in the barracks wished they could disappear from the room.

“Martinelli would have killed anyone who got in his way. You, me, the guards, prisoners, innocent people. Anyone! Others would have shot him down in cold blood without a thought. *HE* tried to save him, tried to get him to give up his mad scheme.”

Hogan turned around angrily. “And got him killed!”

“Martinelli was already a dead man,” Schultz said. “Only he didn’t know it. He had no chance away from this camp. Here, he could have been protected. Even after being beaten by Martinelli, the Kommandant was still willing to protect him.” Schultz looked at Hogan evenly. “I very much doubt that you would have been willing to protect a man who had beaten you, Colonel Hogan.”

Hogan refused to meet his eyes.

“And so,” Schultz’s voice grew heavy, “in your arrogance, your spite, you hand him over to the Gestapo.”

“He’ll be out tomorrow, Schultz,” Hogan said.

“He had better be, Colonel Hogan.”

## Scene Two

Hogan turned at the veiled threat in Schultz's voice.

"He had better be freed tomorrow. Or I begin to see everything, know everything, and remember everything. Tomorrow, Colonel Hogan. That is all the time you have."

The large sergeant, with a dignity none of them had ever seen before, left the room.

Hogan felt eyes on his back. "Go on, what do you have to say?" he asked in a sullen voice.

Kinch answered for them. "I think Schultz pretty much said it all, Colonel."

Hogan looked at his men. None of them would meet his eyes. Hogan angrily slammed the cup down on the table. "I need some air." He stalked out of the barracks.

Inside the barracks, his men glumly retreated to their bunks.

\* \* \* \* \*

The night's mission was as successful as any of them could want. But its success was overshadowed by Hogan's seeming anger at his men. Even the underground group they were with could feel it, and they parted uneasily from the team of prisoners.

It was past midnight when they returned to the tunnels beneath the camp. Normally, after a successful operation, their adrenalin would still be going, and they would continue to talk to wind down. This night, everyone was quiet, glum.

Hogan, again, was left alone.

And he felt alone. More alone than he had ever been. There was a gulf between him and his men.

In a way, there always had been. There was true affection between them, he knew that. They relied on each other to a great extent. But, no matter how much they cared for each other, Hogan knew that his rank was a barrier. The men were far closer to each other than they were to him.

There were few other officers in the camp; this had always been a lower rank camp. And what officers there were, Hogan had no attachment to them. He had not cultivated any. He

## Scene Two

deliberately kept his group small. Of course, the camp, even with its inflated population, knew what was going on. It had to, to ensure that there would be no escapes. And most of the camp participated in the various escape functions of the camp. But the real missions, the dangerous ones, were mostly limited to his group.

But there were times when he felt a need to talk to someone other than his men. Times when he wished there was someone of his own rank who could share his concerns. Someone he could talk to.

Hogan poured himself a cup of coffee.

Odd. Once in a while, he had even sought out Klink. Just to have someone to talk to who had some idea of command.

*Command? Ha!*

Klink couldn't command a kindergarten. He was a pathetic excuse for an officer. He was inept, a coward, a . . .

That picture of Klink was back again — Klink hurt, bruised, bloodied, exhausted.

In the recesses of the tunnel, Hogan buried his face in his hands.

No. He didn't want to remember.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Klink's eyes were pained, pleading. Then, slowly, the light in them died.*

*Bastard . . .*

*Klink's head drooped his body slumped.*

Hogan moaned in his sleep.

*Hogan watched as Klink stood, swaying as he did so. A step away from the log. And Klink's feet gave way under him and he sank to his knees, shivering.*

*Hogan stood, watching him.*

*Klink tried to stand and failed.*

*Hogan took a step toward him.*

## Scene Two

*Another effort by the Kommandant, and he fell on his side into the snow. His eyes lifted to Hogan.*

*The American just watched him. Hogan saw the pain, the exhaustion, on his face. Klink's eyes . . .*

*Schultz reached Klink and awkwardly knelt beside his Kommandant.*

*Hogan turned away from the fallen man.*

*Schultz was aghast. "Colonel Hogan."*

*A glance back at Klink.*

*"Colonel Hogan," Schultz repeated. "Please," he pleaded. "Don't do this. Please, don't do this."*

*Hogan became aware of others standing near them, prisoners and guards.*

*Another look at Klink, his gaze flitting over the bruises on Klink's trembling body.*

*Deliberately, Hogan turned away. Out of the corner of his eye, Hogan saw Klink's head droop.*

*There was still time. Time to go to Klink and tell him . . .*

*There was nothing to tell.*

*Another step away.*

*Klink's eyes lifted toward Hogan. "Don't . . ."*

*Hogan ignored him.*

*Klink's eyes closed and he fell back into Schultz's embrace.*

*Hogan kept on walking, his eyes away from the faces of the men he passed. Away from those surprised, accusing glances.*

Slowly, Hogan's eyes opened. He willed his shaking body still. He refused to think of the dream, refused to think about anything at all. Think of nothing. Nothing at all.

*Don't hurt . . .*

No. Not this time. His hand clenched into a fist, his fingers digging into his palm. He welcomed the pain. He could concentrate on it instead. And forget that unfamiliar pain in his chest. The one that twisted his insides every time he thought of Klink in Gestapo headquarters.

*Stop it! He'll be out tomorrow. And things'll get back to normal again. Normal. Yeah, everything will be normal again.*

But even he couldn't believe it.

## Scene Two

– Eleven –

Wilhelm Klink, kommandant of Stalag Luft 13, sat on the hard cot, his unseeing eyes on the door. It was late now. About two in the morning he guessed. They had taken his watch along with his other effects before they put him in the cell. And they had been so polite about it.

So far.

He shivered; it was cold in this unheated cell. He glanced around. The cot had no blanket; there was a bucket for a toilet in the corner, and a jug of tepid water beside the cot. No food; he had not been fed since they brought him in yesterday morning.

He couldn't sleep, though he knew should try to rest while they let him. If they started to interrogate him, rest would be one of the things denied him.

Interrogate. A shiver, but not from the cold. So far, they had been content to merely ask questions. Questions that he had answered to the best of his ability. He didn't even need to lie; he really had no idea what was going on. He had never heard of the man who supposedly gave the information to the Gestapo.

But when would they stop asking and start demanding? And when would Major Hochstetter, the Gestapo's headman in town, come back? Hochstetter, he knew, would not be content to let him sit in this cell, would not be content to merely ask him questions. Every time he saw the man, he knew that Hochstetter itched to be able to get his hands on Klink. And thanks to Hogan, the major might finally get his chance.

Hogan. That icy anger was back. Hogan had done this to him. Deliberately betrayed him to the Gestapo. Part of him couldn't believe it. He wanted to deny it. Not Hogan. Not after everything they'd been through together. Even if Hogan didn't like him, Klink was entitled to some consideration as a human being.

Human being. That ache inside of him was back again. That ache ever since Hogan had wished him dead.

He might as well face it. Hogan didn't think he was human. All Hogan saw was the uniform. Nothing more. Over the past three

## Scene Two

years, Hogan had lied to him, treated him with contempt, with ridicule. Treated him like an object with no feelings. Hogan had never once helped him unless there was something in it for Hogan. Once in a while, Klink had thought he had, but later Klink would discover the real reason for Hogan's help. And with each seeming victory over Klink, Hogan got more outrageous, more contemptuous.

But never like this. That near gloating on Hogan's face was new, frightening. Klink had lost all semblance of humanity in Hogan's eyes now.

God, he hurt! The pain that slashed through him was almost physical. He'd thought he'd become immune to the emotional roller coaster that Hogan kept him on. But he hadn't.

And he really didn't expect this from Hogan. He never expected Hogan to deliberately hand someone over to the Gestapo. Not now. Not when the Gestapo was looking for any excuse to arrest people.

The cell door next to his clanged; he heard a terrified, "NO!!"

Klink shuddered as the door slammed shut. He knew what they were doing in there. Knew and was terrified of it.

When would they start on him? How long before the door opened, and it would no longer be the polite questions? So far, they hadn't touched him, his rank protecting him a little. But not for long. If they really thought he was a resistance leader, his rank would be meaningless. And the interrogation would begin.

Interrogation . . . Torture. The torture would begin. A shudder.

Even now, Klink couldn't believe that Hogan would have done this if he'd thought Klink would be tortured. It was at odds with everything Klink knew about the man. But Hogan, in his anger, his hate, was capable of not thinking things through. Hogan had always been impulsive. That was partly why he was successful. But it also made life dangerous for those around him. Sometimes more dangerous than it needed to be. And now, Klink may pay the penalty.

Cold anger covered the hurt again. If he got out of here alive, Hogan was going to discover just how badly he'd misjudged Klink.

*Torture was not part of the bargain, Hogan. This, I do not*

## Scene Two

*forget. This, I do not ignore. And this may finally mark the end of Colonel Robert Hogan's reign at Stalag 13.*

A muffled scream cut the silence. And another.

*Oh God. God, I'm so afraid. So very afraid.*

His head dropped to his hands as he began to pray.

\* \* \* \* \*

Klink's car pulled into the camp, stopping in front of the office. Schultz got out of the car and opened the Kommandant's door. Klink got out of the car, his eyes sweeping the compound. The cold eyes found Hogan as he lounged against the barracks' wall. An order to Schultz who didn't look too happy, and Klink turned away.

Schultz puffed his way over to Hogan. "The Kommandant orders you to his office."

No request, no please. Blunt and cold, very unlike the Schultz he had known for years. Schultz still hadn't forgiven him. For a moment, Hogan wondered bleakly if Schultz ever would.

Hogan straightened and followed Schultz to the office.

Exchanging glances, Hogan's men quickly went to his office. Hurriedly, they set up the coffeepot.

For the first time since he'd arrived in camp, Hogan was nervous as he entered Klink's office.

Klink stood at the heater, warming his hands over it. Without turning around, Klink, in German, ordered Schultz and Hilda outside.

Hogan glanced at Klink in surprise; he'd never heard Klink speak in that tone of voice before.

Klink turned to look at him.

Hogan took a surprised step backwards. The look in Klink's eyes, the controlled fury on his face, he almost looked like a different man.

"I knew you hated me, Hogan. But I didn't realize how much." Klink's voice was abnormally hard.

"I . . ." Hogan had to swallow his unexpected nervousness. "I



## Scene Two

don't hate you, Kommandant."

"You don't? How nice!"

Hogan flinched.

"I would like to see how you treat people that you do hate. Perhaps you just stab them in the back."

"Wait a minute — !"

"No!" Klink said harshly. "Not this time!"

Hogan shut up.

"You deliberately, I believe 'planted' is the word, that information about me. And then conveniently let the Gestapo know about it."

"How could I possibly — ?" Hogan started.

"No lies, Hogan! Not this time! I don't care how you did it. Or why. But the fact of the matter is that you deliberately handed me over to the Gestapo."

"You got out!" Hogan retorted angrily.

"And that is supposed to excuse you?" Klink demanded. "You know how paranoid the Gestapo has become. They are looking for any excuse to arrest people. You were very lucky, Hogan, that Hochstetter wasn't in charge. Do you think he would have believed any of that ridiculous story that freed me? What do you think would have happened if he had made the arrest?"

"I, uh . . ." Hogan fell silent. He hadn't considered Hochstetter when he came up with his plan. Or had he not wanted to? He knew how much the two men hated each other.

"I was not particularly comfortable in that cell, Hogan," Klink continued in that strange, hard voice. "But it was more comfortable than the other cells there. Perhaps you know the ones I mean. They have interesting devices in them for getting reluctant prisoners to talk. If Hochstetter had been there, which cell do you think I would have been taken to, Hogan?"

Hogan looked uncharacteristically shaken; he hadn't thought of that. He'd assumed that Klink would just be questioned for a few hours.

"And if that rather gullible officer hadn't believed that my accuser just made a mistake, what do you think would have happened next?"

Hogan stayed silent.

"Or didn't you think of that either?!" Klink's voice

## Scene Two

whiplashed.

Hogan found he couldn't meet Klink's eyes.

"I have put up with quite a bit of abuse from you, Hogan. Lies, insults, open contempt and worse, not only from you but your men as well. A dog would have gotten more respect. But if putting up with the abuse was the way to keep my record intact, I was willing to pay the price."

Hogan's head lifted slowly to look at Klink. This was a Klink he didn't know.

"But the price does not include torture by the Gestapo!"

Hogan flinched and stirred uncomfortably under Klink's gaze.

"I suggest you be very careful in what you say and do from now on, Hogan. Very careful!" There was unexpected steel in Klink's voice. "Or I may decide that you are far more trouble than you are worth."

The threat was unmistakable.

"Is that understood?"

"Yes, sir." Hogan's voice was unusually quiet.

Klink turned back to the heater.

"Kommandant," Hogan said.

Klink didn't turn around.

"I . . . I really don't hate you." Of course not. How do you hate a thing?

Klink half turned, seeming to read his thoughts. "Perhaps what you feel is even worse," Klink said softly. Then his voice hardened. "To be perfectly frank, Hogan, I don't give a damn what you think of me. Now get out of here; I find that I cannot stand the sight of you."

Hogan stared at Klink's back for a moment; Klink ignored him. Slowly, Hogan opened the door and left.

The listening men shut down the coffeepot. They were an unusually somber group.

"Klink sure lit into the Colonel, didn't he?" Carter said, clearly unhappy with what had happened.

"What did you expect him to do?" Kinch asked. "He knew the Colonel was responsible for his arrest."

"Yeah, but how?"

"It doesn't matter how," Baker said. "You heard Klink. He

## Scene Two

doesn't care how. Or even why."

"I don't even know why the Colonel did it," Carter said.

"Come on, Andrew," Newkirk said. "The Colonel was using Klink as a diversion. That's all."

"You don't believe that any more than I do," Kinch said.

"We've got to believe it," LeBeau said.

"Why?" demanded Baker. "Because the Colonel said so?"

"Because I don't want to think about the alternative," LeBeau said soberly.

They heard the outer door open. Kinch put away the coffeepot as Hogan walked in.

Hogan was surprised to find them there but said nothing as he walked over.

"Klink sure was mad, wasn't he?" Newkirk said cheerfully.

"Yeah." Hogan's voice was toneless. Then he shrugged. "Too bad. LeBeau, got anything good for lunch?"

LeBeau looked puzzled. "Oui, mon Colonel. It'll be ready in half an hour."

Hogan forced some life in to his voice. "Good."

"I'd better see how it's doing," LeBeau said uncomfortably.

They were all uncomfortable. Using a variety of excuses, the men left the room. And Hogan was alone again. Alone with his thoughts.

He sat on his bunk, remembering the argument with Klink, replaying it over and over again in his mind.

Why had he set Klink up? Why?

He was afraid of the answer.

Restless, he stood and walked over to the window.

Klink. That picture was back again. The pain, the bruises, the fatigue.

Hogan shook his head to clear it. No. He didn't want to think about it. He didn't want to remember. He especially didn't want to remember what he had said.

*Don't hurt him . . .*

*Don't . . .*

The words echoed in his mind.

*Stop!*

He couldn't think of Klink that way. He couldn't think of Klink as anything other than a tool. A way to get what Hogan wanted.

## Scene Two

He had always used Klink. Ever since he first arrived in the camp. Klink was just an object, to be used or discarded as the need arose. A thing to be insulted or lied to, to be ridiculed or treated with contempt by everyone, including his men. Nothing more. In all these years, Hogan had never really considered Klink a superior officer, a person, a man. He acknowledged Klink's humanity only when it fit in with some scheme of Hogan's.

But when Klink's nephew died, part of the image cracked. And Hogan was forced to confront Klink as a human being. To admit that Klink had needs and emotions that had nothing to do with Hogan. And that day, Klink became a man who could be hurt, hurt badly.

No! Klink was nothing but a tool. And Hogan proved it by setting him up with the Gestapo. That's all. Just a tool. One day, Klink would discover just how expendable he was. When Hogan was through with him, Klink would be gone. And if he was dumb enough to get in the way of Hogan's plans, he might even wind up dead. After all, that's what you did with tools when they stopped being useful. You threw them away. Yeah, one day, Klink would be thrown away.

A grim smile as he left his room. Yeah, Klink would be thrown away.



Act One

Scene Three



## Scene Three

– Twelve –

It was the week before Christmas. But it didn't feel like it, Colonel Robert Hogan thought as he walked into the abandoned coalmine behind Klink. The uncertain news about the war made both the prisoners and the Germans unhappy. The new German counteroffensive seemed to be working; Hitler was promising Paris to the Germans as a Christmas present. But there were German defeats in other areas. So, both sides had little to feel cheerful about.

Hogan glanced at Klink's back. Another reason not to feel cheerful. Klink was the coldest, the most unreachable, he had ever been in the three years Hogan had known him. Klink's expression was stern, unreadable; there was no humor in his eyes now, no softness. That episode with the Gestapo a couple of weeks ago still stood between them. Klink barely talked to Hogan, ignoring his presence most of the time, acknowledging it only when he had to. That brief comradeship they had enjoyed in the days following Dieter Müller's visit was gone. Destroyed by a thoughtless idea.

No, not thoughtless. Hogan had known exactly what he was doing. He didn't want to think of Klink as a person; it would interfere with his future plans. Klink was nothing more than an expendable object. Just a tool to be used or discarded as the need arose. And turning Klink in to the Gestapo proved it.

Then why was he still feeling so rotten about the whole thing?

Those dreams. That's why. Those stupid, mindless dreams. Making him think of Klink as something other than what he was. That picture of what Martinelli had done to Klink, and others like it, kept recurring in Hogan's dreams. Making him feel sorry for Klink, making him think Klink wasn't expendable.

But, damn it, Klink was! He existed only because Hogan had a use for him. And when Hogan no longer had a use for him, Klink would be gone. Just remember that. Klink would be gone.

A glance at Klink's back. Maybe soon if Klink was going to keep acting this way.



## Scene Three

Klink glanced back at Hogan, meeting his eyes for a second. Klink, seeming to read Hogan's thoughts, grew even colder.

Kommandant Wilhelm Klink stopped in the farthest reaches of the mine and turned back toward Hogan, waiting for him. The lantern he held cast eerie shadows on the rock walls.

Hogan glanced around uneasily. They were alone here in the darkness. The others were near the entrance, a long way away, their lights flickering in the distance.

"Hogan . . . Hogan."

Almost reluctantly, Hogan turned toward Klink.

"What is the matter with you?" Klink asked irritably.

"What?"

"I said — " He was interrupted by a muffled sound. Bits of debris rained down upon them.

Hogan looked up, startled.

"A bomber dropping its load," Klink guessed, his eyes on the ceiling. It had been reinforced by wooden beams.

"Guess so," Hogan said. For some reason, this mine made him edgy.

Klink glanced at Hogan. There had been an unexpected nervousness in Hogan's voice. "I would think a prisoner would be used to tunnels," Klink said dryly, guessing at the cause of Hogan's uneasiness.

Pride stung Hogan. "What makes you think I'm not?"

Klink almost smiled. "Not a thing. As I told you earlier, while most of the coal has already been mined, there should still be enough pieces around to help heat the barracks." He gestured toward the loose, dark lumps scattered around the chamber. "If you agree, your men can start — "

He never finished the sentence as the ceiling exploded on top of them.

Hogan came to slowly, and opened his eyes.

He nearly screamed. He was in absolute darkness, not a hint of any light at all. As the shock wore off, panic began to grip him, strangling his throat. He couldn't seem to breathe and began gasping for air. His hands flailed uselessly; he lost all sense of direction, all sense of himself. His mouth opened, ready

## Scene Three

to scream.

“Colonel Hogan.” Klink’s voice sounded faintly in the darkness behind him.

Relief washed over Hogan. Hogan’s voice was shaking, though he didn’t realize it. “Yes.”

A very faint voice, barely audible. “Can . . . Can you see anything?”

The panic nearly swamped Hogan again. “N-o-o.” He couldn’t hear the near hysteria in his voice.

“Pity,” came the unnaturally calm voice. “The entrance to this part of the mine must have collapsed.”

A nervous twitter from Hogan.

“Well,” said the unexpectedly dry voice, “we will just have to wait until they dig us out.”

“If they do.” Panic in Hogan’s voice.

“Of course, they will,” said the voice. “Your men will dig for you; mine will dig for me. It is just a matter of time.”

“The air . . . I can’t breathe . . .” Hogan’s voice was harsh.

“There is plenty of air,” soothed the voice. “Lie still and take deep breaths. Go on, do it!” A command. “One . . . two . . .”

Slowly, Hogan complied. Gradually, his harsh breathing returned to normal.

“Better?” the voice asked.

Hogan nodded, unseen. “Yes.” His voice was much calmer.

“Good. Can you move? Cautiously.”

Hogan checked. “Not really. My arms are free and it feels like there’s a big chunk of rock across my waist. But it’s not too bad; I can move my legs a little. And I’ve got a headache,” he added.

A faint, “So do I. Are you lying on anything?”

“No. Just the ground.”

“Then you should be fine. Just stay still and enjoy the rest.”

“Rest?” A touch of his normal humor. “This is not the most comfortable bed I’ve ever been in.”

“Nor I.” Klink broke off in a fit of coughing.

Hogan’s head turned toward the back. “Kommandant?”

Slowly, Klink’s voice cleared. “Some dirt still in my mouth.”

“Are you all right?”

Suddenly, Hogan remembered the last time he had asked that question. And Klink’s answer. Did he really care? Of course not.

## Scene Three

He had never cared about Klink. And he never would. After all, how could you care about . . . ?

*Don't hurt . . .*

Hogan forced the memory away.

"As you said, this is not the most comfortable bed to be in."

"Kommandant, you had the lantern."

"I am afraid that is gone," Klink said.

"So, no light." A glimmer of the panic again in Hogan's voice.

"Oh, well," a nonchalant voice, "I do some of my best thinking in the dark."

"Well, I'm not too crazy about it," Hogan said.

"Oh, why?"

"Claustrophobia," Hogan found himself admitting. "Ever since I was a kid, I've hated this kind of dark."

"I've always thought of the dark as a friend," Klink said surprisingly.

"Why?" Hogan asked, nervousness still in his voice.

"It was my world. When it was dark, I could be anything I wanted, do anything I wanted," Klink said quietly. "I could forget about school, or parents, or anything else I didn't like. And no one could bother me there."

"Never thought of it that way." The nervousness eased a little. "I always thought there were all kinds of monsters just waiting to grab me."

"Maybe that's the difference, Colonel Hogan; I saw the monsters in the daytime." Klink changed the subject. "Tell me about your childhood, Colonel Hogan. You were born in Cleveland as I remember."

"Uh, yeah. Know anything about it?"

"It's in Ohio, is it not?"

"You know your geography, Kommandant."

"I've always enjoyed it. Especially studying your country. All those thousands of miles and still the same country. It seemed so unbelievable."

"I guess Europe's not like that."

"No. Just a few miles, and it is a totally different world. Different languages, customs, prejudices."

Hogan's head turned toward the voice behind him in surprise.

"Tell me about Ohio, Colonel Hogan," Klink said.

### Scene Three

“Well, it’s green and big and . . . ”

On the other side of the wall of stone, both prisoners and Germans dug anxiously through rubble.

The hours passed. Hogan kept talking, coaxed on by Klink’s faint voice. Whenever Hogan faltered, Klink questioned or cajoled as needed. Finally, the sounds of digging that had been getting louder, stopped.

Hogan stopped talking, his head turning toward the place the sounds had been loudest. “They’ve stopped!”

“They must be close,” Klink said in that faint voice.

“They’ve given up!”

“They must be very close now,” Klink said. “They have to be careful. They don’t know where we are on this side of the rubble.”

Hogan wet his dry lips nervously. “I hope you’re right.”

A sudden noise to his right startled him. A large rock tumbled noisily to the ground.

“Colonel! Colonel Hogan!” It was Carter.

“Right here, Carter!” Hogan called, relief washing over him. He could see a bit of light now. The darkness was no longer absolute. With the returning light, his confidence returned.

“Kommandant!” Schultz called.

“Colonel Hogan,” came Klink’s faint voice, “can you see anything yet?”

Hogan grinned. “Yeah! Schultz!”

“Kommandant?” again from Schultz.

“He’s fine, Schultz,” Hogan answered. “He’s somewhere behind me.”

“Colonel,” Carter asked, “how close are you to the hole?”

“Uh, about six feet to the left of it,” Hogan estimated.

“Okay, that’s good,” Carter replied. “We can break it in then. Just sit tight, sir. We’ll be through in just a little bit.”

The little bit was an hour but Hogan had never felt so relieved. It was over. Finally, over.

In the near darkness, they lifted the final piece of rock from his legs. Hogan sat up gingerly with Baker’s help.

“Everything all right, sir?” A grimy Newkirk asked. “Nothing broken?”

## Scene Three

"No, I feel great. Help me up, will you?"

"Right, sir." Newkirk gave Hogan a hand up and then helped him out of the rear chamber.

Without looking back, without pausing to rest, Hogan walked quickly to the entrance of the mine.

A couple of dozen men, mainly guards, were waiting outside. An ambulance also waited, a doctor standing patiently beside it. The doctor hurried over to Hogan.

Hogan waved him off. "I'm fine. Just a few bruises." He grinned and took a deep breath of the cold afternoon air. "Just fine."

Newkirk grinned as well and handed him a canteen of water. "Well, you look a proper mess, sir."

"Yeah, I guess so."

Hogan brushed ineffectually at the dirt in his hair. Then taking a drink of the water, he spotted Schultz coming out of the cave.

"Schultz!" He was cheerful, glad to be alive and out of that place. He could afford to think of Klink for once. "Where's the Kommandant?"

"Still inside," Schultz said heavily. Then a quick order to some of the soldiers in German. They hurried inside.

Hogan was still cheerful. "He'll be out soon, right?"

Schultz looked at him.

The smile froze on Hogan's face. "He's right behind me, isn't he?"

Schultz slowly shook his head. "No, Colonel Hogan. He is trapped behind a pile of rubble larger than the one we dug through earlier."

Hogan was stunned. "But . . . I could hear him."

"There is a small gap right near where you were lying, Colonel Hogan. That is why you could hear him."

"So you can get to him through that."

Schultz looked at him bleakly. "No, Colonel Hogan, we cannot."

"Why not?" Hogan asked harshly.

A sigh. "It would be better if you saw for yourself."

"Back in there?" Panic again rising up inside him.

Schultz looked surprised, but the surprise faded quickly. "No.

## Scene Three

Go back to camp, Colonel Hogan. Have some food and rest. We will try to dig him out.”

That startled Hogan. “What do you mean, try?”

“It is very difficult,” Schultz said heavily. “There is quite a lot of debris and the ceiling is unstable.”

Hogan stood quite still. “You’re going to leave him in there,” he said tonelessly.

Schultz looked hurt. “We have no intention of leaving him in there. But it will take time to dig him out. And we must be careful. We think that there is not much room between the debris and the back wall. And we do not know where he is in there. If we dig in the wrong place, we might accidentally bury him.”

Hogan shuddered, remembering his own fear of such a fate. It had been almost as bad as the dark — not knowing where he was. He had lifted his hands cautiously, trying to determine if there was anything over him. There hadn’t been.

Well, Klink should be all right in there.

“Come on, sir,” LeBeau was saying. “Let’s get back to camp and get you cleaned up. Get some food into you.”

“Yeah,” Hogan said absently. Then . . .

“Uh, wait a minute.” Come to think of it, Klink never did say how he was. “I just want to see what’s going on.”

“But . . .” LeBeau’s protest fell on Hogan’s retreating back.

With puzzled looks, LeBeau and the others hurried after Hogan as he went back into the tunnel.

Hogan wet his dry lips nervously as he approached the caved-in chamber. But now it wasn’t empty. It was filled with soldiers, standing around, waiting for orders. And there was a lot more light in the front section of it.

Hogan stood at the entrance to the chamber in which he had been trapped, stunned at what he saw. A wall of debris, soil, rock and wooden beams divided the chamber in two. The wall extended nearly to the ceiling. Only a small gap on the left side separated it from the roof. And down where Hogan had lain was a small hole. Two huge beams protruded from the mess out into the middle of the chamber.

Hogan shuddered; he’d just missed being buried under all that

## Scene Three

rubble.

One of the younger, more agile soldiers was on top of the debris, near the gap, pulling sand and dirt out to widen it.

"Klink's behind there?" Hogan asked, an unexpected sinking feeling in his stomach.

Schultz nodded. "Jawohl. Those two beams seem to be near him. But we don't yet know where or how he is trapped. We won't know until we can get some light in there."

Hogan leaned against the wall, his mouth suddenly dry.

LeBeau tugged at his arm. "Come on, mon Colonel," he urged.

Hogan let himself be pulled out of the room. Out in the tunnel, he stopped, gulping in deep breaths of air. He'd had trouble breathing in that cell.

"Come on, sir," Newkirk was saying. "Let's get out of here."

"There's no light behind that wall," Hogan mumbled, remembering.

"A little, sir," Baker said uneasily. "Some of it should be getting through that hole and from the top."

They had never seen him so shaken before. Of course, a cave-in was enough to spook any man.

Hogan wasn't listening. Klink was trapped in there. No light. Probably little air. He couldn't have much room to move around back there. And there was no one to talk to. No one. Klink was alone. Totally alone in that darkness.

So? Klink was expendable. Remember? Expendable . . .

*"Tell me about your childhood."*

Alone. Totally alone.

No. He couldn't leave Klink alone in there. At least, not without checking how he was. He owed Klink that much.

To the surprise of his men, Hogan pushed himself away from the wall and went back inside the cave. He nearly bumped into Schultz as he entered.

Schultz was startled to see him. "Colonel Hogan?"

"Can you see him yet?" Hogan asked, his voice sounding more normal.

"No," Schultz admitted. "In another minute or two, we should have the gap at the top wide enough to see the other side."

"You're going to send someone in, aren't you? To stay with him?"

## Scene Three

Schultz shook his head. "We need everyone to help dig."

"Then I'm going in," Hogan said.

"Thank you, Colonel Hogan," Schultz said as cries of surprise rose from the prisoners. "But it could be dangerous in there. And you should rest. Return to camp, Colonel."

"No," he said in a voice that brooked no argument. "I want a strong light and a canteen."

Schultz looked at the determination on his face. "All right, Colonel Hogan. We will get them for you." He turned to another guard and gave the order.

Meanwhile, the soldier on top of the wall had peered over it. Blanching, he hurried back down and began talking excitedly to Schultz.

"Slowly, Otto," Schultz said. "Slowly. What did you see?"

"The Kommandant!" the soldier whispered. "He is almost completely buried. Only his head is free. I cannot see the rest of him."

Hogan paled. Klink hadn't said a word. He had assumed that Klink had been trapped as he had. But he could move his hands and his legs had been free. It was only those rocks pinning his waist that had trapped him. Rocks too large to move by himself.

Klink had been immobile in that absolute darkness. Completely.

Hogan shuddered. He would have gone mad. He nearly did, except for . . .

"Colonel," Newkirk was saying, "you can't be serious. This isn't your concern. Let them take care of it."

"All of them are needed to dig," Hogan said.

"So?"

"He's alone in there," Hogan said in a soft voice. "No light."

"They'll put a lamp in there," Carter said.

Hogan looked at him. "He can't move!"

"Sir." Newkirk looked at Schultz who moved a short distance away. "This is Klink we're talking about. Remember? Let them handle it. It's no concern of yours."

"Yes, it is." Hogan's voice was shaking now. "You don't get it, do you?"

They looked at each other uneasily.

"He never said anything," Hogan whispered. "He just kept me



## Scene Three

talking, never let me stop. Never let me think about the darkness, or how thirsty I was, or how dirty, or that I was stuck under that stupid rock. I couldn't forget those things, but he never let me feel alone. Not for one minute." He had to swallow the unexpected lump in his throat. "If it weren't for him, I would have gone nuts." He caught their startled glances. "Yeah, me. The brave American colonel. Afraid of the dark."

"Colonel," Kinch said slowly, "it would have scared anyone."

"It didn't scare him," Hogan said. "And he's a lot worse off than I was."

"Then he doesn't need your help," LeBeau said brightly.

"How do you know?!" Hogan demanded. "You weren't stuck in there." The shakiness was back in his voice. "Can you even begin to imagine what it's like? To be completely blind, buried, unable to move so much as a finger. Wondering if the next breath would bring more dirt or rock on top of you. And unable to do a thing if it did. I can't leave him. This time . . . This time, I can't!"

Hogan stalked away, feeling their eyes on him.

"I don't get it," Carter said in a whisper. "The Colonel hates Klink. You'd think he'd enjoy this."

"Maybe he doesn't hate him after all," Baker said softly.

"The Colonel's tired," LeBeau said. "And doesn't know what he's doing."

"Oh, he knows all right," Newkirk said with disgust. "He's helping that bloody Kraut."

Kinch shook his head. "No. Not the bloody Kraut."

The others looked at him in surprise.

"Amazing what you can see in the dark."

Blank looks from the others.

"No uniforms, no slogans, not even Germans or Americans," Kinch said. "Just two men, isolated, scared, with no one to rely on except each other. A voice making sure that you're not alone. That's what the Colonel saw. And it kept him going. And right now, that's all he sees. Not a uniform, or a German. Not even Klink. Just a man, trapped, needing help, who had helped him when he needed it."

"And after this is over?" Newkirk asked.

Kinch shrugged. "Who knows? But for now, it doesn't really matter." He glanced at Hogan, who stood looking up at the wall.

### Scene Three

“Not to him.” A sudden grin. “Well, I’m already dirty. What’s a bit more dirt? Right?”

The others looked at him and shrugged.

“What the hell?” Newkirk said. “I’ve got nothing better to do.”

## Scene Three

– Thirteen –

Hogan, a light held high in his hand, canteen strap around his neck, slid carefully down the rubble. Shadows flickered and danced around the walls as he moved.

Finally, Hogan hit the bottom of the mess. Dirt, sand and rock littered the floor on this side of the chamber. He had to climb over a couple of beams that tilted crazily against the walls. Another beam was wedged between the rock wall and the debris piled in the middle. Klink was just on the other side of it. But Hogan couldn't reach across the beam. He removed the canteen strap from his neck and placed the lantern on top of the beam. Then he lay down on the sand and rock, and inched his way toward Klink. There was barely two feet of clearance between his head and the beam. Then, in the gloom, he saw Klink.

Scarcely three feet separated Klink from the wall of debris on the right beside his head, the space tapering down to less than a foot where his feet would be. But there was nothing separating Klink from the back wall of the chamber. He was pinned against it. The two beams that protruded out of the other side of the wall were lying across him. One beam lay where his hips would be; the other, across his thighs. Loose rock and sand had partially buried the beams, and completely buried Klink's body from his chest down. Klink's left arm was buried as well, somewhere against the back wall. His right seemed to lie against his body, but it looked as if only loose sand and rock covered it. Only Klink's head was completely free.

For a moment, Hogan stared at Klink. Klink, the expendable, the tool, the . . .

Klink's eyes opened. Surprise was in their blue depths as he saw Hogan. Hogan was the last person he expected to see.

"What . . ." Klink swallowed and tried again. "What are you doing here?"

Hogan lay down next to him. "I brought you some water," Hogan said quietly.

Lying on his elbow, Hogan opened the canteen. He placed his

## Scene Three

left hand under Klink's neck, lifting his head slightly and held the canteen to Klink's lips.

Klink choked on the first swallow, water dribbling down his chin. Hogan tried again. This time, Klink managed to swallow some of the liquid. Then Hogan eased his head down.

A whisper, "Thank you."

Hogan turned the light so he could see Klink better. Klink winced in the sharp light. He looked pale, too pale, to Hogan.

"Can you move?" Hogan asked.

A weary shake of his head. "Not really. Just enough to keep my limbs from going numb."

"Okay. I think I might be able to free your right hand without bringing any dirt down," Hogan said. "Okay?"

Klink nodded, his eyes closing.

Carefully, Hogan began scooping the sand away from Klink's arm. It was hot work in the dark confined space; the air itself seemed stifling. But he kept it up. After a while, Klink was able to move his arm a little. After a long while, Hogan grinned.

"I think we've got it, Kommandant!" he said triumphantly.

A slow steady pull. Intent on his task, Hogan missed the pained expression on Klink's face. Slowly, Klink's arm, then his hand, was pulled from beneath the dirt.

A sharp intake of breath from Klink.

Hogan glanced at him.

"It had grown numb," Klink said through clenched teeth. "It is coming to life. Slowly."

Hogan grinned and continued to pull the hand. His smile faded as Klink's hand came free. The dirty fingers were stained with blood. He looked at Klink.

"The lantern," Klink explained in a tight voice. "It was under the beam as it fell. The beam is pressing part of it into my right thigh."

Hogan paled. "You never said anything."

"What would be the point?" Klink asked.

A deep breath. "Okay, Colonel. What about the other beam?"

"It is lying across my hips. I don't think anything is broken. Though the pressure seems to be greater on the left side."

"Your left hand?" Hogan asked.

"Undamaged," Klink said.

## Scene Three

"How much are you bleeding?"

"I don't know," Klink admitted. "The beam is putting pressure on the wound, acting as a tourniquet. I don't think it has been bleeding too much."

"But freeing your hand?"

"Just a little more, I think."

"Damn you!" Hogan exploded. "You're practically buried alive in here, bleeding, and you don't say anything!"

A tired, almost bitter, "As I said, what would be the point?" Then a soft gasp.

"Colonel?"

"I can feel something." Klink's face twisted and his breathing quickened. "The debris — it is shifting."

"Damn! Schultz! Stop whatever you're doing! Now!"

The tense lines in Klink's face relaxed. "It's fading." His breathing settled down.

Hogan picked up the canteen again. "Here." He held it to Klink's lips. Then Hogan laid the canteen down. "I'll be back," he promised.

Klink's eyes closed. "I'm not going anywhere."

Hogan glanced at him in surprise. Then he inched his way back under the beam.

"Anything you do to those beams puts pressure on Klink," Hogan was saying outside the cave as Doctor Ernst Bauer, a lean, intense man with a goatee, listened.

"Then how do we get him out?" Schultz asked.

"Break down the wall, get him from the back."

"How badly is he bleeding?" the doctor wanted to know.

"I don't know," Hogan admitted. "The beam seems to be acting as a bandage."

"And pushing the glass or metal into his leg as well," Bauer said, "damaging the muscles in his thigh. And if the object is long enough and sharp enough, it could penetrate an artery. At which point, he would bleed to death."

Hogan swallowed nervously. "Which is worse?"

Doctor Bauer shook his head. "I do not know. But if he can tolerate the pressure and not go into shock, breaking down the wall might be better." He glanced at Schultz. "How stable is that

## Scene Three

ceiling, and how much time will it take?"

"I do not know," Schultz said wearily. "No one does."

"Then do what you must. But the Kommandant must be watched closely. You must send someone in to check on him frequently."

Schultz sighed, wishing he were smaller, thinner. "Jawohl, mein Herr."

"I'll stay with him," Hogan said tonelessly.

"You, Colonel Hogan?" Bauer was surprised. Why should a prisoner risk his life helping the Kommandant? Especially after the way Hogan had treated Klink after the Kommandant had been beaten.

"It would be better to have someone with him all the time, wouldn't it?" Hogan said.

Bauer nodded. "Ja, it would. Very well, Colonel Hogan. I will give you some salt tablets. Give him all the water he wishes. Keep him conscious and talking. Let me know if his mind begins to wander or if he has trouble staying conscious. Later, I may ask you to check his heart rate and breathing. Is he able to breathe properly?"

"Yes," Hogan said. "But it's hot and cramped in there."

"Loosen his clothing, open his shirt. If you can, remove some of the dirt on him. But stay away from the beams."

Hogan nodded and started to turn away.

The doctor stopped him. "Colonel Hogan."

Hogan looked at him.

"You do realize the Kommandant is in pain, possibly a great deal of pain," Bauer said.

Hogan looked startled. "He didn't say he was," Hogan said tonelessly.

A grim smile. "Perhaps not. But those beams are putting pressure on his nerves. Then whatever is in his leg . . ." The doctor shook his head. "And he has been like that for hours. With each minute, the pain will become worse, not less."

Hogan looked uneasy. "What about painkillers?"

The doctor shook his head. "Too dangerous; he might go into shock." He looked at Hogan's pale face. "Keep him talking, Colonel. Try to keep his mind off the pain. But it will become more difficult as time goes on. Are you certain you want to stay

## Scene Three

with him?”

No. He didn't want to stay with Klink. Whatever possessed him? Whatever happened to Klink was no concern of his.

*Don't hurt . . .*

But, he had given his word. Hogan swallowed nervously and nodded. “Let's get started,” he said grimly.

## Scene Three

– Fourteen –

In the near darkness, Klink listened to the sounds coming from the other side of the wall. Digging sounds. Just a few meters separated him from the toiling men, but it might as well be a kilometer away. He glanced around his gloomy prison. Rock, dirt, stone and those beams.

Those beams.

Jumbled snatches of memory flashed through his mind. Chaotic images of dirt, darkness and pain. The pain lingered the longest. His head striking something, something slashing into his thigh, something crushing him. Somewhere he seemed to hear a scream. Then nothing.

Pain was the first thing that he remembered again. Pain so intense that he cried out from it. And he knew nothing again.

The second time he came to, it was the darkness that nearly overwhelmed him. The darkness and the realization that he couldn't move. Panic had choked him. Panic and a memory that he had long forgotten. It was the memory of that long ago event that kept the panic stilled. This time, his head was free. This time, he seemed to be in no danger of suffocating. This time.

He clung to that hope. He had no idea if it was true, but he clung to it. And later, he clung to a voice in the darkness. A voice that seemed to need him.

And now?

Klink moved his left hand again and flexed his legs, ignoring the pain in his right thigh and the other one, duller, on his left side where the beam was pressing. He didn't want his limbs getting numb. Even pain was preferable. It meant that blood was still circulating to his limbs.

Now, Hogan had been freed. And they were digging for him. How long would it take them to dig him out?

What time was it anyway? He had forgotten to ask Hogan.

Hogan.

Other memories crowded his mind. Now, there was another ache inside him. One that had been with him ever since Hogan



### Scene Three

had wished him dead. He knew what Hogan thought of him; he had always known. A fool. No, worse. A thing. To be insulted, used. A uniform with a wind-up toy inside, ready to jump at the whim of Hogan. Something not human.

But when his nephew died, Hogan seemed to treat him a little differently. As he had when Dieter showed up.

Then the incident with Martinelli . . .

*Prefer that he had killed me . . .*

Angry words he had thrown at Hogan.

*Perhaps I do . . .*

Angry words in return.

Perhaps his anger at Hogan had prompted them. But, at that time, at that moment, Hogan meant them, and all of their prior goodwill disappeared. Klink would have done anything to wipe out what had happened. Just one word, one gesture from Hogan, and he would have been willing to start again.

But it was not to be. Instead, Hogan had betrayed him, handed him over to the Gestapo. A shudder as he remembered his fear in that cell. If Hochstetter had been there . . .

Absurd tears stung his eyes.

He had not allowed himself to admit how much Hogan had hurt him. Now, in this unyielding prison, it hit him without warning. The tight sob in his throat gagged him.

Klink blinked back the tears and choked down the sob. Things were bad enough without his getting emotional.

Another glance around at the gloomy scene, and he shuddered. He was lucky to be alive. Lucky.

The light flickered on the walls, increasing the gloom. At least he had light now. And water.

Water. His thirst was back again, suddenly unbearable. His shaking hand reached for the canteen Hogan had left behind. Got it. He pulled it over, next to his side. This was going to be difficult. Maybe he should wait for Hogan.

Hogan. Again, that ache. He didn't expect Hogan to come back. Why should he? Heaven knew why Hogan had even bothered checking on him. Hogan didn't care what happened to him. Hogan had never cared what happened to him unless there was something in it for Hogan. He had finally accepted that. And there was nothing in it for Hogan by helping him now.

### Scene Three

His trembling fingers uncapped the canteen. That wasn't too bad. The hard part was trying to drink without spilling all of the water.

Klink's head lifted; he winced as the pain in his skull deepened. His shaking fingers made it difficult to hold the canteen to his lips. It tilted and some of the water spilled on him. He laid his aching head down, holding the canteen on his chest.

Try it again. Again, his head lifted.

"Kommandant!"

The call startled Klink. His head jerked toward the voice, the canteen slipped from his grasp, spilling the water as it slid down his side.

Hogan, retrieving the canteen before it emptied, was inching his way toward Klink. He placed the canteen upright against the wall.

"What do you think you're doing?" Hogan demanded angrily.

"I was getting a drink," Klink said tonelessly.

"You could have waited a little longer," Hogan said roughly. "Until I got back."

Klink looked at him.

Hogan sat back, surprised at the look in Klink's eyes. Klink didn't expect him to return. He expected nothing from Hogan. Nothing except hatred and ridicule and contempt.

Now it was Hogan's hand that shook as he lifted the canteen to Klink's lips, his left hand cradling the Kommandant's head so he could drink. His thoughts were jumbled, confused. Klink seemed to know exactly how Hogan felt about him.

What was he doing here? What?

He could leave Klink in here. Klink had light now and water; he'd paid his debt to Klink for Klink's help earlier. Schultz could send someone in periodically to see how Klink was doing. Nobody expected an American prisoner to help the German kommandant of a prisoner of war camp. So, he could leave. After all, it didn't matter to him how Klink was doing, how he was feeling. It didn't matter if Klink was hurt or in pain. It didn't . . .

Hogan recapped the canteen and leaned it against the wall. He looked down at the pale face. Klink's eyes had closed.

Hogan cleared his throat. "The doctor wants to know how you're doing."

### Scene Three

“As well as can be expected,” Klink said in a tired voice. “How are they doing?”

“As well as can be expected,” Hogan echoed. “It will take some time.”

Klink nodded.

He was still pale, but didn't seem to be worse, Hogan decided. “Let's see if we can get you more comfortable,” Hogan said, remembering the Doctor's instructions. Carefully, he undid Klink's tie. “Better?”

A nod in reply.

“Okay. I'm going to try to get some of this stuff off your chest.”

Even more carefully, Hogan began brushing away the loose dirt and rock from Klink's body. Eventually, he managed to clear off the dirt to just below Klink's ribcage. From there on down, the pieces were heavier, some held by the crossbeams.

“Better?”

“Yes.”

Klink's breathing seemed to be easier and his color was a bit better as well.

“Good.” Hogan's fingers began undoing the buttons on Klink's jacket and shirt. “It's going to get hot in here when they really get going.”

Hogan pushed the clothes aside, baring Klink's chest. Klink's chest was wet with sweat, the small dark hairs plastered. For an instant, Hogan imagined he saw blood as well. He shook his head to clear it. Hogan found his handkerchief and wiped the sweat off Klink's face and chest.

Klink looked at him. “Why are you here?”

Hogan didn't look at him. “I bored you with my life story. Now, it's your turn.”

“I see,” Klink said. “Get the patient talking so he forgets where he is.”

Hogan looked at him this time. “Isn't that what you did?”

“You will regret this, Colonel Hogan.”

*I already do.*

“Probably.” Then an indifferent shrug. “Do you want some more water?” Hogan's tone was impersonal now, his earlier emotion seemingly gone.

## Scene Three

Klink glanced at Hogan and turned his head away, a sudden tightness in his chest. “No.” His voice was lifeless, deep in his eyes, a growing pain.

Hogan settled back against the wall as comfortably as possible. “All right, Kommandant. You were born in Leipzig<sup>3</sup>, right? Before the turn of the century?”

“According to Sergeant Carter, a lot earlier than that<sup>4</sup>,” Klink said, his eyes closing.

Hogan managed a small smile. “Well, he’s a bad judge of ages. Go on.”

“I was born in Leipzig, but we didn’t stay there. I was the oldest . . . ”

Time passed. Slowly. Very slowly. The wall seemed to give up its inches very reluctantly.

Hogan wiped his sweaty brow on his sleeve; it had gotten hot behind the wall. He wet his handkerchief with water from the canteen, and wiped Klink’s face and chest.

“Go on,” Hogan said after giving Klink another drink. “You were in the last war, right? The Luftwaffe?”

Klink nodded. “Yes. But, at first, I was in the infantry.”

“Where?”

“The Western Front. In the trenches.”

Hogan glanced at Klink in surprise; he hadn’t thought Klink had any combat experience.

“I’ve read about those trenches,” Hogan said. “Sounded like nasty places to be.”

Klink nodded. “Nasty is an understatement. Though the German trenches were better organized than the French or British ones, they were still little pieces of hell, especially at the front lines. In the winter, they were like ice boxes, and the uniforms were hardly adequate. If it wasn’t freezing or snowing, it was muddy. Like living in a riverbed when it rained. And in the summer, they were fetid, airless ovens.”

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<sup>3</sup>“Hogan’s Double Life”

<sup>4</sup>“Get Fit or Go Fight”

## Scene Three

Hogan looked at Klink as he remembered.

"This," Klink nodded at the debris, "is bringing back memories."

"Pleasant, I hope," Hogan murmured.

No trace of a smile. "Very unpleasant ones. Dirt, mud, insects, lice, rats, human filth, blood, even parts of dead men's bodies, were constant companions. There was never enough food or rest. And the fear. It was everywhere. You could never escape it, not even in your sleep. Cave-ins were very common there."

"Ever get caught in one?" Hogan asked, curious despite himself.

Klink nodded. "Some. Most were not real cave-ins; just some dirt falling on top of you. Rather like digging in a tunnel, I imagine. But one . . ."

"One?" Hogan prompted after a moment.

"It was night, and in that section of the trench, the beds were in alcoves carved out of the walls. It had rained heavily the night before and during the day. And the British artillery had also done some damage. Two of us were in there, sleeping, when the ceiling collapsed on top of us. Schmidt slept on his back; he died almost instantly. I was sleeping on my side against the back wall. As a result, I had a little air pocket."

"You were completely buried?" Hogan was aghast; he had been caught in a couple of minor cave-ins while digging the tunnels and knew what it felt like.

Klink nodded. "Yes. I was blind, deaf, unable to move. And I didn't know how large the air pocket was." A shaky breath as he relived it. "I lay there and waited. At first, I had no idea if anyone even knew where I was. Eventually, I could feel the dirt shifting around me. But I couldn't tell if someone was digging, or if more of the ceiling had collapsed." A shiver as he whispered, "Half the time, I prayed they would dig me out; the rest of the time, I prayed that I would lose consciousness and not know what was happening. I could feel insects, worms, crawling on my face, my hands, in my ears."

Despite himself, Hogan shuddered.

Klink's voice was quiet. "I was terrified of moving for fear that I would bring more dirt down on top of me and close the air pocket. I nearly went mad. I think I screamed. I was unconscious

## Scene Three

when they finally dug me out. They said I had been buried about an hour; it seemed like an eternity.”

He fell silent, still remembering the horror.

“When did you go into the Luftwaffe?” Hogan asked after a few moments.

“Shortly after that.” Klink moved restlessly under the debris. “I had an application in before the cave-in; the approval came through while I was in the hospital. After a few weeks of home leave, I started flight training. I will admit, I wasn’t a very good pilot at first. In fact, I was terrible.”

Hogan hid his smile. “You, Kommandant?”

Klink’s voice was tired, and unexpectedly bitter. “Don’t bother sounding surprised, Colonel Hogan. We both know what you think of me.”

Hogan glanced at him sharply.

“But I did learn to fly. And for the first time since I entered the military, I really enjoyed what I was doing.”

“Why did you sign up, Kommandant?” Hogan asked after a moment. “You tell a different story every time the subject comes up.”

“The stories made the truth more palatable,” Klink said with an attempt at a shrug. “The truth is, I was the eldest son and that was what I was going to do. Like my father, and his father, and so on. For as long as I can remember, I was told it was my duty.”

“Did anybody bother asking what you wanted to do?” Hogan asked quietly.

“What I wanted had little to do with it,” Klink said neutrally. “It was simply expected of me. And I did what was expected of me.”

“Before the war, it wasn’t too bad. I think I half believed all those stories that my father and grandfather told. I think all little boys do. You would be a hero to the Fatherland, to your family and, back then, to the Kaiser. With a glorious future in the diplomatic corps or even in the court. The honor, the nobility, the glory of it.”

“Not one word about the mud or the lice, or living in a charnel house. Or being buried alive. Or having your face torn off, or all your limbs. Or the horrible fear that you might be next and die.”

## Scene Three

Or even worse, that you might be next, and not die.”

Hogan looked at his set face. “But you stayed in. Even after the war ended.”

A wincing shrug. “I was twenty-three, Colonel, with a job, a career. Civilian life in Germany was no prize. The pay was regular and needed. My father had been disabled by the war; he had been young enough to be called up. And he died a few years later. As the oldest, it was my responsibility to take care of the family. And they needed the money I sent. When the depression came, it meant the difference between going hungry or not.”

“Still the dutiful son,” Hogan said.

“There are worse fates.” Another grimace. One that seemed to have nothing to do with what he was talking about.

Hogan glanced up at the wall still far too high above him. It was taking too long, way too long.

A loose rock slipped down the wall toward them. Hogan leaned protectively over Klink as it hit one of the beams lying atop Klink’s body.

A strangled cry from Klink, his breathing quickening.

Hogan looked at him in surprise. “Colonel?”

“The pressure has shifted,” Klink said in a tight voice, sweat breaking out on his brow.

“Go on, Colonel,” Hogan said. “The depression — ”

Klink shook his head. “No! Tell the doctor, the pressure is greater. So is the bleeding; the beam moved just enough.” There was pain in his eyes as he looked at Hogan. “Go! Now!”

Hogan, alarmed, scrambled back under the beam.

“I don’t know what happened,” Hogan said with frustration. “One minute he was fine. Now . . . ” He shook his head.

“There is another problem,” Schultz said heavily. “We are worried about the ceiling. It is very unstable; pieces have been coming down from it as we dig. It may give way at any time.”

“Then you have no choice,” Doctor Bauer said calmly. “You must attack at the narrowest point.”

“The beams,” Hogan said flatly.

The doctor nodded. “The diggers must try to keep them as steady as possible.” He turned to Hogan. “It will become much harder now, Colonel. But you must do all you can to keep him

### Scene Three

conscious. Shock is the biggest danger of all. Keep him talking," he urged. "You must."

Hogan nodded and wet his dry lips. "I'll do what I can."

He couldn't hide it any longer, Hogan thought bleakly as he returned to Klink. The pain was there, plainly visible on Klink's face. Up until now, Hogan could pretend that everything was fine, that Klink was just stuck. Not any more.

Hogan lay down on his side once again.

Klink's eyes turned to Hogan, dirty streaks of sweat on his face and chest.

"They're going to work at the narrowest spot," Hogan said soberly, giving Klink another drink.

"The beams," Klink said tonelessly.

Hogan nodded, unable to think of anything to say.

"Leave, Colonel Hogan," Klink said in that toneless voice. "You don't need to be here. It is too dangerous."

"No!" Hogan said with a sudden fierceness he didn't want to understand. "We got stuck in here together; we're going to get out of here together!"

Klink looked surprised at his vehemence, his eyes questioning.

Hogan avoided his gaze. "Start talking, Kommandant. And don't stop."

After a long moment, Klink began talking again.



## Scene Three

– Fifteen –

The pain was increasing. Hogan could see it in every bead of sweat, in every line on Klink's face, in the tense muscles of his chest. Klink's fingers clenched and unclenched, his words forced through tight lips.

And it scared Hogan. He never had to deal with pain like this before. He didn't know what to do, other than to keep Klink talking. He gave Klink another drink of water and wiped the sweat off Klink's brow.

It scared Hogan for another reason as well. Expendable. The word kept going around and around in his mind. Expendable. A tool. A nothing. Klink was nothing.

But nothings didn't feel pain, and try as he could, Hogan couldn't deny that Klink was in pain. Not any more.

The wall was getting lower, more manageable, but every bit of dirt removed shifted the beams. They had wedged rocks under the beams to keep them steady, but they were still moving, oh so slowly, putting more pressure on Klink.

An accidental butt against one of the beams by one of the diggers.

Klink's face twisted, his head arched, and his freed hand flailed helplessly against the pain. Without thinking, Hogan caught Klink's hand and grasped it firmly in his own. Klink's dirty fingers bit into his right hand. Hogan caught his breath at the force of the hold.

Expendable.

He nearly released Klink's hand. He didn't want to be reminded that Klink was, after all, flesh and blood. He had to remember that Klink was expendable. Just a uniform.

He had relaxed his hold just a bit when a fresh pain hit Klink, twisting his face, increasing the pressure on Hogan's hand.

Hogan stared at Klink's face, seeing, really seeing, the sweat on Klink's tense body, the lines etched deeply into his face, the growing pain in his eyes. Hogan felt Klink's hand in his own, felt

## Scene Three

the warmth and the strength of it.

Funny, in all these years, how often had he touched Klink? Sometimes, but always impersonally. Never like this.

Of course not, why should he touch a tool?

A tool.

The pictures were back again. Klink on the floor, hurt, bruised. Then from his nightmares. The Gestapo. Klink tortured. Collapsing into his arms.

Klink gasped, his face contorting.

*Don't hurt him . . .*

The pressure of Klink's hand increased on his. The nightmare became reality. And the tool . . .

The tool became a man, a man who needed him.

And Hogan held on.

"Go on," he told Klink roughly. "What happened next?"

He continued to hold Klink's hand in his own.

\* \* \* \* \*

Hogan's hand ached from the pressure of Klink's fingers, nearly growing numb at times. He was lying beside Klink now, his face inches away from Klink's. At times, the pain ebbed from Klink's face, but it always returned, sharper than before.

Hogan had stopped thinking about what was going on outside. It was just the two of them in this hot, cramped, dark little world. Sweat plastered Hogan's filthy shirt and hair to his body.

But he didn't care. All he cared about was the tortured man lying beside him, willing strength into him. Silently begging him to hold on. Then not silently.

"Come on, Kommandant, it won't be long now," he was whispering, refusing to think about what he was doing, refusing to acknowledge what he had buried deep inside him. "Hold on. Then what?"

Occasionally, one of the diggers, either his men or the guards, would climb over the wall with a canteen of fresh water. No matter which, they would shake their heads in puzzlement at the sight of the two men, one half buried under the beams, the other

## Scene Three

lying beside him, grasping his hand tightly.

The beam across his hips slid unexpectedly. Klink screamed.

Work stopped for a heartrending instant on the other side. Klink was now visible to most of the men as they worked. They could see the pain on his face, the beams slowly crushing him. And they returned to their work with renewed fervor.

Hogan was shaking as the scream was wrenched from Klink. For an instant, the hand in his slipped; Hogan held on to it tightly.

Klink's tortured eyes, swimming with tears, turned to look at him. "Why?" was Klink's agonized question. "Why are you doing this?"

"I have nothing better to do," Hogan said in a flippant whisper.

"No!" Klink's voice was harsh, faint, filled with pain that was more than physical. "Not good enough. I mean nothing to you. Nothing!"

A gasping cry choked him. Klink's eyes closed as the pressure increased on Hogan's hand.

"Kommandant?" Hogan whispered.

Klink shook his head.

This time, Hogan didn't urge him on. The pain was too great. It was all Klink could do to stay conscious. Hogan carefully changed his position to get more comfortable.

Klink's eyes opened slowly.

Hogan met the questioning gaze of the tear-filled eyes. His own look wavered.

Expendable, he had thought this morning. Expendable, when he turned Klink in to the Gestapo. Expendable. Just a tool. Not a man. That's all Klink had ever been. A way to get what Hogan wanted. That's all Klink was. That's all . . .

*I mean nothing . . .*

Nothing. It didn't matter if Klink was hurting or if he died. It didn't . . .

Klink seemed to read his thoughts and, slowly, his grasp loosened. "Leave, Hogan." His voice was bitter. "And take your pity with you."

## Scene Three

Hogan looked at him.

All the pain, all the hurt, of the past three years were in Klink's tearing eyes. The eyes of a man who had been betrayed too often, hurt too often, by one he had trusted. With a life of its own, Hogan's shaking hand touched Klink's wet forehead gently.

Klink flinched away from his touch. Hogan, he couldn't forget, had helped him before, only to leave him, only to betray him yet again. He was too tired now, he hurt too much, and he was afraid, so afraid, of being hurt again. He couldn't take any more.

And Hogan knew it.

"What have I done to you?" he murmured shakily, the appalling truth finally acknowledged. "Dear God, what have I done?"

That faint whisper penetrated the pain-ridden world Klink was in. And he looked at Hogan. This time, Hogan's emotion-filled eyes held his.

He could stop lying now. To himself. To Klink. Lying about what this man, this foolish, often naive, man, meant to him. This man he had hurt so badly, so often.

"No, Kommandant." His grasp tightened on Klink's hand. "I won't leave.

"We're in this together, Kommandant," Hogan whispered fiercely. "All the way to the end. You and me. Do you hear me, Wilhelm Klink? You and me!"

Klink's eyes stayed on his. Hogan could see it, could see life and long abandoned hope slowly returning to those empty tearing eyes.

"Oh God," Hogan said with anguish, "I'm sorry. I'm so . . ." He choked on the words.

Beneath the pain, beneath the hope, Hogan saw the smile. And more.

"You and me," Klink finally echoed. "To the . . . end."

Then his eyes closed as he screamed silently.

## Scene Three

– Sixteen –

Klink screamed.

“Kommandant!”

Klink’s mouth opened again as Hogan’s grip tightened. Then Hogan felt the pressure on his hand slacken.

“Kommandant!” Hogan yelled again, his lips inches away from Klink’s ear.

But this time, it did no good. Klink’s eyes glazed over, and his limp hand slipped from Hogan’s grasp.

*Damn!*

“Get him out of here!” Hogan yelled. “He’s unconscious!”

No longer worried about hurting the trapped man, the rescuers dug frantically at the remaining rubble. Then as some of them held up the troublesome beams, Klink was pulled loose from the debris. Quickly, he was laid on a stretcher and carried hurriedly out of the cave. Hogan followed anxiously.

At the ambulance, the doctor didn’t hesitate. As Hogan came up beside him, Doctor Bauer ripped open the filthy, bloodied trousers. One of the soldiers who had carried the stretcher gagged and turned away. Jagged bits of glass and metal were embedded in an ugly bleeding wound in Klink’s right thigh. Hastily, the doctor secured a tourniquet just above the wound.

Klink stirred as the doctor loosely bandaged the wound. His eyes opened.

“Kommandant,” the doctor said gently, “we will be taking you to the hospital now. Do not worry.”

Klink nodded wearily. “Colonel Hogan,” he whispered.

Hogan knelt beside the stretcher. “Yes, sir?” Hogan’s voice was unusually respectful.

Klink looked at him steadily and then held up his hand. To the surprise of the onlookers, Hogan didn’t shake the offered hand. Instead, he grasped it, the way he had in the cave.

Klink looked surprised, his eyes searching Hogan’s face. Then with a faint smile, Klink returned the firm pressure. His eyes closed.

## Scene Three

Hogan gently laid Klink's hand down on the stretcher and stood. He watched as Klink was lifted into the ambulance. He continued to watch as the ambulance drove away.

*To the end, Kommandant. You and me.*

Hogan turned away and walked over to the waiting truck, leaving behind a group of very puzzled men.

Hogan followed the ambulance to the hospital and waited less than patiently during Klink's operation. After a long time, Doctor Bauer walked into the waiting room where Hogan had been pacing like a caged animal.

Hogan held his breath as Schultz asked, "How is the Kommandant, Herr Doktor?"

Bauer's smile reassured them. "He will be fine. There appears to be no permanent damage to his leg. In time, it should be good as new."

"May we see him?" Schultz asked.

"He is still asleep," Bauer said. "But it will do no harm. If he awakens, do not tire him. He needs a great deal of rest."

"Danke, Herr Doktor."

Dawn was breaking as Hogan stood at the window in Klink's room, his unseeing eyes on the bleak landscape outside.

"Would you like some coffee, Colonel Hogan?" Schultz asked him.

A nod. "Thanks, Schultz."

Schultz left the room as Hogan walked back to the bed. Klink lay on the bed, tubes and things sticking out of him. He was pale, pale as death.

A squeeze inside Hogan.

*Prefer that he had killed me . . .*

*Killed me . . .*

His words had haunted him while he waited earlier. He had been afraid, so afraid, that his harsh, unthinking words would become reality. Afraid that Klink would die. Tears had blinded him then. He had blinked them away as he saw his men's puzzled eyes on him, and he turned away.

Other words and thoughts had also haunted him. Expendable, tool, thing. Every word he had thought about Klink in the past.

## Scene Three

*Bastard.* The curse he had flung at a beaten, exhausted man who needed his help.

And those nightmares. All those dreams he had been having since he'd wished Klink dead. Dreams he had ignored, dreams that only made him angry. But they were dreams that shook him to the core of his being, dreams which sometimes left him in tears.

But the dreams had been nothing compared to the reality that faced him in that cave. He had felt so helpless when confronted with Klink's agony.

Klink's forehead was wet. Hogan picked up a towel and wiped away the sweat. Then his hand stayed on Klink's forehead.

All that wasted time trying to pretend he didn't care for this man, trying to hate him, making his life miserable. He didn't need to do that. This poor, naive man would have done whatever Hogan wanted without being aware of it.

But that hadn't been enough for Hogan. He had to stick it to Klink as well and then, slowly, twist the knife. Stripping away Klink's humanity every time he did. Last month was the final step. The one time Klink needed him, the one time that there was nothing in it for Hogan, and he walked away from Klink. Worse, he had wished Klink dead.

Dead.

Hogan shuddered. That's what he had been doing to Klink all these years. Killing him slowly, bit by bit. Until there was nothing left. Nothing but those empty, lifeless eyes.

*God, what a fool I've been. A blind, dangerous fool.*

Klink slowly regained consciousness. He hurt. All over, he hurt. His bloodshot eyes opened. Hogan stood beside him, a worried look on his face.

Hogan. He had dreamed about Hogan. Dreamed that Hogan had made him a promise. Dreamed . . .

Hogan saw the confusion, the hurt, still lingering in Klink's eyes. And he understood. It would take time, time for Klink to trust him. He reached out and took Klink's hand in his, grasping it as he had in the cave.

Klink had started at the touch. Started and tried to withdraw his hand. But he seemed to have no energy for such a simple

## Scene Three

movement. He was so tired. Klink's eyes closed.

When Schultz returned, Hogan was still holding Klink's hand.

*It was dark, no light. Something was crawling over him, something obscene. He wanted to scream and couldn't. There was no air.*

*The wall collapsed on top of him. There was such pain in his leg. He heard someone scream from the pain.*

*Hogan. He saw Hogan in the distance. He wanted to call out. But nothing came from his parched throat.*

*"Hold on, Kommandant," someone was saying.*

*He couldn't. He hurt too much. He wanted to cry, to disappear into that welcoming darkness. But someone wouldn't let him. Someone whose hand grasped his.*

*"Still alive, Kommandant?" A voice taunted him.*

*Hochstetter? Martinelli?*

*His back hurt unbearably. Somehow, he kept from screaming as the belt struck yet again.*

*Darkness. Absolute darkness.*

*A voice. Panic-stricken. He responded. And kept talking, keeping the voice from panicking.*

*Then he was left alone. Alone with the darkness, alone with the pain.*

*This time, he screamed.*

Klink jerked awake, his tearing eyes opening. He was alone. Completely alone in the darkening room.

Panic squeezed his insides. Unreasoning panic. He had been abandoned in the darkness with the pain. Hogan had abandoned him again. He had . . .

Klink moved convulsively, pain seared his thigh.

The door opened.

"Kommandant!" Hogan went over to him.

The relief as he saw Hogan was nearly overwhelming. In that instant, he remembered what Hogan had promised him in the cave. And shame for doubting Hogan flooded over him.

Hogan saw the relief, doubt and shame cross Klink's face. He also saw the pain. Hogan picked up the glass of water beside Klink's bed and held the straw to Klink's lips. The Kommandant



### Scene Three

sipped the water gratefully. Then Hogan returned the glass to the nightstand and looked at Klink.

Klink's eyes had closed for a moment but then they opened. He looked at Hogan. His eyes were uncertain, guarded. He hated the doubt that was still inside him, but he was afraid, so very afraid, that what had happened between them in the cave wasn't real.

Hogan nodded slowly with understanding. Time. They both needed time.

His hand found Klink's and grasped it firmly as he had done in the cave. Slowly, the panic, the doubt, started to fade from the blue eyes as they stayed on Hogan's face.

The door opened and Schultz entered. "I am sorry, Colonel Hogan. But you must return to camp now."

Hogan nodded, his eyes on Klink's. "They're kicking me out, Kommandant," he said softly, bending over the still man. "Do you understand?"

Klink nodded slowly.

"I'll see you back in camp, Kommandant," Hogan said quietly. "Okay?"

Klink nodded again, all fear, all doubt gone from his eyes. "Thank you," he managed to whisper hoarsely.

Hogan shook his head. This man had nothing to thank him for. Instead, this foolish man had managed to teach him a lesson he needed to learn. One he would never forget.

A squeeze on Klink's hand, and Hogan smiled briefly. "Hurry back, Kommandant. Do everything they tell you to do. And hurry back."

Klink nodded again.

Hogan released Klink's hand and walked to the door. A glance back at Klink.

*You and me, Kommandant. To the end.*

Klink seemed to read his mind and smiled wanly.

*To the end.*

## Scene Three

– Seventeen –

Christmas Eve, 1944.

Colonel Robert Hogan watched as Klink's staff car turned into the compound. The car stopped before Klink's quarters. Schultz got out of the car, walked around it, and opened the door. Kommandant Wilhelm Klink got out of the car, carrying a cane. Captain Fritz Gruber hurried down the stairs to greet the Kommandant. Leaning on the cane, Klink walked up the stairs and into his quarters.

With a faint smile, Hogan walked back to his barracks.

It had been a week since Klink was pulled from beneath the beams. Though Gruber had given him permission to do so, Hogan hadn't gone back to the hospital since then. He didn't need to. For one thing, Schultz kept him up to date on Klink's condition. For another . . .

Now they both knew how things stood between them. On the surface, things would remain the same. The brash American and the harassed Kommandant. But, regardless of when the war ended, they would face the end together. When the Allies walked into the camp, Klink would need his help. And Hogan would give it freely.

It was dark when Klink came out on the porch in front of the office. A tree had been set up in the middle of the compound, decorated with odds and ends. Klink could, just, hear Christmas carols being sung in the barracks. Snow, soft and light, lay over everything. The sky overhead was clear, the stars bright. The cold air was still, calm. Almost like Christmas should be. *Except for the barbed wire and the armed guards.*

Klink heard Hogan approach.

For a while, neither man said anything.

Finally, Hogan broke the silence. "Beautiful night."

Klink nodded. "Very." Then a smile at the American standing beside him. "You know, in combat, they sometimes call a truce

### Scene Three

on Christmas, even in the middle of a battle.”

“Think they’ll do that now?” Hogan asked.

“I don’t know. But we could call one here,” Klink said.

Hogan looked at him. “How?”

“We forget about curfews and lights out and machine guns.”

He glanced at Hogan. “Provided — ”

Hogan grinned. “Provided we forget about getting away.”

A slow smile. “Well, Colonel Hogan?”

“What would General Burkhalter say?”

“I really don’t care,” Klink said to Hogan’s surprise. “Besides, he’s not going to drop in. Not on Christmas.”

“Kommandant, sometimes, I can’t figure you out.”

“Colonel Hogan, I could say the same about you.”

Hogan laughed. It felt good to laugh again; he hadn’t laughed in a long time. “Okay, Kommandant. We call a truce. When do we start?”

A faint smile. “It already has.”

Surprised, Hogan looked out over the compound. The searchlights were turned into the compound, but the soldiers manning the watchtowers were coming down. The guards, a little tentatively, were putting away their weapons.

“I thought you would agree,” Klink said softly beside him.

Hogan shook his head. “I’m getting too predictable.”

“I would not go that far,” Klink said dryly.

“Then maybe you’re getting too unpredictable.”

A quick glance at Hogan. “Maybe. I think you should tell your men, Colonel.”

Hogan nodded and walked away.

Schultz came up behind Klink. “Should you be standing, Herr Kommandant?” he chided.

But Klink wasn’t listening to him; his eyes were on Hogan as he told the prisoners to come out of the barracks. “I wonder,” Klink said softly.

“Jawohl?” prompted Schultz.

Klink straightened up. “Nothing, Schultz. Nothing at all.”

And Schultz sighed. The Kommandant was a stubborn man. A very stubborn man.

## Scene Three

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Nearly midnight.

Klink looked around, satisfied at what he saw. The guards and the prisoners were actually mingling in the compound, and Christmas carols were being sung by mixed groups of men.

Good. It would make things easier later. How much later, he was unwilling to guess.

His eyes rose to the stars. He found himself praying that this would be the last Christmas in this camp. The last Christmas of the war. A war that had gone on for a lifetime.

To their surprise, Hogan broke away from his men and walked over to Klink, a bottle of champagne and two glasses in his hand. He handed a glass to Klink who took it with a faint smile. Hogan filled Klink's glass and then his own. The bottle he set down on the steps.

It was Klink who made the toast. "Merry Christmas, Robert Hogan."

No titles, no labels.

"Merry Christmas, Wilhelm Klink."

## Scene Three

– Eighteen –

Long after dark, Hogan walked across the compound with a bottle in his hand. Prisoners and guards were milling around together much as they did on Christmas Eve. Only the songs were different. Why not? After all, it was New Year's Eve.

He walked up the stairs to Klink's office. The outer office was empty. Hilda had left happily shortly after noon. Klink, to her surprise, had given her the rest of the day off. But Klink had not been so generous with himself. He was still working in his office.

Hogan quietly opened the door to the inner office and peered inside. Klink seemed engrossed in his work. Something Hogan had never appreciated before. It was easy enough to call Klink incompetent, conveniently ignoring all the times that he worked nonstop. Ignoring all the times Klink did do the right thing.

Hogan rapped softly on the door; Klink's head lifted.

Hogan smiled at him. "Do you know what time it is?" He didn't give Klink a chance to answer as he stepped into the office. "It's just an hour from midnight, Kommandant. A little late to be working. Especially tonight."

A faint smile from Klink. "What did you have in mind?"

Hogan grinned. "What I really had in mind was a nice blonde, or maybe a brunette, the two of us standing in Times Square, waiting for the New Year. But since I couldn't make it back there even if I flew, I'll settle for a drink and some talk."

"You know where the glasses are," Klink said in a dry voice. "I'll just get rid of these."

Klink signed a couple of pages and slipped them into envelopes. The rest he gathered into a neat pile on the side of his desk.

Hogan came over with the glasses. He poured the champagne into the two glasses and nodded at the papers on the desk. "Never seems to stop."

"It is getting worse," Klink admitted. "Every piece of property, from paper clips to napkins, now needs to be accounted for." He picked up a glass.

### Scene Three

“Money?” Hogan asked.

Klink nodded. “Berlin needs every cent, or rather pfennig, they can get their hands on. So they’re tightening the budgets.”

Hogan sat down, picking up his own glass. “Hurting yet?”

“Let’s just say it is getting a little uncomfortable.” Klink sipped his drink. “Not bad,” he said appreciatively. “How are the buildings going?”

“Going. You know it won’t be enough,” Hogan said.

Klink nodded. “Tomorrow, I’ll look over the storage buildings. Maybe we can convert some of them.”

“Good idea. But tomorrow’s a holiday.”

A faint smile. “For who?” He changed the subject. “How is it outside?”

“A bit more raucous than last week.”

“I hope I don’t regret this.”

“They’ll behave, Kommandant. All of them.”

Klink shrugged and lifted his glass. “To your good health, Colonel,” he toasted.

“And yours, Kommandant.” Hogan’s glass also lifted and the two men drank.

“To peace,” Hogan said after a while.

“Peace.” Klink sighed and after sipping his drink, put the glass down. He stood and walked over to the window. “Peace,” he murmured, his eyes on the men milling around in the compound. “Sometimes, I wonder if it will ever happen.”

“It will,” Hogan said cheerfully. He glanced at the man at the window. “When it does, what will you do?”

A thin smile. “You didn’t say who won, Colonel.”

Hogan grinned.

“Yes. I know.” Klink returned to his chair and picked up his glass. “If Germany wins or there is a draw, I don’t think my life will change much. I will still be in the Luftwaffe and probably still here for a while, sending, I hope, prisoners home.

“If the Allies win,” he said slowly, “I imagine what I want to do will be of little consequence for some time.”

Hogan looked at him in surprise.

A faint smile. “I will probably still be here. But I imagine I will be the one inhabiting the barracks. Or the cooler.”

“That’s a pessimistic assumption,” Hogan protested.

### Scene Three

"It is a realistic assumption, Colonel," Klink said evenly. "Kommandants of prisoner of war camps are not very popular among the winners of a war. My fate will be in the hands of someone else for a long time to come." He sipped his drink. "I accepted that a long time ago." He glanced at Hogan. "And what about you, Colonel?"

Hogan shrugged. "I guess I haven't really thought about it. Does seem like a long time away. And it seems like a lifetime ago."

A thin smile. "Colonel, your war has been around for only a few years. Mine?" Klink removed the monocle and rubbed his eyes. "For more years than I like to count. It seems as if I have been in a war, or preparing for one, my entire life."

Hogan silently refilled Klink's glass.

"You Americans think the war started in 1941; the British think it started in 1939, the French, 1938," Klink continued. "It really started in 1918 when the first war supposedly ended." A sigh. "The sheer waste of that war was incredible," Klink said softly. "Millions of men died fighting over inches of ground for reasons few of them understood. In many places, an entire generation of men disappeared. Relatives, friends, classmates vanished. My own father ultimately died of wounds received in the war. But we were lucky compared to many others in Germany."

"How so?" Hogan asked.

"Our family was pretty much intact, close and, unlike many others, we had a home. My mother has a house that has been in her family for generations. And we had a store, a business that we were able to keep operating no matter how bad things became. Many had nothing. In America, you have an expression, 'money to burn'?"

"Yeah. It means you're so rich, you can burn money."

An ironic smile. "In Germany, it meant something totally different. Here, money was so worthless that the only way to get any use out of it was to burn it for heat. In a way, what happened next was almost inevitable."

"I don't buy that," Hogan said bluntly. "You people had a choice."

"Spoken like a man who's never had to contend with the

### Scene Three

complete defeat,” Klink said. Another sip of the champagne.

“Yes, we had some choices,” Klink said after a moment. “But we came out of the first war the losers. And, unlike your President Wilson, the other winners were not willing to be conciliatory. Germany wound up being completely responsible for the first war. Reparations, impossible reparations, were demanded of a people who couldn’t feed themselves. Countries were carved up like pieces of a pie with little regard for the people who had lived there for generations. A system of government that had operated for centuries was swept aside, leaving a vacuum. The Weimar Republic tried, and, for a time, it did some things well. Until the Depression. Then it all collapsed.”

“Then Hitler,” Hogan said, more than a little surprised at Klink’s analysis.

“He gave many people a sense of badly needed pride, and offered hope and prosperity. For a price. By the time the price was known, it was too late.”

“It’s never too late,” Hogan argued.

A cynical smile. “It is when you are surrounded by mindless terror on all sides. When your seemingly normal life can be destroyed by a thoughtless remark. When friends turn on friends, and family members on family members.”

Klink stared into his glass as he continued. “There was an old man who lived not far from us. It was 1933, and the Nazis were still not well known by most people. He made the mistake of cursing some party members. More in the way old men do than from any real ill will. A few days later, he was found in an alley, badly beaten, a warning note tied around his neck. No one ever found out who did it, but everyone knew the Nazis were responsible. Before that, he had been fairly robust and outspoken; afterwards, he withdrew into himself.

“The neighborhood changed after that. Politics became a taboo subject. People became afraid of speaking their minds about any subject. They grew distrustful, even of those they had known all of their lives. Eventually, survival became more important than anything else. And survival meant closing your eyes and keeping your mouth shut. No matter what happened.”

“You’re rather talkative,” Hogan said quietly. “I’ve never seen you like this.”



## Scene Three

Klink rubbed his face. "It's the champagne, Colonel. And the New Year. And . . ."

"And?" Hogan prompted.

"I'm tired," Klink said simply. "Tired of a war that's gone on forever. Tired of constantly being on guard, tired of weighing every word I say, tired of never knowing who to trust." He drained his glass.

Hogan was more than a little surprised at his candor. "Aren't you being rather trusting now?"

A humorless smile. "Probably. Well," Klink stood, "New Year's Eves are supposed to be for reflecting on the past. And the future. If Hochstetter has a listening device in here," he gestured at the office, "I will not have to worry about what to do after the war. I doubt if I will live long enough to see it end." He glanced at Hogan's concerned face. "And you know something, Colonel Hogan, if that happens, the truth is, I won't regret a word of what I said."

Hogan stood. "I don't understand you, Kommandant. One minute, you're a complete . . . The next . . ." He shook his head.

"It's the champagne, Colonel." Klink turned back to the window. "Think of it as the ramblings of a man about to turn fifty who's seen more of the ugliness of life than its beauty." Klink visibly shook himself. "I'm depressing you as well as myself, Colonel. I apologize."

Klink went back to the desk and picked up his glass. Hogan filled it for him.

Klink gazed at the sparkling bubbles. "There is so much beauty in the world. Why are men so intent on destroying it?"

"I wish I knew," Hogan said soberly.

Klink looked at Hogan with a small smile. "Forgive me. I tend to find holidays rather depressing lately."

Hogan smiled back. "You're forgiven. This war won't last forever, Kommandant. Things will change for the better."

"Spoken like a true optimist."

"I haven't been wrong yet."

Klink's smile grew. "It must be wonderful to be always right."

"I wouldn't go that far. I've been wrong once or twice." *Especially about you*, his eyes meeting Klink's.

Klink picked up the bottle and topped off Hogan's glass.

### Scene Three

Putting the bottle down, Klink glanced at the clock. Outside, they could hear a countdown going on in English and German. Inside, the two men gazed at each other and waited.

Cheers from the outside.

Hogan lifted his glass. "Happy New Year, Wilhelm Klink."

"Happy New Year, Robert Hogan."

Their glasses clinked.



Act One

Scene Four



## Scene Four

– Nineteen –

“Colonel Hogan,” Kinch called. “Look at this.”

Hogan took the message from Kinch’s hand and whistled.

“It’s the first time he’s ever contacted us directly, isn’t it?” Kinch asked.

Hogan nodded. “Wonder what’s up?”

“What what’s up?” Newkirk asked as he and the others came over.

“The Stage,” Kinch explained. “He wants to see the Colonel.”

“The Stage!” Carter exclaimed. “Wow! It must be really important.”

Baker grinned. “Hey, we’re moving up in the world. The big time. If the Stage wants our help.”

“Whoa!” Hogan dampened their enthusiasm. “He just wants to see me. Doesn’t say anything about wanting our help.”

“But what else could it be?” LeBeau asked.

“Could be anything. Including something he didn’t like us doing,” Hogan reminded.

“He wouldn’t do that,” Carter said.

“Even if he did,” Kinch said, “we’re not part of his operation.”

“No,” Hogan agreed, “we’re not. But from the way London reacts every time we mention him, we might as well be. We’re big fish in the little pond around here. But he’s a big fish in the biggest pond there is. And what he says goes.”

“When do we go, Colonel?” Newkirk asked.

“We don’t.” Hogan looked at the message in his hand. “He wants to see me. Personally and alone.”

“Whoops!” Baker said softly.

“Must be something special,” Carter said.

“Yeah,” Hogan said.

“You don’t look too thrilled, Colonel,” Kinch said.

A faint smile. “The truth is I don’t know if I should be. I’d like to think he wants our help. But I can think of a couple of reasons for him to chew me out.”

“But why now?” Newkirk asked. “He hasn’t been seen around

## Scene Four

here in weeks. And we've been behaving ourselves."

"You mean," Hogan said, "I've been behaving myself. But we could have accidentally interfered with one of his operations."

"He can't get mad at us for that," LeBeau objected. "Not if he doesn't tell us about it."

"This is the Stage," Hogan reminded. "He can do anything he darn well pleases." Then a grin. "Look, I'm getting bent out of shape over nothing. This is the first time he's personally asked to see me. Maybe he'll let us in on one of his operations. Even if he chews me out, it'll be worth it just to see him."

"Yeah," Carter said. "Maybe you'll even get to see him without that mask on."

Kinch grinned. "Wouldn't that be something?"

"It sure would," Hogan admitted. "But that's a real pipe dream. Rumor has it that no more than a dozen men have ever seen him without a mask."

"Mister Secrecy himself," Baker commented.

"With good cause," Hogan said. "The Gestapo has been after him for years."

"Yeah," LeBeau said. "Hochstetter has a fit every time the Stage gets near this area."

"Don't underestimate Hochstetter," Hogan warned. "I know we tend to treat him as a joke, but he's not. I've heard stories about some of his interrogations; they're not pretty. And he hates the Stage. If he ever found out who the Stage is . . ." He left the thought dangling.

"Yeah," Newkirk said with disgust, "that bloody sadist would have the time of his life."

"If you want the truth," Hogan said slowly. "Much as I'd like to know who the Stage is, I'd rather not. That kind of knowledge is a bit too dangerous to have."

"So, when's the meeting, Colonel?" Baker asked.

Hogan glanced at the message. "Tomorrow night. 2300 hours."

\* \* \* \* \*

## Scene Four

The Stage stared at the message he had transcribed. It had come in on one of the normal channels, one he routinely monitored to see what the other groups were doing. And it had come in addressed to him.

Papa Bear wanted to meet him, alone. Something urgent to discuss. He had no idea what it would be. There was nothing unusual going on at the moment. In fact, it was rather quiet. Not that he was complaining; he could use the rest.

But why would Papa Bear want to see him? And why use that channel when it would be easier to go through London?

His blood ran cold. There could be one explanation. Just one. And a simple message would confirm it. He set the radio to a rarely used frequency and sent the message. They would respond in exactly forty-nine minutes. He checked his watch and walked over to the chair. He picked up the book he had been reading and opened it.

Forty-nine minutes later, he tuned in to another frequency. The message came in. And his explanation was confirmed.

Now he had a decision to make. What to do about Papa Bear? Or, more precisely, what to do about Colonel Hogan?

He could leave the man to his fate. It would end the operation at Stalag 13, but Stalag 13 could be written off. It would be unfortunate, but, at this point in the war, it would make little difference.

It would also leave Hogan and his men in the hands of the Gestapo.

Fortunately, they didn't have much valuable information to reveal. He could warn all the units who would be affected that they had to leave. In less than an hour, it would be over.

And Hogan and his men would be dead. Dead after the Gestapo finished with them.

A thin smile. He had known from the start what his decision would be. He had always known.



## Scene Four

– Twenty –

Colonel Robert Hogan, Papa Bear, waited impatiently in the cold. He glanced at the sky. Even the moon seemed cold, unfriendly.

Had he made a mistake?

But one did not turn down an invitation to meet the Stage. And, despite his resolve, the question nagged Hogan. Who was the Stage? The few times he'd met the man had made Hogan even more curious. The meetings had revealed nothing about who the Stage was. Though there was something vaguely familiar . . .

Well, maybe, tonight, he might find out. But was he sure he wanted to?

Some bushes rustled in the darkness off to his right, and a voice sounded quietly, “The day is done — ”

“And the darkness falls from the wings of night<sup>5</sup>,” Hogan answered.

“Good evening, Papa Bear. I see you know your Longfellow.”

“Not really; I just know what others tell me,” Hogan admitted, peering into the darkness. He could barely make out the dark figure.

“Pity. Longfellow is an excellent poet.”

“I'll take your word for it.” Hogan stepped closer to the figure. “What can I do for you, Stage?”

The man stayed in the shadows. “I have a mission for you, Papa Bear. A very important mission.”

“What is it?”

“Come closer, Papa Bear. I want to see you clearly.”

“Walk into my parlor,” quoted a voice from the shadows on Hogan's right. “Said the spider to the fly.<sup>6</sup> And you are the fly,

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<sup>5</sup>Henry Wadsworth Longfellow: “The Day is Done”

<sup>6</sup>Mary Howitt: “The Spider and the Fly”

## Scene Four

Papa Bear. This is a trap.”

The dark figure before Hogan whirled sharply toward the voice. Hogan caught the glint of a gun a spare instant before it spat fire at the unseen voice. An answering plop from Hogan’s right, and the dark figure gasped as he fell to the ground. In the far darkness, a whistle shrieked loudly and voices shouted incoherently.

“Quickly, Papa Bear!” Hogan’s savior whispered urgently. “Follow me!”

Hogan followed without hesitation as the figure before him ran swiftly through the woods. Behind the running men, a clamor of dogs and voices could be heard.

The barely visible figure reached a car, jerked the door open, and got in. The engine turned over with a soft purr. Hogan tumbled inside as the car started. It sped off quickly into the darkness. Hogan kept an eye out for any pursuers. But after a while, theirs was the only car in sight. By then, Hogan was hopelessly lost.

The car turned down a narrow track between some thick shrubs. It eventually stopped in a hollow surrounded by shrubs, the engine still purring quietly in the darkness. Overhead, a canopy of massive branches concealed the car from the air. Once the lights were turned off, the darkness was complete. Hogan couldn’t make out the black-clad figure sitting silently beside him.

“I should thank you,” Hogan said. “How did you know?”

“The trap was meant for both of us, Papa Bear,” the voice said. “You were to be captured first and then used to bait me. But I had an advantage; I knew you would not contact me.”

“Don’t be so sure,” Hogan said. “What if I had wanted to reach you?”

“I would have ignored the request.”

“Thanks a lot!”

A faint chuckle that turned into a gasp.

Hogan turned toward the unseen voice. “Something wrong?”

“I am afraid the fool was a better shot than I had anticipated,” the man next to Hogan admitted.

“What?!”

“I fear that I need your assistance, Papa Bear,” the voice said

## Scene Four

calmly. "But first I must have your word that you will not remove the mask."

"You're hurt!"

"Your word, Papa Bear."

"You have it," Hogan promised quietly.

"Thank you."

The Stage's hand reached out and touched a switch. The surprisingly strong interior lights came on. Hogan looked startled at the amount of light.

"This place is completely safe," the voice reassured him.

"I'll take your word for it," Hogan said. "Now, let me see."

The man turned toward Hogan. Blue eyes peered at him from beneath a mask that covered the Stage's head down to his lips, lips that were tightly strained.

Hogan tugged at the zipper on the front of the Stage's sweater. The fabric felt damp. Hogan pushed the left side of the sweater over, revealing a bleeding wound in the man's shoulder under the collarbone.

"Nasty," Hogan murmured, pulling a handkerchief from his pocket and laying it on the wound, trying to stem the flow of blood.

"The bullet is still in there, Papa Bear," the voice said tightly. "It is pressing on the nerves." The blue eyes watched Hogan intently. "You will have to remove it."

"What?" Hogan was shaken. "There must be some other way."

"There is not," the Stage said calmly. "We are too far away for me to use any of my people. I am sorry, Colonel Hogan."

Then a sharp intake of breath. The firm muscles under Hogan's fingers tightened perceptibly and the Stage's head drooped a little.

Hogan looked at him in alarm.

"I am . . . sorry." The voice was strained.

"What the hell are you apologizing for?" Hogan said, angry with himself for being so squeamish. "Have you got a first aid kit?"

"In the trunk." The Stage fumbled with the door. Hogan leaned across him and opened it. "There is more room in the back."

"Okay."

## Scene Four

Hogan stepped out of the car into the freezing cold and walked back to the trunk. While he found the medical kit, the Stage got into the back seat. Hogan climbed back inside, the kit in his hand.

The Stage sat with his head leaning against the back seat, his eyes closed. They opened as Hogan moved in next to him.

Hogan opened the medical kit and pulled out a sterile cloth. He pulled the zipper on the Stage's sweater completely down. Despite the outside cold, sweat had plastered the small hairs on the Stage's chest. Blood further matted the hairs.

Hogan carefully wiped the blood off the man's chest. Then he removed the handkerchief ineffectually stemming the bleeding, dropping it to the floor of the car. Hogan started working on the wound itself. The chest muscles had tightened under his touch but the Stage made no sound as Hogan carefully probed the wound.

Hogan dropped the bloody cloth into the bag and scrounged for another. He also found a pair of long, thin forceps at the bottom of the bag, wrapped in sterile gauze. He continued to rummage in the bag.

"What are you looking for, Colonel Hogan?"

"I don't suppose you have any painkillers in this thing?"

"No, I'm afraid not."

"That's what I thought," Hogan murmured. He was not looking forward to this. "I should have swiped some from the camp infirmary."

"That would be stealing," the Stage chided gently.

"They'd never miss it."

"Such drugs are tightly inventoried, Colonel. It could mean serious trouble for the man in charge."

Hogan glanced at him. "You mean Klink?"

"Possibly."

Hogan stayed quiet, his eyes dropping back to the bag.

The blue eyes peered at him intently. "Do you hate him so much, Colonel Hogan?"

"No, I don't hate him," Hogan said in a low voice.

"Despise then."

"I did. Once," Hogan admitted reluctantly.

"Why?"

## Scene Four

Hogan stayed silent.

“Because he is a German?” the Stage guessed. “And because you could manipulate him so easily. You despised both his nationality and his behavior. Despite the fact that you needed him to be so gullible, you wanted him to be more of a challenge.”

A very reluctant, “Maybe.”

“Was that why you led the Gestapo to him?”

Hogan was astonished. “How did you know about that?”

“There is very little that goes on around here that I do not know,” the Stage said calmly. “Or did you just want to put him in his place? Show him how vulnerable he really is.”

Hogan stayed quiet, unwilling to talk about Klink, even with the Stage.

“You took quite a chance, Colonel Hogan,” the Stage continued. “Fortunately, all they did was question him for a few hours. But you know what would have happened if they didn’t believe your story?”

“Yeah,” Hogan admitted. “The truth is, I didn’t think of that.”

“Very sloppy, Colonel Hogan. Hochstetter hates Klink. No man, no matter how foolish, deserves what Hochstetter would have done if he had been there.”

“I know,” Hogan said softly. “I messed up royally that time.”

“At least, you admit it.”

“I’d be a fool not to. I nearly destroyed everything we’ve worked for all these years. Just to prove a point.”

“Did the point get proved?” the Stage asked softly.

“No. And it made Klink angrier than I’d ever seen him. Sometimes I wonder if he’s still angry about it,” Hogan added in an undertone.

“From what I heard about the cave-in, I do not think so,” the Stage said. “It appears that the cave-in proved a point as well.”

“What point?”

“That you two have a wonderfully symbiotic relationship. You both need each other. Perhaps more than either of you is willing to admit.” The voice was beginning to fade.

“Save your strength,” Hogan said quietly.

“There is a canteen under the seat,” the Stage said in a now faint voice. “And salt tablets in the bag.”

Hogan found the canteen and the tablets. He gave one of the

## Scene Four

tablets to the Stage. Then holding the canteen to the Stage's lips, Hogan helped him drink.

"Thank you." Then, "Do it quickly, Colonel Hogan."

Hogan nodded and picked up the forceps. His hands were shaking.

*Stop it! He's the one who should be shaking.*

*Is he afraid? He doesn't act afraid.*

Hogan's fingers rested lightly on the Stage's chest, his right hand grasping the forceps tightly. A quick glance at the masked face. The forceps touched the wound. The muscles under his fingers convulsed, then relaxed ever so slightly.

*This has happened before, Hogan thought bleakly. I'm just guessing at what it feels like. But he already knows. All too well.*

*Don't think. Just do it.*

The forceps entered the wound; the shoulder muscles tensed as the instrument touched the raw flesh. The lips under the mask were a thin line; sweat beaded the Stage's neck and chest. Not a sound, not a groan, escaped the tight lips.

The forceps continued inward. After an eternity, Hogan felt them touch the bullet.

The forceps opened, the muscles tightened, the lips opened. Hogan waited for the sound he was afraid to hear. Then, mercifully, the muscles relaxed, the eyes closed, and the Stage slipped into unconsciousness.

Hogan dropped the bullet on the floor of the car and wiped the sweat from his brow with a shaky hand. Quickly, he bandaged the wound. As he did, the unconscious man next to him muttered faintly. Hogan glanced at the Stage sharply. That odd familiar feeling was back.

Hogan finished bandaging the wound. As the zipper slid up to the top of the sweater, the Stage stirred. Slowly the eyes opened on Hogan's worried face.

"Have I been unconscious long?" the Stage asked in a whisper.

Hogan shook his head and raised the canteen to the Stage's lips.

The Stage took a long swallow. "Thank you." Then his eyes closed wearily.

Silently, Hogan repacked the medical bag. Then he looked at the man beside him. Suddenly, he felt a need to talk. "Stage?"

## Scene Four

“Yes?”

“Do you want to know the real reason I turned Klink in?”

The blue eyes opened and looked at Hogan. “I assume it was to get even for the American’s death.”

“That was the excuse,” Hogan said. And turned away from the penetrating gaze. “The real reason was to prove to myself that Klink was nothing more than a tool. An expendable tool,” he admitted. “And that he meant nothing to me.”

He fell silent; the Stage’s eyes stayed on his face.

After a moment, “When I walked into his quarters,” Hogan’s voice was shaking now, “and saw what Martinelli had done to him, I, uh, felt something for him. Something I didn’t want to feel. And the only way I could shut off that feeling was to prove to him that I could do what I wanted to him and it didn’t matter.”

“But it does matter?” A quiet question.

A shaky breath. “What would you say if I said it did? Very much.”

“That depends,” said the very soft voice. “Is it remorse? Or pity? Or guilt?”

“All of the above,” Hogan said in a low voice. “And more.” *To the end. You and me.*

The Stage’s eyes stayed on his face, reading the emotion in Hogan’s eyes. There was a glint in the blue eyes.

“I would say,” the Stage said softly, “that you have learned a very important lesson, Colonel Hogan.” His eyes closed tiredly but he continued to speak. “Do not dehumanize people, Colonel Hogan. That is what happened in my country.”

Hogan looked at him in surprise.

“People stopped being people. They became objects of contempt, ridicule and hatred. It became very easy to steal from them, to deny them minimal comforts, and to strip them of all rights. Once that happened, it became easier to imprison them, or hurt them, or kill them.” The blue eyes opened and looked at Hogan again. “It is supposedly easy not to treat the innocent that way. It is much more difficult when the people so treated are those whose actions you abhor and must oppose.” The pain-filled eyes turned away from Hogan.

Hogan didn’t know what to say or do. “Would you like a drink?” he finally asked.

## Scene Four

The masked head shook. "No. What time is it?"

Hogan checked his watch. "Nearly three."

"Three." The Stage opened his eyes and straightened up. "It is time to leave."

"You're kidding!" Hogan objected.

"No."

The Stage opened the car door and got out. He sat in the front seat behind the wheel.

Hogan looked at him in amazement. Except for a certain slowness, the Stage moved normally. No one looking at him would ever know that he just had a bullet removed from his shoulder. No one would ever guess that he was still in pain.

He was, wasn't he?

"Colonel Hogan," the Stage said in a normal voice. "I will drop you off about five kilometers from Stalag 13. You will have to walk from there."

"And you?" Hogan asked.

"I have my own refuge."

"You need rest," Hogan said bluntly.

"Rest," the Stage said dryly as the car began to move. "Haven't you heard, Colonel Hogan, that the Stage is tireless and needs no rest?"

Hogan stared at the back of the masked head. "Yeah. And he doesn't get hurt either," Hogan said.

"No, he doesn't."

"Are you sure you're the Stage?" Hogan asked, trying for some humor.

A tiny smile. "If I am not, Colonel Hogan, then we are both in trouble."

The black car stopped near a country lane in the woods. The door opened and Hogan stepped out.

"Colonel Hogan."

"Yes, Stage?"

"Despite what I said, there is always the possibility that I might contact you. To safeguard both of us, I will call through London. If someone contacts you in any other way, I strongly suggest you ignore the request."

"What if I want you?" Hogan asked.



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“Same method. Tell London.” The eyes glinted with humor.  
“But do not be surprised if I refuse.”

“Thanks,” Hogan said dryly.

A smile. “Colonel Hogan, with all due respect, I can think of no possible reason for you to contact me. If you do think of one, I would suggest you tell London the reason.”

“All right, Stage. You’re the boss.”

Another smile. “I do hope you realize that, Colonel Hogan. Good night.”

“Good night.”

Hogan watched the car drive off. Then, shivering slightly, Hogan headed back toward the camp.

## Scene Four

– Twenty-One –

Later that day, Hogan was in the tunnel, telling his men what had happened.

“It was as if nothing had happened.” He shook his head in disbelief. “I mean, he moved normally, talked normally. No one would ever believe that he’d just been shot.”

“Boy, he sure is something,” Carter said admiringly.

The others nodded in agreement.

“Any guesses as to who he could be, Colonel?” Baker asked.

Hogan shook his head. But . . .

“You know, there was something familiar about him. I can’t put my finger on what it was. Maybe just a feeling.”

“You think you could have met him somewhere?” Newkirk asked.

Hogan shrugged. “It’s possible.”

“He could be anybody,” LeBeau said. “A soldier, a traveler, someone who came to camp. Anybody.”

“Whoever he is, I hope he’s long gone,” Hogan said soberly. “The Gestapo’s not going to be very happy that their trap failed. They’ll be poking around here again tomorrow.”

“That’ll make Klink happy,” Kinch said dryly.

“Doesn’t make me happy either,” Hogan said. “I don’t think we’re going to like tomorrow.”

His words proved to be prophetic. The next day, Major Wolfgang Hochstetter and a squad of SS troops descended on the camp shortly after breakfast. They barely had time to get everything down in the tunnel. And they only had that much time because Klink objected vigorously if uselessly to the search.

All of the men in the camp were standing in the freezing cold as the SS troops turned each barracks inside out. Hogan protested vehemently, and even more uselessly, than Klink had. Hochstetter ignored him.

Klink stood on the porch as the search dragged on. Hogan appealed to him for help but gave up as Klink shrugged. In the

## Scene Four

past, Hogan might have egged Klink on, just for spite. But now, he accepted Klink's silence.

Finally, Hochstetter was done. Disgusted, he stormed up the stairs to the office.

"Satisfied, Major?" Klink asked bitinglly.

"No!"

"You found something?" Klink asked with mock pleasantness.

"You know I did not!" Hochstetter spat.

"I knew you would not, Major," Klink said in a cold voice. "Why do you always persist in these useless searches every time something goes wrong with your plans? This is a prisoner of war camp, Major, not the headquarters of the local underground."

"Because, Herr Kommandant, this camp always seems to be in the center of any underground activity."

"You have been saying that for years, Major," Klink said. "And despite many useless attempts, you have never been able to come up with any proof." Klink turned away, ignoring Hochstetter's baleful glare. "Colonel Hogan," Klink said, "I am sorry for the inconvenience. Your men can return to the barracks."

"Yes, sir." Hogan saluted and glared at Hochstetter before turning away.

"That man," Hochstetter muttered beneath his breath.

Klink ignored him. "If you are quite through disrupting the camp, Major, I have work to do. Good day."

Klink turned and went back into his office. Hochstetter, to Hogan's surprise, followed Klink.

"Kinch," Hogan said as he entered the disordered barracks. "Set up the coffeepot. Hochstetter's got something else on his mind."

Klink hung his coat on the rack and pulled off his gloves. He walked over to the heater, rubbing his cold hands over it.

The door opened.

With a glance at Hochstetter, Klink went to his desk and took off his cap, dropping it on the side of the desk. "Still here, Major?" he asked politely.

Hochstetter walked over to the heater. "That Stage," he

## Scene Four

grumbled. "If I ever get my hands on him . . . "

"He is not hiding among the prisoners," Klink said, looking through the mail on his desk.

"Maybe not," Hochstetter said. "But he could be one of the townspeople."

Klink stared at him. "Ridiculous!"

"Or hiding in the nearby woods." Hochstetter turned to Klink. "I want fifty of your guards, Klink."

"Fifty!" Klink was outraged. "Would a hundred be better?"

"Ja. When can I have them?"

"Never," Klink said bluntly, opening an envelope.

Hochstetter walked over to the desk. "You are refusing to give me any guards?"

"Yes, I am," Klink said firmly. "This camp is highly overcrowded. I cannot spare anyone for a fool's errand."

"Uh, oh," Kinch said softly. "I don't think he should have said that."

"Are you calling me a fool, Klink?" Hochstetter asked silkily.

"Of course not, Major." Klink's voice became more appeasing. "But I cannot spare any of the guards."

"Klink, I am ordering you to give me those guards!"

"Ordering, Major? I do not take orders from you. I take orders from General Burkhalter."

"Klink's getting brave in his old age," Newkirk observed.

"Should I call the general, Major?" Klink asked.

Hochstetter stared at him. "That will not be necessary, Herr Kommandant!" Hochstetter spat the words. "I will manage without your help."

"I am sure you will. Now, if you don't mind, I have — "

Hochstetter's hand slammed down on the papers before Klink. "Klink, I will give you one last chance. Give me those men!"

Klink rose slowly to his feet. "For the last time, Major," he said firmly. "The answer is no."

"Are you refusing to cooperate with the Gestapo, Kommandant?"

## Scene Four

“No, Major. I cooperated in letting you search the camp. I cooperated in letting you disrupt the guards and prisoners. I cooperated with you when I was ordered to do so. I have no such orders now, Major.”

“So you refuse to help the Gestapo look for those who would betray the Third Reich and lose the war for Germany.”

“If you are looking for those who would lose the war for Germany, Major,” Klink said bitinglly, “you are in the wrong place. I suggest you start in Berlin.”

Hogan’s men raised their brows at Klink’s indictment. Hogan, remembering their talk last week, wasn’t really surprised.

“Your recent brush with death has made you bold, Kommandant! Take care it does not take you too far.”

“Thank you for your warning, Major,” Klink said sarcastically and started to sit.

Hochstetter’s hand slammed down again. “Klink, I have a dossier on you thicker than anyone else in Germany. Every time I see you, another entry is placed in it. I have put up with you for the last time.” He stepped closer to Klink. “From now on, Kommandant, I will be watching you.” Hochstetter’s voice was low, threatening. “And I will be listening. If I even hear a rumor of a rumor linking you with any subversive activities, you will disappear into a cell.

“Oh, not the kind of cell you enjoyed last month, Klink, but one far more interesting. And, Klink, I will personally ensure that the pain you will feel will be infinitely more exquisite than anything you have ever felt before. And, I promise you, Herr Kommandant,” Hochstetter’s voice dropped even lower, “that you will scream and scream and scream until you have no voice left to scream with.

“Nor, Klink, will you escape from that cell as easily as you did last month. There will be only one way out of that cell for you, Klink. And that will be when your broken body is carried out to the dump along with the other trash.

“Do we understand each other, Herr Kommandant Klink?”

Klink’s eyes met his. “Yes, Major,” he said quietly. “We understand each other. Quite well.”

## Scene Four

Hochstetter smiled. "Good, Kommandant. Good. Until the next time, Kommandant."

They heard the door close behind Hochstetter.

"Wow!" Carter said. "Is Hochstetter ever mad at Klink!"

"What set him off?" Baker wondered.

"The war," Hogan said worriedly. "It's going too badly. They're looking for scapegoats. Anywhere and everywhere."

"But, Klink?" LeBeau asked.

"Hochstetter's hated him from the moment they first met," Hogan said, disturbed by what had happened. "And we haven't helped any. Hochstetter's been shown up too many times. Even Klink's managed to do it. It's just fueled his hate."

"Do you think . . ." Kinch started.

"Herr Kommandant?" Schultz walked in, a worried look on his face.

Klink slowly sat behind the desk. "I assume you heard."

"I could not help it, Herr Kommandant," Schultz said apologetically. "You were both shouting."

"That man!" Klink began loudly and winced. His voice dropped. "He always gives me a headache."

The worry grew on Schultz's face. "You should have let him have the guards, Herr Kommandant."

"General Burkhalter said he could search," Klink retorted. "He said nothing about giving Hochstetter any guards. And Hochstetter knew that." Another wince.

Schultz looked at him. "Perhaps you should lie down, Herr Kommandant," Schultz said.

Klink nodded. "I think I will. But first, please ask Colonel Hogan to come in."

"Jawohl, Herr Kommandant," Schultz said.

"Time to close down," Hogan said.

Kinch hurriedly put away the equipment.

In minutes, Schultz was there, asking for Hogan.

Hogan was surprised at Klink's appearance. "Are you all right? You don't look too good."

## Scene Four

Klink was irritated. "A headache. Brought on by that idiot, Hochstetter."

"He left me with a headache also," murmured Hogan.

"Yes, he tends to do that."

"What's up, Kommandant?" Hogan asked.

"You won't like it."

"How many?" Hogan guessed.

A small smile. "A dozen or so. General Burkhalter was not very specific."

A sigh. "When?"

"About one."

"All right," Hogan said. "We'll get ready for them."

"Thank you. Any problems, please see Captain Gruber. I'm going to try to take a nap. It might make the headache go away."

Hogan grinned. "The only way that'll go away is if Hochstetter does."

A tiny smile in response. "I think you're right. But, unfortunately, that is not about to happen."

"No, I guess not. Any more wonderful news?"

Klink shook his head. "No."

"Okay. Enjoy your nap, Kommandant."

Klink absently returned his salute.

## Scene Four

– Twenty-Two –

It was almost 1400 hours when the truck entered the compound. Hogan and his men watched as it headed for Klink's office. Right behind it, to their surprise, was another truck. And another. And . . .

Hogan stared as six trucks rolled into the compound.

Hogan's surprise was nothing compared to Klink's as he slowly walked down the stairs to the first truck.

"What is this?!" Klink demanded irritably of the SS captain who approached him.

"Prisoners, sir," the captain said coolly as Hogan walked over to them.

"I can see that!" Klink snapped. "What are they doing here?"

"They are to be delivered into your custody, Herr Kommandant."

"All of them?!"

"Jawohl, Herr Kommandant." The captain handed Klink some papers.

His eyes skimmed the sheets. "There must be some mistake. General Burkhalter said a dozen or more."

The captain almost laughed. "There are a dozen or more here, Herr Kommandant. Exactly one hundred and sixteen more."

His amusement disappeared as Klink looked at him. The captain coughed uneasily. "Our orders were to deliver them to you, Kommandant. If you are unable to take them, we will take them elsewhere."

"Where?" snapped Klink.

"A concentration camp, Kommandant," the captain said smoothly. "Perhaps an SS camp?"

Klink stared at him the captain stared back.

"I will keep them," Klink said slowly.

Tiredly, Hogan noted.

"As you wish, Kommandant."

"Schultz!"

"Jawohl, Herr Kommandant!"



## Scene Four

"Have the men checked in," Klink said.

"Jawohl, Herr Kommandant." Schultz wasn't too happy. "Herr Kommandant, what do I do with them afterwards?"

Klink glanced at him. "I don't know, Schultz. Right now, I don't know." His expression grew grim. "But I intend to find out what happened!"

Klink turned and walked back to his office.

Hogan nearly ran to his barracks.

Newkirk was complaining. "They can't be serious, Colonel!"

"Yeah," Kinch said. "Another hundred and sixteen?"

"And Klink's taking them?" from Baker.

Hogan was already in his office. "He didn't have any choice. The next stop would have been a concentration camp."

By the time the coffeepot was set up, Klink was already on the telephone.

"Herr General," his voice held a rare note of grim anger, "I was expecting a dozen men. Not over a hundred! You cannot expect me . . . But, Herr General . . . More tomorrow?!" Klink's voice rose. "How many more? . . . Fifty! . . . But, Herr General, the camp is already overcrowded. I cannot . . . Herr General," his voice was now low, tight, "at that rate, the population of the camp will double by the end of the month . . . But . . . I see, Herr General. Then I need more men. And money . . ." A choke. "I beg your pardon, Herr General. I thought you said my budget would be cut by twenty percent."

The listening men looked at each other in surprise.

"Herr General," Klink began another protest. "But . . . I . . . Of course, I understand, Herr General." His voice said otherwise. "Goodbye, Herr General."

They heard the receiver click, then the door open.

"Fraulein Hilda, please ask Hauptmann Gruber and Sergeant Schultz to come in. Thank you."

The door closed.

The chair scraped as Klink sat down again. And they heard nothing until the door opened again.

Both Gruber and Schultz saluted as they entered.

Klink's voice was low. "Fraulein Hilda, I would like you to take

## Scene Four

notes.”

“Jawohl, Herr Kommandant.”

Klink began. “I have just been informed that we can expect another fifty prisoners tomorrow. And more throughout the month.”

“But, Herr Kommandant — !” Gruber objected.

Klink continued in the same unfamiliar voice. “There is a good chance that by the end of the month the population of the camp will have doubled.”

“Are we getting any more men, Herr Kommandant?” Gruber asked.

“Nein,” Klink said. “If we are extremely lucky, we may not lose any. Our budget is also being cut by twenty percent, effective immediately.”

“They are joking, Herr Kommandant,” Schultz said hopefully.

“No joke. Hauptmann Gruber, inform all officers that their pay will be cut by fifty percent immediately. Sergeant Schultz, noncommissioned officers will be cut twenty-five percent,” Klink continued relentlessly. “All officers and noncommissioned officers will be given the same rations as the prisoners. That will reduce costs.”

“What about the other guards, Herr Kommandant?” Schultz asked.

“I will try to keep their food and pay the same for now. They will have to work longer hours due to the increased population,” Klink said. “Later on?” The listening prisoners could almost hear the shrug. “At 0800 tomorrow, the heads of all departments are to bring their accounts to my desk. Each and every expense item will be closely scrutinized. As will everything else. Up to now, I have tolerated the petty theft that goes on around here — ”

Brows lifted among the prisoners. They thought Klink had been blind to what was going on.

“But no more. Thefts will be punished severely the first time. The second offense will result in a transfer to a combat unit. That is cheaper than having the offender shot.

“That is all for now. Sergeant Schultz, please get Colonel Hogan.”

“Jawohl, Herr Kommandant!”

## Scene Four

“Fraulein Hilda, due to the money situation, I will not be able to keep you longer than a couple of weeks. I think it best if you tried to get another job.”

“I . . .” Hilda was hesitant. “I will see, Herr Kommandant.”

“As you wish.”

The door closed as Kinch broke the connection.

Klink was standing at the window when Hogan arrived. He didn't turn around.

“We will be getting another fifty prisoners tomorrow,” Klink said without preamble. “And more from this point on. Our budget is also being cut by twenty percent.”

“I take it we are now hurting.”

A humorless smile. “We are now in pain. And I doubt if that will be the only cut.”

“They can't be serious.”

“Perhaps you would like to talk General Burkhalter out of it,” bitterness in the sarcasm. Then much quieter . . .

“The world is closing in, Colonel Hogan, and we are all caught in the trap. There is nothing that either of us can do about it.” He shook himself and turned away from the window. “Tomorrow morning there will be a meeting with all department heads,” Klink said in a more normal voice. “I would like you to attend,” he added to Hogan's surprise.

“Me?”

“Whatever happens will affect you and your men,” Klink said. “I do not want you to be surprised.”

“I take it the cuts will affect us as well.”

A nod. “Unfortunately, it cannot be helped.”

“Any more cheerful news?”

Klink's head shook.

He looked tired, Hogan noted. “How's your headache?”

“It came back when the trucks arrived.”

Hogan managed a smile. “That's what I thought. The new men are still outside. Where are you going to put them?”

“We will increase the count per barracks to twenty-three that will be sixteen hundred and fifty-six men in the barracks. The other sixteen will have to spend the night in the cooler for now.”

“And tomorrow's fifty?”

## Scene Four

"I have identified a couple of storage buildings that can be converted to barracks. I was hoping to use them to ease the congestion in the barracks. Now?" A shrug.

"And what about the stuff in those buildings?" Hogan asked.

Klink removed the monocle from his eye and rubbed his bloodshot eyes. "I don't know. Right now, I can't think too clearly."

"We could build another couple of buildings," Hogan said slowly.

Klink looked at him in surprise. "I have nothing to bargain with," he said slowly.

Hogan smiled at him. "Come on, Kommandant. There's always something to bargain with."

He was surprised to see real anger flare up in Klink's eyes.

"There is nothing, Colonel Hogan! Nothing!" Klink looked unexpectedly grim. "Tomorrow morning, I will have to slash, not luxuries, but necessities. I have to . . ." Klink stopped as he saw the look on Hogan's face. And pulled himself erect. "I . . . I am sorry." He turned back to the window. Their new relationship was still growing, still fragile. And he was afraid of jeopardizing it. "I did not mean to yell. It is just that —"

"I know," Hogan said quietly. He walked over to the man at the window and, hesitantly, put his hand on Klink's shoulder. "You and me, Kommandant," he whispered softly. "No matter what happens."

Klink nodded slowly.

Hogan could feel the tension lifting from the tight muscles under his hand. His hand lifted from Klink's shoulder.

Klink cleared his throat and walked away from the window, back to his desk. He sat behind it.

"Captain Gruber can prepare the temporary quarters," he said carefully. "We can see where we stand tomorrow before we decide anything else."

Hogan smiled faintly. "I can live with that."

Klink couldn't meet his smile. "And when the camp's population hits three thousand?"

An impudent grin. "We could always organize an escape."

To his surprise, Klink smiled reluctantly. "Only if I can join it."

## Scene Four

Hogan laughed. "We'll send you an engraved invitation."

Another smile. "You probably would. Now, get out of here, Colonel Hogan I have work to do."

"Yes, sir." A salute, much more professional than in the past.

Klink returned it as their eyes met.

*To the end, Kommandant.*

Klink nodded slowly.

*To the end.*

## Scene Four

– Twenty-Three –

Colonel Robert Hogan, still not quite believing it, was present at the morning's staff meeting.

He wasn't the only one not believing it; Hauptmann Fritz Gruber objected to Hogan's presence.

"But, Herr Kommandant," Gruber said angrily in German, "he is a prisoner. This does not concern him."

"The cuts affect everyone in the camp," Klink said smoothly. "I invited Colonel Hogan so that he will know what is going to happen."

"I object strongly to this, Herr Kommandant," Gruber continued, ignoring the warning glint in the other officers' eyes. "General Burkhalter should be informed that the enemy is being invited to comment on Luftwaffe business."

"And you intend to tell him?" Klink didn't look at his irate captain. Instead, he twirled a pencil in his long fingers.

"Yes, I do!"

"That is your prerogative, Hauptmann," Klink said smoothly. "You may call him after you reach your new billet."

Gruber stared at him. "My what?"

Klink looked at him for the first time. "I believe you heard me, Hauptmann." He switched to English. "Shall we start the meeting, gentlemen? You are excused, Captain."

Gruber stared at Klink in astonishment and didn't move.

Klink looked at Gruber evenly. "Still here, Captain?" asked the soft unfamiliar voice.

"I . . ." Gruber visibly shook himself. "Forgive me, Herr Kommandant. I forgot myself."

"I hope you will remember your manners in the future, Captain." Still the soft, unfamiliar voice.

Another shake. "Jawohl, Herr Kommandant," Gruber whispered.

Klink nodded. "Captain Dingel<sup>7</sup>, you are in charge of supplies.

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<sup>7</sup>"Klink vs. the Gonculator"

## Scene Four

Your books, bitte.”

Klink held out his hand. Reluctantly, the officer passed him the records. Klink opened the thick volume.

Hogan settled back in his chair, his eyes on Klink. The day might turn out to be more interesting than he had expected.

Hogan listened quietly for the most part.

Until now, he had never really appreciated how much effort and time went into running the camp. Yeah, he complained, often bitterly, in the past about how things were going and what the prisoners were getting. But he hadn't quite realized how complex the camp operation really was. Everything had to be brought into camp — food, supplies of all kinds. Transportation had to be arranged, not only for the camp personnel but the prisoners as well. Water, electricity, sanitation, all had to be planned for. The camp was, in reality, a small town and everything had to be taken into account. Everything.

Hogan sat back and listened as the various officers and Schultz, representing the noncommissioned men and guards, presented their records to the Kommandant and found themselves having to justify every expense.

Klink cut. Across the board, he cut. No area was safe from his slashing pencil. Hogan could see that none of the men present were very happy, but none could complain that anyone was given preferential treatment.

Except for the prisoners. Klink refused to cut there. Instead, he was tightening up on everything else.

Bleakly, Hogan realized that Klink was leaving them alone for now because he was afraid of more cuts in the budget. The fat was being trimmed away from the accounts; in the case of the pay, it was more than the fat. But when would he be forced to cut into the meat of the budget?

Hogan half expected Klink to bring up the problem of the crowded barracks. But he hadn't. In a way, Hogan was relieved. He preferred to hash it out with Klink first.

So he just sat back and listened, still a little surprised that he was actually learning something.

The meeting had broken up when Hogan's men heard, “Oh,

## Scene Four

Fraulein Hilda, may I have those budget figures, please?"

"Here they are, Kommandant."

They heard pages rustling. A pen across paper.

"One more minor change," they heard Klink say.

"But, Kommandant!" Hilda sounded aghast. "That is your pay!"

"I know. Not a word, please, Fraulein. This will be our little secret."

"But, Kommandant," Hilda protested. "You can not do that! How —?"

"I have one other source," Klink said smoothly. "By the way, have you considered other employment?"

"Jobs are very scarce, Kommandant," Hilda said. "So far, I have not found anything."

"That other source will be able to pay for half salary for you as well, Fraulein Hilda. At least for a few months. That is, if you would consider staying. I am sorry that it cannot be more."

"I will think about it, Herr Kommandant."

"Thank you. And I would like the report by the time you leave, Fraulein Hilda."

"Jawohl, Herr Kommandant."

They heard the door shut.

"How do you like that Klink?" Newkirk was disgusted. "Cutting everyone's salary and then giving himself full pay."

"Typical Boche sneak," grumbled LeBeau.

"Who is?" Hogan asked as he walked in, overhearing the last comment.

His men looked uncomfortable.

"Well?" Hogan demanded.

"Uh, well, sir," Carter started and fell silent.

Baker broke the news. "Klink just told Hilda to put his pay back to what it used to be."

Hogan stared at them and then, cold fury on his face, left the room.

"We shouldn't have said anything," Carter said worriedly.

"Why not?" Newkirk demanded roughly. "He's been treating Klink with kid gloves ever since that cave-in. This'll open his eyes."

"At what cost?" Kinch asked pessimistically. "The Colonel's



## Scene Four

never been so relaxed. Or the camp run so well.”

“Well, Klink’s a cheat,” LeBeau said. “It’s time the Colonel remembered that.”

Hogan stormed into the outer office. Hilda looked at him in surprise as he opened the inner door. Empty.

“Where’s Klink?” Hogan demanded.

“He went to his quarters for a minute,” Hilda said, puzzled by his behavior.

Hogan sat on a chair. “I’ll wait.”

“Please, Colonel Hogan,” Hilda found herself saying. “Don’t cause any trouble. The Kommandant has had a bad day.”

“Well, it’s going to get worse,” Hogan said grimly.

For a change, Hilda was annoyed with Hogan. “It was bad enough that the Kommandant had to do this miserable job when he was getting paid. But now that he will be getting nothing — ”

Hogan stared at her in surprise. “What did you say?”

“Oh. I wasn’t supposed to say anything. But you made me angry, Colonel Hogan.”

“What do you mean, he’s getting nothing?”

Hilda sighed. “The Kommandant has reduced his pay to nothing. He is also going to pay me half salary out of his own funds.”

“Hilda,” Hogan asked slowly, “does he have much money of his own?” *Money taken from the budget?*

“I really do not know; it is none of my business,” Hilda replied. “But he has been a soldier all of his life; most of his expenses have been paid by the military. And his personal expenses have normally not been extravagant.”

“I know he’s taken money from —<sup>8</sup>”

Hilda smiled. “Oh, that. He paid that back, with interest, a long time ago.”

Klink entered the office from the inner door. “Colonel Hogan.” Klink was surprised to see him. “Did you forget something?”

“Yeah,” Hogan said slowly. “But I won’t forget it again.”

Klink looked confused. “I beg your pardon?”

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<sup>8</sup>“Standing Room Only”

## Scene Four

Hogan smiled. "Never mind, Kommandant. See you later."  
Hogan left the office, feeling Klink's puzzled eyes on his back.

Hogan was whistling as he walked back into the barracks.  
His men stared at him in astonishment and trailed him into his office.

"Colonel," Baker began.

"You really shouldn't listen to gossip," Hogan admonished mildly, though his eyes were far from mild. "Or spread any without getting the facts right."

"Klink didn't change his pay?" Newkirk was astonished.

"Oh, he changed it all right." The mildness was fading from his voice. "Right down to zero."

"Zero!" LeBeau exclaimed.

"Yeah, as in nothing." A tinge of sarcasm in his voice. "So the next time you listen to a conversation, make sure you really know what's going on."

Abashed, "Yes, sirs" from the others.

Hogan shrugged. "No harm done," his voice normal again.  
"When's lunch? I'm starving."

"Fifteen minutes, mon Colonel," LeBeau said in relief.

"Good," Hogan said. "Need any help?"

"As a matter of fact, sir," Newkirk started, "we were just going to do that."

"But — " began LeBeau.

"Yeah, that's right, Colonel," Kinch said even more hurriedly.  
"We were just going."

"Right," Newkirk said with forced cheer. "You just sit down, Colonel, read your mail, and lunch will be ready soon enough."

There was almost a collision as they pressed out of the door.

Hogan stared after them for a moment and then began to smile.

## Scene Four

– Twenty-Four –

It was nearly three when the new prisoners arrived. Hogan watched the two trucks enter the compound. His eyes narrowed. Following the trucks was Hochstetter's car.

Klink came down the steps as Hochstetter got out of his car. Hogan wandered within earshot.

"Major," Klink greeted the Gestapo man neutrally.

"Your prisoners, Klink." Hochstetter thrust the papers in his hand at Klink, hitting him in the chest with them.

His lips tightening, Klink grasped the papers and glanced through them.

Fifty-three new prisoners. That increased their numbers to seventeen hundred and twenty-five men. And he still had sixteen men in the cooler. He had no choice; he would have to squeeze one more man into each already crowded barracks.

"Sergeant Schultz!" he called.

"Jawohl, Herr Kommandant!"

"Process the men," Klink ordered and started up the stairs to his office.

Hogan casually wandered over to the porch as Hochstetter followed Klink.

"One more thing, Klink," Hochstetter said with a sneer. He thrust another piece of paper at Klink.

Klink looked at the sheet, his expression growing grimmer. "You cannot be serious, Hochstetter."

Hochstetter grinned, enjoying Klink's discomfort. "I am quite serious, Klink. You will observe the signature. Fifty men, Klink. Now!"

"The trail is long gone," Klink said tonelessly. "Taking those men will do you no good."

"Are you refusing me, Klink?" Hochstetter asked gloatingly. "The question becomes why? Perhaps you have something to hide." He stepped closer to Klink. "Perhaps we should take a trip to Gestapo headquarters. That cell is there, Klink, just waiting for you."

## Scene Four

Klink turned away from Hochstetter, his expression frozen. "Take your fifty men, Hochstetter, and get out of my sight!"

Hochstetter laughed softly as Klink went into the building. He was still laughing as he turned and saw Hogan leaning against the building.

"Ah, Colonel Hogan," Hochstetter greeted him with good humor. "Lovely day, isn't it?"

"You really are a snake, aren't you?" Hogan said softly.

Hochstetter laughed, not offended. "I see you heard about yesterday. Did he tell you?"

Hogan shook his head. "You should be careful what you say next to an open window, Hochstetter."

A shrug.

"What rock did you crawl out from, Hochstetter? You and other bastards like you?"

"Bastard, Hogan?" Hochstetter sneered. "Isn't that what you called the Kommandant just a few weeks ago?" He smiled as Hogan stiffened. "Such a nice thing to call a man who had been beaten for hours and was forced out into the cold half naked. What a pity I was not there to see it. I would have enjoyed every second of it. Only, I think I would have waited until Martinelli pulled the trigger before I ordered my men to shoot. It might have made an interesting experiment."

A step closer to a paling Hogan.

"Tell me, Colonel Hogan, do you think Martinelli would have killed Klink? Or maybe just wounded him? Maybe he would have lingered for days in excruciating pain before he died. Maybe he would even have screamed, screams that would have echoed through this camp before he died. Or maybe he wouldn't have died, but he would still have screamed — "

"Damn you, Hochstetter!" Hogan shouted furiously. "Damn you!"

Hochstetter smiled. "Why, Colonel Hogan, I understood that's what you wanted. Isn't that what you wished the Kommandant after he had recovered from his ordeal? Pity about that cave-in. You almost got your wish. But . . ." A careless shrug. "Perhaps, next time, the Kommandant will not be so lucky. Perhaps, the next time, the Kommandant will not have you around to hold his hand."

## Scene Four

Hogan turned away from Hochstetter's taunting eyes, his wounding words.

Hochstetter chuckled softly and walked away.

Hogan leaned against the building, forcing down the tightness in his throat.

The guilt was back again. That horrible feeling he had managed to bury deep inside himself. But Hochstetter had resurrected it once again. He could hear his words . . .

*Bastard . . .*

*Prefer he had killed me . . .*

*Perhaps I do . . .*

And worst of all, his betrayal of Klink to the Gestapo.

*Oh God, if Hochstetter had been there . . . If Hochstetter had taken Klink . . .*

A shudder, a sob in his throat.

"Colonel Hogan." Klink's voice came from behind him.

Hogan started and slowly straightened, pulling away from the building.

"Colonel Hogan," Klink repeated. "Are you feeling all right?"

Hogan forced down the sob, forced himself to look normal as he turned back to Klink.

"Yeah, I'm fine," he lied smoothly. He might never be fine again.

Klink glanced at his set face; Hogan couldn't hide his paleness. But Klink made no comment. Instead he said, "I've been thinking about our space problem. I'd like to discuss it with you."

"Of course, Kommandant," Hogan said neutrally.

"My quarters, if you don't mind." Klink gestured.

A little surprised, Hogan followed Klink around the small fence, into the yard, and up the stairs to Klink's living quarters.

Klink took off his overcoat and cap, hanging them on the rack.

"Would you like a drink, Colonel Hogan?" Klink offered, pouring brandy into a glass.

"Yes, thank you." Hogan took the proffered drink gratefully.

"Sit down, please." Klink gestured and poured himself a drink as well.

In the past, Hogan would have wondered what he was doing here and why Klink was being so nice to him. In the past. Yet

## Scene Four

even back then, it was normally his suspicions that kept him from enjoying the informality. Suspicions that were mainly unfounded. A glance at Klink.

Were they beyond such suspicions now? Or did the uniforms they wore still intrude on their relationship?

He didn't really know. And neither did Klink.

*One step at a time. Just take it one step at a time.*

"I have been looking over the camp records, Colonel," Klink said as he sat across from Hogan. "There is a Sergeant Rizzo in Barracks 12 and a Sergeant Doyle in Barracks 18."

Rizzo. Doyle. Hogan nodded, placing the two men.

"Sergeant Rizzo," Klink continued, "studied architecture in school, and Sergeant Doyle was a construction foreman in civilian life. I would like them to take charge of building three more barracks in the compound. Unfortunately, that is as many as space will allow. Then I would like them to work on converting as many of the storage buildings into living quarters as possible. And also help with the problem of what to do with the equipment and supplies that would be displaced by the conversion."

"You seem to have thought about it a bit, Kommandant," Hogan observed.

Klink nodded. "That should give us at least eighty buildings for the prisoners. That will allow us to house approximately nineteen hundred men. For now, at any rate."

Hogan did a quick calculation. "You're still looking at twenty-three, twenty-four men per building. A little cramped."

"I think it will get more cramped than that, Colonel Hogan," Klink said in a low voice.

"You think we'll have three thousand men here?" Hogan asked.

Klink sighed and stood, pouring himself another drink. "I don't know. There have been attacks, counterattacks and bombings. All of which result in prisoners. I don't know how many will wind up here."

"So who's going to do what?" Hogan asked.

"I would like your men to build the barracks. The conversion of the storage buildings can be handled by my men."

"With or without those fifty Hochstetter took," Hogan said bluntly.

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Klink stiffened.

"That was an observation, Kommandant," Hogan said. "Nothing more. Which brings up another point. How many of your men will you be able to keep?"

"I am losing ten tomorrow," Klink said tonelessly, picking up a piece of paper from his desk. To Hogan's surprise, Klink handed it to him.

"Any replacements?" Hogan asked, glancing at the orders.

A shrug. "If so, they'll be what? Old men, boys still in their teens," Klink said pessimistically.

"Which means there will be problems," Hogan said, not too happy.

Klink nodded. "For both of us."

Hogan drained his drink; Klink refilled Hogan's glass and sat down.

"Well, Colonel?" Klink asked, looking at him.

"All right, Kommandant," Hogan said slowly. "I'll talk to Rizzo and Doyle. You know I can't order them to help."

Klink nodded. "Yes. And now the other point. What do you want in exchange?"

Hogan's eyes were on him as Klink leaned against the sofa back. Then Hogan's eyes dropped to his glass.

What did he want? After being at the morning session with the officers, Hogan knew what Klink had to work with. He could forget about extra food rations, or paper, or some of the other things he had normally conned out of Klink in the past.

"An extra hour of electricity in the barracks," Hogan said slowly. It wouldn't cost that much more. He glanced at Klink.

There was a faint smile on Klink's lips and a glint in his eye.

And Hogan grinned. Time for the bargaining to begin.

They compromised, finally settling on half an hour of light during the week and an hour on the weekends.

Another drink to seal the bargain, and Hogan left to talk to his men.

Doyle and Rizzo agreed to help with the buildings. They, as well as most of the men in camp, knew how crowded it had become. And they all wanted to ease the crowding.

The next morning, the two men, along with Hogan, met with

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Klink in his office. The men had already drawn up some preliminary plans for the Kommandant's approval.

Klink nodded as he looked at the tentative plans. The wood would have to be cut by the prisoners as well. As for the other things . . .

Doyle and Rizzo rushed to reassure the Kommandant. Their plans called for buildings built pretty much as the early American pioneers had built. It called for little in the way of nails and other building supplies. Instead, it would take strong backs. Well, with all of the prisoners in camp, they had plenty of strong backs.

By the following morning, Doyle and Rizzo had picked their work parties. There would be ten crews of twenty prisoners apiece, guarded by four men, cutting trees for the buildings. Each group would be working a four-hour shift. The prisoners had to volunteer; unlike in the past, they would not be paid for their work. But they had no trouble getting volunteers. Everyone was anxious to relieve some of the crowding.

Once the trees had been cut, another group of fifty or so prisoners began readying the wood for building. Then another group did the actual building.

Hogan nodded appreciatively as the first building went up. It didn't take that long. And it went up in less time and a lot more efficiently than the two buildings that had gone up in the prior weeks. Then, Hogan really didn't care about the buildings.

Well, not quite true. He cared. And the buildings were well-built considering. But the work had been done slowly, with a great deal of grumbling.

Now?

His eyes sought out Klink standing across from one of the new building.

Now that they cooperated with each other, it was affecting the rest of the camp as well. No one was happy with the overcrowded conditions, but as relations between the two of them got better, it eased the tension considerably. And now it was more important than ever.

Klink had lost thirty of his guards. Guards that had been replaced by only ten men.

Men? Hogan almost laughed when he saw the replacements.



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Seven of the new guards were boys still in their teens, the other three rejects from anyone's army. And they were plainly scared and nervous. Scared and nervous guards tended to be more belligerent. And belligerent guards tended to notice things as well as increase tensions among the men. But so far, Schultz was keeping them in line.

As for the new prisoners, for the most part they were still airmen. But they were cockier than the past prisoners; they knew they were winning the war. The men who had been in the camp for years had lived through defeat and times when they had thought they were going to lose.

Then there were the few infantry soldiers they received. Sometimes, even Hogan had trouble controlling them. When friendly persuasion didn't work, orders did. Hogan had his men working overtime, so to speak, getting the new men involved with the camp. So far, it was working.

So far.

As for Klink . . .

Hogan and Klink were spending a lot of time together. But no matter how the conversation began, it always turned into a talk about how things were going in the camp. Now, instead of fighting each other, they were cooperating with each other. The camp saw and, for the most part, accepted their new relationship.

Hogan was grateful. And, he had to admit, a little surprised. But, in hindsight, he could see the roots of that acceptance.

When Martinelli, even now Hogan found himself wincing when he thought of Martinelli, forced Klink out into the cold that day, Klink's appearance and obvious pain gave most of the prisoners a new view of the despised Kommandant. And Klink's behavior after the incident, the lack of animosity on his part towards the prisoners, served to reinforce that view. Hogan's behavior on that snowy day had startled them even more. And most of them guessed that Hogan had been responsible for the Kommandant's later arrest, though few of them really knew the facts. And that incident, if not exactly eliciting sympathy for the Kommandant, did serve to further mitigate the harsh light in which most of them had seen Klink.

The prisoners couldn't help but see how badly their

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relationship had deteriorated after that incident with the Gestapo. And most of them were uncertain how to react.

They were afraid of offending Hogan whose temper had become unpredictable. And they were afraid of crossing Klink who had withdrawn into himself. Klink had seemed colder, more remote, than ever before. In the past, Hogan had been the one to intercede on the prisoners' behalf, successfully. But as their relationship worsened, no one wanted to cross Klink for fear of drawing his anger on them. For the first time for many of them, they realized that Klink, whether they liked it or not, did have the power of life or death over them.

Then came the cave-in.

Few of the prisoners had helped in freeing the trapped men. But those that did told the others an interesting story. A story where Hogan, who had made his hatred of Klink more than clear over the previous weeks, had actually helped the trapped Kommandant.

But something else had also happened. And no one, no one but the two men who now walked across the compound together, knew what.

Whatever it was, it had led to Hogan spending the night in the hospital after the Kommandant had been freed. Whatever it was, it had led to Klink calling that unprecedented truce on Christmas Eve, and again on New Year's Eve. And whatever it was, it had led the two men to cooperate in running the camp.

Whatever it was.

Hogan's eyes stayed on Klink as the Kommandant walked back to the office.

Even now, Hogan was still afraid to completely admit how he felt about Klink. The emotion was so intense, so deep, that it scared him. It scared him that he could feel that way about another human being, especially about a man that he'd thought he'd despised, thought he'd hated. A man that most people would probably say he should hate. A man that some of his men thought he should hate.

A sigh.

His changing behavior toward Klink had not pleased everyone. He had known it would not. Maybe that was one reason why he had denied the truth for so long. What his men

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would think, what they thought, was important to him. Not so much the rest of the camp. But instead the five men he had grown to respect for their different talents and strengths. And their loyalty to him.

They had put up with a great deal. Put up with his moods and his hair-brained schemes. Despite all odds, they had performed miracles in this camp. Despite their grouching and complaining, he knew that each of them would gladly risk their lives for him. And they had. So what they thought was important.

His changing behavior toward Klink had surprised them. They had not agreed with his harsh behavior after Martinelli died. Nor had they agreed with his betrayal of Klink. Not out of any feeling for Klink, but because it didn't seem in character for Hogan. For Klink, he winced, there had been more than contempt. More than once, they, at least Newkirk and LeBeau, had openly joked about Klink's death, and he knew they meant it. And he had never objected, never stopped their insults and ridicule. He had, if not encouraged, tolerated behavior, comments, that Klink had never permitted among any of the guards. The guards had always respected his rank and the rank of any officer in camp. But he had not given Klink the same courtesy, all because he was a pathetic fool and a German.

And now that his behavior toward Klink had changed, it left his men puzzled. And, Hogan knew, even a little angry. What made it worse was that, right now, Hogan couldn't explain what had happened to them. Right now, he couldn't really explain it to himself.

But it didn't make any difference. He had made Klink a promise in that cave. A promise based on feelings for a foolish, naive man who had, somehow, managed to become closer to him than any other human being. And regardless of what his men thought of him, it was a promise Hogan would honor.

If he had to, with his life.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Stage looked at the paper in his hand with satisfaction.

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This was the final piece of information he needed. Now he could finalize his plans for the next series of strikes — three of them in different parts of Germany. Each of which should, he hoped, help to end the insanity still gripping his country.

He allowed himself a small smile. This time, he would personally lead one of the strikes. The one near Hammelburg.

But first, a candid assessment of his physical condition. His leg was, as the Americans liked to say, good as new, despite the unplanned workout he'd subjected it to last week. The wound in his shoulder was healing nicely, despite its accidental reopening a few days ago. By the time of the strike, he would be in peak condition.

Well, almost, he was forced to add. He had to admit that he hadn't been in peak condition in a long time. Fatigue, and the events of the past few months, conspired against him. That and the realization that he was no longer as young as he used to be. He'd been battling the Nazis for nearly eleven years; it had taken a toll whether he wanted to admit it or not. But still he should be ready for the strike in a couple of weeks. All that remained was to finish his plans and relay them to his lieutenants.

As for the job he planned to lead, he'd have to contact London. A rueful smile. Well, he had been the one to restrict contact between himself and Papa Bear. At the time, it seemed like a reasonable precaution. One that would protect both of them. But now that he'd finally decided to let Papa Bear in on one of his operations, going through London seemed like a waste of time. Ah well, it couldn't be helped.

He leaned back in his chair, anticipating, just a little, the mission. He found himself actually looking forward to it. And it had been a long time since he'd felt that way about anything. Perhaps it was Papa Bear's infernally annoying cheerfulness that was infecting him. God knew he'd had very little to be cheerful about in the past eleven years.

Or perhaps it was the anticipated look on Papa Bear's, or rather Colonel Hogan's, face when he —

A raucous shout outside intruded on his thoughts.

He stood up, walked to the window and looked out. The day was cold, but the sun was starting to peek out from behind the

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clouds. A baseball game was being played in the compound. A close one he gathered from the noise generated by the players.

One of these days, he really should learn more about baseball. After all of the games he'd seen, one would think he'd already know what was going on.

An unconscious sigh. It had been a long time since he'd been able to watch something as simple as a baseball game.

Perhaps next week . . .

No. The week after. After his meeting with Papa Bear, after the mission.

After the mask came off.

Then perhaps he'd be able to sit down, have a drink with Colonel Hogan, and talk about something that had nothing to do with the war. Something like baseball. It sounded absolutely wonderful.

Yes, he thought with rare pleasure, it really will be wonderful. And Wilhelm Klink smiled.