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## Chapter 16. Phone Call from England

I met that day with Victor Carey, the Bailiff of Guernsey during the occupation, Andrew, Angelique (who appeared capable of remembering details the others weren't), and Sir Abraham.

The answers I received were far from satisfying. Carey said he'd explored the topic of the missing children with the Major. "That was it? You explored! Found a sacred white elephant with an immense ruby on its forehead did you? You'll call London today and demand satisfaction."

Carey looked back at me coolly.

"Or you'll go to France in chains as a War Criminal to be tried with the other Germans."

They made calls to London afterward; of course they did. It was then that Group Leader Raffey telephoned.

"You executed a dozen men!" Group Leader Raffey's voice leaped out of the telephone and filled the room.

"Yes, Sir."

"Including a Walter Mooley?"

"His real name was Kurt Von Schneid. You remember the man MI5 told us about."

"And his wife Millicent?"

"Trudy Von Schneid. She also was using a fake British passport. Their two servants hadn't bothered to use fake names, but their passports weren't real either."

Raffey didn't say anything for several moments and I could tell he was writing all this down.

"And the other men?"

"Out of uniform. Officers trying to pass as enlisted men. A Gestapo Colonel in civilian clothes."

"You don't think the shootings were a bit harsh?"

"After the years I spent underground in France?"

Again there was a pause. The anger was gone from the Group Leader's voice now and replaced by a certain weariness. "Expect to do any more shootings?"

"I think we have the Islanders' attention now. And they've got someone different to blame than those they've been blaming up till now."

"Who were?"

"Themselves and the Brits."

That evening's public meeting did not go at all well. We had a new topic, "punishment for collaborators," and it had gotten a bit out of hand.

First of all, more people wanted to get into the discussion than we could fit into the hall. The founders of the State of Guernsey had not envisioned that the general public rather than an elect few might wish a voice in government. The result was that the State Building in St Peter Port did not contain a meeting room suitable for large public gatherings. We were forced to meet in the nearby Anglican Church and that, too, had a limited capacity.

There were also a number of individuals who did not believe in the first-come, first-served equalitarian principle my men at the door had been directed to permit entrance by.

One individual, a member of the former Governing Council, pushed himself and his wife toward the front of the queue where he quickly got into an altercation with the men standing there. Inspector Gaudien tried to moderate, was told to "eff off," put the distinguished former member in a restraining hold and started to lead him out of the building.

"I was going to let him go on the steps, tell him to try another day."

But Mrs. Big-Wig was so grossly offended by the policeman's actions that she began to pound him with her fists. Within seconds, both Mr. and Mrs. Big-Wig had been led off to the jail.

The good news was that all this took place outside the hall out of earshot and I only found out about it after the meeting was over.

The question the meeting itself need consider was, "what was collaboration and how should it be punished?"

One older woman persisted in wanting to put fraternizing with the enemy in this classification and she was quickly shouted down.

I produced a list Dr. Bosch kindly had provided and said I had the names of those who had betrayed for money.

"What about after torture?" came a voice from the crowd, and I repeated that all I was talking about were those who'd betrayed their fellow islanders for a few pieces of silver.

"What about those of us who worked on the airfield?" came the question.

The expansion and improvement of the airfield had kept a lot of Guernsey men employed, put money in their pockets, and food on the table for them and their families. The airfield had provided employment when there were no other jobs to be had. It all

made sense to me. But Wilson completely lost it. He'd been sitting in one of the side pews with Angelique's sister Madeline whom, one couldn't help noticing, appeared to be his now constant companion. All of a sudden Wilson was on his feet in full uniform, his medals, that he usually kept well hidden, rattling as he stood up.

"You bastards put the bombers in the air which attacked us night after night. The guns that shot at Wing Commander Freygood and I came from the planes you launched. You ought to be bloody ashamed. You came dammed close to losing us the war."

Cannon Russell who shared the podium with Sir Abraham and I cringed at the language.

"And where were you when we needed you?" came shouts from the audience. "The war ended a year ago and it took you this long to get here?"

"We bloody starved; we're still starving. Tell me how to feed my kids." This last from a woman.

"What took you so long, Wing Commander?"

I took this to be a rhetorical question. Wilson was on his feet shouting, "He was in occupied France," but no one heard him.

I started to cry. Bloody stupid, uh. I'd let my wife-to-be stay here prey to the Nazi's while I went about my business.

Someone in the audience said, "crying over that effing jerrybag," but others who knew better, for good news as well as bad traveled fast on the Island, said, "No, the Jewess."

Sergeant Silver stood up to help me but I waved him down.

"Thank you Flying Sergeant Silverstein," I said. "That's right, Silverstein, not Silver. We're all in this together. Everyone. I'm setting up a civilian jury. I want volunteers.

We'll want one representative from every trade union. Yes, the unions are back, this is no bloody fascist state here, and I want one representative from every church on the Island and not just the minister."

"Spread the word. Select your representatives. Our first meeting will be Monday in the State Building. We'll also need someone from the hospital and . . . and we'll let you know." I finished weakly.

Then I was out of breath, worn down, prepared like virtually everyone else in the meeting hall, save those still waiting for the return of their loved ones, to go home to wife and child.