

CLIVE CUSSLER
THE
SEA WOLVES

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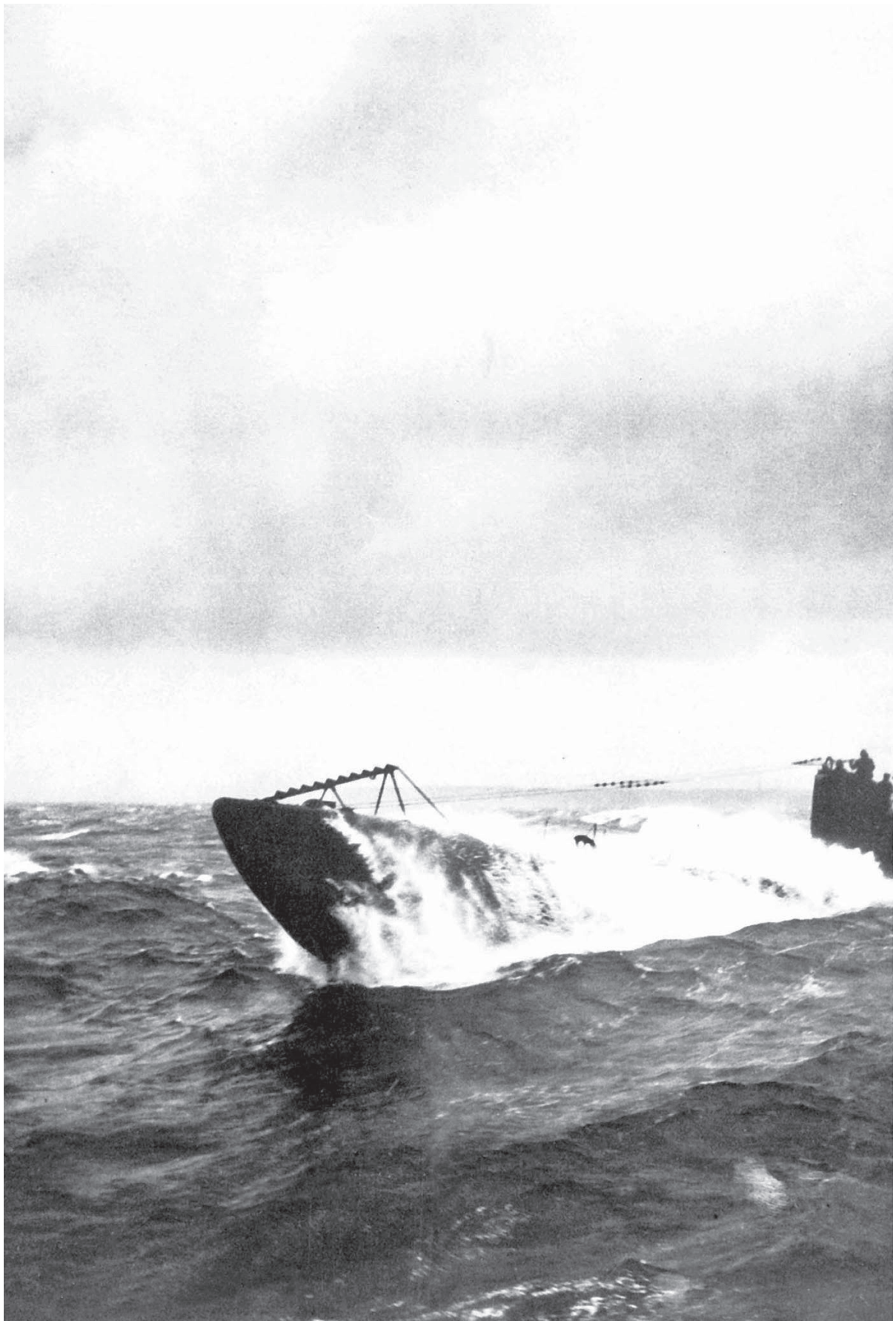
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CLIVE GUSSLER
THE
SEA WOLVES

An Isaac Bell Adventure®



JACK DU BRUL

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CAST OF CHARACTERS



FRENCH GUIANA

MAX HESSMANN German spy/prisoner

FOSTER “FOSS” GLY Prisoner

HEINZ-JOSEPH VOLKER German commando

NEW YORK/NEW HAVEN/NEW JERSEY

JOSEPH VAN DORN Founder of the Van Dorn Detective Agency

ISAAC BELL Chief investigator of the Van Dorn Agency

MARION BELL Isaac’s wife

ARCHIBALD ABBOTT Van Dorn detective and Bell’s best friend

EDDIE EDWARDS Van Dorn detective

HARRY WARREN Van Dorn detective

HELEN MILLS Van Dorn detective

JAMES DASHWOOD Van Dorn detective

EDDIE TOBIN Van Dorn detective

GRADY FORRER Van Dorn researcher

DICK HOPLEY Winchester Arms representative

JOHN KRAMER Winchester Arms employee

WILLIAM “WILLIE K.” VANDERBILT Millionaire sportsman

JOHN PORTE Pilot

WERNER DIETRICH Long Island farmer

JOE MARCHETTI U.S. Navy ensign

GEORGE CALDWELL U.S. Navy captain and Joe's boss

WENDEL CARVER Penn Station security chief

RALPH PRYOR Lighthouse keeper

DEVLIN CONNELL Lighthouse inspector

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT Assistant Secretary of the Navy

KURT MILLER Roosevelt's aide

CECIL SPRING-RICE British Ambassador to the United States

AT SEA

LOTHAR REINHART U-boat captain

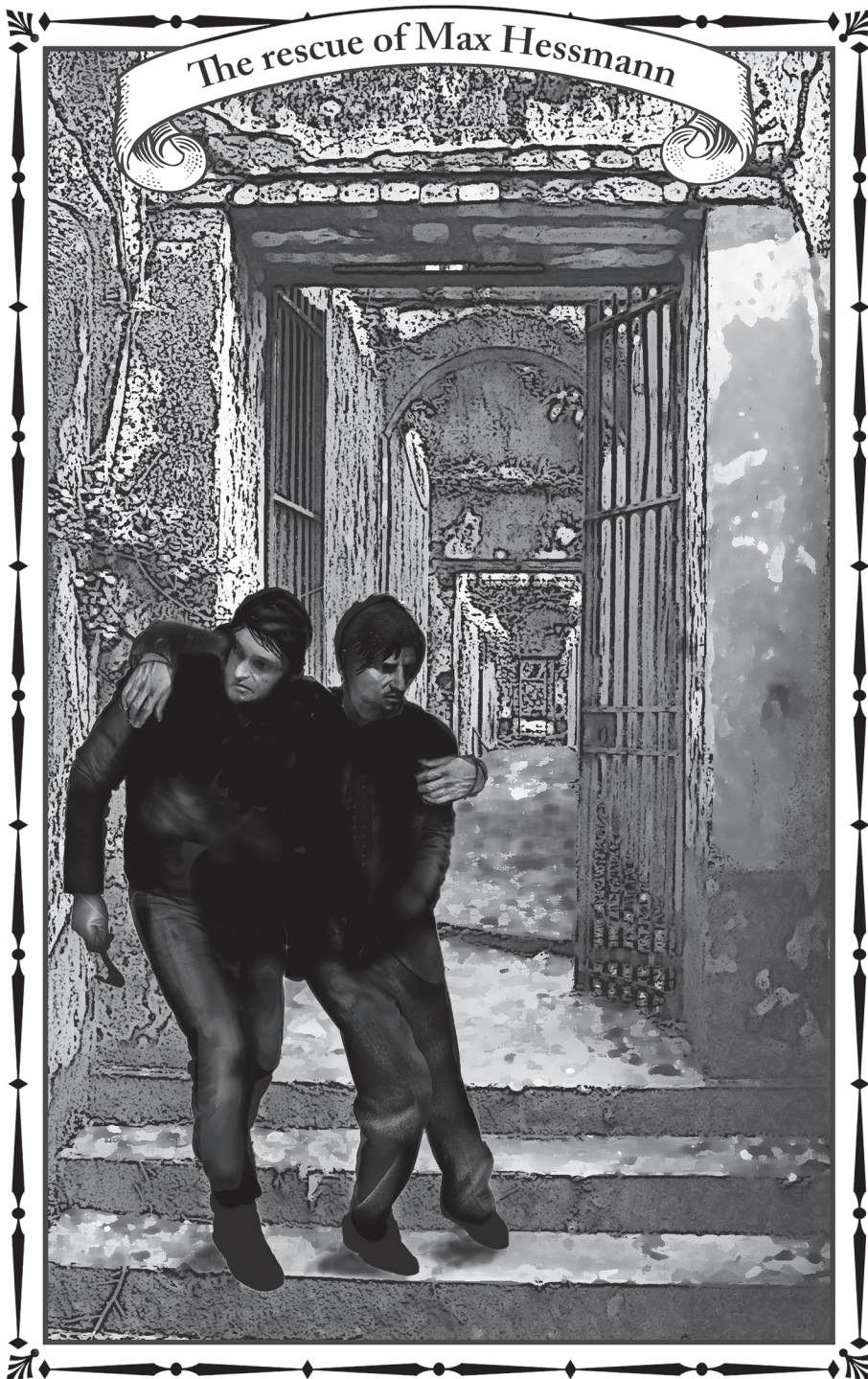
EDWARD JOYCE Captain of the *Centurion*

JAMES MCCUBBIN Cunard Line chief purser

PETER SMITH Cunard Line master-at-arms

GEORGE PIERPOINT Liverpool detective

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PROLOGUE



Îles du Salut

April 13, 1914

THE COMMANDOS CAME ASHORE UNDER THE SILVERY LIGHT OF A tropical moon. There were only three men who leapt onto the rocky coast. Two sailors remained with the aluminum boat so that it wouldn't be lost in the treacherous currents that lashed the forlorn island some nine miles off the South American mainland. The assault team carried pistols but understood if they needed them the mission was likely a failure. Their main weapons were knives crudely fashioned from scrap steel. The blades were ugly, but honed razor sharp, like the weapons they were designed to emulate—the basic prison shiv.

The South Atlantic breeze kept the shore cool, but as soon as the men moved into the thick, inky jungle it was like stepping into a hot-house. Heat and humidity made sweat run from their pores and soon enough their uniforms were soaked through with moisture. Night insects and the occasional cry of a bird drowned out the distant pounding of waves on stone.

Knowing the general layout of the island, the team soon found the path leading to their target. Palm fronds met overhead and blocked the moon's weak glow. Many months of careful planning and preparation came down to the next few minutes and the elite soldiers were all too

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aware of what would happen if they were spotted. The French still loved to use their beloved guillotine.

There were three small isles that made up what was known as the Salvation Island chain. It had been so named because the last six hundred survivors of an estimated twelve thousand men and women who'd tried to colonize the nearby territory of French Guiana had fled here from the fever coast to find sanctuary. All efforts to tame the primeval mainland came to naught until the middle of the nineteenth century when Napoleon III decreed that part of the territory would be turned into a penal colony and that prison labor would be used to conquer the land. The Bagne de Cayenne sprawled along the coast in the form of prisons and jungle work camps and utilized thousands of France's worst offenders as virtual slaves.

The coastal islands too became part of the prison system. Royale Island, the largest, housed four hundred prisoners who had been exiled from the mainland for major infractions of the new penal laws. Another island, Devil's Island, though ominously named, was the most benign place in the entire prison colony. It was reserved for a handful of political prisoners, like the recently released Alfred Dreyfus, who'd been falsely accused of being a traitor.

In a twist of irony, upon his return to France and recommissioning into the army, Dreyfus told only one confidant all that he'd seen and done during his time in Guiana. He'd explained how the prison system worked and gave detailed descriptions of the buildings and the guards' routines. This man, a friend, was actually the German spy the French authorities had thought was Dreyfus. The intelligence Dreyfus divulged to his friend had been crucial in planning the commandos' mission.

The third island of the Salvation group, the one the commandos were stealthily traversing, was called St. Joseph's. It was hell on earth.

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This was where the most recalcitrant prisoners were housed in what the French called *insolement*. Isolation.

The minimum sentence to one of St. Joseph's nine-foot-by-five-foot cells was six months, the maximum usually five years, though many prisoners had paid repeated visits. Time served on St. Joseph's was always added to an inmate's already existing sentence. Insanity wasn't uncommon among the survivors of such deprivation. Death was the more likely outcome.

Silence was strictly enforced, and the tops of the cells were iron bars open to the elements so that the tropical rains and burning sun were additional torments for the men. Guards walked on catwalks above the cells, making sure none of the prisoners spoke. The minuscule food ration was passed through a slot at the bottom of each cell's iron door and another judas door, higher up, could be opened so a prisoner could stick his head out of his cell if the warden or some other official wanted to speak to him. Once on St. Joseph's there was no medical care, no dental care, zero hygiene. The prisoners lived like penned animals, but with the torturous self-awareness a poor animal never knows.

The prisons on French Guiana were supposed to be a social experiment to reform prisoners so they could return to proper society. Instead, they had created a place more barbaric than any medieval dungeon.

The commandos now came to a large clearing at the end of the path. The jungle had been hacked back for a complex of plastered stone buildings. The structures were brutish in style, and even without knowing their function, they seemed shrouded in dark menace. A gate gave access to a broad courtyard. The lock was heavy duty and the one commando tasked with picking it had to use his largest set of tools. He opened it a fraction of an inch at a time to prevent the rust-ravaged

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hinges from squealing. The lockpicker placed two wooden shims at the base of the heavy door so that it couldn't swing open farther, or slam shut.

The courtyard was plain dirt that had been raked smooth. Ahead was an administration building and housing for the guards. To their left stood the detention block. The team leader pointed out that a metal roof had been built above the catwalks to shield the guards, a detail that differed from their mission briefing. They waited in the shadows for a guard shift change to occur, which it did at precisely the top of the hour. A guard made his way from the dormitory and climbed up onto the parapet above the cells. He and the on-duty guard spoke for just a minute and then the latter made his way off to his soft bed.

The commandos gave it ten minutes for the new guard to fall into routine. He was soon leaning against one of the roof's support columns, the cherry glow of his cigarette moving from his face as he inhaled to down by his waist when he relaxed his arm. There was just enough light to see the outline of a rifle slung over his shoulder.

The iron stairs up to the guard's walkway were bolted to the side of the building. The lead commando unsheathed his knife and moved as slowly as a stalking cat up the stairs, his footfalls feathery light, his concentration total. He paused when only his eyes were above the top step, and he watched the Frenchman finish his cigarette and pitch the butt off the building so that it hit the courtyard in a shower of sparks.

He started ambling down the length of the cell block, his footfalls slow and lazy. It had to be a miserable duty, the team leader thought as he rose from a crouch and padded after the guard. To his right and left were the iron-bar tops of the open cells. No light penetrated their musty gloom.

The guard was so dulled by routine that he never felt a shadow stalking him and only reacted when a hand clamped over his mouth in a steel-like grip. He had a fraction of a second to stiffen in shock before

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the shiv was drawn from ear to ear and his throat opened in a violent gush of blood. The soldier slowly lowered the guard to the floor as his body's functions shut down one by one until his eyelids gave one last flutter and his heart stopped.

He slunk back down the stairs and regrouped with his men. They had fifty minutes to spring their target and get clear of the Salvation Islands before the corpse was discovered and an alarm sounded. They rightly assumed that guards on all three islands would be alerted of the murder by a klaxon or bell and that they would pour from their barracks in droves.

Still, they had plenty of time.

They moved to the cell block's main door and eased it open, careful that its hinges didn't squeal. The hallway beyond was plastered brick, patchy with damp spots and showing mildew growth where the wall met the floor. The smell wasn't bad because of the open cell ceilings, but an underlying odor of corruption and filth clung to the space and filled the men's lungs like smoke. Identical doors ran along each wall, thick metal affairs coated with rust. There were no names listed above them. The prisoners were housed in utter anonymity. Like their freedom, their identities had also been stripped away.

The men fanned out and began tapping a code phrase against the doors, pausing to hear the proper response tapped back by their man. This had all been orchestrated even before the man they were to spring had been sentenced to the penal colony all those months ago. He was a German spying on French industry, especially those working on military contracts. They'd all been lucky he hadn't been shot. The French had acceded to diplomatic pressure and eventually direct threats from Germany and the Austro-Hungarian empire to spare the man's life. Everyone knew he'd be sent here.

Tap. Tap-tap. Tap-tap. Tap. Tap.

Nothing but silence from the faceless, nameless men cowering in

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their cells in the night. The soldiers moved on. There were only a few cells left to check and doubt began to creep into the team leader's mind. What if he wasn't here? What if their scheme to get him sent to solitary had failed? They could have given him over to the guillotine upon his arrival and no one outside of the French Ministry of Justice would know. It was even possible he'd died on the long passage from France. Alfred Dreyfus had said countless dead were hauled from the prison ship's fetid cages each day and dumped into the vessel's wake.

Tap. Tap-tap. Tap-tap. Tap. Tap.

Tap-tap-tap. Tap. Tap-tap.

They found him. Max Hessmann.

The commando commander quickly opened the door. "Welcome back to the world of the living, Herr Hessmann," he whispered.

A living corpse stepped from the cell and into the weak moonlight. He was tall but gaunt to the point of looking cadaverous. His head was bald but he wore a scraggy beard that would be teeming with lice. His wrists below the cuffs of his rough prison shirt were as thin as a child's. The light was poor, but even so his eyes were sunken into depthless craters and his cheeks appeared sucked into his teeth.

"Not exactly," the man croaked in English. "I'm Foss Gly."

I HAVE LITTLE ENGLISH," THE GERMAN COMMANDO SAID.
"Française?"

"Oui."

"Bon. Je m'appelle Foster Gly. Call me Foss."

The commando answered in French. "I am Lieutenant Heinz-Joseph Volker of the Imperial German Navy. We are here to rescue Max Hessmann."

"I know," Gly said. Despite his appearance, there remained a com-

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manding presence about him. "Max told me everything. We worked together to get exiled here to St. Joseph's. How long before the guard is discovered?"

"Where is Hessmann?"

"Infirmary on Royale Island, if we're lucky. Dead if we're not. He came down with malaria just prior to the escape attempt that guaranteed we'd be sent here. We couldn't put it off while he recovered. When we arrived here to serve our additional sentence, I was sent to a cell, while he's been on a sickbed. What about the guard? How long?"

"Shift change in about forty-five minutes," Lieutenant Volker answered.

"We just might have enough time. But we need to get moving."

The German seemed a little incensed that this foreigner—his accent said British Isles—thought he could give orders as if he had any standing. "I don't believe—"

Gly cut him off and stepped close so that his full height loomed over Volker. With madness glinting in his sunken eyes, he looked like something from a horrific Germanic folktale. "I saved Max's life twice when he first arrived here. Other inmates knew he was a German spy. These men are all degenerates, but they're still Frenchmen, so they thought they'd teach the odd Boche a lesson. I killed three men defending Max and now he owes me, see. Besides, he's so weak he could never escape on his own, but with me involved the warden will believe I escaped my cell and rescued Max. All the guards know we're tight."

Volker let that sink in for a minute. "They will think you got him off these islands and not suspect a raid from a submarine."

Gly nodded and a ghost of a smile reached his lips. He was a career criminal, a murderer, and a thug, and while most times he opened his mouth to speak only lies came out, tonight he was telling the truth. "Max and I talked about it. He was actually mad at himself for not

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thinking of this while planning his escape with your military intelligence back during his trial in Paris. He realized too late that having someone like me helping from the inside makes for a stronger play.”

“Okay,” Volker agreed. “Do you have a plan?”

Gly knew from Max that the commandos planning to rescue him had rowed ashore from an experimental long-range submarine. “We need to row over to Isle Royale and then your sailors need to row over to Devil’s Island and wait for us there.”

“I don’t understand. Why?”

“If we’re spotted, we’ll never be able to row from shore fast enough. The guards here are lazy and corrupt, but they take great sport in shooting prisoners trying to escape. We’d be sitting ducks leaving Royale in a boat.”

“But how do we get to Devil’s Island?”

“I’ll tell you on the way. This is all for naught if the dead guard here is discovered and all hell breaks loose.”

One of the commandos handed Gly a bundle of dark clothing before they left the cell block. He changed out of the tattered striped pants, but slipped the black shirt over his prison-issued tunic. They sidled out of the building, keeping watch on the barracks, and kept close to the perimeter wall as they ran crouched toward the main gate. Once clear and the door was pressed closed again, they retraced their steps to the coast and the waiting rowboat.

“How long?” Volker asked when they were deep into the jungle. His voice was still barely a whisper.

Gly said, “What?”

“How long have you been a prisoner here?”

“It’s April 1914, yes?”

“It is.”

“Three years.”

The commando shuddered. Gly looked like he’d been marooned on

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a desert island for a decade or more, a scarecrow of withered flesh, with the haunted presence of a man who truly understood deprivation and despair. Volker had faced down armed insurrections in two of Germany's African colonies and knew he was a brave soldier, but the idea of this place and how it diminished both body and soul in three short years gave his bowels an oily slide.

They reached the coast. Gly took in measured lungfuls of the salt-tanged air. As much as he wanted to fill his chest to bursting, he knew his lungs were scarred by the damp and the fevers and illnesses that had racked his body since his arrival in Guiana, and too much would send him into paroxysms of hacking coughs. He'd learned that lesson when he'd been moved from the mainland to the islands weeks earlier. Even so, he could taste something else in the sultry night air, something that hadn't been present on the small launch that had whisked him and Max and other hardened inmates out here.

He could taste the first stirrings of freedom.

Lieutenant Volker used a small flashlight to summon the boat hiding out in the waters of the Atlantic while he and his men hunkered down among the rocks. The wind remained gentle and the surf rhythmic and calm. In a moment, the soft slap of oars played like a backbeat over the sound of splashing waves.

Gly grunted in grudging admiration. The Germans had followed Max's plan to the letter. Their little dinghy smelled of fish oil and looked like it had been battered by years of tropical sun, with faded and chipped paint and gunwales that were punky with rot. Exactly the kind of boat an enterprising inmate could bribe a local fisherman into using to abet an escape from the islands. When they abandoned it after the raid, its discovery would further obscure what really transpired this night.

He refused their offers to help him into the boat. He was weak, his limbs a third of their normal size and the ache of hunger was like a

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hole in his stomach, but he wouldn't acknowledge his own wasted condition. They had starved him and beat him, but they hadn't broken him. That distinction had sustained him since his arrival.

The sailors maneuvered the little craft away from the stony beach, rowing so that the oars barely made a splash. The currents between the islands were notorious and one of the reasons there were no successful escapes from the prison. There was little need for actual walls or cells, though the men on Royale Island were penned forty to a cell and strapped down at night with an iron bar over their ankles to prevent them from moving in their sleep. The islands themselves were prisons as effective as any brick-and-mortar penitentiary. Even the strongest swimmers wouldn't last more than a few minutes battling the rip current and would soon be sucked far out into the Atlantic.

There were also the sharks. When a prisoner died on the Salvation Islands, their corpse was rowed a short distance offshore, a bell was rung, and the poor wretch was dumped into the water. Local sharks had learned to recognize the bell and were ravaging the body moments after it hit the water. The prison boat rowed back to the pier through a widening pool of the man's spilt blood. In its wake, a frenzy of sleek torpedo-shaped predators writhed and fed.

Gly's knowledge of Royale Island came mostly from what he'd learned from other prisoners during his stay in the mainland prison. He himself had sat in a cage on the boat while the transfer prisoners, including the deathly ill Max Hessmann, were marched off. Gly was then brought to St. Joseph's and dumped into isolation.

The first ten days, they'd lowered iron plates over the top of his cell to keep him in total darkness and to let the temperatures soar until he felt like his flesh was melting from his body. He shuddered away the memory, one of a million he wished he could purge from his mind.

Still, he felt confident that he could lead the commandos to the infirmary. It was close to the guards' compound, which made things

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tricky, but with all the prisoners penned in their cells, he'd been told that random foot patrols were rare. Once the commandos were ashore, the sailors would row over to Devil's Island and beach midway down its south shore and wait out of sight.

"Why not leave the boat on the beach or stand it offshore like we did just now?" Volker asked.

"Because the Frenchies patrol the coast of Royale like dogs on the lookout for boats just like this. It's the only way to escape and they guard against it. If the rip weren't so treacherous, I'd say we swim in and send the boat straight over to Devil's Island. Truth is, though, we'd never make it."

The distance between St. Joseph's Island and the spot on Royale where Gly wanted to land was just a few hundred yards, but it seemingly took forever. To the sailors working the oars it felt like they lost eleven inches for every foot they gained. It took forty minutes for them to finally approach Royale Island, a low jungle-covered silhouette rising from the waters. "We only need the two of us," Gly whispered to Volker. "We will be moving around some buildings and a larger force is more easily detected."

"What if we run into more guards than you think?"

"Doesn't matter. It only takes one to raise an alarm. Better go in by stealth and not be seen than to have to depend on force if we are."

Volker frowned. He didn't know Gly and judging him by his appearance inspired little confidence. He doubted the man could even lift a hand to defend himself. But Max Hessmann trusted him with his life, and prior to his capture in France, Hessmann had been a legend in Germany's intelligence apparatus, Sektion IIIb.

"And if Hessmann can't walk?"

"It's the infirmary, there's bound to be a stretcher," Gly said. "Consider this too. If the guards see a large force tonight, even if we manage to escape but only two men are missing from morning muster, they

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will know Hessmann had outside help and there will be a diplomatic incident.”

Volker saw the logic in that. While training for this mission, it had been drilled into him again and again that none of his men could be captured alive. Such an occurrence would light a match to the powder keg that was the current diplomatic status between Berlin and Paris. His orders were to turn his pistol on his men and then take his own life. If they failed, the French would likely blame Germany for the three dead men who tried to invade their penal colony, but there would be no proof. The incident would soon blow over with some bluster and saber-rattling, but no real consequences.

“Okay,” he said at last, “we’ll do it your way.” He whispered to his men the change in plans and gave Gly one of the handmade knives.

“I’m good with a pistol,” Gly told him.

“You might well be,” Volker replied, “but you’re not getting one.”

The men stayed low behind the gunwales as they drew closer. Like the previous island, there was no beach, just solid rock getting relentlessly slapped by waves. They saw no movement, no indication that the shore was being guarded, so they rowed in the last dozen yards and Gly and Volker crawled out of the boat as its prow touched ground.

“We’ll wait for you to get into position, and then rescue Hessmann,” Volker told his men, and gave the boat a shove. He and Gly scrambled over the rocks and into the cover of the dense jungle. A light rain began to patter through the foliage.

“This is good,” Gly said with his lips practically touching Volker’s ear. “Frenchies don’t like to get wet. They think it makes them more suspectable to malaria and yellow fever.”

“Does it?”

“Hell if I know.”

Just as Gly had predicted, they saw no patrols walking the trail that ringed the island. The rain was little more than a drizzle, but it served

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to keep the guards under shelter in the main compound. Also, the clouds obscured the moon's hoary glow and turned the jungle into a tangled jigsaw of dark shades and shapes. They were relatively protected, so the wait went quickly enough.

Gly pointed out the direction they had to go, but let Volker take point. His strength, such as it was, wouldn't last if he took the role of trailblazer. Volker moved well. A lifetime of stalking game through the mountains and forests of Bavaria had turned him into a skilled hunter. They slowed as a little light slipped through the patchwork of branches and leaves. The island had a generator for electricity, but it had long been turned off. There was light from an oil lamp spilling through the gauzy curtain covering a ground-floor window of the three-story infirmary building. The aura moved across the window. The lamp was being held in someone's hand. A doctor checking his patients, perhaps. Or a guard making certain all the prisoners were accounted for. Moments later the light vanished, as if the person had exited the ward and closed the door.

A stubby lighthouse sat next to the infirmary, but its lamp wasn't lit.

They moved close to the stone structure, feeling it radiating some of the heat it had absorbed during the day. Volker led. At the first corner they approached, he ducked low before peering around the edge so that there would be no movement at eye level if someone was looking. His tradecraft impressed Gly. Max had bragged about the German military and especially its troops trained in irregular warfare. If anything, he'd downplayed their skills.

They were at the rear of the building and all the windows were dark. At the next corner, Lieutenant Volker repeated his trick. He quickly ducked back and hustled Gly a few feet away from the corner.

"Guard standing atop some low steps at the building entrance. He's got a rifle."

"Is he out in the rain?"

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“No, there’s an awning over him.”

Gly thought for a minute, picked up a coconut that had fallen from a palm tree, and slid around the corner before Volker could stop him. The guard was a few dozen paces from him, leaning against a handrail and watching the rain falling from above. Gly pressed himself against the infirmary, his body so thin he was like just one more layer of brick veneer. The Frenchman appeared lost in some daydream. Gly knew some of the guards had brought family with them to the islands, but this one looked too young to have a wife. He was likely thinking of some girl he knew back in France, a *petit copine* from *l’école*.

He moved until he was just at the base of the short flight of steps. The guard continued to lean against the rail, unaware of his surroundings. His rifle rested against the rail, close to his hand. Slowly, and just out of the man’s peripheral vision, Gly lobbed the coconut out onto the lawn.

Its movement caught the guard’s eye and he stiffened even as Gly mounted the steps, the shiv in his right hand, his left snaking around the guard’s face to clamp over his mouth. Gly’s hand and the blade touched the man at the same time. There was no struggle as Gly opened his carotid artery with an expertly placed slit. He twisted the man so that his blood soaked into his uniform rather than pool on the stone terrace. Dragging the corpse back into the deep shadows behind the infirmary left Gly panting, but it was worth the effort. He now had the rifle, a Lebel Model 1886 that was probably a decade older than the guard who’d wielded it.

Gly’s prison uniform had no pockets, so he didn’t bother grabbing any more of the Lebel’s tubular magazines the guard carried in a leather pouch attached to his Sam Browne belt. He checked that the rifle had a cartridge chambered. “Having this gives us cover if you need to use your pistol.”

Volker kept his admonishment of Gly’s solo assault to himself. He

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was professional enough to recognize the Briton's skill and ruthlessness and rightly assumed any reprimand would be ignored.

The infirmary door was closed, but not locked. Light spilled from beneath it, possibly from a guard's desk lamp or a nurse duty station. Gly had never set foot in the building. He had no idea of its layout or how many men guarded the sick and infirm prisoners. He let Volker take point again. The commando was in his physical prime and Gly was still winded from killing and dragging his victim.

A door opening slowly would seem suspicious to whomever was inside, so the German agent opened it like he owned the place. There was a seconds-long lag for the man seated at a desk to look up and see it wasn't his partner returning from getting some air. Volker used that brief window of opportunity to attack, lunging hard with the shiv, piercing skin and guiding the blade into the man's heart with well-practiced ease. The guard managed a cry that was little more than a wet cough before his heart stopped and his brain starved for oxygen.

A heavy key ring hung from his belt. Volker cut it free.

Volker turned down the wick on the oil lamp and plucked it from the desk. The closest ward was to their right through an open doorway. They could see two rows of bunks, the men asleep under dingy sheets and threadbare blankets.

Gly stopped the German from entering and whispered, "I should go in. I will be recognized as the man who sprang Max out of here. It'll further confound the Frenchies."

Again Volker could not fault Gly's logic. Hessmann had chosen his partner very well. He wondered what crime Gly had committed to be condemned to this hellish place. Considering how expertly he'd killed the guard, he was certainly familiar with murder.

Gly moved into the ward. Some of the men were awakened by the light, but said nothing. Any change in routine at a prison was something to be suspicious of because it usually meant someone's day was

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about to go from bad to worse. He held the light so he could see the prisoners' faces. He saw a man he recognized from the boat from the mainland.

"Gadot, right?" he whispered.

The prisoner lying on the cot paused for just a moment before he realized the man standing over him wasn't dressed like a guard or one of the doctors. Recognition widened his eyes. "I know you."

"Foss Gly. I came from the main *bagne* with you."

"You went to solitary," Gadot said, recalling more.

"And I got myself sent here tonight. Is the German here, Hessmann?"

"Your mate? Yes. Last bed under the window."

It was all Gly could do not to sag with relief. He turned away to find Max.

"Wait," Gadot said, and grabbed his arm. "They didn't transfer you here. They never do. You're escaping, aren't you? Take me with you. I've been pretending I'm still sick since I got here. I can make it."

"I can't. My plan's only for the two of us. But tell *les flics* it was me, okay?"

Gadot looked disappointed and sheepish. He pulled aside his blanket. His thigh was gashed deeply and had been left open so fluid could drain into a pan on the floor. "I wouldn't have made it anyway, but it was nice thinking about it. Good luck."

Gly moved on, grateful Gadot hadn't pressed his case because he'd have been forced to kill him and he liked leaving a witness behind. Max Hessmann was leaning up on one elbow when Gly got to him. His color was much better than the last time they'd laid eyes on each other. He'd survived the worst of the malarial fevers and agues and looked to be on the mend. He was in his early forties, just a few years older than Gly, with blondish hair and eyes of an indistinct color. He

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wasn't particularly handsome or muscular, which served him well. Being a spy meant being invisible.

"Thought I heard your voice," he said in American-accented English. "I was beginning to think Sektion IIIb had forgotten about me."

"Perish the thought. There's a whole slew of them and a submarine, or so they tell me." Gly helped his friend to his feet. "You okay?"

"Truth be told, I'm weak as a kitten, but so much better than I was a few days ago."

Gly lost three minutes trying to find the brass key that fit the lock shackling Hessmann to the bed frame. With Hessmann's arm over his shoulders, Gly and the German shuffled out of the ward. All the prisoners were awake now and watched with varying degrees of suspicion and envy. A few of the older hands, men who'd been locked up for decades, had a knowing look. They were witnessing two men about to throw their lives away.

They understood that death was the only real escape from this place.

Out in the entrance hall, Volker saw that Gly was overtaxed by helping his fellow prisoner and draped Hessmann's other arm over his shoulders and took most of the man's weight. Gly gave a begrudging nod that acknowledged he appreciated the help. He snatched up the rifle and opened the door.

The guard just reaching for the door handle on the other side blinked in surprise and was about to make a joke about perfect timing when he saw that the scene in front of him was all wrong.

"Who are you?" he demanded. "What is the meaning of this?"

Gly reversed the Lebel and hit the guard in the forehead hard enough to crack the thick bone and send him reeling back into the night. The incident wouldn't have drawn attention except that Gly hadn't doused the oil lamp when he'd opened the door. The flare of light had caught

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the eye of a guard on foot patrol rounding a nearby cell block. His reaction was much better than that of the comatose man lying on the grass at Gly's feet. He began blowing a whistle dangling from a lanyard around his neck, the shrill brassy blasts sending startled birds into the dark sky and causing monkeys who inhabited the island to add to their churlish cries.

"*Merde*," Gly spat. He raised the rifle and fired. The penalty for an escape attempt was time in isolation. For murdering a guard, it was immediate execution. Gly now faced the guillotine.

Volker stopped and lifted Hessmann in a fireman's carry, astonished by how light he was after only a few months in prison. Carrying the spy, he raced with Gly from the infirmary. Volker steadied Hessmann's legs with his left hand while clutching a Luger pistol in his right. Gly led them back into the thicket of vegetation surrounding the sprawling prison camp and headed to the northern side of the island.

Their destination wasn't far, but the jungle made running impossible. More whistles pierced the night and angry men's voices added to the clamor, while more guards woke and came swarming out of their barracks. Overhead, agitated monkeys squawked and ran through the branches in panicked abandon.

The men came out of the jungle just a short distance from their destination. The channel between Royale Island and Devil's was narrow, but so treacherous that a regular ferry was deemed too dangerous. In order to transfer prisoners, guards, and material to the most isolated of the three Salvation Islands, the French authorities had constructed a primitive overhead cable car system that used muscle power to shunt a dangling basket between low towers erected on each island's coast.

Two guards stationed at the Royale tower, alert to an escape attempt in progress, watched the jungle for any sign of movement. One stood on the ground, shielded by one of the tower's legs, and the other

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ten feet up on the platform next to the open-topped cable car gondola. Gly shot the guard with the high ground first. He didn't care that the man's back was to him as he watched the jungle to the east. The Frenchman toppled from his perch and hit the wet ground with a meaty thump. Gly had his sights on the second guard even before the first smacked into the earth. This man managed to get off a pair of snap shots with his gun at his hip before Gly drilled him with two rounds to his chest that exploded out his back.

Gly had depleted nearly half of his ammunition, so he snatched up the unfired Lebel from the guard he'd shot off the tower and he and Volker mounted the stairs to the loading platform. The German set his countryman into the tight wooden car and climbed over the edge. Gly followed. He had both rifles now and stood facing aft while Volker started pulling on the second of the two wires spanning the channel. The car lurched out over the water on its metal guide wheels. Volker soon had a steady rhythm but hadn't covered much distance when more guards appeared on the shore of Royal Island. The trio came under withering fire. Gly fired back, alternating pulling the trigger on each of his weapons, estimating placement more than aiming his shots. He just needed to keep the French pinned for a few seconds.

Bullets zipped and screamed past their heads. Several hit the gondola but none penetrated its side. Volker suddenly stopped pulling them across and the gondola pitched as it lost momentum. The Luger spat twice and then twice more. Guards on Devil's Island had arrived at the cable car's receiving tower. Unsure what was happening, they had hesitated and not shot at the men suspended over the water. Both died as a result.

Moments later they finished the traverse and were back down on solid ground. They were still being fired upon, so they raced into the jungle, Hessmann willing himself to move far faster than his body wanted.

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Volker's two commandos met them as they reached the shoreline. The boat was beached a short way off. They each took one of Hessmann's arms and carried him the last few yards. The sailors had backed the boat to the rocks and were ready to pull on their oars as soon as all five men tumbled over the gunwale.

Gly quickly shook himself free of them and laid aim over the transom. Men appeared on the stone beach and quickly started taking potshots at the fleeing boat. Gly fired back, more to keep them pinned than in any hope of hitting them from the bobbing craft. Like before, he just wanted to trade time for distance. At fifty yards from shore the fire directed at them diminished as the darkness and the continuing rain made them all but invisible.

"There isn't a prison in the world that can hold Foster Gly," he shouted at the distant shore in English and in his deepest Scottish voice. "Sons of Edinburgh never leave one of their own behind."

"What was that for?" Volker asked.

"Just sowing more doubt about who was doing the rescuing and who was the rescuee."

After an hour of rowing, they came upon a nearly three-hundred-foot submarine lying like a basking shark on the surface. They would have gone past it if not for the lamps left lit on her streamlined conning tower.

"Lieutenant Volker," a voice hailed from the top of the tower. "We heard shots from over the horizon and feared the worst."

"Not to worry, Captain Reinhart," Volker shouted back. "The guards there may know how to bully defenseless prisoners. They fared rather poorer against us."

"Did you find success?"

"He did," Max Hessmann answered for him. "And for that, me and my friend here are most grateful."

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“You really did it,” Foss Gly said to his comrade, a rare smile cleaving his brutish face. “I kept you alive and you got me out.”

“You sound like you think our adventure is at an end. I assure you, it has only just begun. I am known as the Kaiser’s favorite spy. We stick together and I will soon make you his second favorite.”

Gly thought about it for only a couple of seconds. He’d be arrested immediately if he returned to the British Isles, and he couldn’t go back to France, where he’d been living when he’d originally been tried for a string of crimes that had stretched from Paris to the docks of Southampton on the morning of the *Titanic*’s sailing. Lord knew his wife and kid would be better off without him. He had no prospects, no loyalty, and no moral compass. Becoming a spy for the Germans made as much sense as anything else.

“You have yourself a partner.”