

'The kind of book you
want to escape normal life to
read at every available opportunity'
Elizabeth Day

THE
WHALEBONE
THEATRE

'A book that will be
loved unreasonably and life-long'
Francis Spufford

JOANNA QUINN

Joanna Quinn

THE WHALEBONE THEATRE

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About the Author

Joanna Quinn was born in London and grew up in Dorset, in the south-west of England, where her debut novel, *The Whalebone Theatre*, is set.

Joanna has worked in journalism and the charity sector. She is also a short-story writer, published by the *White Review* and the Comma Press, among others. She teaches creative writing and lives in a village near the sea in Dorset.

The Whalebone Theatre

‘Magnificent. As capacious, surprising and magical as the whale that lends its bones to Cristabel’s theatre: a tale of intertwined lives and braided fates as deftly managed and heartbreaking as a Dickens novel’ Rebecca Stott, author of *In the Days of Rain*

‘Playful, inventive, sharp, funny ... sheer, undiluted delight from start to finish. It breathes fresh, bracing air into the lungs of the multi-generational saga – and the very form of the novel itself. Few people writing today can match Quinn for the energy and precision of her prose: sentences begin boldly, proceed to hit every nail on their path, then land, gorgeously, in a totally unexpected place. In Quinn’s hands, archetypes are re-born: characters damaged by the usual unsavoury traditions of the British aristocracy are depicted with piercing efficiency, then found to be loveable despite it all. Catchphrases from the past are dug up, tossed wittily around, and suddenly understood for the very first time. Most importantly of all, perhaps, Quinn gives us Cristabel, the sort of intelligent heroine that has been sorely missing from every other classic since *Middlemarch*: disinterested in marriage yet capable of immense love. It’s impossible not to be charmed by this book, its cast of characters, and Quinn’s constantly striking prose. It is both reassuringly familiar, and startlingly new: a big fat Victorian novel written by someone from the post #metoo years’ Susan Elderkin, author of *Voices*

‘I defy any reader not to fall in love ... it transported me wholesale to another time and place and while I wandered its pages, I forgot the world for a while’ Wyl Menmuir, author of *Fox Fires*

‘A beautifully written, completely immersive read that I can’t quite believe is a debut. Very highly recommended’ *Bookseller*

‘Can there be a better proscenium arch than the salvaged ribs of a beached whale? Framed by these giant bones, Quinn’s story passes like a fabulous pageant, richly coloured and packed with incident, taking us from the lonely and orthodox Dorset childhood of the extraordinary Cristabel to the poignant aftermath of her heroic Second World War’ Frances Liardet, author of *We Must Be Brave*

For Nancy and Abi

What cares these roarers for the name of king?
William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

Act One

1919–1920

The Last Day of the Year

31st December, 1919

Dorset

Cristabel picks up the stick. It fits well in her hand. She is in the garden, waiting with the rest of the household for her father to return with her new mother. Uniformed servants blow on cold fingers. Rooks caw half-heartedly from the trees surrounding the house. It is the last day of December, the dregs of the year. The afternoon is fading and the lawn a quagmire of mud and old snow, which three-year-old Cristabel stamps across in her lace-up leather boots, holding the stick like a sword, a miniature sentry in a brass-buttoned winter coat.

She swishes the stick to and fro, enjoying the *vvp vvp* sound it makes, uses it to spoon a piece of grubby snow to her mouth. The snow is as chilly on her tongue as the frost flowers that form on her attic window, but less clinging. It tastes disappointingly nothingy. Somewhere too far away to be bothered about, her nanny is calling her name. Cristabel puts the noise away from her with a blink. She spies snowdrops simpering at the edge of the garden. *Vvvp vvp*.

Cristabel's father, Jasper Seagrave, and his new bride are, at that moment, seated side by side in a horse-drawn carriage, travelling up the driveway towards Jasper's family home: Chilcombe, a many-gabled, many-chimneyed, ivy-covered manor house with an elephantine air of weary grandeur. In outline, it is a series of sagging triangles and tall chimney stacks, and it has huddled on a wooded cliff overhanging the ocean for four hundred years, its leaded windows narrowed against sea winds and historical progress, its general appearance one of gradual subsidence.

The staff at Chilcombe say today will be a special day, but Cristabel is finding it dull. There is too much waiting. Too much straightening up. It is not a day that would make a good story. Cristabel likes stories that feature blunderbusses and dogs, not brides and waiting. *Vvvp*. As she picks up the remains of the snowdrops, she hears the bone crunch of gravel beneath wheels.

Her father is the first to disembark from the carriage, as round and satisfied as a broad bean popped from a pod. Then a single foot in a button-boot appears, followed by a velvet hat, which tilts upwards to look at the house. Cristabel watches her father's whiskery face. He too is looking upwards, gazing at the young woman in the hat, who, while still balanced on the step of the carriage, is significantly taller than him.

Cristabel marches towards them through the snow. She is almost there when her nanny grabs her, hissing, 'What have you got in your hands? Where are your

gloves?’

Jasper turns. ‘Why is the child so dirty?’

The dirty child ignores her father. She is not interested in him. Grumpy, angry man. Instead, she approaches the new mother, offering a handful of soil and snowdrop petals. But the new mother is adept at receiving clumsy gifts; she has, after all, accepted the blustering proposal of Jasper Seagrave, a rotund widower with an unmanageable beard and a limp.

‘For me,’ says the new mother, and it is not a question. ‘How novel.’ She steps down from the carriage and smiles, floating about her a hand which comes to rest on Cristabel’s head, as if that were what the child is for. Beneath her velvet hat, the new mother is wrapped in a smart wool travelling suit and a mink fur stole.

Jasper turns to the staff and announces, ‘Allow me to present my new wife: Mrs Rosalind Seagrave.’

There is a ripple of applause.

Cristabel finds it odd that the new mother should have the name Seagrave, which is her name. She looks at the soil in her hand, then turns it over, allowing it to fall on to the new mother’s boots, to see what happens then.

Rosalind moves away from the unsmiling girl. A motherless child, she reminds herself, lacking in feminine guidance. She wonders if she should have brought some ribbons for its tangled black hair, or a tortoiseshell comb, but then Jasper is at her side, leading her to the doorway.

‘Finally got you here,’ he says. ‘Chilcombe’s not quite at its best. Used to have a splendid set of iron gates at the entrance.’

As they cross the threshold, he is talking about the coming evening’s celebrations. He says the villagers are delighted by her arrival. A marquee has been erected behind the house, a pig will be roasted, and everyone will toast the nuptials with tankards of ale. He winks at her now, bristling in his tweed suit, and she is unsure what is meant by this covering and uncovering of one eye, this stagey wince.

Rosalind Seagrave, née Elliot, twenty-three years old, described in the April 1914 edition of *Tatler* magazine as ‘a poised London debutante’, walks through the stone entranceway of Chilcombe into a wood-panelled galleried room that extends upwards like a medieval knights’ hall. It is a hollow funnel, dimly lit by flickering candles in brass wall brackets, and the air has the unused quality of empty chapels in out-of-the-way places.

It is a peculiar feeling, to enter a strange house knowing it contains her future. Rosalind looks around, trying to take it in before it notices her. There is a fireplace at the back of the hall: large, stone and unlit. Crossed swords hang above it. There is not much in the way of furniture and it does not attract her as

she hoped. A carved oak coffer with an iron hinge. A suit of armour holding a spear in its metal hand. A grandfather clock, a moulting Christmas tree, and a grand piano topped by a vase of lilies.

The piano, she knows, is a wedding present from her husband, but it has been put to one side beneath the stuffed head of a stag. Around the walls droop more mounted animal heads, glass-eyed lions and antelopes, along with ancient tapestries showing people in profile gesticulating with arrows. As blue is the last colour to fade in tapestry, what were once cheerful depictions of battle are now mournful, undersea scenes.

To the right of the fireplace is a curving wooden staircase leading to the upper floors of the house, while on either side of her, worn Persian rugs lead through arched doorways into dark rooms that lead to more doorways to dark rooms, and so it goes on, like an illustration of infinity. The heel of her boot catches on a rug as she steps forward. They will have to move the rugs, she thinks, when they have parties.

Jasper appears beside her, talking to the butler. 'Tell me, Blythe, has my errant brother arrived? Couldn't be bothered to show his face at the wedding.'

The butler gives an almost imperceptible shake of his head, for this is how Chilcombe is run, with gestures so familiar and worn down they have become the absence of gestures – the impression of something that used to be there; the shape of the fossil left in the stone.

Jasper sniffs, addresses his wife. 'The maids will show you to your room.'

Rosalind is escorted up the staircase, passing a series of paintings depicting men in ruffs pausing mid-hunt to have their portraits done, resting stockinged calves on the still-warm bodies of boars.

Cristabel watches from a corner. She has tucked herself behind a wooden umbrella stand in the shape of a little Indian boy; his outstretched arms make a circle to hold umbrellas, riding crops and her father's walking sticks. She waits until the new mother is out of sight, then runs across the hall to the back staircase, which is concealed from view behind the main staircase. This takes her down to below stairs, the servants' realm: the kitchen, scullery, storerooms and cellars. Here, in the roots of the house, she can find a hiding place and examine her new treasures: the stick and the crescents of soil beneath her fingernails.

On this day, below stairs is a clamorous place, the tiled kitchen echoing with activity. The servants are excited about the evening celebrations, anxious about hosting the wedding party, and full of gossip about the new wife. Cristabel crawls under the kitchen table and listens. Items of interest spark like lightning across her consciousness: favourite words like 'horse' and 'pudding'; voices she recognizes surfacing in the melee.

Her attention is caught by Maudie Kitcat, the youngest kitchen maid, saying, ‘Maybe Miss Cristabel will be getting a little brother soon.’ Cristabel hadn’t seen a little brother get out of the carriage, but perhaps one would be coming later. She would like a brother very much. For games and battles.

She also likes the kitchen maid Maudie Kitcat. They both sleep in the attic and practise their letters together. Cristabel often asks Maudie to write the names of people she knows in the condensation on the attic windows, and Maudie will comply, squeakingly shaping the words with a single finger – M-A-U-D-I-E, D-O-G, N-A-N-N-Y, C-O-O-K – so Cristabel can trace her own small finger along them or rub them out if they have displeased her. Sometimes, Maudie will visit her in the night if Cristabel has one of the dreams that make her shout, and Maudie will stroke her head and say shhh, little one, shhh now, don’t cry.

In the kitchen, Cook is saying, ‘An heir to the estate, eh? Let’s hope Jasper Seagrave’s still got it in him.’ Bellows of laughter follow. A male voice shouts, ‘If he can’t manage it, I’ll step in and have a go.’ There is more laughter, then a crash, something thrown. The sound of servants roaring at this incomprehensible exchange is a thunderous wave washing over Cristabel. She decides to use her stick to write her letters, tracing a circle in the flour on the flagstone floor, round and round. O. O. O. O. Time away from her interfering nanny is rare, she must not waste it. O. O. O.

O for ‘oh’. O for ‘ohnoCristabelwhathaveyoudonenow’.

Upstairs on the first floor, Rosalind sits at the dressing table in her new bedroom, although she hardly can call it new, for everything in it appears to be ancient. It is a room of aggressively creaking floorboards and fragile mahogany furniture lit by smoke-stained oil lamps: a collection of items that cannot bear to be touched. She hears laughter coming from elsewhere in the house and feels it as a rising tension in her shoulders. A maid stands behind her, brushing out Rosalind’s ink-dark hair, while another unpacks her cases, carefully extracting items of lingerie that have been folded into perfumed satin pads. Rosalind is aware of being examined, assessed. She wishes she could open her own luggage.

Rosalind checks her reflection in the dressing table mirror; composes herself. She has the pert face of a favoured child. Wide eyes, an upturned nose. This is complemented by her self-taught habit of clasping her hands beneath her chin, as if delighted by unexpected gifts. She does this now.

She has done well, despite everything; she must believe this. There had been sharp talk in London. Intimations of unwise dalliances. Suggestions she’d ruined her chances fraternizing with one too many beaux. But all those men had gone now. One by one, all the charming boys she had danced with and strolled with and dined with had disappeared. At first, it was awful, and then it was usual, which was worse than awful, but less tiring. After a while, it was simply what

happened. They left, waving, on trains and went into the ground in places with foreign names that became increasingly familiar: Ypres, Arras, the Somme.

The years of the war became an aching monotonous time, with Rosalind perched on a stiff armchair, trying to finish a piece of embroidery while her mother intoned the names of eligible young men listed in *The Times* as dead or missing. There were stories in the newspapers about ‘surplus women’ – millions of spinsters who would never marry due to the shortage of suitable husbands. Rosalind cut out magazine pictures of society brides and glued them into a scrapbook: an album of lucky escapees. She was fearful she would become a black-clad relic like her widowed mother, a woman alone, fussing over teacups and miniature monkey-faced dogs, entrapped by knitting baskets and petulant footstools.

Even when the Great War ended, there was nobody left to celebrate with. The handful of passable men who did come home spent parties swapping battle stories with hearty girls who had been in uniform, while Rosalind stood against a wall, her dance card empty. So when she met Jasper Seagrave, a widower looking for a young wife to provide a son and heir, it seemed a space had been made for her, a tiny passage she could crawl through into the orange blossom light of a wedding day, where a house of her own would await her.

And here she is. She has made it through. A winter wedding, not ideal, but still a wedding. Despite the sinus problems of the groom. Despite his insistence on the jolting carriage ride. Despite the view from the rattling carriage windows jerking backwards and forwards like scenery waved about by amateurish stagehands. Despite the clamping, clawing feeling in her heart. It could all be rectified.

Rosalind lifts her new diamond earrings to her ears. She watches in the mirror as one of the maids lays out her ivory chiffon peignoir, arranging it with respectfully covetous hands on the four-poster bed, which has a high mattress like the one in the story of the princess and the pea. Outside the darkening window, there is the crackle of a bonfire, the murmur of voices as the villagers arrive, and the rich, burnt smell of roasting meat.

Cristabel is standing in the garden by the fire, closely observing the suckling pig hung over the flames on a spit, a red apple jammed in its rotating mouth. She holds her stick in her right hand. Her left hand is in her coat pocket, fingers running over other newly acquired treasures found below stairs: a scrap of newspaper and a pencil stub. It is a kind of reassurance, to have these small things she can touch.

She can hear her nanny crashing through the house looking for her, her angry nanny voice running ahead of her like a baying pack of hounds. Cristabel knows what will happen next. She will be taken upstairs to her bedroom without

supper as a punishment for disappearing. The candle will be blown out and the door locked. The attic will become shadowy and endlessly cornered: a shifting blackness raked by the slow-moving searchlight of the moon, a great lidless eye.

Cristabel runs her thumb backwards and forwards over the stick's rippled bark, as she will later on, when she is lying in her narrow bed – as a way of turning over the time when she is not allowed to make a silly fuss. When she was a little baby she made a fuss, and her nanny made her wear the jacket with the arms that tied round to stop her climbing out of bed. She does not intend to make a fuss again.

Beneath her pillow, she keeps various sticks, several stones that have faces, and an old picture postcard of a dog owned by a king, which she found under a rug and named Dog. She can line them up, feed them supper, have them act out a story, and put them to bed. She can protect them and stroke their heads if they have shouting dreams, and make sure they don't get out on the cold wooden floor.

She crouches down next to a patch of snow, uses her stick to write her letters. O. O. O. She hears her nanny saying: 'For pity's sake, there she is. Digging in the snow, getting herself filthy.'

Cristabel likes the word snow. She whispers it to herself, then continues her work, her daily practice: shaping letters, making words, taking names.

S-N-O.

The Morning After

1st January, 1920

New year, new decade, new house, new husband. New as a new pin. Didn't her mother always say something about new pins? Rosalind feels pinned beneath the sheets of the marital bed. There is a rigidity to her spine that recalls the dinosaur skeletons in the London museums. She is fixed in place. An exhibit. White-capped maids come and go, lighting the fire and drawing the curtains, as busy and remote as gulls. Through the window, Rosalind can see bare trees flailing.

Jasper has said it may take time for her to adjust to the role of wife. He says she is young and that being with a man is new to her. (An image flits into her mind – an August evening near the boat shed with Rupert, his moustache scratching against her neck like wire wool – she shakes it away.) Jasper believes she will become familiar with her marital duties in time. She will become familiar with the unfamiliar. She is holding herself very still because it does not seem possible for these unfamiliar acts to exist in this room, alongside such steadfastly ordinary items as her silver hairbrush, the bedside lamp.

The maids bring her breakfast, balancing it on a tray on her eiderdown so she is presented with an unappealing display: a heap of gelatinous scrambled eggs cupped by the curving gristle of a sausage. She covers the tray with a napkin and reaches for her glass atomizer: pff, *pfifffff*, and Yardley Eau de Cologne hazes the air.

The maids pass and call, pass and call. Rosalind hears her own voice producing suitable words for them. 'Not much appetite. Thank you so much.' The maids take the words and the uneaten food away with them. There is a discreet spiral staircase hidden behind a Chinese screen in the corner of the room that allows them to come and go without using the door.

Soon she must attend to things. She must dress appropriately and do what is expected of her. She must be a – what was it Jasper said? His voice so horribly loud in her ear in the darkness, like the voice of a giant – she must be a sport. Rosalind looks up at the tapestry canopy hanging over the bed to find the pattern she had studied last night. It is hidden in the larger design, a sort of lopsided face looking back at her, repeated many times over.

The maids reappear, swooping about with garments and undergarments; they want to dress her and make her beautiful. Men used to tell her she was beautiful. They admired her and talked of their beating hearts, and she felt this as an exultation, an adoration. She never believed that what they called love would involve such obscene exertions. Brute weight and panting effort. A pile of flesh

smelling of port and tobacco, pressing the air from her body until she could not breathe. And the pain: pure white pain, flashing like stars behind her eyelids. No, this has nothing to do with love.

A maid approaches. 'Mr Seagrave has gone to Exeter on horse business, ma'am. He hopes you enjoy your first day in Chilcombe.'

Rosalind nods. She has no words left. She is blank as paper in her stiff sheets.

The maid comes closer, crossing the creaky floorboards. 'We met yesterday, ma'am. You may not remember. I'm Betty Bemrose. I'm to be your lady's maid.' Rosalind glances down to find that, most surprisingly, the maid has placed a hand on her own. 'Perhaps a bath, ma'am? You look wrung out.'

Rosalind looks at Betty's concerned face beneath her white maid's cap. It is round and freckled, and there is the unexpectedly reassuring pressure of her hand.

Betty continues, 'There are some bath oils, ma'am. Believe you brought them with you. That'd get you back on your feet.'

'Rose,' Rosalind says. 'There is a rose oil.'

'Lovely.'

'A dear friend gave it to me. He was an officer. Died in France.'

'So many gone,' says Betty, heading into the adjoining bathroom. 'My sister's husband was lost at Gallipoli. They never even found him. I had them bring up some hot water for you earlier, ma'am, so I only need add the oil.'

'My friend – he had freckles like yours.'

'No!'

'He was charming.'

Betty reappears in the bathroom doorway. 'When you're having a bath, I'll get the bed linen changed. Put some more coal on the fire. We only light the upstairs fires when there's people staying so they do take their time to get going.'

'He took me to The Waldorf once. Have you heard of it?'

'Can't say that I have, ma'am.'

'Simply everybody goes there.'

Betty comes to the bed and gently pulls back the covers. 'Let me help you, ma'am.'

Rosalind grips the young woman's arms and allows herself to be navigated to the adjoining room, where a cast iron hip-bath waits in front of a low fire, holding a shallow layer of still water, scented with roses.

Sitting on a step outside the kitchen door, Cristabel grips her stick firmly in her fist and writes in the dust: B-R-U-T-H-E. B-R-O-H-E-R.

'Try again,' says Maudie Kitcat, passing with a basket of dirty bed linen. 'You are near enough getting it though.'

The new Mrs Jasper Seagrave, bathed and anointed, leaves her bedroom and makes her way downstairs. She is unsure what is expected of her. Her husband is away, and she does not know how to find out when he might return. A letter from her mother has arrived, reminding her of the importance of establishing her authority with the staff, and Rosalind fears enquiring about her husband's whereabouts will not improve her standing in the eyes of the household.

However, she does make authoritative decisions on several matters: that sausages are repellent and fit only for dogs; that a modern bathtub must be installed; that the Christmas tree should be thrown out, along with the lilies (her mother always says lilies remind her of very *obvious* women). Also: a gramophone is to be purchased post-haste, and her husband's sullen daughter should have a French governess. *You*, writes Rosalind's mother in a forward-leaning hand, *are a new broom in the household! Brisk and firm!*

Despite her mother's instructions, Rosalind finds it difficult to issue orders to the male staff, many of whom, such as Blythe the butler, are old enough to be her father. But it seems apt that she, the young bride, should be unknowing. Hadn't she read in *The Lady* that 'men can't help but respond to the feminine charms of the innocent ingénue'? 'Be elegant,' continued the magazine, 'and a little spoiled, but not bored.'

Rosalind leans on the piano near a framed photograph of her new husband. She likes the words 'new husband', they have an exciting feel to them, like a gift box rustling with tissue paper. She likes to use the words even as she avoids looking at the photograph. *New husband. Elegant, not bored.*

The day passes. Other very similar days pass.

Rosalind subscribes to magazines and cuts out pictures of items necessary to her new life – hats, furniture, people – or notes them in a list. Next door to her bedroom is a small room, a boudoir, containing all the lady of the house might need: a decorative table at which to serve tea, a roll-top writing desk, an ivory letter opener. Rosalind sits at the desk and sifts through her magazine cuttings like a miner panning for gold.

With the help of Mrs Hardcastle the housekeeper, she orders a few essentials – silk pillowcases, hand creams – and waits for them. If she stands on the gallery landing, she can look down into the entrance hall, known as the Oak Hall, to see if anything is arriving. She discovers saying 'I'm having a little wander' will usually remove hovering servants. But if they continue to linger, she will then feel obliged to embark on a little wander.

Chilcombe is only modestly sized, nine bedrooms in all, but has been built and added to in such an arcane way that each part seems difficult to reach. Its residents and staff must make long excursions along convoluted corridors with a variable camber, sloping like a ship's deck. There are often unexpected steps,

sudden landings. The windows are narrow as arrow slits and the stone walls damp to the touch.

Rosalind would go out, but the outside world seems unapproachable. In London, the outdoors had been tidied up into parks. At dusk, the lamplighters with their long poles would light the gas lamps lining the pathways, golden circles flickering into life across the city. But in Dorset, the darkness descends so completely it is like falling into a coal cellar. There are no bandstands or statues. Merely ominous woods and a few acres of estate land, home only to ancient trees with fencing round their trunks, as if each were the last of its kind. One wizened oak is so decrepit its branches are propped up with metal staves. Why do they not let it die? Rosalind wonders, for it is very ugly; a bark shell of itself, strung up like a man shackled to a dungeon wall.

The back of the house overlooks a courtyard edged by brick outbuildings: a laundry, tool sheds and stables. Adjacent to the outbuildings is a walled kitchen garden tended by a gardener trundling back and forth with a wheelbarrow. Sometimes there are dead pheasants or hares hanging from the door handles. There are murmured, laughing conversations between servants. Rosalind watches from a landing window, careful not to be seen.

There is a village about a mile away, Chilcombe Mell, but when Rosalind and Jasper passed through on their journey from the train station, she had seen only a handful of thatched cottages, a few shops, a church and a pub. It seemed a half-abandoned place; the buildings all slumped together at the base of a valley as if they had slithered downwards in an avalanche. Beyond the village is a ridge of high land running parallel with the coast, a steep escarpment topped with straggly trees and prehistoric burial mounds. It is known as the Ridgeway and shuts out the world quite succinctly. Who will ever find her here?

Jasper had told her, during their courtship, that the Ridgeway was thought to be the hill the Grand Old Duke of York had marched his 10,000 men up and down. 'Why on earth did he do that?' she'd replied, knowing that this was not the desired response. His wooing of her had largely consisted of him presenting her with historical facts in the way a cat continually brings its owner dead mice, despite their perplexing lack of success. Even at the beginning of their relationship, there had been this awkwardness: a sense of tight smiles and small unpleasant acts of disposal.

When, one morning, there is a knock on the door of her boudoir, Rosalind is quick to respond, expecting Betty bringing her latest purchase. Instead, it is a stout, bearded man in tweed plus fours. Rosalind's surprise is considerable, as she has managed to entirely divorce the physical being of Jasper Seagrave from the words 'new husband'.

'Hear you've been shopping,' says Jasper.

‘A few items. Heavens, why did you knock? Does a husband need to knock?’

‘If you prefer, I won’t.’

‘It merely seems –’ Rosalind finds she has envisaged a different reunion between husband and wife. Shouldn’t he sweep in, declaring he has missed her terribly? Shouldn’t there be trinkets? Wouldn’t that make this all much better?

‘Taking Guinevere out this afternoon,’ says Jasper. ‘Don’t suppose you fancy coming along?’

‘Is that a horse? Isn’t it raining?’

‘Not much. No matter. See you at dinner.’

‘I’ve never been good with horses –’ and here she hesitates, uncertain how to address him, ‘Jasper. Dear.’

Jasper tugs his beard, then leans forward to plant a bristly kiss on her cheek. ‘No matter,’ he says again, before heading downstairs.

She calls for Betty to draw her bath before dinner. Betty natters away as she lays out Rosalind’s eau-de-Nil silk evening gown – long lines, finely pleated, beaded side-seam – and Rosalind is grateful. It helps settle her mind, which has become agitated since Jasper’s arrival. She reclines in the perfumed water and enjoys Betty’s talk as background noise: a sister’s engagement, plans for her upcoming birthday.

‘Your birthday – how old will you be, Betty?’

‘Twenty-three, ma’am.’

‘The same age as me.’

‘Wish I was the same size as you, ma’am. You’ll be pretty as a picture in this gown.’

Rosalind glances at her own white arms. ‘We may have to take the gown in, Betty.’

‘Have you been off your food again, ma’am? That’s a pity. I suppose you miss your London life. I know your mother writes to you often.’

Rosalind suspects her mother would disapprove of such intimate conversation with staff. She pictures her hunched over her writing bureau, scribbling: *A wife’s role is to submit to her husband! To be help-meet, inspiration and guide!*

‘My mother writes every day,’ she says. ‘I’m her only child.’

‘She must be proud of you, doing so well for yourself,’ says Betty.

A wife’s role, thinks Rosalind. To submit. Elegant. Not bored. She spins these words in her mind through the silences of dinner in the dark red dining room and the waiting in the bedroom afterwards and the time after that, when she looks up at the canopy to find the lopsided face watching her in her wife’s role, and there is something in that which allows her a little distance while it goes on:

the unspeakable intrusion, the nightshirt he never takes off bundled between their bodies like something he is trying to smother, and even though there is a part of her mind that fights, that baulks and resists, she does not move a muscle, she never cries out, she simply remains there, gripping the bed sheet with both hands, staring up past him.

How is she to believe it? That this violence is done to her nightly, and all around her, people sleep soundly in their beds, happy it is being done.

And a small finger in the attic traces B-R-O-T-H-E-R, B-R-O-T-H-E-R, B-R-O-T-H-E-R.

Prodigal Brother

February, 1920

A distant *putt-putt-putt* is the first sign that the long-absent Willoughby Seagrave, Jasper's younger brother and only sibling, is returning to Chilcombe. Cristabel, crossing the lawn with her newly appointed French governess, stops to listen. It is an entirely new sound that reaches her ears from across the full distance of twenty centuries; one that has never been heard on the estate before. Cristabel drops the dead snail she is carrying in order to concentrate. The French governess also pauses. *Mon Dieu, petite Cristabel. C'est une automobile! Oui, Madame, c'est vrai.* It is a motor car.

As it approaches, the noise of the vehicle clarifies: it becomes a rattling, rapid *dug-dug-dug-dug*. To a few of the men cleaning out the stables behind the house, the sound is chillingly reminiscent of German guns. But to Maudie Kitcat and Betty Bemrose, the servants tripping over themselves to reach the front door first, it is the sound of glamour and escape, of day trips and freedom, of London and Brighton, of Swanage and Weymouth. It is the sound of the future. It is Willoughby Seagrave.

Betty and Maudie are both ardent fans of Willoughby. Between them, they make sure they receive the letters he sends to Cristabel, the wartime niece he has never seen due to his military service in Egypt. Betty was taught to read by her father, who runs the pub in the village, so she is able to read Willoughby's letters out loud to Maudie and Cristabel, and what letters they are, full of deadly scorpions, desert moons and nomadic tribes. All recounted in Willoughby's looping handwriting with its upward-rising dashes and lavish capitalization; his voice both confiding and dramatic (*Mark my words, little Cristabel – this was an Adventure of the Highest sort!*).

His letters always begin *My dearest youngest Lady*, then launch headlong into a continuation of an escapade from a previous letter, so his correspondence becomes a never-ending tale of derring-do (*You will no doubt remember I had leapt from the bad-tempered Dromedary, lest Muhammad think me a fearful wobbler, and together we were pursuing the Senussi on foot through the Dunes – my men following, fatigued but resolute!*). At the end of every letter, Cristabel commands, 'Again. Again.' And so they must.

Why Willoughby is still galloping about the desert while everyone else has come home from the war is not entirely clear to them, but they have seen a photograph of him in his cream uniform that Jasper has put in a drawer, and he is just as dashing as the film stars in Rosalind's magazines. Twenty-three-year-old Betty enjoys Willoughby's adventures in the same way she enjoys a gossip

newspaper story about the Bright Young Things and their London parties. But for fourteen-year-old Maudie, Willoughby is overwhelming. When Betty reads out his letters, a violent flush creeps over Maudie's face, colonizing her features.

Maudie, the youngest kitchen maid and Cristabel's companion in the attic, is an orphan with a tendency towards intensity. She once locked a delivery boy in the laundry after he teased her about her wayward hair. There are rumours her family were smugglers. There are rumours the delivery boy found a headless rat in his bicycle basket. Maudie has grabbed Betty's hand and is now scrambling with her towards the front door as the vehicle containing Willoughby and a pile of battered luggage roars up the drive. They cannot miss his opening scene. For this is the promise of Willoughby: he is a performance.

The noise is such that Jasper, breakfasting in the dining room, pauses mid-kipper, and asks, 'Are we being invaded?'

Rosalind, at the far end of the dining table, sets down her teacup and holds a hand to her throat. From outside comes the bang of someone slamming a car door, followed by the cacophony of all the rooks that nest in the surrounding trees taking to the sky at once.

Blythe the butler performs a neat half-bow and is about to seek out the noise-maker, but the noise-maker is already with them, striding into the room, his face sooty with dirt, and a pair of driving goggles pushed on top of his wavy copper-coloured hair. Somehow, the space is jammed with people who weren't there a moment ago, a mass of them pressing in behind Willoughby, a crowd that includes Betty and Maudie, Mrs Hardcastle the housekeeper, the new French governess, and Cristabel, carrying a stick.

'Well,' says Willoughby, his voice warm and reassuring, with a slight laugh to it. 'Hello, everyone.'

His audience giggles and gabbles their replies, talking over the top of one another; nervous participants.

Cristabel pushes through the onlookers and solemnly raises her stick. Willoughby bows deeply as a pantomime prince, saying, 'You must be Cristabel. I can see your mother in you. What an honour to finally make your acquaintance.' Then he addresses Jasper and Rosalind, still seated at the table, 'Although, I heard a rumour in London that my brother is keen to extend his family – and why wouldn't he be?'

Rosalind blushes. Jasper opens his mouth but misses his cue, as Willoughby turns back to his audience.

'Betty Bemrose, I have missed you. How I longed for your capable hands in the desert. Nobody in Egypt darns a sock like you. I was threadbare and bereft.'

'Mr Willoughby,' replies Betty, bobbing up and down, both mortified and delighted.

Willoughby's tone moves so smoothly between registers, it is hard to determine whether he is starring in a romantic film, a Shakespearian comedy or a West End farce, and therefore difficult to know whether to be offended by him. Most give him the benefit of the doubt, as there is a line that curves upwards around one corner of his mouth that speaks of his pleasure in ambiguity and his enjoyment of all the benefits of all the doubts that have already been given to him – and his generous willingness to accept more.

Jasper sniffs. 'I presume from that terrible racket you've bought some ludicrous vehicle.'

'Wonderful to see you too, brother,' says Willoughby. 'I do have a ludicrous vehicle. Perhaps I could take you for a drive?'

'Might have told us what time you were arriving. Given us time to kill the fatted calf,' says Jasper, pulling his napkin from his collar.

'Spoil this lovely surprise? Heavens, no,' says Willoughby, although he is now smiling at the French governess. 'I rather fancy this young lady would enjoy a ludicrous vehicle.'

'Monsieur Willoughby –'

'I can see you as a racing driver, mademoiselle. Leather gloves on. Ripping along at thirty.' He pulls the goggles from his head and tosses them towards her. 'Give those a try.'

'Mr Willoughby, you'll be wanting a bath no doubt,' says Mrs Hardcastle, but Willoughby has taken the governess by the arm and is leading her back through the Oak Hall, saying, 'A quick spin. Just to get a feel for it.' Maudie's face, as she watches them pass, is as agape as a desert moon.

When Rosalind makes her way to the dining room window, she sees, in the pale light of a February morning: Willoughby, a French governess in driving goggles, an unsmiling housekeeper, and a child wielding a stick, all seated in an enormous open-top car that is chugging slowly along the drive, occasionally veering on to the edge of the lawn. This unusual activity is overlooked by Jasper, who is not quite smiling but not quite not, along with Betty, Maudie and a cluster of servants. Rosalind watches as the car accelerates, kicking up gravel, its French passenger screaming, and Willoughby shouting over his shoulder, 'We'll be back for lunch.'

Rosalind hears Jasper come in and retreat to his study at the back of the house. She wanders to the drawing room but cannot settle. She is disturbed by the servants, who are fluttering from room to room, window to window, like a flock of birds trapped in the house. In the end, she simply folds her hands, closes her eyes and waits. She is getting better at waiting.

The driving party returns to Chilcombe three hours later, dust-covered and bearing streaks of what looks like strawberry jam. Cristabel is fast asleep, still

clutching her stick, and being carried by Mrs Hardcastle. Rosalind is in the Oak Hall to meet them.

‘Goodness,’ she says, ‘somebody take that child upstairs and give her a good wash. I can hardly bear to look at her.’

She hears her mother in her voice and finds it reassuring. The disruption of Willoughby’s arrival has allowed her to step into a role that has thus far eluded her: the lady of the house. She straightens her back as the windswept motorists troop past. The French governess has a pink carnation tucked behind one ear. At the rear of the party, Willoughby lingers in the doorway, holding his motoring cap in his hand, ruefully stroking his moustache.

‘Why don’t you come in?’ Rosalind asks.

‘I fear I’ve made a dreadful first impression.’

‘It certainly isn’t usual for guests to take half the household off on a jaunt.’

‘No. It isn’t on,’ he says.

‘Whatever must the villagers think. Seeing you careering about like that.’

‘Do you care what they think?’

Rosalind frowns. ‘Of course.’

He shrugs. ‘I believe they rather enjoyed it. We stopped at the pub so they could have a good look at the motor.’

‘You went to the pub in the village?’

‘We did. Do you object?’

‘No. Yes,’ says Rosalind. ‘I mean, I might not have objected. Had I been asked.’

‘That’s what I hoped. Can we start again? On a proper footing this time. After I’ve had a bath. I’ll be so shinily clean and perfectly mannered you won’t recognize me.’ He smiles and it is the blinding burst of a photographer’s flash powder.

‘That sounds – acceptable,’ says Rosalind.

‘You are a good egg. I knew you would be.’

‘Did you? Why did you think that?’

But he is already moving past her, pulling his shirt from his trousers and bounding up the stairs two at a time, calling, ‘Is there hot water for me, Betty?’

Rosalind is left waiting by the door, holding her unanswered questions, her handful of lines.

Circling and Re-circling

March, 1920

Chilcombe is different with Willoughby in it. Even before Cristabel opens her eyes, she can sense a tingling shift in the air. She creeps out of bed at the same dark hour as Maudie, before anyone else is awake, and while Maudie heads to the scullery to begin her morning chores, Cristabel tiptoes down to the kitchen and heads outside to find Willoughby's motor car.

Maudie has told her the only good thing about getting up horribly early is that the last day has gone, but the new one not yet begun, and in that gap, the house belongs to Maudie. Cristabel feels the truth of this as she steps out under a deep blue-black sky, where the only sound is a blackbird's chirruping call, a run of silver stitches through the darkness. This breathless, shadowy world is full of possibility. Everything she touches now will be hers.

The motor car has been parked by the stables and covered with a tarpaulin, which is easy enough to climb under. Hoicking up her nightgown, Cristabel clambers into the driver's seat and examines the steering wheel, the polished wooden dashboard, and the glass-covered dials, very tappable. She moves the steering wheel from side to side. She says, 'Hold on to your hats, ladies.'

Sometimes, she looks at the back seat to see where she was when Uncle Willoughby gave her a jam tart, to be eaten with fingers, no plate or napkin, as he drove through puddles, making everyone shriek. 'Just for you,' he had said, 'no sharing allowed.'

'I don't share,' she replied, and he laughed so much she hadn't bothered to explain she wasn't given things, so she couldn't. She likes to hear him laugh. That irrepressible sound, bursting through the ordinary run of things like a cannonball. Cristabel kneels up on the leather seat and reaches for the rubber bulb of the brass car horn.

Rosalind wakes early, jolted from sleep by a loud noise from outside. Surely Willoughby isn't leaving already? Whenever he is with them, the house has a sense of exciting, preparatory activity – as if it were the start of a holiday – but there is always the accompanying fear he might suddenly depart.

She has Betty dress her quickly in order to be at the breakfast table as fast as she can, but she is the first to arrive. Willoughby and Jasper appear an hour later, demanding large quantities of food. Rosalind rarely manages to eat anything at breakfast, or even say anything beyond the usual pleasantries, but watches as the brothers bicker while devouring whatever is placed in front of them, overlooked by portraits of stern Seagrave ancestors.

Jasper's method of feeding is base and agricultural, the resolute troughing of a man who has long since eaten his way past culinary enjoyment, whereas Willoughby eats like a flamboyant painter – sweeping swathes of marmalade across crumbling toast, pouring milk into his teacup from a jug held so high the liquid becomes a single thin torrent, and licking butter from his fingers while waving down Blythe to request more bacon.

'Sister-in-law Rosalind, the current Mrs Seagrave,' says Willoughby, helping himself to the last of the eggs. 'What are your plans for the coming weeks?'

'Willoughby,' growls Jasper, from deep within his kedgeriee-dotted beard.

'Well –' says Rosalind.

'Because I'm off to Brighton for a few days, so you won't have to feed me, and you'll save on candles. I'm staggered you're still holding out against electrical lights, Jasper. My bedroom is black as the very grave.'

'Oil lamps are perfectly adequate,' says Jasper. 'I will not have unsightly cables strung across my land.'

'What are you doing in Brighton, Willoughby?' asks Rosalind. 'I've been to Brighton.'

'I'm to meet a man about an aeronautical adventure.'

Jasper sighs. 'Do be sensible, Willoughby. Our family funds are not a bottomless pit. As I keep telling you, there are good positions in the colonies for ex-military men. Saw your friend Perry Drake at the club last month – he's off to Ceylon to keep the locals in line.'

'Perry will be a credit to the Empire, I'm sure. But I don't want to do that. Mother and Father left me money to do whatever I want.'

'You can't fritter away your allowance on foolishness,' says Jasper.

'Why not?' says Willoughby. 'Don't you read the papers? The great estates are all being sold off. Why not spend our pennies on something enjoyable before we lose the lot? When's the last time you bought anything other than a horse? Why this pettifogging insistence on things being done as they've always been done?'

'I bought a piano. For Rosalind. For my wife.'

'Does anyone ever play it?'

'One has responsibilities –'

'The future's coming for you, brother, whether you like it or not,' says Willoughby. 'Talking of Perry, you've reminded me he met a chap in the army who would make a decent land agent for Chilcombe. Fellow called Brewer. Practical sort with a keen eye for a balance sheet. You'll need one of those soon.'

But Jasper is continuing along the conversational path he started on before there was any mention of land agents. 'One has responsibilities. We have staff who rely on us.'

Willoughby turns to Rosalind. 'Let me tell you about my aeronautical adventures, Mrs Seagrave. A newspaper is offering an obscene amount of money for the first aviator to fly non-stop from New York to Paris.'

'Wouldn't that be dangerous?' asks Rosalind.

'One might lose one's hat. But it's exhilarating up there, gazing down on the clouds. A white feather bed stretching all the way to the horizon.'

'Fatuous nonsense,' says Jasper.

'I've never been in an aeroplane,' says his wife.

'I'll fly down here. Land on the lawn,' says Willoughby.

'You'll do no such bloody thing,' says Jasper.

'Cristabel would be delighted,' says Willoughby.

'You should not be encouraging a love of aviation in an impressionable young girl.'

'Might be a little late there, Jasper. I've ordered a toy aeroplane for her and, do you know, I found one of those wooden swords we had as boys hidden in the stables – I've cleaned that up for her too.'

'Heaven's sake, Willoughby, that was my sword,' says Jasper.

'You couldn't land an aeroplane on the lawn, could you?' says Rosalind.

Willoughby smiles. 'Is that a dare?'

'I will not allow you to flap around on my lawn like a pheasant,' says Jasper.

'Eagle, surely.'

'I will not be provoked at my own breakfast table, do you hear?' barks Jasper, yanking the napkin from his collar.

'Everybody can hear, brother.'

Jasper stamps from the room, slamming the door. The tableware rattles: a thin silvery peal of cutlery versus crockery. Willoughby leans across the table to pull his brother's breakfast plate towards him. They hear a shout from the hall – 'The child's left her bloody twigs everywhere!' – Cristabel's voice crying, 'Retreat to the barricades!' then the sound of small feet running up the stairs.

Rosalind waits for the table to compose itself. 'Willoughby, surely we won't have to sell off Chilcombe? Jasper says it's been in the Seagrave family for generations.'

'You're a Seagrave now. What do you think?'

'I'm never sure what I think.'

'You need to have a son, then you can start to sound more confident. Two sons, ideally. An heir and a spare. No need for blushing, dear sister.'

'Don't you care what happens?'

'Mrs Seagrave, I'm the spare. None of this is mine, as far as the eye can see.' Willoughby gestures widely, then returns to Jasper's leftovers.

Blythe the butler enters, adjusting his white gloves. 'Will you be requiring anything else, sir?'

'Nothing at all,' says Willoughby. 'Have someone bring my car round.'

'Off so soon?' says Rosalind, but Willoughby is already leaving, taking Jasper's toast with him.

Breakfast with both Seagrave brothers in attendance often ends in this way, with food thievery and napkins thrown to the ground and dramatic exits, and the current Mrs Seagrave left alone at the dining table, staring at the sugar bowl for want of anything else to do. Whenever Willoughby goes, she feels she has missed a chance. She is eager to show him that she too is familiar with the wider world, conversant with the latest society news. She wishes she knew how to capture his interest, how to slow his bright carousel long enough that she might join in.

The more she studies him, the more Rosalind notices that the rules of behaviour do not seem to apply to Willoughby. His attendance at meals is haphazard; his handkerchiefs are Egyptian silk and jewel-coloured. He never joins the household when they dutifully troop off to Chilcombe Mell church on Sunday mornings, but Rosalind has seen him chatting cheerfully to men from the village. Jasper chastised him about it once and Willoughby replied he'd fought alongside such men and wasn't about to start talking down to them now.

After her afternoon rests, Rosalind often opens her bedroom curtains to see Willoughby's tall figure disappearing into the trees at the edge of the lawn, with Cristabel trotting at his side clutching a wooden sword. Betty tells her that they go down to the beach, that Willoughby is teaching his niece to catch crabs. She wonders who has allowed this. She wonders what the French governess she has employed is doing.

She has the sense there are no boundaries in Willoughby's life. It is so enviably free in contrast to her own, so adroitly nonchalant. Rosalind's life, first with her widowed mother and now with Jasper, seems an endless succession of Sundays: clock-marked, rule-bound days of manners and luncheons. How thrilling to discover that the rigid particularity of things – fish knives, tablecloths, topics of conversation – is as arbitrary as deciding that one day should be called Sunday and treated differently to all the rest. If Sunday is only Sunday because we call it Sunday, then why not call it Friday instead?

One morning, she meets Willoughby in the Oak Hall. He is on his way out; she is having a little wander. He nods towards the list she holds in her hand.

'Anything of importance, Mrs Seagrave?'

Rosalind looks down at the list. 'Oh. It's nothing.'

Willoughby frowns. 'Is it a shopping list? I'm off to London today.'

'No, this is my list of the shops I want to visit. When I go to London.'

He takes the list from her hand. 'Do you need anything from these shops?'

‘I won’t know until I visit them. I don’t know what’s in them as I’ve only read about them. In magazines. They are new shops and I want to see everything they have. Then I’ll choose. A hat perhaps. Or a bracelet. Something unique. I have very particular tastes.’ These nine sentences are the most she has ever said to him.

‘Right you are.’ He glances at the list, hands it back to her, then leaves the house with a wave.

Two days later, Betty brings a parcel to Rosalind. ‘Came in the second post for you, ma’am.’

Inside, Rosalind finds a beribboned gift box from the hat shop that was at the top of her list. It contains an illustrated colour catalogue describing every style of hat they sell, along with a note in looping handwriting that reads: *For Mrs Seagrave & her Very Particular Tastes. W.* It hums in her hands.

Rosalind wanders the gallery landing, absent-mindedly touching her throat, watching dusty columns of light fall through high windows into the hall, where the grandfather clock ticks and tocks. In her boudoir, she cuts pictures from her magazines, lets them float to the floor. She goes through her catalogue, circling and re-circling. The catalogue. The note. The catalogue. The note. Her turn coming round.

It becomes a habit then. Whenever Willoughby leaves for London, he visits Rosalind beforehand to enquire whether he should pay a visit to one of her shops.

Willoughby is practised in the art of being attentive to women, but he enjoys this diversion, primarily because of the specificity of Rosalind’s requests – ‘A soliflore scent from an established French house, but not eau de toilette, it should be eau de parfum or nothing at all’ – so unexpected, coming from his brother’s demure young wife.

He enjoys too the ceremonial return to Chilcombe: carrying in a pile of boxes and watching as Rosalind examines their contents, intent and focused as a jeweller, her acceptance or rejection of items entire and irreversible. It is the only time he sees her make decisions without deferring to Jasper, and he finds it captivating.

Sometimes, he will pick out an item himself, testing his eye against her own. He will tell her the shop manager suggested it, and wait for her reaction. It amuses him that his choices are consistently rejected; he feels sure if he offered them as gifts, she would claim to adore them.

Only one of his secret purchases – the new Guerlain women’s scent Mitsouko – passes her test. She tips a drop on to her wrist, sniffs it, then screws up her nose. ‘Awfully heavy.’ But as he is about to re-seal the elegant square bottle, which has as its stopper a glass heart, she takes it back from him. ‘No, I’ll

keep it. It's not altogether vulgar.' When he leaves, her face is at her wrist, breathing it in, with an absorbed expression.

These moments come back to him at odd times. Her delight at the arrival of the items, her glee in the unwrapping. The lilac veins in her wrists. The shadows beneath her eyes. How she stared. She seemed to be looking at more than a few items in gift boxes: it was as if she saw the whole world in miniature; the eye of the botanist trained on the microscope.

One afternoon, Willoughby passes Cristabel on the gallery as he is carrying a stack of parcels to her stepmother.

Cristabel brandishes her wooden sword and says, 'Halt, stranger. I'm waiting for a brother. Is he in there?'

'Afraid not,' Willoughby replies. 'Both hands used on a broadsword, by the way.'

'He will be here soon. Maudie told me what wives do.'

'Darling girl, don't listen to the maids' silly chatter.'

'Maudie isn't silly. Why don't you have a wife?'

'I haven't found one that wasn't already taken. Besides, they seem like hard work. Expensive too. I prefer to spend my money on motors.'

'When will I have a motor?'

'When you stop frowning at your favourite uncle. We'll go for a spin tomorrow, shall we? You can bring that French governess of yours. I do enjoy her company.'

'I can't bring her.'

'Why ever not?'

'New mother has sacked the governess.'

'*Quel dommage.*'

'Maudie says new mother doesn't like anyone prettier than she is.'

'Maudie isn't silly at all, is she? What is this ferocious scowl for now?'

'I'm not pretty. But new mother still doesn't like me. But I don't care about that.'

'You shouldn't. Pretty girls can be terrifically dull. Remember, two hands on the hilt. Weight on the back foot. Better.'

Entreaties

March, 1920

Weymouth is full of sand. A chilly easterly wind is blowing across the wide expanse of the bay, skittering over the white tops of waves and whisking fine sand from the beach, so it gusts in stinging flurries towards the seafront hotels, neglected after years of diminished wartime trade. A line of vacant faces squinting out at a battleship-grey sea. To Jasper, the seaside town feels deserted, a final outpost.

He walks the length of the Esplanade, a broad walkway curving along the beach. In the previous century, it was promenaded upon by royalty, but now there are only wounded Anzacs – soldiers from Australia and New Zealand stationed in the Dorset town to recuperate, pushed along in blanketed wheelchairs, with empty sleeves or trouser legs tucked up and neatly pinned. Jasper considers it a cruel twist of fate that brave men used to the Southern Ocean's azure seas should wind up on England's insipid South Coast, the ocean's limpest handshake.

Scattered among the leftover Anzacs are a few early season visitors, gripping their hats on this blowy day, and down on the beach a handful of children are paddling, skinny limbs pinking with the cold. A pair of old-fashioned bathing machines stand empty at the water's edge. A sign saying 'Back Soon' is propped against the striped tent housing the Punch and Judy puppet show.

At the far end of the Esplanade, there is a red-brick terrace of guest houses, backing on to the town's harbour. Ships' masts are visible above the rooftops, like a series of crucifixes. The penultimate building has a wooden billboard propped by its front door, which proclaims it to be the residence of MADAME CAMILLE, MYSTICAL PSYCHIC adviser to KINGS AND QUEENS, TELLER OF FORTUNES — SHE SEES ALL! SHE KNOWS ALL! This is followed by a chalk illustration of a single eye.

Brushing sand from his beard, Jasper knocks on the door. A young boy lets him in and points up a dark staircase. Madame Camille has a narrow room on the first floor. Something red and gauzy has been draped over a standard lamp, giving the space a rouged, infernal glow. Madame Camille herself is seated at a baize card table by a window overlooking the harbour, her hands resting on a glass ball. Jasper presumes it is meant to be a crystal ball, although it could be a ship's buoy scooped from the harbour for all he knows.

He sits down opposite her and places three coins on the table. Madame Camille's eyes flicker over them, quick as a lizard's tongue. She is thin-faced, with a fringed scarf draped over scraggly hair.

'You've come for someone you've lost,' she says, her accent unfamiliar. Irish perhaps. Or pretending to be.

Jasper is startled by the informality of her address. 'I have. My wife. My first wife, Annabel. I overheard a servant of mine saying you contacted her late husband, and I –'

'Annabel. A strong woman. They don't always want to be contacted, the strong ones. Reluctant to accept it themselves, you see.' Madame Camille rubs the glass ball.

'I see.' He isn't sure he does.

'Do you have an item of hers that still remembers her touch? Something she always kept with her?'

Me, he thinks. I still remember her touch. He frowns, then reaches into his pocket to find Annabel's accounting notebook, each page filled with the miniature Sanskrit of her pencilled numbers. Madame Camille takes the notebook, closes her eyes, breathes loudly through her nose. Outside, a paddle steamer lets go a brassy hoot from its funnel as it makes its way out to sea.

'I hear voices,' says Madame Camille.

Jasper whispers, 'Is she there? May I speak to her? I wanted to explain about Rosalind. A sense of duty compelled –'

'A spirited lady.'

'Is she cross with me?'

Madame Camille frowns. 'She's distracted. Keeps searching about. Did she lose something dear to her? Jewellery? A set of keys?'

'Nothing springs to mind.'

'It can be the most unlikely item – a window left open – it bothers them awfully.'

'I keep the windows closed as a rule. May I speak to her now?'

'She's calling out, bless her heart.'

'For heaven's sake, why can't you tell her I'm here? Or at least give me some proof that this woman is truly my Annabel.'

Madame Camille half opens her eyes. 'Not in the business of proof, mister. I gives you what they gives me.'

'Ridiculous!' Jasper exhales, spittle ricocheting through his whiskers.

Her eyes are fully on him now, undiluted, sharp as a fox. 'Perhaps that's all then.'

'This is what I get for my money?' says Jasper, noticing at that moment the money he placed on the table is no longer on the table.

'It comes as it will,' she says, infuriatingly unconcerned.

From the corridor comes a deep masculine cough.

Jasper stands up and barrels furiously from the room, past the young boy who let him in, now accompanied by a large man in vest and braces with great hams for arms, and rushes back down the stairs, into the daylight, and the sudden

shock of garish seaside life is nauseating: the limbless Australians, the discordant jangle of a pipe-organ in the pleasure gardens, and the nasal cries of Mr Punch grappling with his wife. *Thwack, thwack, thwack. That's the way to do it.*

Jasper hurries along the Esplanade, his face repeatedly crumpling in a kind of agony. How stupid to think he could talk to Annabel. Utterly idiotic to go to that fraudulent gypsy. He finds a handkerchief. Blows his nose loudly. Plonks himself down on a wooden bench. Looks out along the shore.

He is heartily sick of Dorset. Every morning, reading the newspaper, he will seek out advertisements describing land for sale in Cumberland, in the north of England, where he and Annabel had spent their honeymoon. Hadn't honeymooned with Rosalind. Hadn't seen the point.

In Cumberland, everywhere you looked, you faced the kind of epic landscape that could make a man take up religion or watercolour painting. But Jasper is trapped on the crumbling bottom edge of England, constantly badgered by disgruntled tenants and staff, all wanting more from him when he has increasingly little to give. He thinks of the accounting notebook in his pocket, how it changes from Annabel's neat numbers to his own chaotic scribble, dotted with question marks.

Rising taxes have forced him to sell off two tenant farms and he is only clinging on to the last having agreed to fix the rent at pre-war rates. His own family are more of a hindrance than a help. Rosalind has eye-wateringly expensive tastes, and although she is due to inherit a hefty amount when her mother dies, said mother refuses to shuffle off. Meanwhile, Willoughby is burning through his allowance at a flagrant rate. Whenever Mr Bill Brewer, his new land agent, shows him the household ledger, Jasper can see – for the first time in his life – gaps, debts, vacancies. Just last week, his one remaining gardener had gone off to work in a Torquay hotel.

There are only a few of Jasper's original staff left. Barely a handful had returned from the war, and most had left something of themselves behind on the battlefield, if not a foot or an arm, then whatever it was that controlled their emotions. Jasper recognized the flighty look in their eyes as that of a horse after a thunderstorm: there could be no talking reason to them. They would have to come round in their own time, if they ever did.

In an attempt to balance the books, he had sold a few family portraits. He felt a twinge of sadness as Great-Aunt Sylvia was carried away, but then a diminuendo of that feeling, as if her solemn face were watching him from a train moving into the distance. When housed in Chilcombe, the portraits had been part of a reassuring continuum, but once given a price, something of them vanished. The train containing Great-Aunt Sylvia rounded a bend; the smoke from its chimney rose up and merged with the clouds.

Jasper blows his nose again, a mournful bugle call. The sea is still grey, the wind still cold. Somewhere along the diminishing coastline lies his home. His ancient home containing a wife he doesn't love and a child he doesn't know how to love and an empty space where his love used to be.

Sometimes, when Cristabel wakes in the night, she cries, 'I'm up here!' as if answering a question about her whereabouts, but nobody in the house has asked the question, nobody in the house has called for her. From her tiny bedroom on the other side of the roof space, Maudie hears Cristabel shout out once, twice, then a mumbled version and then nothing, just the silence of children, held high in the pitch-black attic, listening, waiting.

Every morning, after breakfast, Rosalind will go to her writing desk to compose charming letters of invitation, hoping to begin the life she imagined when she said her wedding vows. Each missive she sends out she imagines as a plucky messenger pigeon flying over the great wall of the Ridgeway. Every letter includes an enticing mention of *Jasper's brother Willoughby – a war hero!* – and folding him into an envelope gives her a strange pleasure, as if she were sealing Willoughby inside her future plans. *Do come!* she writes. *Do!*

But replies to her entreaties are few.

One evening at dinner, she says, 'Jasper, perhaps we could consider taking a house in London for the season?'

'I stay at the club if I need a bed,' he replies.

'What about when your daughter comes out? It would be useful then.'

Jasper coughs. 'Long way off.' He pushes back his chair and leaves the room.

Left alone at the long table, Rosalind senses the scuttling approach of servants and lifts her smile in readiness.

'Everything satisfactory, ma'am?'

'Perfect. Thank you.'

Later, lying in her newly installed bathtub, Rosalind calls to Betty, 'The child, Jasper's child, how old is she?'

Betty's freckled face appears in the doorway. 'Just turned four, ma'am. Had her birthday last week, in fact.'

'Is she coming on all right, do you know?'

'I believe so, ma'am. They say she is a bright girl. Already learnt her letters. She's a funny one, Cristabel. The other day –'

'Could you fetch a towel, Betty?'

'Right away, ma'am.'

Rosalind swooshes gently to and fro, luxuriating in her new tub, until Betty arrives with the towel, then she heaves herself from the suction of water, rejoining gravity.

At her dressing table, she idly plays with the contents of her jewellery box while Betty brushes her hair. 'Betty, does the girl Cristabel resemble her mother? I've never seen a photograph.'

Betty pulls a face. 'Hard to tell, ma'am. Mrs Annabel, God rest her soul, had what you might call strong features.'

'Ah,' says Rosalind, meeting her own gaze in the mirror. The reassurance of her face. Its fine planes. Its surety.

Betty says, 'I've let out your red gown as you asked, ma'am. It was tight at the waist, wasn't it? Good to see you've got your appetite back.'

So First, the Primroses

April, 1920

Betty was the one to tell Rosalind. Pragmatic Betty with her numerous sisters and accumulated knowledge of what goes on within the mysterious, treacherous innards of women.

Rosalind was in her rose-scented bath, casting an assessing eye over her floating Ophelia body. 'I must stop eating rich desserts, Betty. I'm developing a paunch.'

Betty paused in her folding of towels. 'Well, ma'am. I was meaning to say. My eldest sister gets a bump there when she's expecting.'

'Expecting what?'

'Expecting a baby, ma'am. When she's in the family way.' Betty kept her attention on the towel in her hands. 'Forgive my impertinence, ma'am, but do you – have you noticed any change to – has your monthly visitor arrived of late?'

Rosalind said nothing. There had been the word 'baby' and then her ears had tucked themselves shut, neat as an otter's, so Betty's voice had become an unintelligible *wurble, wurble, wurble*. She held herself very still. There was something in her. They had put something in her. How dare they intrude upon her like that.

Betty looked at her. 'Ma'am?'

'I won't be joining my husband for dinner tonight,' Rosalind heard herself say, and was surprised at the civility of her voice. 'Would you be so kind as to let Mrs Hardcastle know? That will be all.'

Rosalind stayed in the claw-footed bathtub until the water went cold, only her face, knees and breasts poking above the surface: a pale archipelago. Floating in the filmy water, held up by it, she hung suspended above the rest of the house. She listened to the continuation of evening activity: the patter of servants on staircases; the chiming of the grandfather clock; a rook cawing outside, jawing companionably on like an after-dinner speaker. Everything was as it should be, as it always would be.

When she sank a little, so her ears were submerged, she heard her own heartbeat very close by. Lying there, goosebumped and shivering, Rosalind wished, for the first time in her adult life, that she could see her mother, but then she remembered how her mother was, and wished instead she had been given a different mother. One like Betty's, perhaps, who ran the pub with her husband and was prone to being overly generous with the gin but was someone you could tell your troubles to. But how foolish to think in such a way. Your mother was your mother, whether you liked it or not. You had no choice in the matter. If she had a

gin-swilling mother who worked in a village pub, where on earth would she be now? Certainly not in a claw-footed bathtub. Certainly not in possession of pure rose bath oil. And Rosalind watched the light on the bathroom wall shift in slow degrees from gold to peach to grey.

The following morning, a doctor came into her bedroom.

Rosalind presumed Betty had told Mrs Hardcastle about her body's new bulge, and this information had been passed on to both a doctor and to Jasper, as there was a posy of primroses on her breakfast tray. She was relieved by this, as she could not think how to tell Jasper herself. So first, the primroses, and then the doctor, all before she was out of bed. Now she was the carrier of a possible Seagrave son and heir, her husband would give her flowers and allow strange men into her room to examine her.

Dr Harold Rutledge was his name. A friend of Jasper's. Stout and ruddy as a toby jug. Rosalind kept her eyes on the canopy above the bed as he ran his hands over her abdomen, leaning close enough that she could smell last night's brandy on his breath.

'All seems tip-top. Plenty of rest, no horse-riding, but normal marital relations can continue,' Dr Rutledge said, then laughed, an oddly triumphant noise. 'Good old Jasper,' he added, pulling aside the top of her nightgown to press a cold stethoscope to her breast.

Rosalind wondered what he could hear through his metal instrument. She imagined a hollow hissing of reeds. She was aware of a crowded, desperate feeling in her mind that only abated when she concentrated on a far corner of the canopy.

The doctor removed the stethoscope and closed her nightgown as casually as a man turning the page of a newspaper. 'Excellent, excellent,' he said.

Everybody seemed very pleased, and, despite the fact Rosalind didn't tell a single soul, everybody seemed to know, almost immediately. Village children appeared with bouquets. The butcher's boy arrived with a parcel of meat. Even the vicar in Chilcombe Mell church beamed benevolently at her from the pulpit while speaking of fruitfulness. It was as if they had been waiting for this all along.

She remembered how welcoming they had been when she arrived. Their eager hands opening doors, carrying bags, offering tea. They had pressed her clothes, poured her wine, and she had felt rather royal, as if she were someone of importance. But they hadn't wanted her at all, had they? They had wanted it.

Rosalind retired to her bedroom, pleading nervous strain, admitting only visits from Betty or Mrs Hardcastle or Willoughby, if he came with things from London. Jasper, surprisingly acquiescent, retreated, muttering, 'Whatever you wish.'

Dr Rutledge called occasionally to examine her expanding stomach. He advised she take up cigarettes, saying women were prone to hysteria when with child. ‘Brain’s starved of nutrients. Try a few every day after meals and you’ll be right as rain.’

The cigarettes (provided by Jasper) (in a silver case engraved with her initials provided by Willoughby) were vile, but she persevered. There was something about the way they set her head spinning she almost enjoyed. She imagined herself with a stylish cigarette holder, at a party in Belgravia. She didn’t like to look down at her body any more. She preferred the version of herself she was ordering clothes for: the society hostess with the twenty-one-inch waist.

Deep in her belly, the implanted creature grew. She did her best to ignore it, but she was hot and tired, a bloated vessel. At night, even with the windows wide open, she tossed and turned in her own sweat, her body generating heat like a smelting furnace. Every morning she woke exhausted, with a sour metallic taste in her mouth, as if she had spent the night sucking coins.

Of course, they had not thought to tell Cristabel. The thought did not enter their minds. It remained outside their minds, along with most matters pertaining to Cristabel. Such thoughts were items left uncollected, of little value. And, as often happens, these forgotten items were picked up by servants.

Maudie Kitcat peered into Cristabel’s attic bedroom one evening and said, ‘You’re to have a brother or sister, have they told you?’

Cristabel looked up from her bed where her collection of stones with faces were building themselves a home under her pillow to protect themselves against the ravaging attacks of the postcard of a dog called Dog. ‘The brother?’

‘Could be.’

The stones with faces came rushing out of their pillow shelter, their expressions twisted cries of joy and relief, and the postcard of a dog called Dog was tipped over, like a great wall.

Maudie watched, with her curiously fixed stare, and continued, ‘Betty says if they don’t have a boy, they’ll keep going till they do.’

‘Where is the brother living now?’ asked Cristabel.

‘In Mrs Seagrave’s belly. That’s why she’s gone fat.’

Cristabel reached under her bed to grab a few sticks from her stick pile to build a little bonfire. She carefully leant the sticks against each other, then said, ‘I didn’t live in her belly.’

‘You didn’t.’

‘I lived here. In this place. This is my place.’

‘That’s right.’

‘The brother will live here too. With me. I will look after him.’ She looked at Maudie who nodded, then walked away down the attic corridor.

Cristabel placed the postcard called Dog on the bonfire and put the stones with faces in a circle around it. There would be a great feast tonight. A postcard of a dog called Dog would be roasted with a red apple in its mouth. There would be fresh snow. And jam tarts. And everyone would have seconds. And no one would go to bed.

Under Beds

Under Cristabel's Bed

Feathers, sticks, sheep's wool, a seagull skull, a dried ball of glue, one large lobster claw.

Three snails in a jar.

A trench lighter.

A wooden sword.

A toy aeroplane.

Drawings of soldiers, sometimes accompanied by dogs, camels or bears, captioned: HOLD FAST FOR ENGLAND and BROTHERS UNITE and LOYAL PALS and SHE-BEAR SUCKLED THEM.

Lists of names, some crossed out.

One toffee, half eaten, rewrapped.

Under Maudie's Bed

Four of Willoughby's letters to Cristabel.

An old piece of soap found in a guest bedroom.

A book about hunting African wild beasts taken from the study.

A pocketknife.

Lumps of chalk found on the Ridgeway.

A slate on which the letters of the alphabet are practised.

A diary.

A pencil.

Under Rosalind's Bed

Shoe boxes containing the following:

Invitations and dance cards for events held during June and July 1914.

A napkin taken from the Café Royal, London, during the early hours of 17th July, 1914.

Six theatre tickets.

Two cinema tickets.

A daisy chain, pressed and dried.

Thirty-seven illustrations of bridal wear cut from magazines between 1913 and 1918.

One hundred and fifty-two magazine clippings depicting items including: Victrola gramophones, anti-wrinkle turtle oil creams, illustrations of correct dining etiquette, Sioux Indian ornaments, electrical reading lamps, croquet mallets, Turkish cigarettes, camphorated reducing creams, luxury hosiery, Royal Worcester teacups, and revitalizing health tonics to restore natural vigour to body and mind after times of great strain.

An article entitled 'Which Kind of Marriage Turns Out Best?' cut from *Woman's Weekly*, February 1919, following sections underlined:

He has a horror of the lip-salving, opinionated girl of today. He just wants a wife with one or two ideas in her head and a home

A woman who is loved has no need of ambition

A man may run straight – but a woman must!

Without passionate love

Magnetic spark

Photographs cut from various women's magazines captioned:

The tide of progress that leaves a woman with the vote in her hand but scarcely any clothes on her back must now ebb and return her to her femininity.

A free art plate of Florence La Badie, effervescent star of Thanhouser Film Corporation.

Off to the Paris fashion parades in a giant aeroplane from Croydon!

Articles entitled:

'The Latest Ways of Warming Homes'

'A Loving Wife's Burden'

'Life Stories: At the Crossroads!'

An advertisement: *Maternity Corset: in all the latest designs, giving a QUITE ORDINARY APPEARANCE to the wearer – a physical as well as a mental comfort. Spotted broche, ribbon trim, side lacing allows for adjustment.*

A Sleeping Woman

August, 1920

One summer afternoon, Willoughby says, 'This used to be my mother's bedroom. It was very different then.'

'How so?' Rosalind looks up from leafing through fabric samples. Now seven months pregnant, she is propped up in bed wearing a floral nightgown and matching bed jacket.

Willoughby has draped his long frame across the delicate chair that sits beside her dressing table. Betty is in the adjoining bathroom, cleaning the new sink. A gift box lies on the floor, its lid half off, something chartreuse and silky spilling out of one corner like liquid.

He says, 'Mama favoured a funereal style of decor. Windows closed against contagions. Curtains drawn to protect the furniture. I had to sit by her bed in the gloaming while she read the Bible.'

'The only books my mother considers acceptable are the Bible and Debrett's,' replies Rosalind. 'She thinks reading unbecoming in a woman. Told me I should never develop a taste for fiction.'

'You're fond of magazines,' says Willoughby, smoothing his moustache.

'I prefer the pictures to the stories.'

'So do I.'

'I'm grateful to my mother, of course,' says Rosalind, after a pause.

'I'm not. I couldn't breathe around her. I'm talking of my mother, you understand.' Willoughby ruffles his hair, looks about the room. 'I much prefer it now. Even with this flowery wallpaper.'

Rosalind blinks. 'Rose damask. From Haynes of Paddington. I'm glad you approve. Do you approve?'

Willoughby laughs, a rich, dark sound. 'I do. The room's inhabitant is also much improved. Although I rarely see her outside of this room.'

'I hope to be up on my feet soon, but Dr Rutledge tells me I should rest,' says Rosalind. 'It's not unpleasant though. Quite soporific. I lie here and I imagine the parties I will have, in the autumn, and at Christmas. I lie here and picture the parties and what I will wear and absolutely everything to do with them. After that, I close my eyes and think of nothing. I simply stop for a while, and everything continues about me, almost as if I weren't here at all. Isn't that strange.' During the course of this speech, her hands become restless, her fingers twisting into her hair.

Willoughby shifts in his seat. 'I look forward to these imaginary parties.'

In the bathroom, Betty turns on the taps in the new sink. The pipes give a great clanking boom.

Willoughby smiles a little downward smile as he stands up. 'I should let you rest.'

Rosalind watches him leave.

During the last weeks of her pregnancy, Willoughby continues to visit Rosalind, bringing requested items from Mayfair boutiques. After examining the purchases, Rosalind often falls asleep. It occurs to Willoughby that he has never seen a woman sleep in this way before. When next to a sleeping woman, he is usually asleep himself. Or picking up his clothes on the way to the door. He remains in the chair by the dressing table, murmuring to Betty, 'I'll sit here a while, see if she comes to. Perhaps you could fix her some fresh flowers.'

He likes to observe Rosalind's face, which is like a child's as she sleeps, both innocent and furious. Sometimes she frowns, as if concentrating; sometimes a smile repeatedly twitches the corners of her mouth, as if she were greeting a line of people. Sometimes, most peculiarly of all, he can see the movement of the baby in her belly, her nightgown briefly distended by a miniature foot or fist pushing outwards.

Mrs Hardcastle had given him a hard stare when she met him emerging from Rosalind's room one afternoon, carefully closing the door behind him. 'Mrs Seagrave needs her sleep, Mr Willoughby.'

'That's precisely what she's getting,' he replied, hands held up in innocence.

He isn't unaware, of course, of the body beneath the nightgown, still slender despite its protruding stomach. A sleeping woman is not conscious of the ways her buttons can gape, or how her bed sheets can wind about her legs.

But there is something else too: he is enjoying this time because it is unlike any other time he has spent with a woman. He is a man for whom doors and nightgowns have opened easily. The world, for Willoughby, is entirely accessible; it lies about like the spoils of war, waiting for him to take it. But his exchanges with Rosalind are bound about with restrictions and propriety. They feel decorous, courtly, soothing. The presentation of gifts in a quiet room. The pulling of a ribbon on a parcel. Nothing more.

Behind the veil of her eyelids, Rosalind roams the darkness. She has noticed a peculiar thing. She feels the presence of Willoughby most intensely if she closes her eyes. She feels he is somewhere in the darkness with her, and they are drifting around each other like balloons. There is a sense that if she presses forward, pushes through the darkness, she will come upon him, sprawled in an armchair by a dressing table, swinging one leg to and fro like a pendulum, waiting in a room much like the one she is in now.

Increasingly, she cannot sleep when he is in the room with her, although she dutifully tries to. She focuses on the black behind her eyes and wills it to let her through, concentrating on limiting her movements, controlling her breathing. Sometimes she drifts into a doze and then returns, drifts then returns, like a tethered boat on a moving tide.

Outside, the summer burns on. The sunlight through the floral curtains tinges the room warm pink like the inside of a conch shell or the fleshy glow of the world as seen by a child with its fingers pressed over its eyes.

One day in the last week of August, Rosalind is lying on her high bed, elegantly draped in a masquerade of sleep. Betty has gone to the kitchen, dispatched by Willoughby to fetch a jug of water. Suddenly, Rosalind hears his chair creak. He is moving. And she knows, with a tightening of breath in her throat, that he knows she is not asleep. His voice, when it comes, is close to her ear, soft. 'Stay just as you are.'

She hears the sound of a chair being pulled across the wooden floor, then the sound of him sitting down near her. She remains perfectly still, unable to admit to her charade, even though he has spoken to her. The darkness behind her eyes has shrunk to nothing. She exists only in her throat, the tips of her nostrils. She could exist in this single moment for ever – then the chair scrapes back and she hears him leave the room.

He comes again the next day. Betty is dispatched. The chair next to the bed.

He comes again a few days later. Betty leaves. The chair pulled closer.

He comes again and it is the first day of September and he places his hand on her torso at the place where her stomach begins to swell. He leaves it there for a moment, as if monitoring something, then briefly stretches out his fingers like a pianist reaching for an octave so that his thumb touches the underside of her breast. They remain like this for a while, neither of them moving, before he takes his hand away. But a moment later, it returns, landing on her side, then moving to her wrist, her waist, her throat.

Rosalind, lying back under the weight of her belly with her eyes closed, is unaware of his movements until they arrive fleetingly on her body. It is as if she were a great mountain range and his hands the tiny, feathery touches of explorers with their charts and compasses, slowly making their way across the slumbering earth, casting their ropes about her.

(But where is Jasper? He is at the stables, the races, the auction, the church, the one decent restaurant in Sherborne, the gentlemen's club in Marylebone: he is anywhere at all that is nowhere near a wife within weeks of childbirth. He exists in a thin seam of usual haunts that allow him the luxury of looking neither up nor down

nor side to side but simply straight ahead, most often through the bottom of a brandy glass, because he cannot look anywhere else.)

And when her waters break, when Willoughby is above her in her airless bedroom on a warm September afternoon, it is as if Rosalind has become molten; turned from flesh into liquid and left her own body behind.

Cristabel and the Stories

August, 1920

There is much for Cristabel to do before the arrival of the brother. Maudie says babies are tiresome and she'd as soon leave them on the lawn for the rooks to have at their eyes, but Cristabel feels this is because Maudie does not have any brothers. Or sisters, for that matter, but brothers are the main thing.

A brother, according to the books Cristabel has read, is a plucky lad full of life and go, ripe for adventure. Uncle Willoughby is a brother, and he is much more adventurous than her father. Cristabel's brother will need a wooden sword like hers, and she has put some of her stones with faces into his cradle to act as companions, for on windy nights there is a howling in the attic that even a plucky brother might find alarming.

She is also planning to tell the brother stories. Her current charges – the stones and the postcard called Dog – are always hungry for stories. She reads to them from discarded newspapers or Uncle Willoughby's letters. Sometimes, she even manages to steal a book from her father's study. She is forbidden to enter the study or touch the books, but if she ever sees the room unattended, she will dart in and stuff a book under her dress. Only one at a time though, and returned quickly, so there are no telltale gaps left on the shelves.

The study contains collections of Greek myths; leather-bound volumes of *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*; a book called *Moonfleet* about smugglers, and, best of all, a row of adventure stories by someone called G. A. Henty, with titles like *At the Point of the Bayonet* and *The Bravest of the Brave*. According to the author's introductions, they are based on true episodes in England's glorious history. It is from these books she has learnt the ways of brothers.

The Henty books are cloth-bound, with gold-lettered titles and illustrated covers bearing crossed rifles and jousting knights. Each is carefully inscribed with the same scribbly name on the frontispiece – *J. Seagrave Esq.* – and the pages repeatedly marked with greasy fingerprints. When Cristabel first opened Henty's *The Dash for Khartoum*, a shower of old pie crumbs fell from its pages into her lap. They turned out to be edible.

Cristabel has enjoyed every one of these books and memorized as much of them as she can, but she would like the brother to have something new, not stolen. A story to keep.

'Do you have any stories?' she asks the French governess, who rolls her eyes and says, '*Non.*'

'Do you have any stories, Betty?'

‘What do I want with stories?’ replies Betty, who is on her knees, blacking the grate in the attic.

‘You read the stories in the new mother’s magazines.’

‘They’re romance, Miss Cristabel. Not fitting for the likes of you.’

‘Why? What’s in them?’

Betty sits back heavily on her haunches, her face red and perspiring. ‘They’re about weddings and that.’

Cristabel frowns. The brother will not want stories about weddings. He will no doubt find them as tedious as she does, so she resolves to make the best of what she has. She can read him the letter from Uncle Willoughby about discovering a scorpion in his boot in Constantinople, and it can be followed by the newspaper report she found about the hanging of an Ontario man who took hours to die, and she can finish with Henty’s account of an Englishman leading a band of peasants to victory against the blood-stain’d sons of France. Maybe after that, she can do it backwards.

‘Maudie, does a story always have to go from beginning to end? Can it go the other way?’

‘However you prefers it, Miss Cristabel,’ says Maudie, carefully sharpening her pencil with a pocketknife. ‘In my diary, sometimes I go back and read a bit from last year, and it don’t matter. All headed to the same place. It’s pleasant to drop in on yourself unexpectedly –’

Maudie Kitcat’s Diary

25th December, 1918

frost

church

plum pudding

member when I kisst Clive in the last stabel on the left after church that time an how he shook

‘– and find yourself still there. But when you’re reading it, you know more than you did then. So you feel clever. Cleverer than that Betty Bemrose, at any rate.’

‘What’s in your diary, Maudie?’

‘Never you mind.’

‘Can I see it?’

Maudie shakes her head. ‘Not ever. I’d have to slit your throat while you was sleeping.’

‘With that very knife?’

‘Very same.’

Maudie is an excellent mentor in so many ways, and Cristabel is extremely gratified to take her advice regarding stories. Forwards or backwards, it doesn't matter a jot.

Waiting, Wanting

25th August, 1890

Thirty years earlier

It was the first day in months his parents had even glanced at him, and Jasper was balling it all up. Forced into a sailor suit that strained over his sixteen-year-old tubbiness and trying not to drop his baby brother in a stuffy photographic studio in Dorchester as a man hidden beneath a black cloth peered through the lens of a wooden contraption and shouted at Jasper if he breathed too visibly. Every time the photographer shouted, Jasper's father shouted, his mother sighed, and the photographer's assistant also sighed. An echo chamber of shouts and sighs. All his fault.

But his parents – Robert and Elizabeth – couldn't raise themselves to scold him properly. They were too busy adoring nine-month-old Willoughby in his voluminous christening gown, and continued to do so all the way home, cooing like idiots at the baby as they bounced about in the horse-drawn carriage. Jasper pressed his forehead to the rattling window and watched the sky pass by. The stately clouds proceeding over the water meadows outside the town looked solid, habitable. Great white clouds. Great white myths.

Baby Willoughby was a miracle. Everybody thought so. For almost the whole of Jasper's life, his mother Elizabeth had been pregnant, but every Seagrave child born after Jasper died, usually immediately. Others survived just long enough to be given weighty ancestral names, which they took down with them into the Seagrave crypt at the village church, where their small coffins were lined up on a shelf like parcels waiting to be posted.

It did not do to make a fuss, but it was felt as an affliction; this repeated boxing up of tiny bodies, this shutting up, this muffling. Chilcombe was a mute place of closed doors where red-eyed maids pressed handkerchiefs to their mouths. At the end of every meal, Elizabeth would lay her cutlery precisely in the centre of her bone china plate without a single sound.

One of the footmen told Jasper that babies were made because 'married folk do what cows and bulls do'. Jasper had seen this: the snorting bull lurching on top of the cow; the cow staring ahead, fatalistically chewing its cud. His body recognized such activity as known, as possible, but he could not imagine his parents behaving in such a way, for they hardly seemed aware of each other.

His mother wore black dresses that extended from chin to floor, and drifted about like a ghost, whereas his father existed somewhere beyond the walls, charging about the Empire. If Robert ever returned, it was a brief, blustery visit, in which he would blow through the building in a flurry of discarded boots and

shouted orders to servants, like a localized tornado: a great deal of flattening; no real contact. Sometimes the only sign that his father had returned home was a new stuffed animal appearing in the Oak Hall.

How the babies were produced seemed unlikely, but that they died seemed inevitable. Jasper was the sole survivor: all-conquering and monstrous. From his bed at night, he sometimes heard an ailing infant crying and transformed these sounds into the screams of the vanquished Arabs in Khartoum. He imagined himself leading the victorious British troops; national acclaim quick to follow, his proud father slapping him on the back. When the screaming finally stopped, silence hung on the quivering air, long and expectant.

Then Willoughby was born. Jasper barely gave him a thought, expecting this baby to go the way of the others, but Willoughby, with his copper hair and bow-lipped mouth, did not die. And one day, Elizabeth unexpectedly dropped her cutlery in the middle of breakfast and asked for the baby in the nursery to be brought to her. Jasper, up in the attic schoolroom reciting Latin verbs with his tutor, heard footsteps running by, then Willoughby being borne past like a young maharajah in an elephant parade.

The following day, an even more surprising event occurred. His mother appeared in the schoolroom. She had never been there before. Previously, the schoolroom was merely the name of a place that existed somewhere above her, remote as heaven.

‘One of the maids suggested Willoughby might like a toy,’ Elizabeth said.

A maid appeared brandishing two of Jasper’s tin soldiers. ‘Will these do, ma’am?’

‘Perfect,’ said his mother and away the raiding party went, leaving Jasper with nothing but *amo, amas, amat, amamus, amatis, amant*.

From then on, it was as if there were some sort of celebration going on in the house that Jasper was not permitted to attend. When he walked through the house with his tutor, heading out for his daily march along the coast, he would see people arriving to view the miracle baby, guests gathering in the drawing room, and his mother holding Willoughby, her face strained with anxious hope. It was an expression Jasper had previously seen on Cook, whenever she had created a new meal for his parents.

(Jasper would often lurk in a corner of the kitchen as Cook waited to hear how her creation had been received, because if she caught him watching, she would wink and say, ‘Now you’ll eat anything I give you, Master Jasper,’ and this would be followed by a tasty morsel: a chunk of cheese or an apple briskly polished on her apron. It was also true. Jasper would eat anything Cook gave him, primarily because she was one of the few people to speak to him without being obliged to do so. Besides, it satisfied something in him, to take food and eat it, it

didn't matter what it was. He was neglected and peevish; peevish and neglected. It was hard to tell which came first.)

'Chop chop, Jasper,' his tutor would say, ushering him out of the house, and Jasper would spend the walk slashing at plants with his wooden sword.

In the evening, when the time came for Jasper to greet his parents before their meal, he would descend the staircase, hair flattened with saliva, and lurk in the hall until permitted to enter the dining room; somewhere he only saw in glances, as he was not allowed to gawp about like a fish. The walls were painted blood red, to show off the meat served on the family china, while his parents were lit by candles, their long shadows looming behind them. In discreet corners, servants waited to serve; just as the dining room waited for Jasper every day, waited to find him wanting.

One evening, Robert, a man who began conversations somewhere in the middle, said, 'Time for you to learn more than Latin, boy. Need to set an example for Willoughby. You'll be coming with me tomorrow.'

At the mention of Willoughby, Elizabeth smiled down at the dining table, as if admiring her reflection in a pond. Jasper looked at the paintings on the walls. Portraits of Seagraves with alabaster skin, from a time when both men and women favoured ringlets. All seemed to be pressing a single hand to their chests, one finger splayed apart as if attempting to subtly point to something: the lustrous fabric they were wearing, perhaps, or the faux classical landscape behind them – *Look! In the trees! A little domed temple!* – or even the alarmingly high forehead of the person in the portrait next to them. At the far end of the room hung the photograph of surly Jasper in his sailor suit, holding Willoughby in his gown.

'That wooden sword of yours,' said Robert. 'It's a child's toy. Give it to your brother. That will be all.'

Dismissed, Jasper went upstairs and got into bed, where he retrieved a biscuit stored under his pillow and picked up his King Arthur book. Then he put them down again. He should read less. Eat less. He should buck up his ideas. Jasper stared at the ceiling.

The following morning – in fact, all of the following mornings, of all of the following years, throughout his youth and then his twenties and his thirties – Jasper glumly followed his father out of the house to learn about his responsibilities as heir, while inside, his younger brother blossomed effortlessly. Willoughby learnt to walk in a single afternoon; Jasper stole whisky from his father's liquor cabinet, went swimming in the sea late at night, slipped on the pebbles and broke his ankle so badly he was left with a limp. Willoughby gambolled everywhere with his favourite wooden sword; Jasper hobbled about, weaponless, waiting for his father to die so he might be able to prove himself to his father.

The limp did not help matters. Jasper felt uncomfortable when visiting tenant farmers. He preferred doing the rounds on horseback. Up there, he was far enough removed from the *populace* to achieve benevolence. On foot, lumbering along, he was cumbersome as a circus bear. He noticed the sharp eyes of the estate workers as he approached; their smirks as he lurched across uneven fields like a man moving a wardrobe.

His social life was similarly limited. He wanted very much to be a fine English gentleman, but he could not dance, as his weak ankle gave way beneath him. He sat at the side of assembly rooms, imagining grisly deaths for young bachelors who could waltz. His poems remained in his pockets. He comforted himself with the thought that noble Hector never bloody well waltzed. During the night, if he had consumed too much food at dinner (and he usually had), he could hear himself breaking wind in his sleep, the helplessly escaping air a sort of continuation of his inept attempts at making small talk, a smattering of half-hearted repartee.

Sometimes, while following his still-very-much-alive father about the place, Jasper came up with schemes for how he might change life at Chilcombe if he were in charge. In reality, there was no space left for his ideas, given the scale of his father's. Robert Seagrave's booming Victorian confidence dominated the future like the grand avenue of beech trees he was planning. Robert would never live to see the trees grow, but he had no doubt that in hundreds of years, Seagraves like himself would be parading beneath them.

It was a curious thing, that Jasper's father's life served as impediment to his own. Occasionally – on November afternoons, for example, the low sun glinting over the cobalt sea – the ocean inspired huge, inexpressible sensations that reduced Jasper's thoughts to broken half-sentences.

I love the –

How can we not believe that –

To meet someone who –

What would it be –

Sentences snapped in two before they had the chance to become clichéd, before his gloomy mind could dismiss them as claptrap, as impossible nonsense.

'Jasper, pay attention, for pity's sake,' his father would bark.

There was cheese to be eaten in the kitchen. Cake too. Apple dumplings. Peppermint creams. Turkish delight. The jelly-covered crust of an old pork pie.

The Boxing Day Hunt

December, 1914

Six years earlier

Willoughby. Willoughby! Jasper did his best to ignore his brother. It was the first and, God willing, last Christmas of the war, and the younger Seagrave son was home on leave. Taking a break from soldiering, Willoughby bestrode the front lawn wearing white jodhpurs, a scarlet jacket and a top hat, while knocking back a glass of port and holding a frisking horse for a pneumatic blonde heiress. Jasper heard the heiress exclaim, ‘Such bravery! We all think of you,’ and knew it was not the massed troops of Britannia that she and the other women of England held in their minds as they knelt to pray in village churches or gazed across the sea towards battle-scarred France – it was bollocking Willoughby.

Willoughby Seagrave was the toast of society and, most gallingly, the toast of women. Jasper had seen even the dowdiest of old maids gazing lustfully after his long-legged brother. The boss-eyed spinsters Jasper escorted to county balls never looked at him that way. Catching his reflection in silver-framed mirrors, he knew why. He was a sobersided man in his forties, with a haggis for a face, and he was forever peering about, as if trying to puzzle out the answer to something everybody else knew.

Jasper had hoped when he became head of the family, matters might be different. That he might be respected. It was true that once his father finally had the good grace to expire – toppling over like a tree after Sunday lunch, as if to show them how an Englishman should die – things started to look up.

The whole village lined the route to the church on the snowy day of the funeral, just before Christmas 1913, and Jasper walked behind the men carrying the coffin, aware of the villagers’ eyes following him. As he paced behind his father’s body, he heard in his mind the carol ‘Good King Wenceslas’. *In his master’s steps he trod, where the snow lay dinted.*

It would be wrong to say he was happy at the funeral; he felt his father’s absence as a vast, whistling space. But as the mourning party left the churchyard, having deposited Robert in the crypt next to his wife and all their babies, Jasper found himself humming the tune – *Bring me flesh and bring me wine* – and by the time he was back in the house (the house that was now his), pouring himself a brandy, he was softly singing. *Thou shalt find the winter’s rage, freeze thy blood less coooo-ooooold-leeeee.*

But it soon transpired that matters hadn’t changed. Whenever Jasper met local people, they only wanted to talk about his father and how there would never be another of his like. Robert had been blessed with the gift of obliviousness and

the villagers appeared to admire him for it. Whenever Robert cantered by on horseback, he would wave at them so very generally, it was as if he were blind and simply gesturing in the direction of people he had been told were nearby. If he ever appeared on foot, there would be a flurry of hat-tipping and curtsies that he would stride through, like an explorer through jungle undergrowth. On the rare occasions when Robert did notice an individual among the masses – an especially pretty child, a pleasingly capable groom – then that person felt the very eye of God had turned upon them.

Jasper was not, is not, never will be God.

‘Everything all right, sir?’ said the stable boy holding Jasper’s horse.

‘Hmph,’ replied Jasper, watching the fulsome heiress leaning from her horse to take a sip from Willoughby’s glass. Their father had never allowed women to join the hunt, believing their erratic reactions spoiled the sport, but Willoughby was welcoming them with open arms.

One booted foot into the strong hands of the stable boy, and Jasper is hoisted into the saddle, immediately kicking his horse Guinevere away from the rest of the pack.

Thankfully, Willoughby didn’t last long. After an hour of riding, he declared the fox they were chasing to be an unbeatable beast, bellowed, ‘A port, a port, my kingdom for a port!’ and led his followers and the panting hounds back across the fields to the house.

It took Jasper another hour of determined hacking before he could take solace in the countryside: the clockwork clatter of a pheasant’s wings as it burst from a hedgerow; the sea in the distance, the same washed-out white as the sky.

Faithful Guinevere carried him on until they were quite alone. He was almost starting to feel equable when a woman cantered up, wearing a black riding jacket and a hat with a veil. She was not riding side-saddle; she was riding square in the saddle as men do.

‘Trying to escape?’ she asked, slowing to a steady trot.

Jasper grunted.

‘Precocious, isn’t he? Your brother,’ she said. ‘I had been warned.’

‘Bloody going to ride his bloody horse into the bloody ground,’ said Jasper.

‘Shame we couldn’t warn the horse. I say, what a field for a gallop – come on.’

She was off. Guinevere gave a skip of delight and Jasper found himself following. They thundered across the hard winter earth like jockeys.

At the far end of the field, the woman pulled her horse to a halt. Her hands, Jasper noticed, were firm but gentle with the bit. She didn’t go in for the yanking that Willoughby and his boorish friends were prone to.

‘There’s a respectable inn near here,’ she said. ‘We could let these fine creatures have a well-deserved rest.’

She led him there, swinging herself from the saddle with a boyish leap. Jasper dismounted, feeling, as he always did, the drop in status that accompanied his drop to earth. His weak ankle buckled as soon as his feet hit the ground.

The woman looked up from where she was scraping her boots. ‘Riding accident?’

Jasper rifled through his usual list of suitably manly excuses for his limp, but her flushed face, friendly as a Labrador, caused him to say unexpectedly, ‘Pebble beach. Whisky.’

‘Bad luck,’ she winced, tying their horses to a fence. ‘Hamper you at all?’

‘Nuisance when deerstalking. Gives way on occasions.’

‘I’ve a horse with a gammy leg,’ she said, pushing open the door to the pub, which was hunched low beneath a thatched roof. ‘Used to pitch me off in the most unlikely places, but then he learnt to watch where he put his feet. You know how useful that can be in a hunter. Looking to breed him next year.’

‘Is that so? I’m looking for a sire for Guinevere.’

Jasper could hardly hobble to the bar fast enough. A pair of brandies and they were soon sitting by the fireplace in the snug, cantering through his favourite subjects: horses, hunts, bloodlines, breeding. Her name was Annabel Agnew. She had black hair escaping in wiry coils from her hairnet and a trace of mud across one cheekbone. He ought to tell her to wipe it off, but perhaps not yet.

‘Didn’t think the fairer sex went in for horses,’ said Jasper, with what he hoped was a jocular air.

‘Always loved them. Get to ride more now as I’m helping my father run our estate. My older brother was killed in France, so until my younger brother learns the ropes, I’ll still be running it. He’s at Harrow. Hoping he’ll stay there until the war is over.’

‘Awful business. But the Germans won’t hold out for long. England will always come up to the mark. What brings you to Chilcombe?’

‘I have a younger sister too. The one who fell off her horse before she’d even mounted it. I’m under strict instructions to keep her away from your brother. Which – it now occurs to me – I’m failing to do. She’s terribly smitten with anyone in a uniform.’

‘You’re the chaperone, eh?’

‘The spinster sister is often required to prevent their siblings contributing a little too much to the war effort.’

Jasper guffawed. ‘Should get back to the house then.’

Annabel frowned and leant back in her chair. ‘Just how fast can he be, this ruinous brother of yours?’

‘Well. I suppose there are several young women back at the house.’

‘All of whom he probably needs to charm.’

‘Quite right.’

‘Could take him about as long as it takes us to have another drink.’

‘You might well be correct.’

‘So, this Guinevere – tell me where you found her. She’s an impressive beast.’

Later, three brandies later, when they were trotting back to Chilcombe, Jasper noticed that, on horseback, she didn’t seem so tall. In the pub, when they stood up in the inglenook, she had rather towered over him, but in the saddle, thanks to Guinevere, he had at least half a hand on her.

Jasper and Annabel dismounted in front of the house, leaving their horses to the stable boy. Jasper limped quickly to the entrance, keen to escort her inside, but as he pushed open the front door, he heard riotous laughter.

Arriving in the Oak Hall, he saw Willoughby in an armchair by the fireplace – an armchair he had presumably dragged out of the drawing room – surrounded by his acolytes, who were drinking port and carelessly chucking logs on to a ferocious fire. There was a woman slumped next to Willoughby, wearing the bottom half of the suit of armour and inexpertly sounding a bugle. The other parts of the armour were scattered about the floor like dismembered limbs.

‘Nearly had it that time, darling,’ said Willoughby.

‘That armour is not for dressing up,’ snapped Jasper. At the sound of his voice, servants lurking on the gallery vanished into bedrooms.

‘Only just got back, Jasper? Must have been a very wily fox,’ said Willoughby, without looking round.

The woman attempted to sit upright, hiccupping loudly. She was the blonde heiress.

‘That woman should be taken to her room,’ said Jasper, feeling his face redden. ‘We have guest rooms for our guests. She should be lying down in one of those.’

Willoughby used the spear belonging to the suit of armour to push a log on to the fire. ‘Is that what we do, brother? Do we ask our guests to remain in their rooms?’

‘That is not what I said, Willoughby.’

‘Jasper, we are back, all too briefly, from a bloody business, fighting the good fight. Surely even you can’t begrudge us a few drinks?’

Jasper was about to give them a sizeable piece of his mind, when he heard the strangest noise. Annabel was laughing uproariously. He should have guessed there would be something wrong with her. She must be one of those lunatic spinsters. He was wondering if she would ever stop, when she slapped her hands

against her sides, and said, 'You won't believe it, but that's exactly what Jasper said.'

'What did I say?' said Jasper.

'I was adamant that if we came back here and found a scene of gallivanting, that Jasper should kick you out, you insolent buggers,' said Annabel. 'But he said I couldn't begrudge boys back from the front a few drinks.'

Jasper glanced at Willoughby, who had turned to look at Annabel.

'He's even put some money behind the bar at the pub in the village so you chaps can have a pint or two before dinner,' she continued. 'Isn't that right, Jasper?'

Jasper opened his mouth, Annabel supplied the words. 'What do you think, chaps, drinks in the local hostelry?'

The men looked at each other, then the one called Perry said, 'Splendid idea, Jasper old boy.' Soon they were all putting on their hats and trooping out, leaving the heiress to be helped by Mrs Hardcastle.

Willoughby, bringing up the rear, paused in front of Annabel. 'I don't think I've had the pleasure,' he murmured, carefully buttoning his jacket.

'Annabel Agnew,' she said, extending a hand. From the side, Jasper noticed she had the profile of a Roman emperor.

'Knew a girl by that name in Hampshire,' said Willoughby, taking her hand in his. 'She preferred to be called Belle.'

'Annabel,' said Annabel.

'Friend of Jasper's, are you?'

'Very much so,' she replied, her voice brisk as a whip. 'Don't think I caught your name.'

Willoughby smiled. 'Willoughby Seagrave, at your command.'

'Jolly good,' she said.

Jasper caught a look passing between them, that of the strict schoolteacher to the wilful pupil: a steady reckoning of each other's strengths.

After Willoughby had left, Annabel turned to Jasper. 'There is a village pub, isn't there?'

'Yes. Place called The Shipwreck.'

'Thank the saints. I was rather banking on that. Best send a boy down there with instructions for the landlord, or that motley rabble will turn up to find no drinks available.'

'Bloody hell. Yes, we must.'

'No hurry though. None of them looked capable of anything more than a saunter.'

Jasper called in the youngest footman and sent him down to The Shipwreck with orders to give Willoughby and his friends everything they wanted. It pleased

him in an unexpected way, this act of munificence. He wondered whether he ought to do something similar for the staff on special occasions. He considered musing out loud about this idea in front of Annabel Agnew. He decided he would do this as he gave her a tour of the house.

Summoning up the courage to do so took him through the study, the dining room, the garden and the stables, but eventually, when they arrived back in the drawing room, he said, 'Might borrow that idea of yours. Drinks at The Shipwreck. For the staff, I mean. New Year's Day. Perhaps a show of fireworks for the village children.'

'Capital notion,' she said.

'Thank you for stepping in earlier,' he mumbled. 'I went off half-cocked.'

'My pleasure.'

'Willoughby makes my blood boil.'

'Best keep him out of the house then,' she said, and were this statement coming from anyone other than the straightforward Annabel, Jasper might wonder if it was meant flirtatiously, but with her, it seemed simply an honest assessment of the situation. Although, he couldn't be sure that there wasn't a slight sparkle in her eyes. Then he realized he had been studying her face for some time while half chewing on his moustache.

'I chew it, when I'm thinking,' he said, smoothing his moustache back into place.

Annabel held up one of the loose strands of hair that had escaped from her hairnet – the ends were broken and split. 'Snap.'

One of Jasper's hands was still attending to his facial hair; the other suddenly felt agitated and empty. There was only the sound of logs in the fireplace burning, their crackling and sighs, and his own breathing.

Annabel was still holding her own hair. 'Always been envious of dogs. Having bones to chew.'

'Yes,' replied Jasper. He could hear her breath now, as well as his own, and the silence seemed even larger.

'Always wanted lots of dogs,' she said, looking at him with a frankness that was astonishing.

'Very fond,' he said, and felt, at that moment, that somehow each of his breaths drew her closer to him, though he could not remember either of them moving.

Then a maid came in carrying a coal scuttle. 'Beg pardon, Mr Seagrave,' she said. 'I thought everyone had left.'

'Not everyone,' said Jasper, swallowing. 'Could you bring us some tea?'

'And cake,' added Annabel.

Jasper found he was beaming at the remarkable Miss Agnew. ‘Yes. Yes, yes. Lots of cake.’

Jasper and Annabel spent the afternoon by the fire in the drawing room. It was a quiet room, north facing, with a cool light, the walls heather green, hung with paintings of rural landscapes: cattle in snow, cattle fording a river, cattle come to a river at twilight. They drank tea and ate cake and talked about horses and dogs, dogs and horses. He told her some of his favourite historical facts about the region and it transpired she had some fascinating ones of her own.

Time appeared to do extraordinary things. At one point, Jasper glanced at the clock on the mantelpiece, and it was four o’clock, but when he looked again a second later, it was gone six. Then, when he was watching Annabel efficiently demolish a slice of fruitcake, her cheeks glowing pink in the heat from the fire, and she looked up to catch his gaze, he found he was aware of each and every second as it passed. When Willoughby’s boisterous party returned from the pub and Annabel got up, saying she must check on her sister before dinner, Jasper was suddenly disconsolate.

As she was leaving the room, Annabel turned back. ‘Fancy a ride out tomorrow?’

Jasper nodded. Annabel waved a strand of hair at him and disappeared.

Dinner that night was not as hideous as he feared, despite having two of Willoughby’s brainless friends seated next to him. He could suffer their nonsense because every time he looked up, he could see Annabel in a blue silk evening gown, at the other end of the table. In the candlelight, her hair shone black as oil.

The men around him were talking of war. They couldn’t wait to get back to France, to get stuck into the Boche. They would be home by springtime. Willoughby was boasting to the blonde heiress about being posted to Egypt, promising to bring her back a pyramid.

This is my house, thought Jasper. Tomorrow, these people will leave, and this will still be my house. Annabel Agnew lives in Wiltshire. Wiltshire is not that far away.

In the midst of the clamour and battle of the dining room, he raised his glass to her across the table.

His

February, 1915
Five years earlier

‘Naturally, my sister is heartbroken,’ Annabel had said, relaxing into an armchair in the drawing room. ‘Ever since she heard the notorious Willoughby was off to Egypt, she’s been reading the newspapers, and now the Ottomans have invaded, she’s beside herself.’

‘She needn’t worry,’ said Jasper, pouring brandy into two glasses. ‘My brother has a knack of avoiding anything resembling hard work. Last I heard, he was learning to ride a camel.’

Annabel laughed. ‘Thank goodness you’re nothing at all like him.’

Jasper paused in front of the drinks cabinet. From there, he could see out of a window overlooking the lawn to where a rook paced to and fro, its considered manner suggesting a man with his arms held behind his back, filling time, waiting for news. The February weather was grey and dismal, a thick fog had rolled in from the sea. There was just the rook, the lawn, the fog, and the room Jasper was standing in.

What he meant to say as he turned round to offer her a glass was, ‘Would you care for a drink?’ but Jasper Seagrave had never been good at public speaking, and the words came out quite differently. What he said was, ‘Would you care to marry me?’

Annabel took the drink from his hand and said, ‘Let me get this one down me.’

Jasper turned to pace, to regret, to rue, to stew, but Annabel had drunk the brandy in a single gulp and was placing the glass on a side table, saying, ‘I think I would, you know. Yes, I think I rather would.’

When they married, one month later in the village church, it was a modest celebration, as so many were away fighting. They honeymooned in the Lake District, in beautiful Cumberland. Afterwards, Jasper would remember that day, those first weeks, in bright flashes, like scenes glimpsed from a moving train. It seemed remarkable to have such happiness when news from abroad was increasingly dark and worrying, but Annabel Agnew – Annabel Seagrave – made everything remarkable.

Returning to Dorset, he felt somehow taller. He was sure the servants looked at him differently. Annabel was so practical, so cheerful: her strong hands flicking through the household accounts or knitting mufflers for the troops or tightening a stirrup on Guinevere or checking the teeth of one of their new dogs. She proved perfectly capable.

They were unsure if she would ever be able to have a child. The riding accident that meant she always rode square in the saddle, never side-saddle, had damaged her pelvis. There were concerns. Annabel over thirty and Jasper in his forties. Some days, he believed he would be happy to die heirless simply because she was there every morning when he woke up. There, frowning through her reading glasses at her notebook, a pencil behind her ear, then turning to him with a smile. She was larkish at times, but always concentrated when he spoke. ‘Got it,’ she would say, and she always had.

They trained their horses together, talked about entering a few in races. They even went up to Ascot that year, and thought it was the new corset beneath her dress that made her faint after the first race. She wasn’t used to being out of her riding breeches and, when they got home, announced she didn’t want to go anywhere that required corsets again. They didn’t know she had fainted because she was with child. A month later, when it had become clear that Mrs Seagrave was pregnant, they had laughed and wept until Annabel insisted they stop because they were upsetting the dogs.

She suffered throughout her pregnancy. Her damaged pelvis gave her great pain. ‘It better be a boy,’ said Jasper, carrying in one of the new puppies to show her, ‘can’t let you go through this again.’

Willoughby was surprisingly admiring. His telegram from Cairo read:

*S*PLENDID NEWS STOP *S*PLENDID WOMAN STOP *O*VERJOYED FOR YOU BOTH STOP *W*

Jasper suspected Willoughby was worried about what might happen if Jasper never produced an heir, because then the great weight of the family name would shift on its axis and slide towards Willoughby, and all the camels in Persia couldn’t gallop fast enough for him to escape being buried beneath that.

But what did that matter, because Chilcombe was truly Jasper’s now, in a way it had never been before. When he and Annabel, his wife (his wife!), walked arm in arm across the lawn, he felt he was returning to his rightful place. He would follow her as she walked through the house, watching as she opened doors, opened windows, opened cupboards, finding the most unlikely things: a harp (which she could (almost) play); a stuffed baby elephant (which she had mounted on wheels for their child to ride), and Jasper’s old copy of *The Iliad*, which they read together to the baby in her stomach.

Annabel. She was bracing: she was the wind that smacked you in the face when you set your horse at a gallop, and she was the warming brandy waiting for you by the fire at home. They were to have a child in the spring. A son, he was certain. Everything was coming towards him now.

They Won't Let Him

March, 1916

Four years earlier

They won't let Jasper in the room. They won't let him in the room. Three men, four men, have to heave him away. He tries to break down the door, he wants to see her, but they say not now, sir, not now, sir, you wouldn't want to, sir, the doctor says there was a great deal of blood, sir, it's for the best, sir, but he had only just found her, he had only just found her, he needs to get to her, he needs to see her, he needs to tell her, she was going to help him, she was going to make him, she was his, she was his smart sparkling Annabel, a thoroughbred, that's what she was, and she would have him, she would have him, she accepted him, she took his hand, she kept everything in order, she did the books, she could account like a marvel, and when she turned to him from her writing desk to ask if there was anything he needed, he would say that everything was perfectly satisfactory, that he would sit and read the papers, but the day's news would slip through his fingers to the floor and all he could do was watch the concentration concentrated in the nape of her neck, where wiry wisps of hair fell over her collar, and he never thought he would admire brains in a woman, but she had the brains of a good hunter, she knew when to take the fence and when to stall, where the ground was boggy, where the turf was firm, she made it look easy, that leggy stride of hers, a woman who could break the neck of a pheasant without blinking because it was kinder to be quick, and in the evenings, he would sit before the fire and watch her laughing as she tried to play the harp, plucking sound from strings she'd found hidden in the attic, and she came to him with a frankness, with a blunt and welcome ease, like dropping your clothes on the beach, none of that sideways, side-saddle nonsense some women went in for, flapping their fans, whispering with their friends, she came to him honestly, long-limbed as a boy, straightforward as a soldier, flexing her lengthy fingers, fingers mobile as a monkey, deft as a bookkeeper, fingers that flared with magic and pulled gold and music from the air, as if gold and music had always been there, and who will do the accounts now? Who will account for him now? By his word, he is loosed and falling, and they won't let him in the room, they won't let him in the room, and from somewhere he hears the rising wail of an infant, a baby they tell him is a girl, sir, a girl who looks just like her mother, sir, her mother, her mother, her mother, she so wanted to be a mother and they won't let him in the room to tell her, they won't let him in the room.

Afterwards

April, 1916

Four years earlier

They had boxed up Annabel. Put her in the crypt. There had been a funeral. He believed he had been there. But he also knew it was impossible.

Jasper knew that each day followed another day, but this too was impossible, as every day was the same day. There was a war going on in Europe. There was an empty space in his house. That was all.

They had printed her name in the newspaper alongside the dead infantrymen. He had sold the harp. Given the dogs away. Put the stuffed baby elephant in the attic, upended, its little wheels spinning in the air.

It all seemed quite fraudulent. It was incomprehensible that events kept happening and she was not there to see them. Sometimes, he woke in the dead of night, wanting to tell her something dreadful had occurred, to shake her awake and say, 'My dear, you simply won't believe this.' But there was no one there, only the whistling walls and the empty dark.

She would be back soon. Not on this long, empty day, but perhaps the next. He wished someone would shush that noisy baby.

She would be back soon.

The Vegetable

September, 1920

‘Is everything all right?’ says Willoughby, nodding at her stomach.

‘I don’t know,’ says Rosalind. ‘I felt something.’ She cautiously puts her hand down beneath the sheets and discovers the bed is sodden. Glancing surreptitiously at her fingers, she notices the liquid is tinged pink with blood and feels a distant jolt of fear.

‘I’ll fetch Betty.’ Willoughby pushes back his chair, moves away from the bed.

Betty arrives in the room surprisingly quickly. ‘Is anything the matter, ma’am?’

‘There seems to have been some sort of accident, Betty. The bed is wet. I don’t know why, I—’

‘Goodness, it means the baby’s coming, ma’am. I’ll call Maudie to fetch the doctor. Let’s get you out of that wet nightgown.’

‘It’s coming now?’

‘They come when they want, ma’am. Arms up, that’s lovely.’

Rosalind allows Betty to move her about like a rag doll. She is dazed, still lost in the heady world behind her eyelids – and Willoughby gone, when they had been so close, his mouth so near to hers she could feel the warmth of his breath.

Betty dispatches maids to fetch clean towels and hot water. Boots clatter up and down the staircase. Mrs Hardcastle appears in the doorway, tapping her fingertips together, then vanishes. There are shouts outside, the crash of a bicycle dropped to the ground. Messages are sent to Salisbury where Jasper is visiting a racing stables.

‘When will it happen, Betty?’ asks Rosalind.

‘The doctor will be able to tell you, I’m sure.’

‘I’ve quite an ache in my back. Does it hurt as much as they say?’

‘It can’t be that bad, ma’am, or people wouldn’t keep doing it.’

Doctor Rutledge arrives promptly, having been visiting a patient in the village, and Mrs Hardcastle escorts him into the bedroom. He listens to Rosalind’s heart with a stethoscope and runs his hands over her bump, frowning. Then he asks her to lift her knees up and hold them open.

‘I beg your pardon?’ she says.

‘Need to take a quick look,’ he says. ‘See what’s what.’

Betty smiles reassuringly and begins folding up the bedcovers from the bottom of the bed to allow the doctor access. ‘A quick look, ma’am. To check all’s well.’

Between them, Betty and Mrs Hardcastle push Rosalind's knees up towards her chest and then Betty prises them apart. Rosalind has to look away, her hands fluttering about her face, as the doctor leans in, armed with some kind of steel implement.

'I see,' says the doctor, after a while. He returns to feeling her bump, his eyes casually wandering around the room as if examining the decor. 'I see.'

The women wait.

After some time, Dr Rutledge turns to Mrs Hardcastle. 'Difficult to tell where this baby is.'

'Yes, Doctor.'

'Strapping big baby too.' Dr Rutledge looks at Mrs Hardcastle for some time, adjusting his waistcoat. There seems to be an unspoken assessment going on between them. Finally, he says, 'If it is the wrong way round, it might not be plain sailing.'

'It has been traditional for the Seagrave heir to be born in the house,' replies Mrs Hardcastle.

'Wouldn't like to take any chances. Especially after.'

'Yes, Doctor,' says Mrs Hardcastle.

Betty places her hand on Rosalind's arm.

'Is Jasper due back soon, Mrs Hardcastle?' says Dr Rutledge.

'We haven't heard from him, Doctor.'

'Am I right in thinking Mr Willoughby Seagrave has a motor car?'

'We'll find him right away, Doctor.'

Betty and Mrs Hardcastle help Rosalind down the stairs, both talking to her, a cross-stream of encouragement and reassurance. Other staff hover nearby, hands clasped nervously in front of them. Rosalind has been dressed in a clean nightgown, dressing gown and slippers, which gives her the curious feeling she is a child allowed up past bedtime.

'Good luck, ma'am,' says Blythe, opening the front door.

Outside, Willoughby – one hand on the wheel of his open-top car, one hand lighting a cigarette – revs the engine. Mrs Hardcastle opens the rear door and helps Rosalind into the vehicle while Dr Rutledge heaves himself into the front passenger seat, smiling cheerfully and saying, 'Splendid machine. A Wolseley, if I'm not mistaken.'

'Four-cylinder engine, four-speed gearbox. She'll go for miles, this one,' replies Willoughby, patting the wooden dashboard. 'Is Mrs Seagrave all right?'

Rosalind notices that the day has become evening. Long shadows are falling across the lawn, and the trees at the lawn's edge are silhouetted against a persimmon sky. Beyond the trees, she can hear the sea's gentle back and forth. It

would be a perfect evening to sit outside with a cocktail, laughing at some snappy witticism with your head thrown back, a string of pearls at your throat.

‘Mrs Seagrave is doing marvellously,’ says Dr Rutledge. ‘Let’s get her to the hospital.’

‘A hospital?’ Rosalind asks, but her voice is lost in the roar of the engine. As they accelerate away, she looks back to see Betty and Mrs Hardcastle standing outside the ivy-covered house: Betty with one hand in the air, Mrs Hardcastle with both hands to her mouth.

The car jolts down the driveway, past the stone pillars that mark the entrance to the estate. The pillars are topped with indeterminate heraldic creatures that Jasper once explained to her, but Rosalind cannot remember what he said. The iron gates that used to hang between them are long gone and only the stone creatures remain, green with age, totems of a previous civilization.

As the car steams through the village and up over the Ridgeway, with choking belches of petrol fumes, the ache in Rosalind’s back increases. She tries to tell Dr Rutledge, but he is having a shouted conversation with Willoughby about fuel consumption, and whenever he looks round at her, she feels obliged to smile politely. She attempts to lean forward to tap Willoughby on the shoulder, but the movement of the car and the awkwardness of her bump means she fails to make contact. It is easier to simply hang her upper body over the edge of the vehicle and take gulps of the evening air as the countryside flies past. She hadn’t realized there was so much of Dorset. It looked much smaller in the pictures she’d seen.

The car suddenly comes to a halt, brakes screeching. The lane up ahead is full of sheep, their black faces emitting a cacophony of *baas*. A shepherd stands in their midst, staring open-mouthed at the vehicle. Willoughby swings the car into the hedgerow, reverses out and drives back up the lane.

‘Try a left up here,’ cries Dr Rutledge, gesturing towards a grass-covered track.

‘There are no signposts anywhere,’ says Willoughby, ‘I could navigate better in the bloody Sahara.’

‘Ah! By the stars, eh?’ shouts Dr Rutledge, hanging on to his hat as they gain speed. He turns to Rosalind. ‘All right back there?’

The pain in the lower half of Rosalind’s body has worsened. It doesn’t seem to be an ache any more, but something more purposeful. It comes in waves that tighten like an iron corset, until, at their peak, there is a moment where she feels ready to throw herself from the vehicle, then it fades and the world returns. She is not sure if this cycle lasts for minutes or hours. She hears the doctor reassuring her they will find the right road soon, but it is not possible to speak because it is coming again, the tightening. With each exhalation of her breath, she makes a

moan like a cow. As long as she can fill her head with the moaning noise, she can still breathe. As long as she can stay hanging over the edge of the car, she can get through it.

Then they are pulling over to the side of a lane near some farmland, and Dr Rutledge is clambering across the leather seat towards her. She is half aware that he is reaching between her legs, but this is no longer something she is able to worry about.

‘Thought so,’ he says. ‘It’s coming. On to your back, Mrs Seagrave, on to your back.’

Between them, Willoughby and Dr Rutledge manoeuvre her, so she is positioned lying along the back seat, propped up on Willoughby. Dr Rutledge has opened the rear door to give himself more room, and stands half out of the vehicle, feet balanced on the running board as he unbuttons her dressing gown.

‘Do you have anything we could give her? A shot of morphine?’ asks Willoughby.

‘Too late for that.’

‘Nothing at all?’

‘It’s nature’s way. Follow my instructions, Mrs Seagrave. Let’s have no fuss.’

The doctor rips open her nightgown with a practised air and Rosalind sees her own legs smeared with blood. She is suddenly weeping, furiously and copiously, like a child.

‘Don’t try to get up, Mrs Seagrave,’ says Dr Rutledge. ‘When I tell you to push, you must push with all your might.’

‘But I don’t want to,’ she says.

Willoughby takes her hand. ‘You’re in it now, darling. I’m afraid there’s only one way out.’

‘Mrs Seagrave, I need you to push. Right now,’ says Dr Rutledge, rolling up his sleeves and crouching between her knees.

Rosalind tips her head back to look at the sky and sees it miles above her, like the surface of the ocean. It is not possible to stay inside her body with all that is going on, it seems likely that she will die if she stays there, of pain and shame, and so she leaves it, and swims upwards to the blue film of sky, hearing her own curious lowing echoing out across the fields below her. Willoughby is gripping her hand and in some far distant part of her, she strains to rid herself of a boulder wedged in the structure of her body.

‘That’s it,’ cries Dr Rutledge.

Willoughby wipes her hair from her face. ‘Come on, soldier.’

When Dr Rutledge next tells her to push, Rosalind roars through gritted teeth, trying to heave the boulder out of her body. She heaves and heaves and

thinks it will never be done, but suddenly it is done, and the doctor is lifting up a purple-faced infant, saying, 'It's a girl, a girl.'

Its fists are clenched and its toothless mouth is straining open like a baby bird gaping for a worm and its yellowy eyes are unfocused in the wandering way of the blind and when Rosalind looks at it, the moment is silent and empty.

'Good grief, the child's the spitting image of Jasper,' says Willoughby, his voice unexpectedly shaky.

'Never fear, Mrs Seagrave, the next one will be a boy,' says Dr Rutledge, tucking the baby into the crook of his arm. 'You popped this one out marvellously. We'll tidy things up and get you home. Shift yourself on to the picnic blanket, there's a good girl. Don't want to stain the seats.'

Dr Rutledge uses his handkerchief to carefully wipe the baby's face as it lies in his arms, and then smiles at Willoughby who is reaching out to touch the child's clenched fist, as if they two were the proud new parents.

'Hello there,' says Willoughby. 'How do you do?'

All Off

September, 1920

Cristabel wakes before dawn and doesn't know why. Then she hears it: the cry of a baby. She scrambles out of bed, pulls a cardigan over her nightgown and is about to race down the attic stairs when she sees Maudie, already dressed in her maid's uniform, frizzy hair escaping from her white cap, climbing towards her with an oil lamp.

'The brother –' Cristabel begins, but Maudie cuts her off with a shake of her head.

'It's a girl. Big one.'

Cristabel sits down on the wooden stairs, frowning. 'Are they sure?'

'Face like your father's, but it's a girl all right. Mrs Seagrave hasn't taken to it. Says it looks like a vegetable.'

'You said they'd try again if it wasn't a boy.'

'They will. That's why she's here.'

Cristabel sighs. It isn't what she had hoped for. The letters for the brother will have to be retrieved from under his pillow. The stones with faces too. It is a grievous blow, but despite this, she does feel some measure of sympathy for the vegetable baby disliked by the new mother. Surely sisters must be beneficial in some way. They know how to do weaving and how to cook simple warming fare. Sometimes they look after aged parents, when everyone else has left. Sometimes they are chained to rocks and offered up as sacrifice. She could probably find a use for that sort of thing.

Maudie looks at her thoughtfully. 'I know you was wanting a brother.'

Cristabel nods. 'But I have a sister.'

'Half-sister,' replies Maudie. 'She's no mother of yours, that one. You'd be wise to remember that.'

Rosalind is glad to get back to Chilcombe, where she can return to her bedroom sanctum and put the indignities of the motor car episode behind her. She is tended by devoted Betty, who brings her strengthening meals of liver and heart. Betty helps her bathe in scented water hot enough to return her to herself and, afterwards, binds Rosalind's stomach with a long piece of linen, to regain her figure.

Lying in bed, Rosalind runs her hands over the tight layers of fabric. She feels rather wounded by everything, rather taken apart, and the bindings are a protective casing, a comfort. Outside, it is becoming autumn and the wind is moving through the trees like a rumour. The seasons are on the turn.

Sometimes, Betty will ask if she wants to see the baby, but Rosalind will say no, the child is better where it is. Betty will nod understandingly. She has seen her sisters go half mad trying to look after screaming babbers. It is not the kind of work a delicate lady like Rosalind should do. A nanny is employed. Rosalind's mother writes to express her satisfaction that Rosalind has succeeded in *her primary and most blissful duty as a wife*.

Late one afternoon, Rosalind wakes to see Jasper standing at her bedroom window loudly blowing his nose into a crumpled handkerchief, his many-chinned profile startlingly reminiscent of the baby dispatched to the attic. A baby born in a car. How déclassé. She suddenly feels a clarification of her feelings towards her husband, as if everything up until that point had gathered together and hardened.

He speaks without looking at her. 'Betty tells me you are fond of the name Florence for the child. After the celebrated nurse, I presume. I would be happy with that choice.'

'I might call it Vegetable,' she says. 'It looks like one.'

Jasper turns to her, perplexed. 'What are you saying? Don't you like it?'

Rosalind does not answer. She stares back at him. He has caused this, and he has had to do none of the horrible bits. She feels the kind of impotent crossness she felt as a child.

Jasper continues, 'Harold Rutledge said you might be upset it wasn't a boy. Next time it will be.'

Rosalind says nothing; the silence is a small weapon for her to use. She carefully straightens her bedcovers. She needs to start making some lists. She wants to hold a birthday party for Willoughby in November.

Jasper frowns. 'I was delayed. On the day. Didn't want to worry you.'

'I wasn't worried,' she says.

'Willoughby said you were a trouper.'

'Did he?'

'You can call the child whatever you like. I'm just glad you're all right,' he says and crosses the room towards her, with his hands outstretched in a strange half-pleading gesture, as if carrying an awkward weight: a rolled-up rug; someone else's coat; an old ill dog.

'I'm perfectly all right,' says Rosalind, tucking her hands under the sheets. The thought of him touching her brings on a shuddery feeling. 'Could you ring the bell?'

'Can I get you something?'

'I want Betty.'

'Of course.' Jasper obediently presses the button on the wall that summons a maid.

‘The name. Florence. It isn’t because of the nurse,’ says Rosalind, after a pause. Under the covers, she is running her hands over the bindings, adjusting them where they feel loose. ‘Why should I care about some dry old stick of a nurse? No. I saw a film. When I was in London. *The Woman in White*. It was about a beautiful woman called Laura who falls in love with an art teacher, but an evil old man called Sir Percival tricks her into marrying him instead. What he doesn’t realize is there’s another woman who looks like Laura. Then – well, it’s complicated, but Sir Percival dies in a fire so Laura and the teacher can marry like they should. Ah, Betty, come in. I was telling Jasper about a film. Betty loves to hear about films. She desperately wants to go to a picture house, don’t you, Betty?’

Betty nods. ‘I do, ma’am.’

‘It was the actress in the film, Jasper. Her name was Florence La Badie. I will always remember her.’

‘I see,’ says Jasper.

‘My child may look like a vegetable, but at least she will have a film star name,’ says Rosalind. ‘Or is that worse, do you suppose? To be a dowdy girl with a glamorous name.’

‘No daughter of yours could ever be dowdy, ma’am.’

‘You are a dear, Betty. I almost want to take you to a picture house myself,’ says Rosalind. ‘Was there anything else you wanted, Jasper?’

Jasper blows his nose again. ‘Only to give you my best wishes,’ he replies, formal as a retiring judge.

Rosalind observes her husband as he crosses the room. Once the door has shut behind him, she lets out a breath. Then she gets out of her bed in her nightgown and walks barefoot to her dressing table, where she sits down on the stool, positioning herself in front of its triple mirror in order to see herself and her two pleasing profiles: a triptych of reassurance. Betty stands behind her, running one hand down her mistress’s long hair, which shines in the glow of the softly sighing oil lamps.

Rosalind says, ‘You will see a film, Betty. I will take you to London and give you the afternoon off specially.’

‘That would be a treat, ma’am.’

Rosalind nods, then opens a drawer of her dressing table and takes out a photograph from a magazine, which she passes back over her head to the maid. ‘While you’re at the picture house, Betty, I will have my hair cut in that modern style,’ she says. ‘In a London salon.’

Rosalind waits to catch Betty’s gaze in the mirror, then, using both hands, lifts her hair and holds it folded against the back of her head, so it appears shorter, a jaw-length bob. ‘Like this,’ she says. ‘All off.’

Things

October, 1920

Cristabel, aged four and ever after, would place a great deal of importance on logic.

She is not allowed to have new boots because she spoiled her old ones by throwing them into the sea to serve as an anchor. She must wear the salt-stained pair until she has learnt her lesson. This is something she can understand. There is a followable logic to it. But there is one issue that does not seem understandable, however much she thinks about it. The issue of the things that boys have.

She had first noticed it when she came across a fisherman's wife playing with her infant son on the beach, letting him sit in the shallows at the water's edge. The naked boy, who was hitting the water with his plump hands, looked like the baby Jesus in the stained-glass windows in the village church. Slightly disgruntled, with a domed head. But between his legs there was a peculiar thing: a fleshy periwinkle curled on a wrinkled skin pouch of marbles. That – she later learnt from Maudie – was a thing that made him a boy, and boys were what the new mother was meant to be providing.

Cristabel did not have a thing. She had checked. Therefore, she was not a boy. She was not what was wanted. The vegetable baby also did not have a thing. Maudie confirmed this. Ergo, the vegetable baby was also not wanted.

Once alerted to the existence of these items, Cristabel kept a watchful eye on any she saw, to see if they did anything of interest. They never did. The things she sighted on the village boys when they went swimming in the sea were simply longer versions of the one seen on the baby on the beach.

What the things were called was a puzzle. Betty responded crossly to this question, saying, 'Never you mind, madam,' and took away Cristabel's breakfast before she had finished. The fisherman's wife just laughed. Maudie, usually so blunt in her responses, pulled a face and said, 'I only know words your stepmother wouldn't like.'

They seemed such insignificant things but were protected by this peculiar anonymity and brought their owners considerable advantages. Boys with things were allowed to wear trousers and go to school. People ruffled their hair; threw them apples; gave them amusing nicknames; praised them for gumption. They didn't have to have petticoats or husbands. They kept their own surnames and drove motors.

The brother would have a thing too, and the brother would be the heir, and the heir was what everyone wanted. Cristabel thought 'heir' was a strange word.

It looked like a mistake and was pronounced *air*, like the noise people make when they don't know what to say.

What heir meant was similarly confusing. You could be born an heir but also named one, if there was a sword. 'I name you Air,' said Cristabel to the umbrella stand shaped like an Indian boy, tapping her wooden sword on his shoulders. She would no doubt find out more when the brother arrived. He would probably share being heir with her. They were going to share everything, except jam tarts and the sticks that belonged to Cristabel.

Before she had known about the things, she had thought it likely that she might be a boy. She had qualities and ambitions well matched to boyhood. An interest in snails and maps and warfare. A roving disposition. Nobody told her that she wasn't. When they found her constructing a chariot out of a wheelbarrow and two croquet mallets, it was something typical of Cristabel. Eyebrows were raised. Punishments were half-heartedly discussed, then forgotten about.

It was only after the new mother started growing a baby in her stomach that people remembered Cristabel wasn't actually a boy, and that stricter standards of behaviour should be enforced. They started saying she must 'behave herself, like a big girl'. There was a distinct lack of logic in these new rules, but when she pointed this out, she was told to stop acting like an uppity little madam.

When the vegetable baby was christened (Florence Louisa Rose Seagrave – Cristabel's suggestion of 'Cristabel the Younger' sadly ignored), Uncle Willoughby bought Cristabel a dress and some squeaky shoes to wear for the church ceremony. The dress was a mass of bows and flounces, and she had to stand in front of the full-length mirror in the new mother's bedroom as they put it on her. There was much tightening and fastening, and she felt it as a kind of tethering, an impediment.

Her body was no longer something amenable that transported her rapidly about the place, like an excellent rickshaw; it was something forced to be stationary, something to be looked at.

'There,' said Betty, tweaking the ribbons on the dress, glancing between the real Cristabel and the reflected version. 'There you are.'

As if she hadn't been there before.

One evening, in the attic with Maudie, who is reading her *The Iliad* in return for one of Cristabel's pencils, it occurs to Cristabel that everyone interesting in *The Iliad* is a boy. They are all owners of things. The only girls in it are sad wives, sad servants or sad beautiful women who cause wars.

It is a dark, drizzly night. Wind sighs down the chimney. The sound of the sea comes and goes. Maudie, in her black and white maid's outfit, sits cross-legged on a rag rug in front of the fireplace, carefully following the words with

her finger, slowly intoning. “Unarm’d if I should go, what hope of mercy from this vengeful foe; but woman-like to fall, and fall without a blow.”

‘What does it mean, “woman-like”?’ asks Cristabel, who is tucked up in bed. The slanting room is lit by a few guttering candles on the mantelpiece.

Maudie thinks for a moment, then replies, ‘It means Mr Homer never met me. Or Betty Bemrose, for that matter. You’d have a job to knock her down.’ She carries on reading while Cristabel considers this.

‘Maudie –’

“... pent in this sad palace, let us give to grief the wretched days we have to live ...”

‘Why aren’t there interesting girls in the stories?’

“Still, still for Hector let our sorrows flow, born to his own, and to his parents’ woe.”

‘Maudie, why are all the best characters men?’

Maudie closes the book with a *cillump*. ‘We haven’t read all the books yet, Miss Cristabel. I can’t believe that every story is the same. Bedtime for you.’

A Hunter's Moon

November, 1920

Jasper eats a late lunch alone. Sinks a full bottle of Bordeaux. Starts on a second. He hasn't seen Rosalind at the dining table in months and Willoughby doesn't often show his face, not even for dessert. Jasper grimly spoons lemon syllabub through his beard, while idly wondering – with no real hope or expectation – if he and Willoughby will ever attain an affectionate, brotherly relationship. It is a matter of regret to him they still slip into the well-worn grooves of ancient quarrels and petty bickering. Willoughby's a flibbertigibbet peacock, with more hair than sense, but he's brave. Dauntless. He's heard Willoughby's fellow officers talk about him with admiration. Jasper would like to be able to call his brother a friend. That would be something.

By the time he rises from the table, after a silent four-course meal eaten at a table set for three, it has become evening and dark outside. Jasper walks through the ground floor of his home, where servants are hurrying about, making everything ready for the guests who will soon be arriving to celebrate Willoughby's birthday. As Jasper opens the door to his study, he notices moonlight falling through the window like an invitation.

These days, he is more inclined to close the curtains and share the solitary lamplight of his desk with a decanter of brandy, but as a youth, he'd never been able to resist a moonlit night. He would steal down to the beach, book in one pocket, pork pie in the other, sole witness to a world lit up in eerie whiteness.

Even on that awful night when he'd broken his ankle, and was sprawled on his back crying, he had still kept gazing at the moonlight on the sea. And of course, the times with Annabel – the two of them swimming in the glittering ocean, so light in the water he could lift her like a bride – what a miracle that had been, what a gift. How he misses her. His love. His wife.

He hears a crash from somewhere upstairs in the house. Probably Willoughby dropping another bottle of wine he hasn't paid for. Jasper opens his desk drawer, pulls out a hip flask, tucks it into his jacket pocket, heads through the Oak Hall and out into the night air. He walks along the edge of the lawn, lifting his head to look at the moon.

For the last few nights, whenever he's gone out to talk to the horses, he has been captivated by the sight of a huge moon rising over the trees that surround the house. A giant disc, toenail yellow, heaving itself slowly into the night sky. Such effrontery in its bare-faced blankness. A Hunter's Moon, the villagers call it. After the autumn harvests have been gathered and there's nothing but stubble in the fields, a full moon comes in November to light up all the soft scurrying

creatures with nowhere left to hide. The predators given a night of their own. The last killing of the year.

There has been too much killing. Whenever Jasper looks out across the front lawn, he remembers the summer of 1914 when war was declared. The Chilcombe Mell men who had joined up gathered in front of the house before leaving for France. There was a lunch provided. Ginger beer. Bunting. All very jolly.

His father would have known how to talk to them, that half-proud, half-shy bunch, shuffling about on the grass in their stiff new uniforms. But whenever Jasper looked at them, familiar faces kept catching his gaze, distracting him: little Albert who brought the post; Tom Hardcastle, head groom and devoted husband of Ada the housekeeper; Frank and Clive from the stables, standing with their father Sidney; spotty Reg the blacksmith's son, and Peter, the youngest footman, still wearing his wire-framed glasses. The following day, they would all be packed on to the London train from Dorchester, off to begin the fight.

Jasper, too old and lame to sign up for the Big Show, was downright envious. It was sickening to be out of it, to be a civilian in wartime. It gnawed at him, this static uselessness. If only he could do something that counted, to prove he wasn't what his father called a 'snivelling hands-upper'.

He wanted to inspire courage in the men, so had scoured his well-thumbed copy of *The Iliad*, looking for a way to ignite the stirring emotions he experienced when reading about gallant Hector, stepping out from the walls of Troy to face the warrior Achilles, despite the pleas of his family. Jasper looked for a suitable speech from that moment, but found there was a great deal about 'perishing', which seemed less than apt. There were other marvellous sections though, which he rehearsed, quietly, in the lavatory.

So then Jasper: standing at the doorway to Chilcombe, flanked by servants, faced by soldiers. (Suddenly, a rushing awareness: hadn't he always imagined a moment like this? Hadn't he always been travelling to this point?) He began. "Without a sign, his sword the brave man draws and asks no omen but his country's cause." So said Homer and so say I.'

He heard rooks cawing in the trees, saw Peter the footman carefully taking off his glasses to wipe them, watched Reg turn to Clive and say, 'What's he on about?'

'Buggered if I know,' muttered Clive.

Jasper cleared his throat. 'One would wish to join you, of course.' (The disappointing sound of his own voice; the men leaning forward, straining to hear.) He tried again: 'Of course, one would wish to join you.'

But they didn't want to hear about him, it was their day. He knew that, damn it, he'd considered it in the lavatory. Then from behind him, a clear voice came ringing out, like a fork striking a champagne glass. 'Naturally, my brother Jasper

wishes he could do his bit, but we won't need any help. The only people in need of help are those poor devils who will be up against us!

Laughter, cheers!

'By God, I'm sure that each and every one of you will stand alongside me, Willoughby Seagrave, and do your duty, for King and country, and for Dorset, this beautiful county and her beautiful women.'

Knowing laughter, cheers!

'You know me, boys, and while we're over there fighting the good fight, my family will ensure your families are well cared for, as we have always done.'

Murmurs of assent, sniffles from watching female servants.

'When we come home victorious, we'll meet again on this very spot, and Jasper will be here to welcome us back.'

Cheers, cries of agreement!

'Won't be long, boys – because the Boche don't stand a damn chance!'

The red and white bunting flapping in the trees, the sunshine on the dappled lawn, the joyous faces hurrahing, Willoughby in his officer's uniform, opening his hands to them all, and Jasper standing outside the walls of Troy, knowing he volunteered for a doomed encounter because he was too frightened to be thought cowardly.

'What do you say, chaps, a swift drink before we go?' Willoughby cried, bounding across the lawn to join the men.

Jasper retreated into the house. He hoped there might be some apple cake in the kitchen. He wished he hadn't worn a ceremonial sword. It clanked awfully.

Albert. Frank. Clive. Tom. Sidney. Reg. Peter. Willoughby. Only Frank, Reg and Willoughby came back.

Jasper continues to meander across the lawn, drinking from his hip flask. He can hear the hush of the sea, the tremulous hoot of a tawny owl; all else is silence. He looks back at Chilcombe, sees the shadows of servants flitting past windows, doing Rosalind's bidding, no doubt.

Lamps are lit on the ground floor, but the rest of the house is in darkness. Jasper hears the wail of a baby high in the attic. He finds the crying of children physically painful. He wishes he didn't ever have to hear it. Beyond the house, there is the Ridgeway, implacable and unlit. Beyond that, more hills and more darkness and towns and cathedrals and England and so on, all piling up behind it.

He is tired. Gone at the knees. Holed below the waterline. The newspapers say 'war weariness' has drained the nation's collective nerve power, allowing deadly Spanish Influenza to spread. Appalling, of course, that so many are dying from it, but the thought of a feverish descent is rather attractive – a sudden virulent end possessing the body as swiftly and irrevocably as love. He finds himself to be a heavy load. A sandbag of a man. He takes a swig from his hip

flask, ambles round the corner of the house towards the stables, stumbling slightly on the lawn edge.

It is a comfort to him, the rich hay smell of the stables. The snorts and snickerings of the horses. He makes his way to faithful Guinevere's stall, rubs her velvet nose. She'd carried him through every ride with the hunt. It had been on her broad back that he'd first set eyes on Annabel Agnew. When had he last ridden out with hounds? Why didn't he have that in him any more? Yet another thing put down somewhere and forgotten about.

He unlatches the stall, leads the horse out. Finds a saddle, a bridle, and clumsily puts them on, murmuring alcohol-scented apologies into Guinevere's twitching ears. He pulls up a stool, balances precariously on it for a moment, before heaving himself into the saddle, shoving his feet into the twisted stirrups. Best foot forward. Once more unto the breach. Off we trot.

Animal and man move ponderously out of the stables, heading round the house, through the trees, and down the path that leads to the coast. The night is frosty and still. The moon hangs low over the sea: a vast, pockmarked sphere. Jasper closes one eye and squints at it. It is the tarnished light of ancient metal, of fallen shields and broken swords. It stares him down.

Beneath the saddle, the shifting of Guinevere's bones jerks him from left, to right, from left, to right, as the elderly horse carefully picks her way across the hard ground. Guinevere knows this route well, so Jasper lets the reins drop, allows his bulk to be tipped inelegantly from side to side. He closes his eyes, lets his head tip forward, his body still jolting about, as if assailed from either side by invisible opponents. It would be bliss to sleep. His hands pat about himself for his hip flask and it is as he is doing this – this childlike *pat-pat-patting* of his own stomach – that Guinevere catches a hoof in a rabbit hole and lurches forward, pitching Jasper out of the saddle.

It would have been all right if he had been holding the reins. It would have been all right if he hadn't had his weak foot tangled in the stirrup, which meant that his body was swung downwards in a perpendicular arc and his forehead hit the ground first, smashing against a large rock with considerable force. As it was, his brain was severely rattled inside his skull and the urgent signals travelling through his synapses to warn him he was injured never reached their destination, and the crushed cells of his brain began dying in overwhelming numbers, flickering out like stars disappearing from the night sky, so his last thought wasn't really a thought at all, more a sense of something rushing past him, and an image he had been picturing in his mind in the moments before he fell, of a woman in the sea silhouetted against an argent moon.

Loyal Guinevere regains her footing. Snorts. Waits for instructions. When none are forthcoming, she continues on her usual route, following the paths she

knows of old, dragging the body of Jasper behind her.

Maudie Kitcat's Diary

3rd November, 1920

party tonight. all sorts arriving.

Mister jasper gone wobblin off on a horse. he's proper drinky. Mister willoughby says never be the most sozzled person at a party, unless it's an awful party. then he winks. Betty says to watch him he's a rascal. other times she says Maudie you watch too much. she should make up her mind.

winks are secrets. little hooks. there are clasps on Mrs Rosalind's corsets called hooks & eyes. that is winks. little clasps only some see.

grandfather told me servants in this attic used to wink lights off and on to smugglers. most folk dont notice whats under their noses. i can be at the window in nothing but my slip and none of them downstairs knows.

Mister willoughby winks to make me blush but i dont care. i do it too. winked at a village boy & kisst him in the woods. i am 15 tomorrow. got meself gifts as they wont will they.

one of Mister willoughby's hankerchiffs from the laundry basket smells of him

box of matches

glass marbel with bubbles inside

on my birthday i am going to kiss someone else. dont mind who.

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..... / / / / / /
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Act Two

1928–1938

Whale Fall

March, 1928

She reaches skyward, feeling for a handhold. Beneath her fingers, the surface is smooth and slippery. There is nothing to grab on to. At roughly head height, there is a wooden tent peg she has laboriously hammered into place using a rock. It has a skipping rope knotted around it, which she grips and pulls, testing her weight. The peg wobbles but holds. She will have to heave herself up using the rope, then use the peg as a foothold to get to the top.

Before she commences her attempt on the summit, she looks out across the bay: a lively teal sea beneath a cloudless sky, with the Isle of Portland on the far horizon. After a night of thunderstorms, the air is as fresh as clean laundry. The chilly mist that has swathed the county for weeks has been swept away, lifting like stage curtains to reveal the coastline in its spring colours, the cliffs covered with yellow gorse, busy birds bouncing from bush to bush. An untouched morning: her dominion.

The sun has been up for half an hour already and interested gulls are appearing overhead, swooping and calling. She doesn't have much time. She adjusts the items strapped across her back, leans on the skipping rope and begins her ascent of the great mound. Best foot forward. Onwards and upwards. Near the top, the gradient levels out and she proceeds by dragging herself forward on her stomach, using her grandfather's ivory-handled hunting knife for leverage.

Finally, she reaches the peak. She eases herself to her feet, pulls a home-made flagpole from the bindings on her back, and stands on tiptoe in order to give herself enough height and momentum to plunge the sharpened end of the flagpole into the carcass of the dead whale, the leviathan that is stretching more than sixty feet along the beach, reeking of the dark green depths of the ocean it traversed, before a storm washed it up on her beach, where she could claim it for herself: Cristabel Seagrave. She lets go a mighty war cry, hears it bounce around the bay, the bay, the bay.

Cristabel stands for a moment, holding her flagpole – a sharpened broom handle – as the disappointingly shallow wound she has made in the whale's rubbery hide begins to ooze a clear liquid and a faintly bacon-ish smell. She looks back down the creature's curving spine to its flat tail. The night before, when she had escaped from the house to watch the storm and discovered the dead whale washed up on the pebbles, its dark skin had been as glossy as wet lacquer. Now, out of its element, it is starting to dry out: wrinkling, paling. She can see white patches of barnacles on its back.

There are a few small wooden boats setting off from the next cove, about a mile to the west. She can hear the faint creak and splash as the fishermen row out from the shore, their sounds travelling low over the water like skimmed stones. They will have heard her cry. They will know she is waiting for them.

From behind her comes the sound of someone careering down the steep path on to the beach. It is her half-sister Florence, known to almost everyone as ‘the Veg’. She is out of breath, her round face flushed, wearing a dressing gown, one unbuckled shoe and an expression of high alarm. ‘I came as soon as I got your note,’ she says. ‘Goodness, I didn’t think it would be so big!’

The creature is a long tubular shape ending in an enormous mermaid’s tail. It is slumped on its side, with one flipper the size of a dining table flopped uselessly on the pebbles. At its highest point, where Cristabel is standing, it is seven feet high, a dark grey colour fading to a pale cream on its underside, which has a curious pleated texture. Its huge head is almost entirely made up of its bottom jaw; the upper jaw appears only to be a flat lid perched on top. The thin line of the whale’s mouth is downturned and a small eye, still open, is tucked in the corner of the mouth, almost as an afterthought. It is – thinks the Veg – like a giant button-eyed sock puppet, the kind she and Cristabel use in their cardboard theatre, and its great size makes its glum expression most affecting.

‘How sad,’ whispers the Veg, tears filling her eyes.

‘Pull yourself together, Veg,’ says Cristabel. ‘He was dead when I found him last night, and he was still dead when I came with my equipment this morning.’

‘He?’

‘I don’t know. Hard to determine. Where’s Digby?’

‘I’m here, I’m here,’ and a slim, dark-haired boy in shirt, shorts and plimsolls comes scrambling down the path. He has a checked tea towel knotted round his neck that flies out behind him as he pelts past the Veg. He only stops running when he is at the base of the whale, directly beneath Cristabel, then gives an admiring whistle. ‘What a beauty.’

‘Isn’t he,’ grins Cristabel.

‘It’s like I’m having a dream, only I’m awake. A whale on our beach. Did you claim him, Crista? Oh, you did! You took the flag!’

‘Remembered in the nick of time, Digs. Tell me, what’s afoot back at the house? Are your parents awake?’

‘The situation remains uncertain,’ says Digby, who is six years old. He is Cristabel’s long-awaited brother, even though he isn’t actually her brother.

‘I woke Digby soon as I found your note. We came as fast as we could,’ adds the Veg, who is seven and a half. ‘You’re very high up, Crista.’

‘There’s some fishermen,’ cries Digby, pointing out to sea.

The girls turn to look, shielding their eyes with their hands. The morning sun is sharp white light on the ocean and the fishermen approaching in their wooden boats are silhouettes against the brightness. As they get closer, they rest on their oars and push back their caps, squinting towards the children and the whale.

‘What have you got there?’ shouts one.

‘A mighty leviathan,’ shouts back Cristabel. ‘I have claimed it.’

‘Is that right?’ There is laughter from the boats, which rock gently, waves slapping against their sides. ‘Are you Miss Cristabel Seagrave, by any chance?’

Cristabel stares at them, holding her flag tightly.

‘It’ll start to smell soon,’ calls another of the fishermen.

‘That’s my concern,’ she says.

‘We’ll see what the Coastguard has to say about that,’ comes the reply.

The Veg calls out, in her high voice, ‘Cristabel found it.’

‘Thought that was you, Miss Cristabel,’ says the first fisherman. ‘You mind yourself up there.’

Cristabel straightens her spine and nods: a mute acknowledgement. ‘Decent sorts, fishermen,’ she says to the younger children. She has just turned twelve; there isn’t much she doesn’t know. She has read nearly all the books in the house and learnt a great deal more from men such as these.

She likes fishermen, gamekeepers, blacksmiths, butchers. She enjoys both their company and their useful skills, for she admires things done in an adept manner, in the same way she covets tools that can be snapped shut and pocketed. When the local men teach her practical skills, like tying knots or baiting fishing lines, and she is then able to carry them out by herself, it gives her the same feeling as having said, ‘Now, look here all of you, listen to me.’ The feeling of having written out some rules and handed them round. The feeling of being up in front on her own, as she is now, high on her whale, looking down at Digby and the Veg.

But someone else is approaching. Mr Bill Brewer, Chilcombe’s land agent, a former London debt collector, spotted in the Army Service Corps by Willoughby’s friend Perry who has an eye for a useful man, and now ambling down the path accompanied by his spaniel, which begins circling the whale, sniffing excitedly. ‘Well, well,’ says Mr Brewer. ‘Who wants to explain this to me?’

‘Mr Brewer, I need you to alert the authorities,’ says Cristabel. ‘I have claimed a whale for the Seagrave family.’

‘So I see, Miss Cristabel. Do you have any plans for it?’

Cristabel and Digby exchange glances. ‘We will preserve it for the annals of history,’ says Cristabel.

‘We will make famous the name of Seagrave,’ adds Digby, patting the whale appreciatively.

‘We will examine its innards for science.’

‘We will put it on display so all may come and wonder.’

‘We will hang its bones from the ceiling of the Oak Hall.’

‘Yes! We will have an enormous skeleton inside our house!’

‘Forming an exhibit of national importance.’

‘Poor whale,’ says the Veg, under her breath.

Mr Brewer peers at the whale. ‘I’m not sure Mrs Brewer will let you bring that in on her clean floors.’

Cristabel cautiously lets go her flag, relieved that it stays upright, then crouches down to hiss to Digby, ‘He’s not playing ball. We will need to alert the authorities ourselves. Can you run back? We’ll have to send a telegram.’

‘To who?’

‘The authorities. I’ll stay here. Stand guard.’

‘Righto.’ Digby sprints off, pulling the Veg with him.

The two of them dart up the steep path that leads from the beach to their house. It is – as the Veg has often observed – the kind of path you would be nervous about going up if you didn’t know where it went. It has – as she says – a trespassy feel about it. It twists and turns its way up the cliff, with gorse and blackthorn leaning in from either side, tangling their spiked branches together, so there is no way of seeing where it leads.

At the top is an old wooden gate in a dishevelled hedge, with a sign that warns: PRIVATE PROPERTY. Digby and the Veg crash through the gate and run on, following the path through dense woodland. Branches snap underfoot; wood pigeons take flight from the bracken with a panicky flapping; swords of sunlight slant downwards through the trees. The woodland thins out as the path widens and becomes more established, leading eventually to the edge of a large lawn. The children sprint across the lawn to the front entrance of Chilcombe. They push open the heavy door and, turning to shush one another, step carefully through the entranceway and into the Oak Hall, where light from a new glass cupola embedded in the ceiling falls the height of the building and lands on the pieces of a broken whisky bottle a maid is on her hands and knees sweeping up.

‘Leave it, leave it,’ says Willoughby, walking barefoot down the curve of the main staircase, tucking a stained shirt into crumpled trousers. ‘More bottles will be broken, I’m sure. Might as well get used to treading on them. Breakfast is the main thing. I am desperate for breakfast.’

‘Yes, Mr Willoughby, sir,’ says the maid. ‘And your wife, sir? Will she be requiring anything to be brought to her room?’

‘Rosalind has renounced all solid food stuffs for Lent. She is enjoying a purely liquid diet.’

The children watch as, on the gallery, a door opens, and Rosalind appears, smudge-eyed, wrapped in a peach silk peignoir. ‘I can hear you, Willoughby. Your voice is very booming. I’d like tea and toast. You know I would like tea and toast. My cigarette case is missing.’

Willoughby, reaching the maid, stage-whispers, ‘Bugger the tea and toast. I’d like my breakfast outside on the lawn. Can you do that for me?’

‘My silver cigarette case,’ calls Rosalind. ‘The one you gave me.’

‘You should check Perry’s trouser pocket. You most certainly had it when you were sitting on his lap.’

‘You made me sit there, Willoughby. You always talk as if you had nothing to do with anything.’

‘I am in need of eggs,’ says Willoughby, still addressing the maid. ‘What’s your name – are you Lucy or Elsie? I lose track.’

Rosalind pads rapidly down the stairs in her satin slippers, tightening the belt of her gown and saying, ‘Lucy left months ago and there’s never been an Elsie. Leave the girl alone. Whatever she’s called, she’s to bring me my tea.’

‘Why your tea not my breakfast? What is it you want, Rosalind?’

She is next to him now and her hands are busy about his waist, pulling at his shirt, laying her thin fingers on the flesh of his stomach. ‘I didn’t hear you get up. I woke up and you’d gone. You left me there alone.’

‘I’m fairly sure I’d performed my husbandly duty. I was hungry, woman. Still am.’

‘Digby!’ cries Rosalind, suddenly noticing the children. ‘What are you doing? Have you been outside? What have you got round your neck?’

‘A fine goatskin cloak, Mother.’

‘It looks like a tea towel. Put a coat on. Remember when you had that terrible spring cold? You aren’t as strong as your father.’

‘His father is hungry and is going to eat eggs if someone will ever bring them to him.’ Willoughby walks past the children, ruffling the Veg’s mousy hair as he passes.

The maid darts quickly in the direction of the kitchen.

‘Our guests will be expecting their breakfast too, Willoughby,’ says Rosalind. ‘How many people were here last night?’

‘Seven? Ten? That dreadful woman with the turban definitely hasn’t left,’ he replies, his voice echoing in the stone entranceway.

‘She’s an American poetess. Much admired.’

‘How unfortunate,’ comes Willoughby’s voice from the bright lawn.

Rosalind sighs. ‘You could at least talk to her.’

The Veg nods encouragingly at Digby, pushes him forward.

‘Mother?’ he says.

‘Yes, darling.’

‘May I send a telegram to the authorities?’

‘Is this one of Cristabel’s silly schemes?’

‘It’s not a silly scheme. It’s a matter of national importance.’

‘You mustn’t let her bully you, darling,’ says Rosalind. ‘I know she’s older than you but she’s not your big sister – just a cousin. She’s lucky to be living here, all things considered.’

‘Crista would never bully me, Mother.’

On the gallery, more bedroom doors are opening, and more dressing-gowned people with bleary, bloodshot eyes are appearing. One of them, a thin man with a ginger moustache, is wearing a turquoise turban at a jaunty angle.

‘Perry!’ cries Rosalind, lifting her arms so that sunlight from the cupola catches her sleeves like butterfly wings. ‘You are naughty. You should take it off before anyone sees.’

‘A military man is never without the appropriate headwear,’ he replies. ‘My God, I feel rotten. I hope there’s a hair of the dog down there for me.’

‘Darling, of course. Come, come. We’ll breakfast on the lawn.’

‘Mother?’

‘Ask Mr Brewer, Digby. I haven’t time for whatever it is you’re talking about.’ Rosalind starts towards the staircase to meet her descending guests, then turns back to the Veg. ‘What are you wearing?’

‘My dressing gown, Mother. And one of my shoes. I left the other in –’

‘You’re managing to appear even less appealing than usual. Have Maudie brush your hair, what little there is of it.’

‘Yes, Mother,’ says the Veg.

Digby takes the Veg’s hand, squeezes it, and pulls her away. They head through the hall and downwards to the windowless world of below stairs, where they run along a corridor lined with a row of labelled bells – DINING ROOM, DRAWING ROOM, STUDY, MASTER BEDROOM, DRESSING ROOM, SECOND BEDROOM, GUEST ROOM 1, GUEST ROOM 2 – two of which are jangling neurotically, insistently.

On either side of the corridor are storerooms, cold rooms, pantries, wine cellars. These underground caves are crammed floor to ceiling with produce: tins, pots, jams, hams, butter dishes, biscuit jars, smoked fish, cold cuts, fruit cakes, and bottles of champagne stacked in a rack, like a glass honeycomb. At the far end of the corridor is the main kitchen, its tiled walls hung with copper pans, filled with a great black range with ovens on either side, and thick with bustling staff and the sizzle and spit of breakfast: kippers, eggs, black pudding. By scuttling through the kitchen, the children can leave the house by the back door,

which leads to a courtyard surrounded by brick outbuildings. Mr Brewer's quarters, where he lives with his wife and young son, are here, above the laundry.

'Mr Brewer has a telephone up in his office. I believe we could use that to send a telegram,' says Digby, as they arrive at the door that leads to Mr Brewer's home. 'Do you know how to operate a telephone?'

'No,' says the Veg, 'and we can't go into his office without asking. That would be burgling.'

'It's not burgling if we need to alert the authorities.'

'Need to alert them of what?' asks Betty Brewer, née Bemrose, opening the door. 'What are you two up to? Where's that troublesome Cristabel?'

Digby and the Veg exchange glances; they are unsure of Betty's loyalties. Even now she is housekeeper at Chilcombe and married to the equable Mr Brewer, they suspect her first report is always to Rosalind.

'Good morning, Mrs Brewer,' says Digby politely. 'We're not up to anything.'

Betty frowns, hangs a large set of keys on to a loop at her waist. 'Don't have time for nonsense today. I've eight hungry house guests and their staff to feed.'

'Cristabel found a dead whale and we need to alert the authorities,' blurts the Veg.

Betty adjusts her dress, shifts her wide, authoritative bosom, pulls the door firmly shut behind her so that it locks with a click, and sets off towards the kitchen with a bustling step. 'Miss Florence, I believe I said I don't have time for nonsense.'

Digby and the Veg look at each other.

'We'll have to go back to the beach and tell Crista we've met with unforeseen difficulties,' says the Veg.

Digby pulls a face.

'Come on,' says the Veg. 'She'll know what to do.'

The children set off round the side of the house, heading once more for the woods, but are interrupted by a statuesque woman with dyed blonde hair, in a patterned robe, who is striding across the lawn with a cigarette holder and a champagne glass. 'Oh, hi,' she says, her voice a curiously elongated drawl. 'Are you scampering squirrels the heirs to the estate? Can you tell me where I find the sea? I find it invigorating to commune with the ocean before I breakfast. I can sense it's nearby – there's a breath of salt in the air.'

The Veg points towards the path through the woods. 'That way.'

'I thank you. But tell me, why the headlong rush?'

'There's a dead whale and –' says the Veg, breaking off due to a nudge from Digby.

‘You’re kidding.’ The woman has a long expressive face, both solemn and humorous, and appears to have drawn on her own eyebrows. She turns and shouts back towards a group of people gathering at a table outside the house. ‘These children say there’s a dead whale. Is this a common occurrence?’

Digby cries, ‘Good morning, everyone. Crista has claimed the whale for the Seagrave family. There’s no need for fuss.’

‘Too late, Digby old chap. If there’s a whale on the beach, it already has an owner,’ calls a man in a turban, who is Willoughby’s army friend Perry, such a frequent visitor to the house that the children know him as Uncle Perry.

‘An owner? Who?’

‘The King, dear boy. Anything washed up on the beaches of England belongs to the monarch by right. Whales, dolphins, porpoises. If they wash ashore, they’re “fishes royal”. A law that dates back to Saxon times, if I remember rightly.’

‘Really truly, Uncle Perry?’

‘Upon my word.’

The blonde woman claps her hands together. ‘I will never tire of these eccentric English laws. Why would you even have a law about whales? Oh my. So beautiful in its absurdity.’

From the table, Rosalind calls, ‘Myrtle darling, don’t waste your time with the children, come and have breakfast. I want to hear more about this Russian you met in France.’

The woman glides across the grass, turning in circles, half-dancing, making the breakfast party laugh.

The Veg puts her hand on Digby’s arm. ‘You will have to tell Crista about the King.’

Digby turns his wide brown eyes on his half-sister. ‘Oh golly, Flossie,’ he says. ‘She won’t like it. Not one bit.’

On the beach, Cristabel sits cross-legged on top of the whale, holding the flagpole upright, while her flag, an old handkerchief bearing an inky version of the Seagrave coat of arms – a crowned lion rampant – flutters in the breeze. Her face beneath the straight line of her fringe is resolute, determined. The whale is now surrounded by curious onlookers, local fishermen and people from the village, who are poking it and exclaiming loudly, while children clamber up its tail and pretend to ride it. Mr Brewer and his dog are still there, together with a few more Chilcombe servants. There is talk of a man from the Coastguard attending, and possibly a newspaper photographer.

Digby and the Veg push through the crowds.

Cristabel catches Digby’s eye. ‘What is it, Digs?’

He shakes his head. 'Bad news, I'm afraid. Uncle Perry says you can't claim it. He says it belongs to the King.'

'Belongs to who?'

'The King. Perry says King George owns all the dead whales.'

'But it's mine. I found it. King George doesn't even know it's here.'

'Perry says there's a law. I'm sorry, Crista.'

'How on earth can there be a law about dead whales?'

'I suppose if you're King you can have laws about whatever you like,' says the Veg.

'That is the most damnably unfair thing I have ever heard!' says Cristabel, yanking her flagpole from the carcass and throwing it down on to the pebbles, where it is gleefully captured by Mr Brewer's spaniel.

Mr Brewer, calmly retrieving the pole from his dog's mouth, says, 'Not much in life is fair, Miss Cristabel. Will you be coming down now? Must be time for your breakfast.'

Digby adds, 'Shall we have breakfast then, Crista? Aren't you ravenous? We could come back later.' He leans companionably on the whale and peers up at her.

Cristabel closes her eyes and places her hands on the creature beneath her. She feels the spring breeze on her face, hears the waves hitting the pebbles. She is tired, dizzily so, after being up nearly all night. She lifts her mind above the babble of the people surrounding her, and summons the memory of early that morning, when she had first clambered aboard the whale, and it had been hers: something she had found and claimed. This hulking beast, her deserved treasure, now taken from her by ridiculous old rules.

She hears the Veg far below saying, 'We could dig a moat around the whale, Crista.'

Cristabel's eyes flick open, and she slides down the side of the whale, landing neatly on her feet. She walks swiftly past Mr Brewer and the gawping, slack-jawed crowds. The Veg and Digby run to catch up with her as she strides up the cliff path, her fists clenched.

She speaks without looking at them. 'It might be his, but it shouldn't be his. Rules should always be fair. That's the English way. I'm going home now because I am hungry, but it is still my whale. By which I mean to say: it will be my whale. I've merely got to figure out how, and if I have to talk to the King directly, so be it.'

The Arrival of the God Poseidon

March, 1928

The sloping ceilings of the attic give Cristabel an Alice in Wonderland feeling, as if she were too big for the room. Lying on her narrow bed, she imagines her legs growing until her feet poke out the window. It is sunny outside; the rooks are nattering away in the trees. She wishes she was on the beach with her whale. She wonders which foolish king made up the whale rules. She wonders about the man who wrote the Alice in Wonderland book. He can't have been very sensible either.

'Stay still, Miss Cristabel, for heaven's sake,' says Maudie, who is crouched at the foot of Cristabel's bed trying to lace her boots.

With her head on the pillow, Cristabel can reach up and place her hands on the ceiling, where it slants downwards to touch the floor. Both walls and ceiling have recently been covered with a bold striped wallpaper in red and white, patterned like a circus tent. It is, according to Rosalind, quite the latest thing.

Many things are now the latest thing. Cristabel doesn't care for any of them. The chromium bathtub. The glass-fronted cocktail cabinet. The blue baize billiard table. The giraffe-hide footstool. The latest things arrive at Chilcombe in crates carried by sweating delivery men, and there is a general flapping about, as if this latest thing will make everything different, but each item, once put into position and subsumed into the quotidian, quickly loses its promise. The latest things are not the latest for long. Whether too modern to fit into the ancient house or not modern enough to avoid replacement, they are soon items of dissatisfaction, receding into the background or seeming to find their own way out.

'Up you get,' says Maudie, now a young woman of twenty-two, with strong limbs, thick eyebrows and a mass of frizzy brown hair barely constrained beneath a maid's cap.

Cristabel is pulled to her feet, straightened up and brushed down. Her black hair is dampened with water and briskly combed into its usual square-edged bob: a series of hard borders around her unsmiling face. Then she is forced to eat a bowl of gelatinous porridge before she and the Veg are sent along the attic corridor to the schoolroom for French lessons with their latest governess, Mademoiselle Aubert.

Mlle Aubert is the girls' sixth French governess. Rosalind is insistent they must have a French governess, despite their efficient dispatching of each one that comes their way. Although Cristabel will freely admit to hastening their departures, she is of the opinion that Rosalind's own erratic behaviour is largely to blame for the rapid turnover of staff at Chilcombe. Cristabel has heard talk

below stairs of drunken displays, outrageous demands. The servants say Rosalind is spending every last penny of Jasper's life insurance on home furnishings and entertaining, but rarely remembers to pay their wages. Cristabel has said as much to Uncle Willoughby. 'Rosalind does not inspire sufficient respect in the staff.'

'Cristabel, sweetheart, you know very well she would rather you didn't call her Rosalind.'

'You can't honestly expect me to call her Mother.'

'I suppose not. Auntie? Don't glower at me.'

From her desk in the attic schoolroom, Cristabel can hear the steady purr of Uncle Willoughby's newest vehicle, a sporty Daimler, as it heads off down the drive. He will be out all the bright day, speeding through the lanes, the world turning away beneath him like a spun globe.

'Attention, Miss Cristabel, *s'il vous plaît*,' says Mlle Aubert, a dour young woman with a face dotted by dark moles. 'You will be leaving the globe alone. It is for Master Digby when he is learning the geography.'

Cristabel gives the schoolroom globe a final spin, watching as the countries blur into a multicoloured mass, dominated by the pink sprawl of the British Empire, which contains natives and tea plantations and ancient civilizations where Grandfather Robert suppressed uprisings and opened tombs and shot lions. Nobody ever tried to stop him from claiming his great treasures. She wonders if he ever had to reason with a king. Also: would it be possible to stuff a whale? Cristabel makes a mental note to ask Digby's latest tutor, who is rather a sissy but useful in terms of providing scientific information.

In the airless schoolroom, there is only the squeak of Mlle Aubert's chalk on the blackboard as she writes out the verb *être*; the buzzing of a bluebottle battering itself against a window; and the regular *bump, bump, bump* of the Veg's boot swinging against a chair leg. Far below, Cristabel can hear the opening and closing of doors as the maids go about their business. Somewhere else in the house are Digby and his tutor, endeavouring to patch up Digby's ragged education before he heads off to boarding school in September.

It is stuffy up in the attic. Always too hot or too cold. There is only one small fireplace in the girls' bedroom, screened off by a wooden fire rail where the children's damp clothes hang steaming, and faced by a rocking chair where nannies have soothed generations of fractious Seagrave infants, the runners creaking against the floorboards.

'Do you think we should rescue that fly?' asks the Veg.

'Non,' says Mlle Aubert. 'We are doing verbs until you can say them in the proper way.'

'Verbs? *Alors!*' cries Cristabel, throwing up her hands in a Gallic gesture. '*Pourquoi? Poor moi.*'

The Veg giggles.

‘Very clever, Mademoiselle Cristabel,’ says Mlle Aubert, examining her cuticles. ‘Clever girl to laugh at lessons.’ Phlegmatic Mlle Aubert is proving a formidable opponent. She has already outlasted all her predecessors, primarily because she has no desire to be liked. She regards any sign of friendliness as something of a weakness in those foolish enough to approach her pleasantly. Willoughby has observed that Rosalind has employed the only objectionable French girl he has ever met.

Cristabel says, ‘You must hate verbs too.’

Mlle Aubert folds her arms. ‘French verbs are simple. English verbs are difficult. If you had to learn English verbs, you perhaps have a reason to be complaining.’

‘Why did you bother?’

‘Because I am not a lazy oaf. You, Mademoiselle Cristabel, will be like the English ladies who go to Paris to buy fancy hats and shout at shop girls in English and do not hear when the shop girls tell them in French they are going to charge them double for their fancy hats. They do not understand because they were too lazy to learn their verbs.’

‘I detest fancy hats.’

‘But if someone is saying you have the face of the donkey, you perhaps want to know.’ Mlle Aubert raps the blackboard. ‘Être.’

‘What’s donkey in French? Is it *baudet*? How do you say you have the face of the donkey?’

‘Être.’

‘*Vous visage de baudet?*’

‘Without the proper verbs, your donkey insults will always be weak.’

Cristabel lays her head on her desk for a moment. Then, in a muffled voice, ‘Very well. I will do the verbs. But only in order to insult people correctly.’

Inscrutable Mlle Aubert gazes out of the window, slowly rolling up an exercise book. ‘Être,’ she says, then dispatches the buzzing bluebottle with an efficient thwack.

After many interminable hours, it is lunchtime. Over a tepid meal of stewed brisket and boiled potatoes, followed by milk pudding, Cristabel tries to engage the Veg in a debate about time travel. Could a scientific inventor create a machine using levers and clockwork that might return them to yesterday?

‘I didn’t like yesterday,’ says the Veg, ‘there were prunes.’ Her round face is serious, frowning.

‘I didn’t like it either, but it would be in the interests of furthering knowledge,’ says Cristabel. ‘Imagine, if you went back to yesterday, you might meet yourself.’

‘Meet myself?’ The Veg looks alarmed.

Cristabel continues, ‘Or you could go back to the time of the Saxons and demand the rules about whales be rewritten because they’re unfair.’

‘Enough nonsense stories,’ says Mlle Aubert, who considers most stories to be nonsense.

‘What’s the French word for whale?’ says Cristabel.

‘*Baleine.*’

‘What’s the French word for injustice?’

‘Eat your pudding.’

After lunch, the girls have their afternoon walk. Following Mlle Aubert, they make their way downstairs and through the Oak Hall, which, under Rosalind’s jurisdiction, is now full of expensive fur rugs, curving armchairs made from cream fabric and bright inlaid wood, and circular side tables holding decorative lamps, magazines and ashtrays. The ancient brass candle holders have been removed from the walls and replaced by spherical glass electrical lights. Where there once were tapestries of battles there are now elaborate mirrors. The grand piano has been moved into the middle of the room and is topped by framed photographs of people in tennis outfits, alongside a fluted glass vase filled with faintly carnivorous flowers.

But while the space no longer resembles a medieval hall at ground level, its remote upper reaches, with their dark wood panelling, still retain an austerity. The daylight that comes in through the new glass cupola seems to take an age to fall on to the modern furniture, in the same way that a column of sunlight is slowed when it passes through the depths of the ocean, in the same way as a change in the law is stalled in its passage through the House of Lords.

Outside, it is a beautiful day. Mlle Aubert adjusts the Veg’s hat to keep the sun off her face and they set out across the lawn: Cristabel leading at a martial pace carrying a bucket; the Veg tagging along singing to herself; Mlle Aubert bringing up the rear. They take a circuitous route, as Mlle Aubert insists they avoid the path that would bring them on to the beach opposite the rotting whale, because the sight of it makes her *seeek*.

The whale’s stay in Dorset has not been an easy one. A few days after it washed up, a very uniformed official from HM Coastguard came from Portland to stand alongside the whale’s head and announce he was annexing it for the King. But it soon became apparent – after terse telegrams exchanged with palace staff – that the King would not be collecting his newest acquisition.

The uniformed official then announced he would be auctioning the whale on behalf of the King. There followed some vocal protests from Cristabel, who was taken back to the house by Mlle Aubert, whereupon she began writing letters to the King, in which she compared herself to England’s greatest explorer, Captain

Scott, who had heroically fought his way to the South Pole, only to find that the conniving Norwegians had placed their flag there already. She received no reply.

Cristabel was disgusted to hear from Mr Brewer that bidding at the auction was lacklustre, but the whale was eventually sold off to a retired schoolmaster from Affpuddle for thirty pounds. The schoolmaster told the local paper he would display its skeleton in his garden and give lectures on the mightiest of God's creations. Carpenters were then brought in, with shears and saws, to debone the creation, and the Seagrave children joined a crowd gathered on the beach to watch the grisly proceedings.

It was an unnerving spectacle. Men in rubber boots crawling about on top of the whale, sawing their way through its sleek body as if it were a giant ham, its blood streaming downwards, staining the pebbles. However, it soon transpired that the retired schoolmaster had not discussed his ambitious plans with his wife, and there would be no new home in Affpuddle for the whale after all. The post-mortem was ceased and the men in rubber boots retired, grumbling, to the pub. Local boys were paid to transport any loose pieces of whale back up to the village in wheelbarrows, where the blubber was taken by cart to Dorchester market to be sold for soap, while the organs went to local hunts to feed their hounds.

Despite an increasingly gaseous odour, what was left of the partially dismembered whale remained a popular curiosity. Students of zoology visited and identified it as *Balaenoptera physalus*, a fin whale. An older male specimen, far from its usual hunting grounds. They were puzzled by its unorthodox stranding but hypothesized that it was hit by a ship. Its ongoing decay had caused the whale's head to deflate and its jaw to fall open, revealing a bristly fringe in place of teeth. The students said this material, which resembled closely packed quills, was called 'baleen' and acted as a filter for seawater in the same way as a gentleman's moustache served as a strainer for soup.

The students told them strips of baleen were used to make the stays in Victorian corsets, and the children found this a delightful concept: to use a soup strainer from the mouth of a whale to tighten the waists of women. Old photographs of Seagrave grandmothers were now seen in a different light – beneath their high-necked dresses, they had mouth parts strung about their midriffs like cannibals.

As the students continued their explanations of the whale's by-products and how they have been integral to man's advancement through the ages, Cristabel quietly laid a hand on the side of her broken creature. With its small eye placed redundantly on the side of its bulky head, she couldn't imagine how it could ever see where it was going. Its eye was like a porthole for a passenger on an ocean liner, just a place to peer out at things as they passed by.

She dreamt about the whale almost every night. In her dreams, she was again the discoverer triumphant; the whale, whole and beautiful, lying becalmed at her feet. Sometimes she dreamt that her whale was alive, and she would ride on its back as it crested the ocean, ruler of the seas, rightfully resurrected.

Cristabel is thinking thoughts along these lines, about whales and dreams, when she, the Veg and Mlle Aubert finally reach the shore. They can make out the remains of the creature around a low headland, half a mile away.

Mlle Aubert, the afternoon sun etching dark lines on her face, sits on the beach, leans back against a large rock, and closes her eyes. 'Find things to put in bucket, girls. Collect shells for Madame Rosalind.'

This is their chance. Experience has taught them that Mlle Aubert can fall asleep within seconds of closing her eyes so, if they go quickly, they can get to the whale before she wakes up. 'Let's run,' hisses Cristabel, discarding the bucket and grabbing the Veg by the hand. They put on speed, the pebbles creaking and twisting dangerously beneath their boots.

But rounding the headland, the Veg pulls Cristabel to a halt, because there are children climbing over their whale. Four or five children scrambling over its carcass like crabs, and they are naked as savages, their bare flesh shining in the sunlight. Cristabel glares fiercely at them. It is painful to see her whale commandeered in such a way, like seeing pirates aboard a British naval vessel. One of them squats on his haunches, balancing on the whale's ribcage, and glares back. They are all dripping wet, with dark hair hanging in strands around their shoulders, and they clamber about as nimbly as the famous Apes of Gibraltar.

The Veg, red-faced and astonished, whispers, 'What are they doing?'

But there is more astonishment to come. For at that moment, they hear a booming voice coming from the sea. A bearded man is standing in the surf, and he too is missing his clothes. He is shouting, 'It is divine, the water!'

For a moment, Cristabel believes it is the god Poseidon, come from the briny depths to take them away in his chariot, but she hears answering voices, and turns to see two women capering on to the beach wearing shorts and shirts. They are carrying towels and one of them has a hamper, which she drops with a crash, shouting, 'Not as divine as champagne, I'll bet!'

'Ha!' cries Poseidon, his deep voice bouncing off the sea. 'Very good!' He falls back, his arms outstretched, to float on the clear water.

One of the women starts towards Cristabel and the Veg, waving a hand. 'Hullo,' she calls. 'Not sure we've had the pleasure.'

The Veg is only able to squeak like a mouse so it falls to Cristabel to announce they are the Seagrave children.

'Do you live here?' says the woman, brushing back her hair, which is short like a boy's.

‘We live in our house, Chilcombe,’ says Cristabel.

The other woman calls over. ‘Did the child say Chilcombe? Isn’t that where Rosalind Elliot pitched up? Mother told me, I’m sure.’

‘Rosalind Elliot? This far from London?’ says the first woman. ‘Inconceivable.’

‘Darling, that’s exactly what I thought.’

‘What on earth does she do out here? Open bazaars?’

At the mention of her mother, the Veg finds new courage, announcing, ‘Rosalind is my mother.’

‘What a turn-up for the books,’ says the first woman. ‘We must pay Ros a visit. Find out why she’s gone native. One can only imagine she’d run out of options.’

‘You are wicked, Hilly,’ says the other. ‘As is the smell from that rotting whale, my God.’

‘Don’t stand downwind, darling. Come hither.’

Now that the women are closer, Cristabel can see they look almost identical. Both are slim and flat-chested, all corners and clavicles, with cropped blonde hair swept back from angled faces. Women made of straight lines, like the illustrations in Rosalind’s magazines.

There is a crash as Poseidon exits the ocean, stumbling on the shingle. Much of his broad body is covered with curly hair; there is a line of dark fur running down his stomach.

‘Halloa!’ he cries, waving his arms in the direction of the Seagraves. ‘What is these we have here?’

Cristabel is stumped, being unfamiliar with the protocol required to greet a hairy naked man. The Veg solves this dilemma by covering her face with her hands and saying, ‘We are Florence and Cristabel. How do you do?’

Cristabel, prickled the Veg has answered before her, decides to look at the man’s beard and nothing else. When she looks up in order to locate the beard, she finds it heading directly for her.

‘This child has such a face,’ says the man, ‘I think for a moment Anna Akhmatova has followed me here.’ He reaches out a hand, damp from the ocean, and it encircles Cristabel’s jaw, like a bandage for toothache. ‘I should paint you,’ he says, and, for a moment, she believes he means to redecorate her, to cover her with glutinous paint until she is an eyeless statue. In the distance, she hears the plaintive mosquito-like summons of Mlle Aubert.

‘We have to leave now,’ says the Veg, from beneath her hands, starting to back away. ‘That’s our governess. She’s noticed we’ve gone so you mustn’t try to capture us.’

The naked man smiles benevolently and holds up his hands in an expansive gesture. 'It is always the way, no? As soon as we meet, we part.' His black hair is both swept back and receding, revealing a prominent forehead and dark eyes tucked deep in his skull. He has a boxer's square cheekbones and a bullish neck.

'I beg your pardon, but this is our beach,' Cristabel says. 'This is our beach and those children are standing on my whale.'

'That's your whale?' says one of the women. 'Could you do something about the pong?'

The other woman says, 'Don't worry, girls, we know your mother. We'll pop over for a visit. Ros will have kittens.'

'Won't she, though,' says the first woman, looping her arm around her companion's waist so they stand linked together. Behind them, the savage children bounce on the whale. One of them sticks out its tongue.

'Rosalind is not my mother,' says Cristabel, ignoring Flossie tugging at her sleeve.

By now, Mlle Aubert has rounded the headland and is fast approaching, her sturdy legs carrying her across the stones. '*Alors! Criiistabel! Floorrence!* Get away from the stinking whale!'

The man, who has picked up a towel and is wrapping it around his waist, looks up with interest. '*Bonjour,*' he cries, adding in thickly accented French, 'What pittance do they pay you to chase their children for them?'

Mlle Aubert snaps back in her mother tongue, 'Pardon me, but that is none of your business, monsieur.'

'All that much, eh?' says the man, still speaking in French. 'Ah, but it is a privilege, no? For a servant to chase the children of the rich on a glorious day such as this.'

Mlle Aubert approaches, out of breath. 'I am no servant, monsieur. I come from a good family.'

'I don't doubt that, mademoiselle. I too come from a good family, with a beautiful house in the finest city in Russia, and last year, my brother was driving a taxi around Paris while I made portraits of rich men's wives on the banks of the Seine, and neither of us could tell you if our parents are alive or dead. It is the way of these modern times, no? That we find ourselves here, washed up on the beaches of the English.'

Mlle Aubert frowns at this curious stranger who speaks her language, and reverts to her slow English. 'You know Paris?'

'As I know the bodies of my lovers,' he replies, also in English.

Mlle Aubert's frown deepens. 'It was my home.'

'Then we must talk together of Paris. It is the only city, is it not?'

Mlle Aubert folds her arms. 'For you, perhaps. No longer for me.'

‘But why?’

Mlle Aubert scowls.

The man looks at her intently. ‘Let me guess. Your family is not what it was. There were hard times.’

She nods.

He continues, ‘Before then, a life of pleasure. A fine house.’

Mlle Aubert laughs bitterly. ‘In Faubourg Saint-Germain. Fresh flowers every day of the year.’

‘Faubourg Saint-Germain? And now chasing children. *Ach*. What terrible fate befell the house of flowers?’

‘That, monsieur, is not your concern.’

‘It is not,’ he replies cordially.

Mlle Aubert’s jaw shifts from side to side. ‘Do not take me for a fool.’

‘I do not.’

‘The house was not lost from foolishness.’

‘Who would think that?’

‘My father died at Marne a hero. He never believed he would die.’

‘Heroes never do.’

‘Now my mother lives above a shop on the Rue des Rosiers. Takes in sewing. She is hopeful a wealthy man will marry her so our family may be restored. But she is old and ruined.’

Cristabel and the Veg stare at Mlle Aubert. This is the most they have ever heard her say. Previously, they have seen her as a solid impediment in an unflattering black dress, not really a person at all, certainly not a person with a story. How intriguing to hear of people living in fine houses in Paris, and ruined mothers taking in sewing, for France is a country they know only as the place where soldiers of the Empire bravely gave their lives in the Great War, and where Rosalind and Willoughby go to get away from the children, neither of which suggests any kind of native population doing anything interesting.

‘The clock moves slowly for those waiting for the past to return,’ says the man, and holds out his hand. ‘I am Taras Grigorevich Kovalsky. It is an honour to meet you.’

Mlle Aubert, her eyes shrunk to assessing pinpricks, ruminatively strokes the mole on her upper lip, then holds out her hand to Taras Grigorevich Kovalsky and does not seem in the least surprised when he bends to kiss it. ‘I am Mademoiselle Aubert,’ she announces over his bowed head, ‘Ernestine Aubert.’

One of the blonde women, seeing the Veg’s wide-eyed expression, says in a loud aside, ‘Everybody ends up telling Taras their life story, darling. Normally before they agree to take their clothes off for him. He’s a crafty beast, you’ll see.’

Mlle Aubert glares at the woman, then grabs the Veg's hand and marches back up the beach, saying, '*Au revoir, Monsieur Kovalsky.*'

Monsieur Kovalsky, the god Poseidon, the painter of portraits, the crafty beast, waves at Mlle Aubert and the Veg, then turns to smile fondly at Cristabel, and it is as if this smile were entirely usual, merely a continuation of a line of previous smiles. He leans down and nods at the whale. 'I have come for this creature. I want to paint a picture of it. You say it is yours.' His eyes are black and shining.

'I discovered it, monsieur,' Cristabel says.

'You have a claim to it.'

'Precisely.'

'May I have your permission to paint its portrait?'

She thinks for a moment, then says, 'All right then. *Oui.* I give my permission. But make those children get off it. They should treat it with respect.'

'It will be done.' He puts his hands together. '*Merci.*'

'*De rien,*' says Cristabel. 'I hope it is an excellent portrait.'

Monsieur Kovalsky turns away, saying, 'I hope our paths will cross again, keeper of the whale.'

Cristabel runs after the Veg and Mlle Aubert. She looks back only once to glimpse Monsieur Kovalsky drinking from a champagne bottle with his head tipped back, and the two women pulling off each other's shirts. Then Monsieur Kovalsky bellows at the savage children and they disappear from the whale as if blown by the force of his voice.

All through afternoon lessons, Cristabel continues to see Monsieur Kovalsky in her mind; she holds his image like a shell she has collected. Mlle Aubert – Ernestine! – is similarly distracted. Cristabel and the Veg catch her gazing from the window, humming an unfamiliar tune under her breath. She asks them to provide answers to the questions: *How far to the Métro station?* and *How much for the beautiful tulips?*

The blonde women had spoken of Rosalind and talked of visiting Chilcombe. But Cristabel will not share this knowledge, this possible meeting, with the magpie Rosalind, because Rosalind will want Monsieur Kovalsky and his strange companions to be her latest things. Rosalind with her cocked head, her claws. No, Cristabel will hold this treasure, this shining discovery, as long as she can. It is a seashell kept carefully hidden between her palms; the shape of her clasped hands like someone waiting to applaud.

Welcome to Chilcombe

April, 1928

It is too warm to stay indoors. Mlle Aubert has the afternoon off and is writing letters, presumably of complaint, so Cristabel and the Veg are walking up the chalk headland that marks the eastern edge of their known world: Ceal Head. This is a 500-foot-high outcrop at the far end of their beach that stretches out into the ocean, resembling the long-nosed profile of a sleeping dragon. The dragon's sloping flanks are covered with green and brown vegetation; patches of white chalk show through like old bones.

Groups of schoolboys sometimes visit Ceal Head to tap at rocks with hammers in the pursuit of scientific knowledge. The rock formations here are of interest to those with an interest in rock formations, and Digby's tutor. He is now – the tutor – rummaging at the bottom of the cliff looking for fossils: a bent matchstick figure beneath the chalk face of history. Digby is standing listlessly behind him with a bucket.

The Seagrave girls follow a curving path up Ceal Head, staying close to the edge, looking down on to the undercliff, a tangled strip of wilderness that runs along the base of the headland, where they can hear wood pigeons communing with their insistent *coo-coo-cooing* and busy wheatears with their *snip-snip-peep! snip-snip-peep!* Sometimes they spy linnets, songbirds balanced precariously on the uppermost branches of gorse bushes, pouring out rippling music.

As Cristabel and the Veg climb higher, there are fewer trees lining the path, and those that remain are wind-bent and wiry. Trees in exposed locations do well to keep their sails trimmed, thinks Cristabel. She approves of things that fit their purpose. Looking behind her, she can see a group of adults picnicking on their beach, a safe distance from her whale. Their beach is known locally as Chilcombe Mell Beach, but the Seagrave children do not know any other beaches, so have no need to name it. Cristabel can make out Willoughby and Perry. She does not care to identify the others. She wants to walk until they have shrunk to nothing.

'Quick march, Veg,' she says. 'When I was your age, I used to run up this hill all by myself.'

'That tutor guy, he's no slouch,' says Myrtle the American poetess, swirling her drink, and peering along the beach towards the scrabbling tutor. 'Rocks all look the same to me.'

A picnic lunch has been consumed, mainly by the men of the party, along with several bottles of champagne. More bottles are lolling half-buried in the shingle at the water's edge. It is a humid day, and the ocean is glassily still. The

sky and sea are translucent grey, merging into each other at the horizon, creating a flat wall of sameness; there is nowhere to get to.

Willoughby, lying on his back in a striped swimming costume, says, 'Tell me, Myrtle, are you wearing gentlemen's pyjamas? Have you raided Perry's wardrobe?'

'She's far taller than me,' says Perry, swatting at sandflies. He is a lean, ascetic figure, gingery and pale, with the fine hair of a duckling and a slight whistle to his 's's.

Myrtle laughs. 'Willoughby, you're a tease. These are silk beach pyjamas. I acquired them in Nice.'

'When were you in Nice?' asks Rosalind, a soft voice from beneath a parasol.

'I keep a villa on the coast, so I go whenever I crave that exquisite light,' says Myrtle, her lengthy arms cantilevering outwards. 'But it's getting so crowded now. I'm considering Italy next. Somewhere less *en vogue*.'

Rosalind nods. 'Quite half the people in Cowes last year were foreigners. Where in Italy might you go?'

'Venice, Rome, Verona. My heart leads me, and like a dog I follow.'

'You must read us more of your poetry, Myrtle. Perhaps this evening.'

'You are too kind, Rosalind. I would be honoured to share my words with you.'

Willoughby rolls over, buries his face.

Reaching the summit of Ceal Head, Cristabel and the Veg look out at the sea. It is mill pond still. If they peer over the edge, they can look down on to a kestrel, and it too is hanging unmoving, close to the cliff face.

It is something though, to be higher than hawks. They can see for miles. To the east, the coastline dips and lifts its way into the distance; there are secluded bays and chalk stacks, and Cristabel has vowed to conquer them all, as soon as she is allowed to go further than Ceal Head. To the west, the view is less spectacular but more familiar. They spy the chimneys of Chilcombe and, scampering up the coast path towards them, Digby escaping from his tutor.

Beyond Chilcombe lies much unexplored terrain. On the far horizon is the seaside town of Weymouth and the Isle of Portland, tethered to the mainland by a pebble causeway and made (the girls mistakenly believe, after overhearing a conversation about the island's famous quarries) entirely of stone: a barren, moon-like place.

In the absence of any kind of systematic education, the Seagrave children's knowledge of the world has been patched together from disparate sources to make an occasionally workable Frankenstein's monster of information. They know the names of most butterflies (Perry); how to skin a rabbit (Maudie); not to eat

blackberries in October when the devil spits on them (Betty); and the quickest way to the village pub (Willoughby). But they do not know anyone in the village (Rosalind thinks it inappropriate) or what it is like to live in the village (they only ever pass through it while fetching Willoughby from the pub) or what lies over the Ridgeway, apart from London, the King and a tea room in Dorchester, where Willoughby takes them for sticky buns on their birthdays.

As for the rest of the globe, they could tell you that France is across the Channel, along with the icy wastes of the Antarctic, the Wild West, and the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, but they have not much idea of what goes on there. Digby will occasionally pass on truncated lessons from his tutors, but these isolated islands of education are quickly forgotten; foggy outcroppings of Latin or algebra, uninhabited, left to the birds.

However, their sparse factual education has a hefty coating of fiction. Their most treasured possessions are their books, most of which were liberated from the study by Cristabel in the glorious months of freedom after her father's death, when everyone was preoccupied, and she had the run of the house.

As well as their beloved Greek myths and Henty adventure stories, they have a copy of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, left by a departing governess, and the girls have been named co-owners of a *Tales from Shakespeare* and an illustrated edition of *The Tempest* that Digby received at Christmas from his mother. They use them to stage productions in their cardboard theatre, with a sock puppet cast, as well as acting out scenes in the attic, using a bed sheet pegged along a clothes line as a stage curtain. *The Tempest* always stars Digby as Ariel the sprite and the Veg as Miranda the romantic lead, with an impressive turn by Cristabel as Caliban. She enhances her performance as the grotesque slave creature by stashing walnuts in her cheeks to fill out her face in a bumpy and drooling manner.

'Hold your horses, you swinish lords,' cries Digby, as he comes panting up the hill to join them.

'You'll do well to keep a civil tongue in your head, you insolent cut-throat,' replies Cristabel, pulling a tall teasel from the ground and brandishing it.

Digby stops to tighten the tea towel around his neck. 'How dare you address valiant Robin Hood in such a manner?' He runs to the Veg and grabs her by the hand. 'Fair Marion! Come hither to the smugglers' path! We fly to freedom!'

Their most-loved books have been read so many times, they only have to look at the covers to know how it feels to be enclosed within them. But the worlds contained within the books do not remain between the covers. They seep out and overlay the geography of their lives. The children feel sure a cliff path on Ceal Head is one used by smugglers in the book *Moonfleet*. (*It starts where the*

undercliff dies back again into the chalk face, and climbs by slants and elbow-turns up to the top. The shepherds call it the Zigzag, and –)

“Even sheep lose their footing on it, and of men I never heard but one had climbed it,” says Digby, in a fervent whisper, pulling the Veg along.

‘I don’t want to, Digby,’ says the Veg. ‘It’s slippery.’

‘Then stand sentry at the top and use your musket well, my girl,’ says Digby.

Moonfleet, with its tales of maddened seas and ships dashed to pieces on a shingle bank, is also responsible for Cristabel’s notion that the pebble causeway that stretches between Weymouth and Portland is the only thing holding back a storm-tossed ocean raging on the other side. She likes to imagine what might happen if the causeway were breached, how the waves would come roaring across the bay, a thousand-strong army.

On wild nights, she will go to the window of the attic, and say to the Veg and Digby, in a voice heavy with foreboding, ‘I can hear the waves tonight. We can only hope the causeway will hold.’ When she says this, she can believe it is true, and it is a terrible thrill that runs through her, a powerful excitement, heightened by the sight of the Veg shutting her eyes and putting her hands together to pray.

‘You should try to sleep,’ Cristabel will say. ‘I’ll keep guard.’

Digby will nod solemnly, buttoning up his pyjamas. ‘I’ll take the next watch, Captain.’

The smugglers’ path on Ceal Head is near a row of red-brick coastguard cottages, perched high above sea level, determinedly facing every weather front blowing in from the Channel. The retired coastguard who lives in one of the cottages is in his garden, a pair of binoculars in his hand. He and Cristabel exchange nods.

‘Spotted something might be of interest to you, Miss Cristabel,’ he says, as Digby and the Veg come running to join them, Digby’s cloak now tied around his head.

‘What’s that, Jim?’ says Cristabel.

‘Man with a foreign-type beard heading towards your house. Didn’t look like your pedlar kind, but I ain’t seen him round here before. Had some women with him. In trousers. Afternoon, Master Digby, Miss Florence.’

‘Good afternoon, Jim,’ says Digby. ‘How is your wife?’

‘Improving, Master Digby, and that’s to be thankful for. What’s that on your head now? You playing Crusaders again?’

‘It’s a masterful disguise,’ whispers Digby.

‘When did you see this man, Jim?’ says Cristabel.

‘No more than five minutes ago, I reckon.’

Cristabel glances back down the cliff to the beach. The adults are still there, sprawled like fallen bodies. ‘I’m much obliged to you, Jim.’

‘No trouble at all, miss. I was planning to show you them reef knots, but I won’t bother you if you’re going on now.’

‘My apologies, Jim, but this appears to be a matter of some urgency,’ says Cristabel. ‘Come on, Veg, look lively.’

‘Why must there always be running?’ says the Veg. ‘Why can’t we ever sit down for a bit? There’s a lovely sitting spot over there.’

‘No time for malingering,’ says Cristabel. ‘It’s Monsieur Kovalsky. He’s coming to Chilcombe.’

‘Let us away!’ cries Digby, sprinting ahead, his every third stride a skip or a hop or a wild leap over a bush.

Down on the beach, Perry asks, ‘Are those your children up there?’

Rosalind peers at the cliff from beneath her parasol. ‘Hard to tell.’

‘They’re coming down that path at quite a pace. I think it is the three of them.’

Willoughby, still face down in the shingle, says, ‘Come now, Perry – you know Rosalind only has one child. A boy called Digby. Those girls have nothing to do with her.’

‘I confess, I lose track of which child belongs to who,’ says Myrtle. ‘Is the younger girl yours, Willoughby? The smiley one? She’s a peach.’

Willoughby gets up and begins walking into the sea. ‘Fancy a bathe, Perry?’

‘Love to, old chap,’ says Perry. ‘Insufferably close today.’

Rosalind says, ‘Myrtle and I will go back to the house to dress before dinner.’

‘I think it was the children, you know,’ says Perry, standing up and brushing the shingle from his legs. ‘I can’t see them any more.’

Willoughby disappears beneath the water.

Halfway down the cliff path, Cristabel, Digby and the Veg take a sharp right to follow a short cut. They clamber over a stone wall and are dashing through the woods that surround Chilcombe, when they hear a distinctive laugh.

‘Front lawn,’ says Cristabel, breaking into a gallop. ‘Monsieur Kovalsky is on the front lawn.’

And he is, entirely, on the lawn: sprawled flat on his back. The two short-haired women are at the outdoor table drinking and smoking, clad in matching mannish clothes: striped tops and wide trousers. Blythe, holding a soda syphon, is standing nearby with Maudie, wearing expressions of mild concern and intense interest respectively.

‘Hurrah, the children are here. They’ll vouch for us,’ says one of the women.

‘Master Digby, Miss Cristabel, Miss Florence, these visitors are here to see Mrs Segrave. They say they have already made your acquaintance,’ says Blythe.

‘Terrific,’ says Cristabel. ‘They have. Thank you, Blythe.’

Hearing Cristabel's voice, Monsieur Kovalsky rises to a sitting position. He is wearing an open shirt and loose corduroy trousers. His bare feet are covered in splashes of paint. 'The child is here,' he says. 'The keeper of the whale with the Akhmatova face.'

Cristabel lifts her chin and walks across the lawn towards him. She extends her hand, and, when he puts his broad hand in hers, shakes it firmly. 'Cristabel Seagrave,' she says. 'Welcome to Chilcombe.' She has rehearsed this moment many times in her mind and it is perfect that it happens exactly as it should. It is hardly marred at all by the arrival of Rosalind and Myrtle, as, at the moment they appear, Monsieur Kovalsky is holding Cristabel's hand, and this means Cristabel – for all eternity – will have always known him first.

'Rosalind,' she says, 'this is Monsieur Kovalsky. He is an artist from Russia who has spent time in Paris, in the country of France.'

Rosalind, uncharacteristically flushed after the walk back from the beach, is momentarily mute. Then one of the blonde women shouts, 'Ros! Yoo-hoo, darling! Surprise!'

'Philly? Philly Fenwick? Is that you?'

'The very same,' says Philly, lifting her drink. 'Why don't you join us? I do believe you live here.'

Rosalind approaches the table, handing her parasol to Maudie. 'Philly, my goodness, how long has it been?'

Philly half stands to embrace her. 'Absolute aeons. What's that scent you're wearing? Mitsouko? My, that takes me back. You must know Hilly. Hillary Vaughan. She and I met at the Slade. Been inseparable ever since. Philly and Hilly. Well, it just had to be.'

'Couldn't prise us apart. Delighted, I'm sure,' says Hilly.

'What brings you to Chilcombe?' asks Rosalind.

Philly gestures towards the lawn with the two fingers holding her cigarette, as if waving a smoking gun. 'We're with that disreputable wretch. Became entangled in Paris. Hilly was modelling; I was taking art classes. Both of us heartily sick of the debutante life.'

'Nauseated,' says Hilly. 'Endless lunches where you do nothing but talk about lunches. All our lovers and brothers dead. What did we care for lunch?'

'He found us in a Montmartre nightclub dancing the Ki-Ki-Kari, wanted us to pose for him as twins. We drank fantastic amounts of absinthe and moved into his studio on that apocalyptic night. Quite the adventure.'

'We followed Dionysus,' says Hilly, her eyes on Taras.

'We followed a great artist,' says Philly. 'He's the genuine article, Ros. His paintings are like nothing you've seen. We're on our way to Cornwall. Thought we'd drop by.'

‘Taras wanted to paint the famous whale,’ adds Hilly.

‘I say, it’s delightfully quirky you still have a butler. An ancient retainer,’ says Philly. ‘Do you have a grotto too?’

‘Taras? Taras Kovalsky?’ cries Myrtle. ‘Oh my! This is the Russian artist I told you about, Rosalind. Monsieur Kovalsky, so fortuitous to encounter you again. Myrtle van der Werff. We met in Antibes.’

Taras Kovalsky, who has been sitting on the lawn smiling at Cristabel, looks at Myrtle. ‘We have not met.’

‘It was a pool party hosted by a couple from Florida. You had a crowd of devotees, but we spoke intently about sculpture. Its elastic qualities.’

Taras hums a little. ‘No,’ he says again. ‘But we meet now, on this green lawn.’

‘I did a reading,’ says Myrtle. ‘A piece about a fisherman’s net.’

‘Myrtle is a poetess,’ says Rosalind. ‘Very acclaimed. We met skiing in Switzerland. She’s reading for us this evening. Perhaps you could join us, Mr Kovalsky? For dinner and poetry. You too, Philly, Hillary. Nothing grand. Lobster salad. Scallops. A light *mousse au café*.’

Taras stands and approaches Rosalind, takes her hand in his paint-splattered paws. ‘Call me Taras. I am grateful for your kindness. Today, I am weary. I paint, I paint, but nothing comes.’

‘A good meal may restore your artistic vigour, Mr Taras,’ says Rosalind. ‘Do you enjoy lobster?’

‘Whatever you wish to share.’

‘Maudie, please inform Betty we have extra guests for dinner. Where are you all staying?’

Philly laughs. ‘We’re bohemians, darling. Gypsies. We’ve been holed up in grubby farmhouses.’

‘We knock on doors to beg for rooms for the night,’ says Hilly.

‘Doesn’t your mother mind?’ says Rosalind. ‘You’ll stay here, I insist. At least for a few nights.’

‘It’s rather splendid actually, Ros,’ says Philly. ‘Once you learn to embrace life without fretting about money, you open yourself up to fate.’

‘Even in the smallest of villages, we can find lodgings and a local woman to come in and cook for us. We want for very little,’ says Hilly.

‘There are always those who believe in art,’ says Taras, as he lifts Rosalind’s hand to his mouth. ‘You are generous. I bring with me others. There are children.’

‘We have plenty of room,’ says Rosalind.

At that moment, Willoughby and Perry appear in the garden, with towels slung about their necks, followed by Digby’s tutor carrying a bucket of rocks.

Rosalind waves a hand at her husband. ‘Good swim, darling? We have visitors.’

‘So I see,’ says Willoughby.

Rosalind turns back to her guests. ‘Shall we say eight o’clock for dinner? With poetry to follow. What a charmingly impromptu salon. Tell me, Mr Taras, do you ever paint portraits?’

‘My subjects choose me,’ he says.

‘We have wonderful works of art here at Chilcombe. Perhaps I could give you a tour?’ Rosalind gestures towards the house and Taras makes his way inside. She scuttles rapidly after him, saying, ‘If you’d like to turn left, you’ll find –’

But Taras is already across the hall and up the main staircase in his bare feet, passing the paintings that line the stairs with hardly a backward glance. ‘Horses, horses, dogs. What is that, a boar? The English and their animals. It is unnatural.’

‘I keep the more modern paintings on the ground floor, Mr Taras,’ says Rosalind in pursuit, ‘although there is a fine view of the cupola from the gallery. I had it installed. There’s a zodiac motif.’

Taras pauses to look over the gallery bannister to the hall below, where the children, Digby’s tutor, Myrtle and Perry have gathered. Willoughby has sloped off to the drawing room for a drink, followed by Hilly and Philly. Taras points at Cristabel, his downward hand as portentous as Michelangelo’s God. ‘Where do they keep you, child? Where do you and your French servant sleep?’

‘In the attic,’ replies Cristabel.

‘The traditional family nursery,’ says Rosalind. ‘Tell me, Mr Taras, how do you know we have a French servant?’

‘Children and servants always in the roof. So much revealed by what is hidden in the tops of houses,’ says Taras. ‘Cristabella, show me the way to your attic.’

Cristabel runs up the stairs and guides Taras along the length of the gallery, past the adults’ bedrooms and Digby’s bedroom, to where a wooden door conceals a windowless corridor that leads to a narrow staircase that climbs further upwards. They are followed by Perry, Myrtle, Digby in his tea towel headdress, Digby’s tutor, the Veg, and a rigidly smiling Rosalind, all strung out in a line like mountaineers.

Up in the cramped attic, Taras has to stoop. With his broad shoulders and bare feet, he seems a giant at the top of a beanstalk, shrinking each room he goes into. The girls’ bedroom, with its striped wallpaper and cardboard theatre, seems fit for a doll’s house, while Maudie’s room beneath the eaves, with a broken teapot by the bed to catch drips from a leaky ceiling, is nothing but a cubbyhole.

The children are used to visitors circling the interior of the house as slowly and respectfully as underwater divers, so it is exhilarating to see Taras entering

the places guests never go, banging open doors without ever stopping to ask.

The door at the far end of the attic, which leads to Mlle Aubert's room, is locked and the space behind it is stiff with the kind of silence produced by someone standing still and listening hard. Taras noisily tries the handle, then moves on to an adjacent smaller door that opens on to a low-ceilinged storage space containing crates, trunks, suitcases and an ivory model of an Indian palace.

One crate has tipped on to its side, spilling out swagger sticks, scimitars and spears. Paintings and tapestries are stacked haphazardly against the walls, alongside cracked glass cases of stuffed grouse and quail, while the mounted heads of antelope lie on the floor, staring blankly upwards. At the very back, a stuffed baby elephant on wheels is balanced precariously against a Victorian child's cradle and, in a cobwebbed corner behind the cradle, there is a tower of books topped by an apple core, a notebook, and what looks to be a hand-drawn map, held in place by a turquoise stone figure.

'What is all these?' Taras asks.

'I don't come up here often,' says Rosalind, raising a handkerchief to her face. 'I believe many items were collected by my husband's father, Robert Seagrave, a great traveller.'

'Collected?' says Taras. 'As if all these were waiting about like baggage for him to take home. I suppose it belonged to nobody until the grandfather came to find it.'

'I'm not sure I follow you,' says Rosalind. 'Many of those objects are antique. They weren't lying about.'

Taras clammers into the roof space, knocking over an antelope's head on his way to pick up the turquoise stone figure from behind the cradle. There is not enough room for him to turn round so he returns backwards, like a large bus reversing, brandishing it. 'This – this creation – she is an Egyptian goddess to be worshipped. Who worships her here?'

'That's a goddess?' says Cristabel.

'Should we give her back?' says Digby.

'Is it valuable?' asks Rosalind. 'We could move some of the more valuable items downstairs.'

'You want it now it has a price,' says Taras.

'I don't know anything about its price,' Rosalind laughs, a dry, forced sound.

'If you're that keen on it, Mr Kovalsky, why don't you make an offer for it?' says Perry. 'You must sell your paintings, after all.'

'Money is the great destroyer of art,' says Taras.

'Is it?' says Rosalind. 'Many artists I know consider money to be a great gift.'

‘A gift that gets heavier and heavier,’ says Taras, who is tenderly wiping dust from the turquoise sculpture, a seated figure with the head of a lion.

‘I’m sure every family has boxes in the attic. Family treasures packed away for a rainy day,’ trills Rosalind.

‘Are not most days in England rainy days?’ replies Taras.

‘This is all very fascinating,’ says Rosalind, ‘but I must speak to Betty about scallops. If you’ll excuse me, the children will be pleased to show you about, I’m sure.’ Her neat footsteps tap away across the wooden floor. The crowd in the attic pull back to let her pass, then gather in again.

‘I say, Mr Taras,’ says Digby’s tutor, ‘did you say that item was a goddess?’

‘The Egyptians knew her as Sekhmet,’ says Taras. ‘Goddess of fire and war. She protected the pharaohs in battle and on their journey to the afterlife.’

Myrtle peers at Sekhmet. ‘I have a similar *objet* from Dutch New Guinea. Primitive art is compelling.’

‘I didn’t know it was a goddess,’ says Cristabel.

Taras turns to her. ‘But you were drawn to her, no? You kept her in your place. That is your place in there, is it not?’

‘What have you been doing in there, Crista?’ says the Veg.

‘Nothing. I go in when I want to,’ says Cristabel.

Taras nods. ‘The unconscious guides us to mystical symbols and we must translate them. Children have a powerful connection with this instinct. What else do you do in there, Cristabella?’

‘Nothing. I draw maps. I write plays. Stories.’

‘How long have you been doing this work?’ asks Taras.

Cristabel frowns. ‘It’s not lessons.’

‘You have begun the work of an artist. This is how it starts. Attics. Secret corners,’ says Taras. ‘It is your soul’s work.’

‘I’m not an artist,’ says Cristabel.

‘You doubt yourself?’ says Taras.

‘No,’ she replies.

‘Good.’ Taras brushes dust from the goddess, then hands her to Cristabel. ‘Keep this one. She has called to you.’ Then he pulls himself up and announces, as if bringing news from a distant kingdom, ‘I am hungry.’

There is a general shuffling about among the people crowded into the attic, and they are beginning to make their way towards the stairs – except for the Veg, who is squeezing herself into the storage space – when Taras turns back to Cristabel. ‘Whose child are you, keeper of the whale? You are not of that Rosalind. I cannot believe that. And you are not of the red-haired man with the womanly mouth.’

‘Mr Willoughby Seagrave,’ supplies Perry. ‘Your host.’

‘My parents are dead,’ replies Cristabel.

‘I saw nobody like you in the portraits,’ says Taras. ‘Except perhaps the one with the rhinoceros.’

‘Grandfather Robert,’ says Cristabel. ‘I have his hunting knife.’

‘But he does not have your ferocity. Perhaps only a woman can have such ferocity. Where are the paintings of your mother?’

‘There aren’t any,’ says Cristabel.

Perry interjects smoothly, ‘Perhaps I can be of assistance. I believe the portraits of Annabel, Cristabel’s late mother, were returned to her family estate after her death.’

‘Where is her family estate?’ asks Taras.

‘It no longer exists,’ says Perry. ‘Cristabel’s mother had two brothers, both killed in the war, and a pretty younger sister who went off to India to get married, so the Agnew estate went to some distant cousin in Suffolk, if memory serves. Heard he sold off both home and contents to cover some sizeable death duties. A sad tale, but not an unfamiliar one.’

‘Nothing left for the daughter of a dead daughter,’ says Taras.

Cristabel is staring at Perry. ‘This is my family estate,’ she says. ‘Chilcombe.’

‘Of course,’ says Perry, then claps his hands together: the flat, single sound of an Englishman restoring order. ‘I don’t know about anyone else, but I could do with a drink. Shall we?’ He offers his arm to Myrtle.

‘It is hot as hell up here,’ says the poetess, and the party troops off, leaving the children in the attic.

The Veg, cobweb-strewn and sweaty, reappears from the storage space pulling the stuffed baby elephant behind her. Digby helps her drag it free, then turns to Cristabel, saying, ‘Did Mr Taras say your goddess looked after people in the afterlife? Maybe it came from a tomb.’

‘Probably, Digs. Might well be cursed,’ says Cristabel.

The Veg looks up from affectionately patting the head of the elephant. ‘I am feeling mystically drawn to this elephant. Doesn’t he have an agreeable face? I shall call him Edgar.’

Digby steps closer to his cousin. ‘Crista, did you mind about Uncle Perry –’

‘Uncle Perry knows this is my family estate,’ says Cristabel. ‘He was talking about another place, that I never even think about. I never even think about that.’

‘You don’t,’ agrees Digby.

‘You poor unfortunates might want to forget all about your mother,’ says Cristabel. ‘She’s going to make a fool of herself in front of Monsieur Taras. You know she goes swoony for an artist.’

The Veg nods. ‘She’s always wanted her portrait painted.’

‘We found him first, Veg,’ says Cristabel.

‘He definitely likes you, Crista,’ says Digby. ‘He wants to paint your whale.’

Suddenly, the door behind them opens and Mlle Aubert steps out of her room. The children quickly blurt out their obligatory *bonjours* and she replies in her brusque manner, then adds, with a sly expression on her face, ‘You know, *mes enfants*, Monsieur Taras speaks good French. Perhaps you might want to work on your own lessons, *non*? Then we could all talk together. As a conversational exercise.’

Cristabel remains poker-faced until Mlle Aubert has left the attic, then turns to the others. ‘Does your mother understand French?’

‘*Non*,’ says the Veg, wiping the dust from the elephant.

‘So if we learnt French to talk to Monsieur Taras, she wouldn’t be able to tell what we were saying?’

‘She only knows the names of perfumes,’ says Digby.

‘*Formidable*,’ says Cristabel. ‘A secret code.’

‘When did you find this place, Crista?’ asks the Veg, looking into the storage space.

‘After Uncle Willoughby married your mother. She kept throwing my things out. I needed somewhere safe.’

‘Why didn’t you tell us about it?’ asks Digby.

‘You were babies. Babies can’t be trusted. Besides, every ship’s captain needs his own quarters,’ Cristabel says, before heading to her room to stand the goddess Sekhmet on her bedside table.

Facts Learnt by the Children

When They Creep Out of Bed and Conceal Themselves Behind the Coats in the Small Cloakroom Behind the Main Staircase in the Oak Hall During that Night's Dinner Party

1. It can be very warm in April, at night, if you are concealed behind coats in a small cloakroom.
2. Adult voices increase in volume after each course of dinner, apart from Perry's, which remains a controlled, level murmur: a calm river snaking through the mountains and valleys of conversation.
3. Servants repeatedly dispatched below stairs to fetch cigars, champagne and port can and do swear in many fascinating ways under their breath.
4. Monsieur Taras considers art to be the only sane response to an insane world.
5. Willoughby thinks this is absolute arse.
6. Willoughby believes that the finest minds were lost in the war. What's left, he claims, are the ridiculous so-called Bright Young Things bed-hopping around London wearing each other's clothes and bugging each other.
7. There is something called bugging.
8. There are Russian people called Lenin and Trotsky that Willoughby and Perry only ever refer to with the appellation 'that': 'that Lenin chap', 'that Trotsky fellow'.
9. Rosalind wonders if Hilly or Philly has ever met any of the so-called Bright Young Things or been to their parties.
10. In Russia they believe an empty bottle brings a curse upon your family.

11. It is possible to tell when Myrtle has begun reciting her own poetry as the poem will begin with three or four words proclaimed loudly and ringingly at the same pitch and pace, as if she were banging the words together: 'BLUE ATLANTIC OCEAN LIGHT', 'HEART BLIND, I STUMBLE', 'OH, THIS CALLOUS WORLD'.
12. Taras went to France to be a painter, as he could not paint as he wished in his own country. He asks his fellow guests to remember that they do not live in a country that regards painting as an act of defiance.
13. You can identify the owner of a coat by its smell.
14. Taras has a Russian accent, which means that he places unusual EMphasis on unexpectED syllables while his vowel sounds roll and yaw. Some words are stretched almost beyoooooond endurance while others are pushed. Out. With. Dis. Gust.
15. Rosalind believes it is wonderful England is a free country and wonders if anybody at the table knows how to shimmy.
16. Taras says that in England freedom is measured out in silver spoonfuls to those who can afford it.
17. The sound of breaking glass can, after a while, cease to be startling.
18. Perry wonders whether anybody ever wrote to Annabel Agnew's family, to let them know how Cristabel was getting on.
19. Rosalind believes Jasper was worse than useless at any kind of correspondence and that he was probably supposed to do it but never did.
20. Rosalind says if she could find a way to dispatch such an impertinent child to another family, she would.
21. Rosalind says she is joking.
22. Willoughby will not permit jokes at his niece's expense.
23. Philly keeps a little something in a cigarette case that peps people up if they start to flag.

Things the Children Would Have Learnt Had They Not Fallen Asleep in the Very Warm Small Cloakroom Behind the Main Staircase in the Oak Hall and Been Taken Upstairs to Bed by Maudie Kitcat and Mr Brewer Who Had Been Alerted to Their Whereabouts due to the Veg Snoring

1. Some dinners go on so late that, after pudding has finished, the guests can demand they now be served breakfast by shouting EGGS-EGGS-EGGS-EGGS.
2. Rosalind has spoken to Mr Brewer and arranged for Taras and his entourage to stay in an empty cottage on the edge of the Chilcombe estate by the sea.
3. Rosalind has not consulted Willoughby about this.
4. At the end of dinner parties, people start having the same conversations they had at the beginning, only louder and over the top of each other.
5. Willoughby believes that three in the morning is a jolly good time to take his new car for a spin and that a beguiling plate of eggs should go with him.
6. Sometimes adults will cry while at the same time saying they are perfectly all right.
7. Perry's full name is Colonel Peregrine Aubrey Blomefield Drake.
8. Servants can sleep leaning against walls.
9. After a dinner party, people will go to their bedrooms, and there will be successive rounds of door openings and closings: firstly, the brisk openings and shuttings of people efficiently using bathrooms and lavatories; secondly, the more subdued closings of people going into their bedrooms, locking their doors and turning off the lights; thirdly, the discreetly spread-apart clicks of locks carefully being unlocked again, followed by the creaks of doors slowly opening, accompanied by tiptoed footsteps, barely audible knockings, and a

hush of whispered closings, and this third round of sounds will go on and on, like an echo caught in the corridors, all the way to morning.

Through the Bluebell Woods

May, 1928

April is blown away by another round of storms, thunder rolling about the bay like a wooden skittle ball, then May steps in with a curtsey, and Dorset blooms with a giddy enthusiasm, like a young girl at her first county ball spun about the dance floor by a strong-handed farmer. The hedgerows take up motion, cow parsley quivering delightedly every time Willoughby roars past in his Daimler; Chilcombe's horse chestnut trees gladly wave their ice-cream cone flowers, and the buttercup meadows are all swaying invitation. Bring a picnic, bring a rug, bring a lap to lie on, a head to lie upon your lap.

The woods to the west of Chilcombe, mostly elegant beech trees with a few oaks and pines, now stand in a sea of bluebells, a flood of flowers lit by sunlight filtering through new leaves. Here and there are clumps of geometric bracken and the white pompom bursts of wild garlic flowers, filling the air with their profligate scent.

The three Seagrave children, wending their way through the trees, find they are carrying with them a careful silence. It is mid-morning, a Tuesday in the first week of May, and since entering the woods, their conversation has fallen away. They are all listening, although they couldn't tell you what they are listening for. They know these woods well, but the bluebells have altered them; they now seem charged with a strange expectation, the kind of silence you can hear yourself breathe.

The bluebells go on as far as the children can see, and the lines of beech trees – both the vertical trunks stretching upwards and the diagonal lines of the trees receding into the distance – repeat and cross-hatch and overlap until it is hard for their eyes to follow them. The vanishing point vanishes, the defined becomes the undefined, and the trees become an endless wall. They cannot see through it. That there is a world beyond the trees seems doubtful. There is only the wood and the stillness of the wood. Cristabel imagines Robin Hood and his Merry Men hiding in the trees; she thinks of the peasant warriors of La Vendée who could merge so silently into the bocage, it was as if they melted away.

They are making their way down a sloping path to an old cottage on the edge of the estate where Taras and his entourage have set up home. Betty has often warned them of the dangers of mysterious gentlemen found in fairy-bell woods, but they are going to meet Taras beyond the woods, and believe this will be safe. Cristabel is also largely unconvinced by fairy talk, particularly in daylight hours, though the Veg secretly hopes she will encounter someone magical – a Puck or Titania – and Digby would welcome anyone at all.

The children walk as a solemn procession in descending height order: Cristabel leading with a frown, the Veg twirling a spiral of hair, Digby casting his wondering gaze from side to side. The girls are in plain cotton frocks; Digby in shorts, shirt and tea towel cloak. All wear long greyish socks that have concertinaed their way down pale legs, and sensible lace-up boots. The Veg's straw sunhat has been pushed from her head and is hanging down her back on its yellow ribbons. Cristabel's hat hangs in a bush half a mile back. She has replaced it with a handkerchief, tied and knotted like a buccaneer. She carries with her a stick, for swiping, and her grandfather's knife, to score the trunks of trees.

Just as Cristabel starts to believe they will be walking through the bluebells until their dying days, she notices that the trunk she is scoring does not belong to a beech, but to one of the blossomy hawthorns that mark the wood's ragged border. The trio move into open sunlight with a sense of relief and a smaller, quieter sense of loss. The woods seal themselves off behind them. Cristabel, familiar with the shifting ways of trees, piles a few stones at the roots of the hawthorn so they will know where to go back in.

They follow a grassy path to the cottage, which has lain empty since the last tenants left to find better-paid work elsewhere. It is tucked into the curving arm of the bay where Ceal Head slopes down to sea level, a few hundred yards east of the whale. Honeysuckle smothers its porch, while overgrown hollyhocks and hydrangea cover the ground-floor windows. Butterflies sun their wings on its walls, while squabbling seagulls hop along the roof, yanking straw from the thatch. It is a house of flora and fauna; half consumed, half alive.

Facing the cottage is an old stone barn with a thatched roof and wooden doors. The doors are currently open, revealing Taras, barefoot in stained overalls, holding a palette and painting animatedly on a three-foot canvas propped against an upended lobster pot. The children can make out either Hilly or Philly swathed in a sheet and reclining on hay bales in the shady interior.

The space between the barn and the cottage is repeatedly criss-crossed by the savage children they saw on the beach, who are now wearing a disparate selection of adult clothes – an embroidered blouse, a waistcoat, rubber fishing boots – and shouting at each other in a mixture of French and other unknown languages. A dark woman in a headscarf occasionally appears from the cottage to shout at the children and shake a mop at them, like an angry cuckoo from a clock, and every now and again, Taras turns to bellow at them in Russian. It is during one of these outbursts that he notices the Seagraves.

'Ah, Cristabella! Have you come to save me from these terrible people who do not know how to close their mouths when a great artist is working?' he says.

On his canvas, the children can see a rough figure and green hills, as simple as hills drawn by a child, one curved line on top of another. Everything is

cheerfully coloured and flattened out. It is not at all like the paintings that hang in Chilcombe, with their muscular horses and epic horizons.

Cristabel moves closer, pulling off her handkerchief headpiece and nodding to the savages. One of the smallest – a girl, she thinks – smiles back and is consequently thumped on the arm by a larger one sprinting past. The child stops smiling but does not cry.

‘Gosh, that must have hurt,’ says the Veg, wincing. ‘I don’t think they have a nanny.’

‘That one’s got a toad,’ says Digby.

‘They are playing. It is a fairy story, I cannot remember,’ says Taras. He shouts in Russian, and the children run off to the beach.

‘We pretend like that,’ says Digby. ‘Pretending is my favourite thing to do.’

‘All children love the theatre,’ says Taras, swiping his paintbrush across the canvas.

‘We’ve never been to an actual theatre, Mr Taras,’ says the Veg, ‘but we have a very good cardboard one.’

Taras nods. ‘In Paris, I painted stage sets in the theatres for bread money. Lies! I painted for wine money. Then I would hide in the wings to watch the performance.’

‘You painted stage sets?’ says Cristabel, then turns to Digby with her eyebrows raised.

Digby searches her expression until he sees something that makes him nod very fast.

Cristabel turns back to Taras and says in a voice slightly louder than her own, ‘We’ve often talked about putting on a real play here at Chilcombe. There’s been many expressions of interest.’

‘Ever so many,’ adds Digby.

Cristabel continues, ‘But it has been hard to find a suitable scenery painter. Here. In the rural countryside.’

A corner of Taras’s beard twitches. ‘You are thinking that perhaps I could paint sets for you?’

‘Oh, let’s put on a play,’ calls the model in the barn. ‘It would be a hoot.’

‘Theatre is not, as you say, a hoot. It is an art,’ says Taras.

‘I would die to be in a real play, Mr Taras,’ says Digby, hopping with excitement.

‘Mother would adore it if we did a play that everyone came to see,’ says the Veg.

Taras smiles. ‘Clever Miss Florence, you are correct. The lady Rosalind has taken me in like a stray tommy-cat in the hope that great art will happen. We cannot disappoint her.’

Philly – for it is Philly wrapped in a sheet on the hay bales – calls, ‘What a jolly troupe we shall be! I’ve always wanted to play the Dane.’

Hilly, who has emerged from the cottage wearing a man’s shirt, hands Taras a drink and says in her cool voice, ‘The Dane? Or a pantomime dame?’

‘No whispering, darling,’ calls Philly, adjusting her sheet.

‘Because Philippa Fenwick never whispers, does she?’ says Hilly.

‘Enough,’ says Taras sternly, though he has his arm about Hilly’s waist and is patting her fondly with the hand that still holds a paintbrush. Behind them, the mop-wielding woman hurls a bucket of dirty water into a hydrangea.

Hilly says, ‘I rather suspect Rosalind will want to be centre stage once she hears there’s a show on.’

‘Rosalind can’t act,’ says Cristabel.

‘Oh, I think she can,’ replies Hilly.

‘What play shall we do, Taras?’ calls Philly. ‘*Romeo and Juliet*?’

Taras faces the children. ‘Cristabella, tell me. Do you have a favourite story? One you tell yourself in bed at night. I was a lonely child in an attic. I know how it is to tell yourself stories.’

Cristabel doesn’t hesitate. ‘*The Iliad*. I tell it to Digby and the Veg too.’

‘Perfect,’ says Taras. ‘We will create for you a Troy and a wooden horse for you to hide inside.’

Cristabel is so pleased by this development that she manages to stop herself from reminding Taras that the Trojan horse doesn’t actually appear in *The Iliad*, it is in Homer’s other great work, *The Odyssey*, but she cannot *not* say anything at all, so she steps briefly to one side and issues the correction to a confused Veg in a low voice.

‘The wooden horse what?’ says the Veg.

‘There is a big picture of a horse on a hill not far from here,’ Digby is saying to Taras, ‘it’s made from chalk. They made it for the King. But the King was cross because they did him riding away from the seaside when he should have been riding towards it. So the poor man that drew the horse hanged himself from a tree.’

‘Betty says he haunts the woods to this day,’ adds the Veg.

Taras laughs, a noise like the booming of a bull seal. ‘Artists and patrons. It does not always end well. Let us try not to displease the lady Rosalind. I do not wish to swing from trees.’ He turns to his canvas and paints a swift outline of a horse on one of the hills. The children are delighted to see their conversation so casually included in his work.

‘We will work like billy-o on the show, Mr Taras,’ says Cristabel, turning her hands to fists and placing them stoutly on her hips.

‘What fun,’ says Hilly, her voice flat as a pond.

Philly heaves herself up from the hay bales. ‘Hilly, do you have a ciggie? I’m all out.’

Taras turns, waving his brush. ‘I do not release you,’ he shouts, ‘*back, back, back, back, back, back!*’ His voice is so loud it makes the children jump, but they have never seen an artist at work before, and assume it is part of the process.

Taras then returns to jabbing at his canvas, as if the children were no longer there. His lack of interest in them means they can examine him properly, their first real artist. From the front, he is commanding: black eyes, dramatic beard. But from the back, he is workmanlike and oblong. There is a weightiness about him, an accumulation of meat over muscle, and his hefty arms hang like joints in a butcher’s window. If the front of Taras is the artist-entertainer, the back reveals the lifter-labourer – the graft behind the artistry. The combination is something akin to a circus strongman.

The Veg points at the painting, whispers, ‘Is it meant to be Miss Philly? It hasn’t got legs.’

Taras says, ‘You want legs? A machine can do legs. Art comes from within. From dreams.’

“‘We are such stuff as dreams are made on,’” quotes Cristabel.

Taras nods. ‘You have it. These others? *Psh.* Now I must work.’ He flaps a hand at them.

Cristabel accepts the dismissal and walks away, Digby and the Veg following. She is glad to be on the move as the idea of doing a real play of *The Iliad* is an expanding bubble of excitement in her chest and she wants to take it away before anyone can burst it.

Up until now, she has had limited resources when putting on plays. Only socks, bits of cardboard, and the Veg and Digby, occasionally supplemented by pliable servants or Betty and Mr Brewer’s young son, a solid child who looks so like Mr Brewer they call him Small Bill, and who, being preoccupied with boxing techniques and knocking things over, is not much use. She and Digby have long talked about putting on a show one day, but she had never imagined it happening at Chilcombe, with a real artist and a real cast with adults in it. It is as if her private imaginings have inflated and burst their way free from the attic, like Alice in Wonderland after drinking a potion.

As they head into the woods, Cristabel’s mind turns to the savages, their unruliness, how the older one had whacked the younger one. She would never hit a girl. Not even the Veg. But she appreciated the effectiveness of the blow. There was a fierceness about the savages she rather admired, and she would need ferocious warriors in *The Iliad*. She would need warriors and gods and spears and shields and bravery and betrayal and cowardice and loyalty. Cristabel looks into

the bluebell woods, senses their humming vibrancy, the silent drawing back of quivering bowstrings. These she will bring forward. These will be on her side.

Two weeks later, and at the end of a sun-filled alcoholic afternoon, Rosalind and Myrtle are following the same path through the bluebells.

‘My word, this is idyllic,’ says Myrtle, swaying along in a straw sunhat, her American voice astonishingly loud in the hushed woods.

‘My shoes are ruined,’ says Rosalind.

Myrtle sighs – a great prairie wind through the trees – and says, ‘If I lived here, I would walk these woods in the moonlight. With a lover.’

‘Walk about at night?’

‘Did your handsome husband never lead you into the woods, Rosalind? In the halcyon days before he was your husband. Spill a little.’

Rosalind shakes her head, wrapping a shawl about herself. ‘There weren’t any woods. It was simply something that happened. We turned to one another for comfort, after the death of my first husband. Like many do.’

‘Death inspiring the sex impulse. How very Freudian.’

‘Most things are, I’m told. Although Willoughby wouldn’t have any of that.’

‘Willoughby who married his brother’s widow,’ says Myrtle.

The two women are one behind the other. Rosalind leading, head bowed, dropping her conversation towards her feet; Myrtle following, chin lifted, letting her words rise.

‘Sometimes I think he believes I arranged it all,’ says Rosalind. ‘Isn’t that ludicrous?’

‘How so?’

‘We had been together, he and I. The night of the accident. It was Willoughby’s birthday. There were silly games. But I certainly didn’t intend it.’

‘You woke from your widow’s grief to find Willoughby – and to find him beautiful,’ says Myrtle. ‘He is rather beautiful. That flaming hair.’

Rosalind smiles automatically. She often receives praise from women on behalf of her husband, like diplomatic gifts. ‘Do you think so? You wouldn’t be the first.’ She pulls at a tree branch, then adds, ‘It wasn’t solely grief, you know. There was an understanding between us. Before.’

‘Before? You surprise me.’

‘I’m sure I don’t. You’ve been to all sorts of funny places.’

Myrtle laughs, lifting one hand so the bangles on her arm rattle downwards.

Rosalind continues, ‘You think me inhibited because I don’t talk about – shall we say, “intimate relations” – the way you do. Don’t you find it rather spoils it, if you’re always examining everything and having discussions?’

‘*Au contraire*. I find the mystery only deepens.’

They walk in silence for a while, then Myrtle says, 'You're so alone with yourself here. In the city, everything distracts. But in the country? Listen. Nothing. Only your heart. And all its attendant terrors.'

'It can be very quiet.'

'I'm telling you, Rosalind, spend a weekend at an English country house and you die a thousand deaths. The longest hours of your life spent sitting waiting for someone to bring you a cocktail. Of course, when they finally do arrive, holding your drink and wearing a well-cut Savile Row suit, you fall desperately in love with them. Because what else is there to do? Why else do we go to these big houses with their infinite lawns? All these perfectly manicured empty spaces – they demand we find some way to fill them, some meaning to justify the empty hours.'

'It did feel empty here. After the accident. Willoughby couldn't get away fast enough.'

'Men do like to leave at speed.'

'He bought himself an aeroplane. Vanished for weeks. Couldn't bear the thought of being trapped at Chilcombe. I couldn't either. But I had no choice.'

Myrtle picks a bluebell, tucks it behind her ear. 'What brought him back? Willoughby the runaway brother.'

'I sent him a telegram. We were to have a son.'

'Digby.'

'I knew it would be a son. Willoughby says I couldn't possibly. But I did.'

'A changeling child. Those innocent eyes.'

'I gave him a son and heir. The Seagrave line would continue. There was no reason at all for him to be cold with me.'

'They don't always need a reason,' says Myrtle. 'I got married once. Isn't that comical? He was a writer. We met in Greenwich Village. Married soon as we could.'

'I didn't know that.'

'I went home to Boston to tell my parents, to break my daddy's heart. When I came back and walked into our apartment, I was crying my eyes out. I so wanted to be embraced but my new husband didn't even look up. Simply held out a dirty coffee cup and said, "Be a dear."'

'What did you do?'

'I went into the kitchen and washed it.'

'I rather thought you were going to say you left him.'

'Three years later, I did,' says Myrtle. 'Love is stubborn.'

'What do you mean?'

'I mean, even when you're standing in the rubble, you can usually convince yourself it's habitable, that with a good rug you could make it homely,' Myrtle

laughs. 'We're still married, but I don't often disclose it. Men treat you differently if they know.'

'I try not to talk about money,' says Rosalind. 'It makes everything unpleasant. Willoughby doesn't like to think his money is actually mine.'

'Is it?'

'It's Jasper's life insurance and my inheritance. But he's my husband, so of course it's his.'

A pause in the conversation. The stillness of the woods swallowing all sound. The silence a kind of erasure. When the women look behind themselves, the path has vanished.

'Chilcombe is hardly my native milieu, but I do my best,' says Rosalind. 'He doesn't even notice.' A bramble catches her hem. Tugging it free, she wobbles forward in her delicate shoes, saying, 'I hope this won't end up in a poem, Myrtle. You could leave things out though. If you were to write about me.'

'Peregrine said much the same yesterday. That he liked poetry, but he preferred it without people. Landscapes not portraits.'

'Do you like Perry? He's ever so rich.' Rosalind flicks a quick look over her shoulder.

Myrtle pulls herself up to her full height. 'Darling, I'm ever so rich. My daddy didn't work all his life for nothing. I might have disappointed him, but I'm still his little girl.'

The women find a scene of bustling industry. Hilly and Philly have propped pieces of hardboard against the barn wall and are painting them to look like castle ramparts. The woman in the headscarf is sitting in the cottage porch sewing a long gown. Taras is in the middle talking animatedly to Cristabel. He sees Rosalind and throws his arms wide. 'Ah! Never let it be said that the gods do not listen. Perhaps we will have a Helen.' Even from a distance of twenty yards, Rosalind can hear Cristabel sigh.

'Do you need some assistance?' says Rosalind, walking towards him. 'How fortuitous. That's why we're here.'

'Eager beaver volunteers,' says Myrtle, with a Boy Scout's salute.

Cristabel, who is wearing a sheep's wool beard, beckons Taras. He leans down to confer with her, stroking his own beard thoughtfully.

Rosalind feels the tight annoyance she knows as Cristabel rising in her chest. 'Is something the matter?'

Taras says, 'Cristabel says you can play Helen, but you will not need to learn any lines. She says you are to be a mute witness to bloody scenes of horror that you have brought about.'

'I assumed you would be overseeing the production, Mr Taras,' says Rosalind.

The Veg appears at Rosalind's side with a pillowcase belted around her middle. 'Are you to be Helen, Mother? Her face sank a thousand ships! Cristabel is Zeus. I'm Hector.'

'A man?' asks Rosalind, caught between her usual disparagement of her daughter and her keenness that her daughter should not reflect badly on her. 'What about you, Mr Taras? What part do you play?'

'Achilles. I come to burn the city. Inside the walls, Helen hides with her lover Paris.'

'Who's Paris?' asks Rosalind.

Taras points to the beach, where Digby, in shorts and a paper crown, is pacing to and fro, occasionally stopping to gesture. '*Et voilà*. The boy prince, learning his lines.'

'Isn't he a little young?' says Rosalind.

'It is perfect,' replies Taras. 'Everything is said by the portrayal of Paris as a child of privilege.'

'Inspired,' murmurs Myrtle.

Philly steps forward, waving her cigarette. 'I'm the Greek soldiers, darling. We're very cross about the whole thing. Hilly is the Trojans. All besieged and moany. Typical Hilly. We're going to have identical costumes in different colours. Little tunics. Up to here.'

'Identical because there are no differences in war,' says Hilly. 'All sides equal in their futility. Particularly Philly's.'

'Is the play set in Greece?' asks Rosalind.

'Almost, darling. Thereabouts.'

'So my costume could be something flowing, in white or cream,' says Rosalind. 'Like in the paintings. Which reminds me, how is your art coming along, Mr Taras? I hope this isn't distracting you.'

Philly exhales a plume of smoke. 'His art is going marvellously, Ros. He has a new model. Apparently, she's the cat's meow.'

'Gosh, who's that?'

Taras rubs at the corner of his mouth. 'Ernestine has been kind enough to sit for me. Work is – it is progressing. It is work. It is slow.'

'Who is Ernestine?' asks Rosalind.

'Mademoiselle Aubert,' says the Veg. 'We all practise our French together.'

'Mademoiselle Aubert!' says Rosalind. 'I'm not paying her to have her portrait painted. Is she here?'

'You can't really tell it's her in the painting,' adds the Veg. 'It's all pink.'

'Hardly appropriate,' says Rosalind, and her hands lift to pat her newly shingled hair.

‘We talk of Paris,’ says Taras. ‘The tree-lined boulevards. As we talk, I see it again. *Je reviens.*’

‘Do you have any other models in mind?’ says Rosalind. Again, the hands lift and pat.

‘They choose me,’ he says, and walks away.

Rosalind has a powerful urge to run after him and push him over, send him scabbling on to the dusty floor of the barn, and to rip the paint-stained shirt from his back.

‘We’re rehearsing tomorrow, Mother,’ says the Veg, ‘I could go through the script with you.’

‘I don’t need help,’ says Rosalind. ‘Bring it to me. I’ll look at it.’

Taras’s voice comes from inside the barn. ‘The giantess can be Ajax.’

‘Guess that’s me,’ says Myrtle.

Cristabel nods. ‘Ajax has a shield made of seven cow skins.’

‘Who doesn’t?’ says Myrtle. ‘My, would you look at that incandescent sky!’

Rosalind deploys her automatic smile, casting it blindly about herself. ‘You must all come for drinks soon. We can play boules on the lawn.’ Then she turns and heads back along the grassy path. She can hear Myrtle rhapsodizing, the insinuating murmurs of Hilly and Philly, and the children’s babble. She enters the wood. Leaves them all behind.

Rosalind Seagrave walks through the dappled trees. The sunlight has stretched across the woodland floor throughout the day, across the celandines, anemones and dog violets. And this light will go on into the night, because the sky, on these shining spring days, does not want to go black. Even after the sun has gone, there remains a strip of amber across the horizon, and above that, a pale wash reaching upwards to a band of aqua and above that, a deep blue that is the colour of the very edge of space, and then and only then, high up and forgotten, the indigo black of the night sky, waiting in the wings, carefully holding the golden bauble of envious Venus.

Black Flag

May, 1928

The evening is mild, a fuzz of soft greys and greens. Mist has sidled in from the sea and draped itself across the hilltops, cutting Chilcombe off from the rest of the world. It is gone nine when Cristabel steals out of the attic. The adults have left for a party in Somerset, leaving the house to those who are confined to it: servants and children. Nobody is eating or drinking or making demands, so most of the servants are asleep in their beds or playing cards by candlelight down in the kitchen.

Cristabel creeps down the main stairs into the Oak Hall, which is lifeless as a crypt, dim light falling through the cupola on to the grand piano. The piano is rarely opened. Despite Rosalind's oft-stated wish that the children should 'be musical', nothing has been done to further this aim. One of the governesses offered piano lessons, but only the Veg persevered long enough to pick it up, and only the Veg sits at the piano to practise, determinedly plonking her way through melodies until she has mastered them, changing direction with each wrong note, like somebody blindfolded colliding with furniture.

Cristabel collides with nothing. She deftly crosses the hall and slips out of the front door into the misty night, where she spies the narrow shape of Maudie rounding the side of the building. For a moment, they stare at each other through the murk like alley cats, then Maudie nods and vanishes. Cristabel knows she is released, sight unseen. She also knows that whatever Maudie is doing is not something to be enquired about.

Stealthy as a poacher, Cristabel hurries across the garden. She is wearing her lace-up boots and her coat done up over her nightgown. She carries with her a handkerchief dyed black and tied to a stick: a black flag – the international symbol for parley. Even pirates recognize the black flag. It means they are being offered a chance to sit and talk, man to man, weapons put to one side. She also carries a chunk of sponge cake and a silver trench lighter, two peace offerings shoved in her coat pockets, and her grandfather's hunting knife concealed in one of her sleeves as protection.

She reaches the edge of the lawn and is about to dart into the trees, when she hears a noise behind her. Digby. Barefoot in monogrammed pyjamas. Rubbing sleep from his eyes. Wavy hair standing up from his head. 'I heard you go past,' he says. Digby's bedroom is on the first floor, though he sleeps there only occasionally, preferring to stay with the girls in the attic. 'Where are you going? Why didn't you wake me?'

'I'm going to talk to the savages. Thought it best to go alone.'

He frowns. 'Why?'

She waves the black flag. 'I'm going to seek a parley.'

'You never do things without me.'

'Only one person seeks a parley.'

'I can help,' he says. 'I'll be your squire.'

'Very well, but I'll talk to them by myself. You're to stay in the woods.'

'In the woods?'

'Keeping watch,' she says. 'As soon as I need you, I'll give you the signal.'

'All right,' he says. 'Race you there.'

They spring through the woods like athletes, hurdling tree roots, making sure that any fears lurking in the shadows are outdistanced. When the cottage comes into view, Digby hides himself behind a hawthorn and draws back an imaginary bow and arrow. Cristabel nods at him, then leaves the woods, her heart pounding in her chest.

The flower-covered cottage by the sea is quiet, but it is a different kind of quiet to the staged and weighty stillness of Chilcombe. The cottage has all its doors and windows open. Candles wedged into empty wine bottles flicker on the window sills. Interesting smells are exuded: spicy food, turpentine, tobacco, and something else, rich and heady. Cristabel can hear low voices inside and is moving forwards to hear what is being said, when a twig breaks behind her.

She turns to find the tallest of the savage children, wearing nothing but a pair of shorts. He has come out of the barn. The others are scrabbling down from the hay bales to gather behind their leader, numerous as rats.

Cristabel waves the black flag, then puts it on the ground. She reaches into her pockets and holds out the cake and the lighter. The tall savage grabs the cake and tosses it over his shoulder to the smaller ones. He then takes the lighter, turning it in his hands to examine it. Carefully, Cristabel reaches out to spin the file wheel with her thumb, sparking it into life. 'It's a decent lighter,' she says, 'my Uncle Willoughby had it in the desert.'

The savage is so close to her, she can smell his skin. His shadowy face, lit from beneath by the lighter, is sharply angled, fiercely browed. He is a head taller than her and holding a cigarette in the corner of his mouth like a cowboy. Skinny and broad-shouldered, with shoulder-length dark hair and the wispy beginnings of a moustache. She thinks he must be about thirteen; old enough to consider himself an adult. She can hear the sea close by, its hiss and rattle on the pebbles.

She says, 'I come to offer you parley. I need people. For my play. For *The Iliad*. I know you like pretending. I've seen you do it. You dress up.'

He leans towards her. When he speaks, and it is the first time she has heard him speak, it is with a mixed-up accent and elongated vowels. 'Go home, little girl.'

He tries to put the lighter back in her hands, but she resists, pushing it towards him, saying, 'I'll make you an offer. If you appear in my play, I'll teach you to fight with a sword.' She raises her voice so the younger ones can hear. 'All of you. I'll teach you to fight like warriors. My uncle taught me. I know how to do it.'

The savage laughs. 'I know how to fight, little girl. The only thing I would do with a sword is rid myself of the blonde whores in my father's bed, *comprende?*'

For a moment she is confused. 'Blonde whores?'

He nods at the cottage.

'Wait,' says Cristabel, 'your father is Taras? He doesn't act like your father.'

The savage gives a snort. 'How does a father act?'

Cristabel is stumped. Over his shoulder, she can see the savages watching her. They all have black hair. 'Don't tell me he's father to all of you,' she says. She had assumed Taras's entourage was made up of disciples, not relatives.

The boy throws his cigarette to the ground. 'Why do you think we are here? We are children of the great Taras. Perhaps we will get a blond brother soon, eh? Maybe two. My mother can look after them like she looks after the rest of his bastards.'

'Who's your mother?' Cristabel suddenly remembers the woman in the headscarf. 'Do you mean the one that does the cleaning?'

The boy pulls back sharply. 'My mother is his wife.'

'I didn't know Mr Taras was married.'

'Why would he tell you? He prefers to forget.' The boy hoicks up a mouthful of saliva and spits it, a quivering froth, to the ground. 'But I can tell you something, little girl – one day, we will be rid of those blonde devils, and we will go home.'

'Do you mean Hilly and Philly?'

'They are not the first devils. There was one in Nîmes. One in Bruges. Sometimes, we collect the children. My mother becomes their mother. You understand?'

'I'm beginning to,' Cristabel says. 'Hilly and Philly are blonde devils, and you believe they are usurpers.'

The boy frowns.

'Usurpers,' she says again. 'They have taken your mother's rightful place.'

He nods.

'I didn't know,' says Cristabel. '*Pardonnez-moi*. Do they make you sleep in the barn?'

'We choose the barn,' he says. A hysterical shriek of laughter comes from inside the cottage, as if to explain why. The boy tenses his jaw.

‘How does your mother stand it?’ asks Cristabel.

The savage shrugs. It is a complicated feeling, the one she has at that moment. There is something in the boy’s expression she recognizes; something about what it is to be burdened with adult foolishness – and she will always be on the side of the usurped, the powerless. However, she cannot bring herself to be against Taras, her god from the ocean, the artist bringing her theatrical dreams to life. There is much that requires consideration. But there is also a task in hand. She has a play to produce, and she needs these half-naked foreigners to make up the numbers. She remembers a line from a Henty book: *An Englishman must always somehow or other put his foot down and square his shoulders in a way that a Frenchman never could.*

Cristabel clears her throat. ‘I came to parley. To strike a deal. Tell me, are you French?’

The boy shakes his head. ‘Half Belgian, half Russian.’

‘But you speak French.’

‘French, Russian, Flemish, English. Do you have a favourite?’

‘English, naturally. Let me be clear: I need a cast for my play. I want you and your brothers and sisters to be in that cast.’

‘Do you not have little friends to play with?’

She considers her answer for a moment before opting for the truth. ‘No. We do not have friends. That is why I require you. In return, I will teach you to fight. Or I could get you things from the house. What do you want? Cigarettes? Chocolate?’

The savages whisper ‘chocolate’ among themselves like an incantation.

The boy says, ‘Why should we trust you? You could steal for us, then call us thieves.’

‘I give you my word of honour,’ says Cristabel.

‘I know nothing of your word.’

Cristabel thinks for a moment. Then she reaches out and flicks on the lighter, which the boy still has in his hand. She flattens her own hand and holds it above the flame. ‘Watch,’ she says, ‘this is my word.’ She lowers her hand towards the lighter, keeping her eyes fixed on his as her eyelids begin to flutter with pain.

The savages edge closer. The boy waits until Cristabel is holding her shaking hand very close to the flame, furiously blinking back tears, before he moves the lighter away and pockets it. Cristabel clenches her hand to her chest, taking deep breaths.

‘Cigarettes, yes. Chocolate, yes,’ says the boy. ‘One more thing. I want to learn to drive a motor car. You fix that, we talk about plays. *Oui?*’

Cristabel nods. She is not yet in control of her voice.

He watches her for a moment, then says, 'We also do not have friends.' Cristabel is not sure if it is a statement of empathy or of threat.

She strides towards the woods, managing a shaky, 'Monsieur, I will consider your terms.' She has left her black flag on the ground.

He calls after her. '*Bonsoir, mademoiselle. Je m'appelle Leon.*'

Digby is in the trees waiting for her, shivering in the night air. She manages a smile, then sniffs, wipes her eyes. 'Burnt my hand.'

'You didn't give me the signal,' he says. 'Does it hurt?'

She nods.

'Did the savages do it?' Digby asks.

'No,' she says, 'I did. To prove my worth.'

'You did it?' he says. An owl hoots in the woods and Digby shivers again. 'Why didn't you signal me, Crista?'

'I knew I could do it, Digs.'

He is silent for a moment then, in an actorly voice, says, 'We must hasten to the castle to tend your wounds, my liege.' He leads the way through the trees, occasionally glancing at her over his shoulder, as they make their way home.

In the darkness of his bedroom above the laundry, Mr Brewer lights a cigarette as Maudie pads down the stairs and out into the night as silently as she had arrived. Weekends when his wife and son are away, Maudie has taken to slipping in and out of his bed like a cat.

It wasn't something he remembered trying to arrange – there were old acquaintances of that sort in Hammersmith he could visit if he felt the urge, grateful women who called him Billy, who remembered him as an ambitious young man, well known in the pubs of West London, a man who made it his business to make it his business – but it hadn't been entirely surprising when Maudie appeared late one night, materializing in the dark like something he'd dreamt up.

She hadn't ever offered him a reason for her late-night activities, she didn't talk much at all, which Bill Brewer – a man who navigated the world by anticipating demand and minimizing damage – appreciated. Ask no questions and all that. Only once, in a moment of idle curiosity, had he said to her, 'What are you doing here then, Maudie?' and she had eyed him assessingly from her preferred position, looking down at him, her hands resting on his chest as it rose and fell, and said, 'Practising.'

Rehearse

June, 1928

[SCENE: *A tumbledown cottage by a pebbly beach. A thatched barn full of half-painted canvases and a stuffed baby elephant on wheels. A stage set depicting a castle wall. A rehearsal.*]

TARAS: [*drawing a line on the ground*] The audience will be watching from here. The lights go up. Cristabella, now you begin your production.

CRISTABEL: Enter Achilles.

ROSALIND: Achilles is Mr Taras?

CRISTABEL: A thousand times, yes. The narrator starts our story.

DIGBY'S TUTOR AS THE NARRATOR: Me now? Very good. 'Achilles' wrath, to Greece the direful spring of woes unnumber'd, heavenly goddess, sing! That wrath which hurl'd to Pluto's gloomy reign the souls of mighty chiefs untimely slain; whose limbs unburied on the naked shore ...' Oh, what's next?

CRISTABEL: 'Devouring dogs and hungry vultures tore.'

[*Enter savage children on all fours, snarling and barking*]

CRISTABEL: The Greeks gather to make the case for war against the Trojans.

PHILLY: [*waving a painted sign that says WAR*] War. War.

HILLY: A little more oomph, darling, come on.

ROSALIND: Where should I be?

THE VEG: Over here with me, Mother. We're in Troy.

TARAS AS ACHILLES: 'Why leave we not the fatal Trojan shore, and measure back the seas we cross'd before?'

THE VEG: [*whispering*] Achilles doesn't want to fight, Mother. He wants to go home.

CRISTABEL: Can we have the people creating the sea effect on now?

[*Betty Brewer, Maudie Kitcat and Mlle Aubert, backstage assistants, costumiers and goddesses, run on trailing blue ribbons*]

DIGBY'S TUTOR AS THE NARRATOR: 'The goddess-mother heard. The waves divide and like a mist she rose above the tide; beheld him mourning on the naked shores ...' Naked shores again? Is that right?

CRISTABEL: Goddess, centre stage. No, we decided we didn't need the fish.

[*Savage children enter and exit with fish*]

MYRTLE AS AJAX: 'The limbs they sever from the inclosing hide; the thighs, selected to the gods, divide.' It's not my line, but I adore it.

MILLE AUBERT AS GODDESS: 'Shall Troy and ze adulterous spouse, in peace enjoy ze fruits of broken vows?'

ROSALIND: Why is she looking at me?

THE VEG: You're the adulterous spouse, Mother.

ROSALIND: She needn't look at me quite so hard.

PERRY AS NESTOR, KING OF THE GREEKS: 'Who dares, inglorious, in his ships to stay, who dares to tremble on this signal day; that wretch, too mean to fall by martial power, the birds shall mangle, and the dogs devour.'

WILLOUGHBY: [*lying on the ground in the middle of the audience space*] Bravo, old chap.

DIGBY'S TUTOR: This play is full of dogs.

[*Savage children bark*]

CRISTABEL: [*banging scenery*] No more barking!

LEON THE SAVAGE AS PATROCLUS: [*gesturing at savage children*] *Quand allez-vous faire les choses, vous écervelés fils de putes? Zut alors.*

CRISTABEL: Paris is snatched away by Venus. Mrs Brewer, that's you. If you can't lift your arms in that costume, just beckon with a finger.

ROSALIND: Do I do anything here?

CRISTABEL: No.

TARAS: But you must show through your face that you know the man you love is a dilettante. A man who chose beauty over wisdom.

WILLOUGHBY: I'm going back to the house for a drink. You're all doing marvellously.

The Mysterious Travelling Ways of Voices at Night

June, 1928

She gives him the signal after supper – an earlobe tug, a sniff – and that means: up. Tonight, we go up. They meet in the girls' attic bedroom. Then, using a chair shoved under the window as something to stand on, and employing the Veg, who does not like high places, as corridor lookout, they heave each other out of the window, working like acrobats, each pulling or pushing in turn.

Once on the roof, they rest against the gable for a moment, before beginning their monkey clamber up the tiles to the apex, sending clumps of moss flying off the roof edge. Their destination is the group of chimneys at the roof's highest point. Between these altitudinous columns, Cristabel and Digby have made their nightly nest.

Sitting side by side, they occupy the same air space as bats, owls and moths: fellow travellers on the night air. The rapid swirl of bats, thrown rags of flapping chaos; the ghost float of white-faced barn owls in their Elizabethan ruffs; the soft thumps of bumbling moths against the attic windows. Occasionally, they can make out someone far below, like Perry wandering the lawn with his pipe, a circle of thinning hair on the top of his head. 'Nobody ever looks up,' Digby says, resting his chin on one hand. 'I must always remember to look up.'

A biscuit tin wedged behind a loose chimney brick holds cigarette cards, a French dictionary and a notebook. Digby and Cristabel leave letters for each other there too, so it serves as a private postbox. A candle stub jammed between roof tiles gives enough light for reading or writing, and Digby's tin soldiers are lined up in the guttering along the roof edge: a thin line of defence. Sometimes they hear people calling their names, and how delicious it is to remain silent and fugitive together.

Cristabel retrieves two apples from her pocket and hands one to Digby, being careful not to use her burnt left hand.

For some time, there is nothing but companionable apple-crunching, then Cristabel says, 'I've been imagining the first performance. Over there. Beyond the trees.'

'Everyone watching,' says Digby.

'Hector stepping out from the walls of Troy to defend his home.'

Digby carefully rolls his apple core down the roof edge into the guttering, then hugs his knees and says, 'Flossie does that scene perfectly.'

They pause for a moment, to listen out for the snores of their faithful lookout, their noble Hector, who always, without fail, falls asleep at her post in

the attic corridor, often with one of her music books open on her lap, as she likes to practise the piano even when not at the piano, her small fingers dutifully making their way along invisible keys.

Other sounds from Chilcombe's inhabitants float up to the rooftop like balloons. Rosalind's voice, just then, as high and ringing as a handbell: 'Wind the gramophone, Philly darling.' Willoughby, his warm baritone adorned with the clink of heavy-bottomed glasses: 'Need a top-up, old chap?' Myrtle following Perry around like a rumour, her invocations all treacle: 'Peregrine, won't you dance with me.' The mysterious travelling ways of voices at night.

Digby continues, 'Flossie told me she imagines she's defending Chilcombe, not Troy. Isn't that splendid? We will always defend Chilcombe, won't we? When it's ours.'

Cristabel spits out an apple pip with a rapid *fftt*. 'Your mother says Chilcombe will be all yours. I imagine she'll have me and the Veg sold for scrap.'

'I would never let that happen,' says Digby. 'That would be a travesty.' He leans against her to find her hand, laces their fingers together, then bumps this single knotted hand on his knee.

He has never got out of the habit of holding her hand. If it were anyone else, Cristabel would think it mimsy, but his natural affection reaches across her straight-backed reserve (just as, nearly forty years before, the amiable toddler Willoughby would constantly grab the hand of the awkward adolescent Jasper), and once Digby has her hand, it is as if the annoyances and impediments that restrict her are loosened, and things are simpler, more possible, and it is no bother at all to lean together, knocking knees: brothers, outlaws, mountaineers, castaways. It is easier when it is the two of them.

Digby says, 'Think of all the plays we could do, if we were in charge. We could hire renowned actors.'

'We don't have to wait till then, Digs. We should do plays now, while Taras is here,' says Cristabel. She is crunching her way through her apple core until there is nothing left but the stem. 'I've an enormous amount of ideas. Brilliant ideas. This is my soul's work.'

Digby says thoughtfully, 'It isn't always the people you think will be good at acting who are good. I thought Mother would enjoy it, but she doesn't.'

'People have unexpected qualities,' says Cristabel. 'I thought Uncle Perry would think it was silly, but he's terrific.' She efficiently flicks away the stem of her apple, then pulls her cardigan down over her knees. The rooftop air, even on this summer night, is cold and celestial. The sky above them is full of stars.

'Crista,' says Digby, 'I noticed something at the cottage. There's only two bedrooms.'

'Yes?'

‘The savages sleep in the barn and the dark woman goes in one room. But that only leaves one bedroom for Hilly, Philly and Taras. They must all sleep together. Crista, do you think that Hilly and Philly want to be boys?’

‘What?’

‘The clothes they wear, their hair. Perry says they look like Etonians. He says if he’d had a fag like Hilly, his school years would have been very different.’

‘They might find trousers more practical. I might wear trousers soon.’

‘Sometimes they wear dresses,’ says Digby. ‘Remember the ones with the glittery beads? It’s as if they dress up as different people.’

‘I did actually see them once,’ says Cristabel. ‘Taras and Hilly and Philly. I meant to tell you. I had gone through the woods.’

‘You went without me again?’

‘Digs, it was important. I had to meet with Leon to finalize our agreement.’

‘I don’t think he’s a very good actor,’ says Digby. ‘He never remembers his lines.’

Cristabel bumps him with her shoulder. ‘I’m telling you what I saw. In the cottage. Two blonde heads, one dark. Lots of legs. Hard to tell what was what.’

‘In one bed?’

‘Yes.’ Cristabel remembers the tangle of limbs, the casual intertwining of anonymous bodies lit by flickering candlelight, and a sickly pulse thumping in her chest. This was somehow linked with the memory of Leon’s voice in her ear – *those blonde whores in my father’s bed* – and then meeting him on the beach with no one else around, to promise him Uncle Willoughby would teach him to drive. She had even sought out Willoughby when he was at his most drunk and cheerful, to make sure he would agree, and the calculatedness of this made her chest thump harder.

‘Why do you think they do that, Crista?’ says Digby.

She shrugs. ‘I don’t know.’

In truth, Cristabel feels she does know some of why the trio in the cottage share a bed; she has the outline of it. There were jokes she’d heard Willoughby make, muttered comments from village boys, certain sections in books Myrtle left on the lawn. But much was unclear. Even Maudie, their frank if erratic guide to the adult world, was reluctant to be drawn on the subject, simply smiling and pulling at strands of her own hair. Cristabel thinks again of the three bodies: their closed eyes, their absence from themselves. All the windows of the cottage open, as if it had been abandoned, as if they had gone on a journey.

Digby knocks his knee against hers. ‘What do you think it will be like?’

‘What?’

‘Our play.’

‘Oh. Nerves giving you trouble, Digs?’

‘No, I’m trying to imagine it.’

‘I can see how it should go in my mind and I think it probably will go like that and it will be a great success. The first of many.’ She squeezes his hand. ‘You’re not to worry. I’ll be there.’

In the house, a clock strikes midnight. As the night tips over into the small hours, the adult voices inside gain in volume but disintegrate in clarity. No longer gently rising balloons, they become shards and fragments, loud exclamations snapped in half by doors slamming and bursts of brassy music on the gramophone.

‘I smell bacon,’ says Digby.

‘Bacon and eggs, I’ll warrant, for those still up. Did you know if you throw an egg from this roof on to the lawn it won’t break? I’ve done it ten times in a row before.’

‘No!’

‘I’ll show you tomorrow. We should get some sleep.’

‘Can I go in with you, Crista? I don’t want to go back to my room.’

‘Long as you don’t kick me.’

So they snuff out their candle and slither and slide down the bumpy roof to the window and throw a blanket over their snoozing sister and jump into bed to close their eyes and let the night sky turn and wheel about without them.

The Iliad

June, 1928

To Cristabel, Chilcombe and its environs had always been a place of constancy. The sun followed the same course every day, arching over her head like a well-struck cricket ball. The pebbles on the beach clacked ruminatively as the tides moved in and out. There were fields, rounded fields, and ancient trees upon which she and only she had carved her initials. A reliably quiet place – which was always the first thing visitors remarked upon after the noise of their car engines died away. ‘Gosh, isn’t it quiet?’ The answer was invariably, ‘Yes, do come inside,’ as if being exposed to such a large amount of quiet was somehow unwise.

However, on the morning of their performance of *The Iliad*, when Cristabel opens her attic window, she feels a new air come rushing at her from many miles away, flying across the glinting sea, fast as the shadow of an aeroplane. It is here. The day. Her day.

Nothing is as it usually was. There is a wriggling knot in Cristabel’s stomach like a nest of mice. Eating breakfast seems nonsensical. The Veg is mumbling her lines while chewing her porridge, her woolly beard already hung round her neck, and Digby is bouncing about the attic on one foot. There are sounds of frenetic activity elsewhere in the house. Food being delivered. Chairs carried to and fro. Trestle tables arriving from the village.

This unusual bustling continues all day, with Rosalind at its heart, overseeing decor and catering, accompanied by Betty with her mouth full of pins to make any last-minute adjustments to costumes. Blythe and Mr Brewer are dispatched to decorate the path through the woods with Chinese paper lanterns and, by early afternoon, the cottage itself has been transformed by Taras, Hilly, Philly and Myrtle. Lengthy pieces of fabric are draped from the upper windows and pegged into the ground, creating a tent for Greek war leaders, and a large painted flag flies from the chimney pot. In front of the barn stand the plywood battlements of the besieged city of Troy, decorated with seashells by Taras. Coloured glass bottles holding candles mark out the front of the stage area.

All the weeds and brambles have been removed, the grassy area between the buildings has been mown, and borrowed wooden chairs and deckchairs fill the audience space. Cristabel carefully places one of her handwritten programmes on each seat, while the Veg, following Rosalind’s orders, puts a cut rose from the garden on each programme, with a pebble to hold it in place. On the beach, a driftwood bonfire stands ready to be lit in the final act, so that the last scenes will

play out against a backdrop of rising flames. Everything is poised and ready; an empty church awaiting its congregation.

But will they come? Cristabel had delivered all the local invitations herself. She borrowed a map from Mr Brewer, commandeered a bicycle from the butcher's boy and – after a painful afternoon teaching herself to ride it – spent a week whizzing through the countryside carrying invitations to the great and the good of South Dorset.

It had been thrilling to seek out addresses, following a map like an explorer. She had never known there were so many villages tucked away in the valleys. Osmington, Sutton Poyntz, Chaldon Herring, Tyneham. The thick summer hedgerows hung so far over the narrow lanes that, from a distance, they looked impassable, but as Cristabel approached, with her brakes squealing, the way through was revealed, like a series of concealed passageways. The warm evenings stayed light as she freewheeled past fields full of cows solemnly masticating, the cuckoo's echoing call following her through the dusk.

Rosalind may not have known anything about Helen of Troy, but she did – Cristabel reluctantly conceded – know something about how to put on an event. There was an admirable cunning in how she gathered what she needed. She had recruited a dressmaker friend of Philly's to design costumes and sweet-talked the vicar into lending her practically everything he owned. Rosalind even wrote the invitations herself, saying, 'The personal touch is everything, if you want the right guests.'

Myrtle, smoking in her battle gear during a pause in rehearsals, had replied, 'I'd certainly want to come along.'

'Darling, they all want to come along,' Rosalind had said. 'People are dying to meet Taras. But won't this be a novel way to introduce him? The great artist in a theatrical production with the children.'

Now the big day is here, and the time written on the invitations – *7 o'clock for pre-performance cocktails* – is ticking ever closer. Cristabel sits down under a tree and waits. There is nothing more to be done.

She hears their voices first. The voices of people walking up the driveway. Mr Brewer guides them on to the lawn, where maids with olive wreaths in their hair wait with trays of cocktails. Cristabel sees a few men who know Mr Brewer making jokes about his bare legs and leather tunic. Friendly winks and insults. She has never seen Mr Brewer behave in such a jovial way before. Then cars start arriving. One after the other, crunching up the gravel. Rosalind's high call of greeting floats across the garden, like the triumphant cry of the peacock.

A crowd begins to gather on the lawn, holding their cocktail glasses. They are all eyes, swivelling about, taking in the ancient house, the secluded garden, the other guests, and even occasionally examining Cristabel herself. She

recognizes a couple of Uncle Willoughby's land-owning friends, porcine and bristling, along with a few straight-backed chaps he and Perry knew in the army. A group of intense young adults, with interesting haircuts and skinny wrists, she decides must be Hilly and Philly's art school friends, who Philly says all live in bedsits with gasrings on the floor, surviving on boiled eggs and frantically copulating to keep warm.

There are grand elderly women, weighty with the jet-black jewels of a previous age, talking loudly about Taras and his ART, and she assumes these must be the patrons he refers to as 'English old ladies with big purses'. She also catches the tail end of some of Rosalind's gushing introductions and divines there is a 'celebrated restaurateur' and a 'modern sculptress' among those milling about. Nearly fifty people, if not more.

Ten minutes till curtain up. Cristabel runs down to the cottage. She needs to put on her costume and make her final preparations. Meanwhile, Blythe begins to lead the audience through the woods. It is a quite magical experience, they will all later agree, to wind through the trees on a midsummer's eve, following a path decorated by paper lanterns. When they arrive at the cottage, they realize – why hadn't they realized this before? – that it is in an idyllic spot, nestled in a grassy dip of land by the beach. House martins and swifts swooping in circles. Exhalations of honeysuckle sweetening the air. The lulling sound of waves on the shore. Barely a whiff of whale. They take their seats and pick up their programmes.

A hand-drawn picture on the cover depicts a furious man waving a spear at a castle. Below this, in inky letters, is written:

TONIGHT THE SEAGRAVE ESTATE IS PROUD TO PRESENT THE FIRST PRODUCTION EVER STAGED IN THE COUNTY OF DORSETSHIRE OF THE
RENOWNED STORY OF *THE ILLIAD* BY NOBLE MR HOMER

DIRECTED BY MISS CRISTABEL ELIZABETH SYLVIA SEAGRAVE ESQUIRE (ZEUS)

ART DIRECTION BY MR TARAS GRIGOREVICH KOVALSKY (ACHILLES)

PLEASE NO TALKING OR INTERRUPTIONS

Cristabel Elizabeth Sylvia Seagrave, now backstage and peering through a slit in the walls of Troy, studies the audience as they look at her programme. Ordinarily, she doesn't like unknown people, but she is beginning to feel a fondness for her audience. It rises in her as an approving warmth that has to do with their willing acquiescence; how they are paying her programme due attention and leaning towards each other to point out features of the scenery.

She leaves her viewing place to go into the barn to pull on her costume. In contrast to the quiet expectation of the audience, inside the barn is a frantic, overexcited place, repeatedly rocked by explosive emergencies that run through

the assembled cast like fire. *Patroclus has lost his shield! Hector's got her thumb stuck in her beard!*

Taras, the still point in the eye of the hurricane, sits on an upturned lobster pot, sipping vodka, in a short tunic that reveals his incredibly thick legs, each the size of a child's torso, and covered with black curly hair like a satyr. Hilly and Philly flit about him, slim as reeds in their soldiers' costumes, with their hair slicked back and eyes encircled with kohl. Perry, pale and upright in the suit of armour, stands nearby. His decades of military life, normally well concealed, are now curiously visible, as if the role of Nestor has allowed him to lift some kind of internal veil to reveal Perry the colonel, Perry the man at home in warfare. Mr Brewer too has resumed his soldierly bearing: a calm, tucked-in competence; the faintly amused fatalism of the capable lower ranks.

There is the Veg pacing solemnly back and forth with her wooden sword, very like her father in her beard, her tubby roundness never more affecting; she makes Hector a brave barrel of a man, valiant despite the odds. Myrtle, tall as an Amazon, fitting her helmet over her bleached hair while leaning casually against the elephant. The younger savages darting about, shaking their spears; Leon carrying a bucket full of rabbit's blood for the final battle (parasols are to be handed out to the front row during the interval). Digby, the beautiful prince, a loop of flowers in his dark hair. Rosalind, a trembling column of white. The three female servants in their draped goddess costumes: Betty all overflowing bounty; Maudie a wild-haired wood nymph; and Ernestine Aubert, solid and immovable as destiny.

Cristabel loves her cast. She realizes that now. She loves them as the gods love mortals: benignly, and with forgiveness. They had been infuriating in rehearsals, utterly rage-inducing, but now, by some mysterious alchemy, they are perfect. She takes a breath and begins to climb the stepladder propped against the side of the barn that will allow her to appear above the city of Troy, as if floating in the sky, at the moment of her first line, approximately ten minutes into the first act.

From her concealed place near the top of the ladder, she can see Digby's tutor, the narrator, as he steps out on to the stage, the first performer to appear from behind the wooden ramparts. A hush falls over the audience. A few discreet coughs. A gull cawing, then –

Achilles' wrath, to Greece the direful spring
Of woes unnumber'd, heavenly goddess, sing!
It has begun.

At first, Cristabel keeps her attention firmly on the narrator, reciting his lines in her head as he goes along, but as he becomes more confident, she turns her

attention to other members of her cast. She watches each of them step on to the stage, sees each begin to find their way. Quavering voices become stronger, nervous gestures more defined. Perry even exchanges a few dry asides with the audience. Eventually, Cristabel is able to turn her gaze to the crowd and take in their rapt expressions.

It pleases her immensely that she has created this. It reminds her of playing with the cardboard theatre in the attic, how her favourite part was lying on the floor, doing the voices, making the characters interact, and watching Digby and the Veg lying on their fronts, faces propped in their hands, transfixed by the story, as if it were unfolding all by itself. It was a conjurer's magic, a divine power.

She would never tell Digby and the Veg that when her time came to say her first lines as Zeus she felt true fear, a blood rush of terror that ran through her from head to toe, spinning her heart like a mill wheel. But as soon as she starts to say his lines, she is Zeus, king of the gods, and she knows how to be that.

Although her audience pays her polite attention, she, as a good director, can see there are more natural performers emerging from her cast. Perry, for example, with his knowing and easeful air. But their favourite by far is Digby. Even when he isn't saying anything, she notices their eyes seek him out. Nudges and nods ripple through the crowd whenever he appears.

She catches his eye once and sees that her own Digby is very far back. It is Paris who returns her gaze. While performing in front of grown-ups makes Cristabel feel a little hot and awkward, fearful she might be laughed at, for Digby, who sees no difference between himself and anybody else, it is as straightforward as breathing. His natural honesty means there is nothing between him and the part he plays, no complicating barrier of self-consciousness.

Then there is Taras as the warrior Achilles. When the other characters are onstage, there are moments of complicity between audience and cast, a sort of warm acknowledgement they are muddling along together. But whenever Taras appears, there is no interaction. His Achilles is a killer. A man aware of all the souls that must be sacrificed in order for him to obtain immortality, and exactly how they must die and the sounds they will make as they do so. He takes this awareness and lays it on those watching, with no quarter.

The performance flies past. The final scene – fallen Hector/Veg dragged behind her elephant, with the beach bonfire aflame – even has members of the audience dabbing their eyes with handkerchiefs, fluttering white flags of surrender. Then *applause*, *APPLAUSE*, the most wonderful sound, rushing around them like waves as they take their bows, rising in crests as Digby steps forward. And again for scene-stealing Perry. And again for the great Achilles. And again for Betty, nearly falling out of her bounteous outfit. And again for all

of them. A held note of *clapping, clapping, clapping* that Cristabel hopes will never end.

Afterwards, the performers hurry backstage, slapping each other on the back. They keep breathlessly going over the play, re-enacting it to each other, the parts that had nearly gone wrong – *I almost forgot to kneel!* – and the parts that had gone well – *You did that speech better than ever!* – as a way of keeping it alive, tossing it between themselves like something that cannot be allowed to touch the ground. They garland each other with praise, clasp hands, spin about like dancers. Audience members find their way into the barn too, to congratulate them and shake their hands; slow-moving civilians meeting the glamorous dramatists. Cristabel has never had so many people talk to her, never heard so many people say her name.

Eventually, the audience and cast begin to make their way back up to Chilcombe. Leaving the barn, Cristabel catches Leon's eye. He is stained with rabbit's blood, his grinning face caked and filthy. He holds up a packet of cigarettes and nods towards the bonfire. She shakes her head. She wants to be at the house now. She finds the Veg and Digby, and together they sprint through the woods in the twilight, still half costumed, flowers flying from Digby's hair like moths.

Rosalind is already there, greeting each member of the audience as they return. She has a comment for each one, her manner tailored to fit each guest. For the rich old ladies, she is a gracious debutante; for the easily flattered old buffer from the neighbouring estate, she is a sparky coquette; for the weak-chinned vicar, a demure mother. Cristabel notes, with some frustration, that Rosalind seems perfectly capable of acting when not onstage.

The house itself forms a perfect backdrop. All the windows are wide open, the front door too. Chilcombe has been creakingly prised open like a doll's house, revealing an interior lit with bowls of floating candles, glowing and flickering like a treasure cave.

As the children file past, Cristabel hears her stepmother say, 'Your production has received positive reviews, Cristabel.'

Digby and the Veg continue into the house. Cristabel stops.

Rosalind speaks without looking at her. 'If there were to be another play, it should be done differently.'

Cristabel says nothing.

Rosalind waves at someone across the garden, then says, 'There should be strings of electrical lights in the trees, and the stage itself should be lit. Mr Brewer can arrange this. The costumes should be professionally made. There's a woman in Hampstead, I have her details.'

A pause. The hubbub of guests, of champagne, of success. The rooks cawing in the trees.

Rosalind continues, 'I won't be in it. I have too much to do. But Taras must be involved, Digby will have the main part, and it will happen by the end of the summer. The Veg can perform something on the piano in the interval, Myrtle tells me she's rather good, but none of that fiddly music she likes. Something everyone will like. We will invite people from the newspapers too.' She glances at Cristabel to check she's been heard, then adds, 'Tell Digby to mingle. Everyone's desperate to meet him.'

Cristabel says, 'I have some ideas.' Like Rosalind, she speaks into the air, as if musing out loud. 'Ideas of my own.'

'I'm sure,' says Rosalind, in her hostess voice.

'Perhaps I will write a list for you,' says Cristabel, and waits, unmoving. She doesn't often stand near her stepmother and is pleased to discover that there is no longer much between them in height.

Rosalind purses her lips, like a gambler mulling at a card table, then says, 'Very well.'

Cristabel nods, then joins the throng pouring into the house. She notices, with some surprise, that her entrance into the Oak Hall causes a stir. She hears whispered comments, mentions of her father's name. A few people even smile in her direction. She gives brief nods in return, offers a handshake here and there. It is, she supposes, important to greet people. Make them feel welcome. Things of that sort.

She spots Digby and the Veg eating chocolate cake by the fireplace, which Rosalind has filled with an exotic floral display, and heads towards them, slipping Myrtle's unattended cigarette case from the top of the piano into her pocket as she passes.

'Your mother wants us to do another play,' she tells them.

'That's terrific!' says the Veg, in an explosive scattering of crumbs. 'I'm so delighted! This has been the most perfect day in history! Look at all these people!'

'The greatest news I ever heard,' says Digby, shaking his head. 'We could do one of our Shakespeares, Crista.'

'We could, Digs, we could,' she replies, taking a chunk of cake from his plate. As she eats it, she examines the people looking at them, smiling in their best clothes, holding their cocktails, and she thinks about *The Iliad*. She thinks about what happened afterwards, in the next story, when the cunning Greeks finally made their way into the city of Troy to win the war.

After the body of brave Hector had been burnt on a pyre, the Greeks constructed a huge wooden horse, to be presented to the people of Troy as a gift.

A mighty stallion on wheels, hollow on the inside, and they had filled it with silent soldiers, packed together, gingerly stretching cramped limbs, and carefully running their thumbs down the sharpened blades of their swords.

If you find a way to give people what they want, they let you in, thinks Cristabel. If you make a creature to hide inside, they open the doors and pull you through.

Noises Off

A bedroom in the cottage by the sea

HILLY: You were the best, darling.

TARAS: Yes.

A guest bedroom at Chilcombe

MYRTLE: You were the best, darling.

PERRY: Please, Myrtle. Enough.

The main bedroom at Chilcombe

ROSALIND: Digby was the best, don't you think, darling?

WILLOUGHBY: Left my ciggies downstairs.

A field halfway between The Shipwreck pub and the Chilcombe estate

PHILLY: I wondered which of us you would choose. My London friends had a wager. Good old Hilly was the favourite. Odds on, apparently. They didn't think I was your type.

WILLOUGHBY: Darling, you're not.

PHILLY: You say such awful things so charmingly. One could almost believe you have no malice in you at all.

WILLOUGHBY: I don't believe I do.

PHILLY: Why do you carry on in such a way? All the women, the affairs.

WILLOUGHBY: I wouldn't call this an affair. Besides, you're besotted with that Russian ogre. You're only here because it's Hilly's turn tonight.

PHILLY: Taras likes to drive women mad because he believes madness is a supreme form of expression. What's your excuse? I believe you secretly despise women.

WILLOUGHBY: You all seem to loathe each other quite enough as it is. Never understood why women can't get along. Always bitching about everything. Making life complicated. Cigarette?

PHILLY: Why even make love to me?

WILLOUGHBY: You talk as if I dragged you here by your hair.

PHILLY: Do you have a light?

WILLOUGHBY: *[after a pause]* If you've been doing something for a long time, it becomes a habit, I suppose. When I was in the army, there were things I did every morning without fail. Boots, buttons, hat. After a few years, I didn't even notice I was doing them. They simply got done.

PHILLY: A perfect definition of the unconscious drive. How easy it must be to be you.

WILLOUGHBY: Nobody ever says no, darling. Whose fault is that?

To London

July, 1928

It was Perry who suggested it, at dinner. 'Why don't you take the children to the ballet with you? They're becoming rather feral.'

'Feral?' Rosalind had said. 'Do you find them disagreeable, Perry? The girls have a degree of backwardness, I'll admit, but Digby has beautiful manners. We could take Digby.'

'A jaunt to the capital would be good for them all. Civilizing,' Perry replied. 'I'm in London next week, I'll meet you there. Treat them to afternoon tea at The Ritz. My grandmama used to take me when I was a boy.'

Myrtle draped her long hand on Perry's arm like a napkin. 'What an inspired idea, Peregrine. The children's eyes must be opened to the forces of enlightenment.'

'Must they?' said Rosalind.

'Oh, Rosalind,' said Myrtle. 'It'll make them more interesting at parties, if nothing else. Frowning like that will give you lines.'

'I rarely frown,' said Rosalind. 'It's simply the thought of Cristabel galumphing about the streets of London. She mustn't take the sword.'

'Has it occurred to you that Cristabel might be less of a galumpher if she visited London more often?' said Perry. 'Has she ever been there? Has she ever been anywhere? Astonishingly, it won't be that long before she'll be a debutante. She needs to learn how to behave. Nobody minds a spirited girl from the shires. A practical sort. But they will mind if she won't use a fork.'

'Surely she uses a fork?'

Willoughby laughed. 'I'm afraid not, my dear. She's taken to eating off her hunting knife. Like a pirate. I rather enjoy it.'

'You both know about this,' said Rosalind.

The two men, handsome in their evening wear, smiled at her ruefully across the dining table, blameless and assured.

Cristabel gazes up at the locomotive engine and whistles appreciatively. 'A magnificent beast. Look at the size of the thing!'

The Seagrave children, much to their surprise, have been dressed in their best clothes and taken by car to the railway station at Dorchester where they are now waiting to board the 8.15 to Waterloo with Myrtle, Taras, Hilly, Philly and a strained-looking Rosalind on a sunny Wednesday morning in July 1928.

The station is bright and smart, bedecked with hanging baskets of red geraniums, while the train – olive green and shining – is the most impressive machine the children have ever seen. The highly polished cylindrical engine. Six

smart carriages. It basks in the sunshine like a lizard, giving off a potent whiff of hot metal.

They are off to the Princes Theatre on Shaftesbury Avenue for a matinee performance by the legendary Ballets Russes during the last week of the company's summer season in London. Myrtle has a costumier friend who has arranged it and Myrtle is hopeful that Taras will meet Sergei Diaghilev, a man she describes as 'the company's famed impresario' as if she were reading it from a brochure.

She is saying this again, loudly, as a porter heaves the party's bags on to the train. 'And Diaghilev – the company's famed impresario – is said to be in town this week. Such a fortuitous opportunity, Taras. You'll adore him, he'll adore you, and *voilà!* You'll be the artist designing his next wonderful production. They say he holds court in The Savoy after every show, so that, darling, is where we'll go.'

'That, darling, is where Hilly and I will be during the show,' says Philly. 'We saw the Ballets Russes in Paris aeons ago. They were truly avant-garde then.'

Philly and Hilly are cutting quite a dash at Dorchester Station, in vivid emerald and saffron drop-waist dresses with matching headscarves. Myrtle, alongside them, wearing her turquoise turban and a Chinese fringed shawl, looks like an elongated genie.

Hilly, in saffron, says, 'Nowadays, Diaghilev peddles popular nostalgia for the masses.'

'He might as well work in advertising,' sniffs Philly. 'All those onion-domed churches applauded by people with no understanding of the Russian soul.'

Taras gives one of his bull seal laughs. 'Women! They want their artists to be poor and unsuccessful.'

'A true artist will always succeed,' says Hilly. 'But Diaghilev is a money man before he's an artist.'

Philly adds, in a lascivious tone, 'I've heard he's mainly interested in the contents of his male dancers' tights.'

Myrtle clutches her necklace of Venetian glass beads. 'I don't blame him. The thighs on Nijinsky. Eye-watering!'

'He's awfully short, Myrtle. Dwarfish. You'd crush him like a snail.'

'Diaghilev is interested in what?' enquires Rosalind.

'Enough of this chitter,' exclaims Taras, who is sporting a wide black hat and an embroidered shirt for his trip to the capital, along with checked trousers and lace-up shoes without socks.

As if in agreement, the waiting train lets out an irritable hiss of steam, and the women of the party shriek and laugh. The two other passengers waiting at the station – a farmer's wife and a shop girl – politely ignore them.

The station master blows his whistle, and the children climb aboard, making their way into the First Class carriage. The compartment they are to travel in is like a little room, with a door and windows and velvety seats with embroidered antimacassars that smell faintly of tobacco. Cristabel immediately busies herself working out the correct way to operate the window that allows access to the exterior door handle, so she will be able to properly exit the train when they arrive in London, while the Veg fiddles nervously with her hat. Digby is so overwhelmed he can only stare at the overhead luggage rack. The adults head further up the train to the dining car, where they plan to have scrambled eggs and champagne for breakfast.

Cristabel is saying, 'I like this window very much. Look. You pull down on this leather strap to open it,' when the train makes a sudden lurch to announce its imminent departure. There is a great *fffffflump, ffffffflump*, like the sound of an immense mattress being turned over, as the engine starts to heave its way forward; a triumphant *hoo-hooooo* from its whistle as it leaves the station; and then the *rickety-tack-rickety-tack-rickety-tack* of the carriages clattering over the railway lines at increasing speed. The children rush to lean from the open window so they can gaze along the long snake of the train, which is interspersed with the heads and upper bodies of fellow window occupants, fresh-air enthusiasts holding on to their hats and grinning.

'I wish I had a whistle,' shouts Cristabel, over the noise of the engine. 'I've asked for one every Christmas.'

They rocket through the countryside, white smoke pouring from the train's chimney. Sometimes, when the train rounds a bend, the angle of the track gives the children a glimpse into the engine cab where the grimy fireman is frantically shovelling coal into the glowing firebox, the ravening industry powering the huge machine, and how thrilling it is when they plunge into a tunnel, the smoke swirling about them, an enveloping blackness roaring in their ears.

'Are we still in Dorset?' asks the Veg, after a while, settling herself back on her seat. 'Or are we somewhere else?'

The children look at each other.

Digby shrugs, 'I don't know how to tell.'

'Probably over the county bounds by now. I'll check with the guard for you,' says Cristabel. 'Heavens, look at all those cows. You only ever seem to see cows side-on, have you noticed? Very rarely face-to-face.'

The countryside continues to hurtle past, vast acres of it. Orchards, farms, beehives. Shepherds with sheepdogs. Children balancing on gates, waving hankies. Passengers get on and off the train at every station, and each station has a different name. Wareham, Hamworthy, Parkstone. Sometimes, other trains come into sight, travelling in the opposite direction, and the sound as they approach is a

relentless galloping that builds and builds until they pass each other in a rapidly screaming blur, the noise a terrible sundering. Brockenhurst. Southampton. Winchester. There are bungalows, hospitals, churches, boating lakes, docks, many-funnelled ocean liners, lamp posts, schools, cricket pitches, cinemas. And people. So many people. It has the effect of subduing the children: the rushing mass of it all; its impassive busyness. It is hard to believe it has always been there, going on without them. There is so much of it.

When Cristabel imagined the train to London, she had thought of it as simply that: a train that would leave Dorchester and pass through some countryside that looked much like the countryside she knew and then reach London. But it transpires that there are many places between Dorchester and London. The line between Dorset and the capital is not a single sweeping stroke, but a wiggly squiggle, full of pauses and interruptions. There are countless towns and villages she has never heard of, and all seem to be populated by people merrily going about their business, unconcerned by the mysterious unknownness of their locations. Whatever could they all be doing? What was there to occupy the inhabitants of Beaulieu, of Sway, of Hinton Admiral? They weren't in any books. Nobody had ever mentioned them.

There was another peculiar thought that niggled at Cristabel: none of them knew her. None of them knew her name. Even the guard on the train didn't know her name, and she had rather expected he might.

After some time, the guard pops his head into their compartment to say they are approaching London. They look out of the window in anticipation, but it is as if they are coming into the city through its backstage area, as the view is a succession of unattended functional places: blackened industrial buildings, scrubby yards, outhouses, tangled fences. But the buildings pull themselves up, increasing in size and grandeur as they near their destination. They catch a glimpse of Big Ben, and then Waterloo Station itself appears round a corner, a huge open-ended warehouse, its roof a latticework of sooty glass and cast-iron arches, with sparrows and pigeons flying around inside, and a great clock hanging from the interior ceiling.

The train wheezes up to the platform, pulling up alongside others of its kind. Then carriage doors bang open and there are porters shouting and trunks being unloaded, and flower stalls and newspaper sellers, and people on the platform waving and calling. The Seagrave party disembark, and Hilly and Philly immediately set off at the brisk pace adopted by many of their fellow passengers.

'Toodle-pip, darlings,' calls Philly. 'We're lunching with Hilly's parents. Duty calls.'

'We can't take Taras,' adds Hilly. 'Last time, Daddy tried to stab him with a toasting fork. See you at The Savoy.'

The children are shepherded through the busy station by the unlikely duo of Myrtle and Taras, the tall American and the sockless Russian, with a sweating porter carrying their bags and Rosalind trailing behind, murmuring uncertainly, ‘When was I here last? I can’t remember the last time I was here.’

At one point, Taras turns to them, his eyes wild above his black beard, and shouts, ‘Breathe in the restless city, children of the big house! Let it enter your veins.’

They do. There is an open-top car waiting outside Waterloo for them – Myrtle has arranged this – and, as it drives them through the noisy, fume-filled London streets, the children gulp in everything they can. The towering buildings; the policemen in white gloves directing the swarming traffic; the countless red motor-buses, each with a curving staircase on its rear end to take passengers to the top deck, staircases that twist upwards like decorative sashes bearing single, incomprehensible words: DUNLOP. CUSSONS. SCHWEPPES. As the car crosses a bridge over the Thames, the children can see working cranes lining the water’s edge; tugboats chugging industriously about, and barges piled with black coal ploughing their way along the river.

Myrtle takes them to a clamorous restaurant, the interior of which is decorated with reflective surfaces: mirror, silver and glass. Every time the children look up from their pork cutlets they see multiple images of their fellow diners, fractured and scattered about. They have never eaten with adults before, and it is a disorientating experience.

Rosalind is glancing about, saying, ‘I don’t think I’ve been here before. No, I don’t think I have.’

‘You should insist that Willoughby take you to London,’ replies Myrtle, from over a cairn of oysters. ‘The spirit withers if left too long in the countryside. Too much scenery; not enough theatre.’

Taras, through a forkful of potato, adds, ‘The modern city is a fuel. A petroleum.’

‘Willoughby doesn’t take me anywhere,’ says Rosalind.

‘Leave the man alone,’ says Taras, adding a slosh of wine to his mouthful of potato. ‘You are always under his feet like a cat, tangling yourself about.’

‘Could somebody tell me,’ says Cristabel, waving her eating knife to attract attention, ‘what an “impresario” is? Like Mr Diaghilev.’

‘He is the person in charge of a theatrical company, Cristabella,’ replies Taras. ‘He finds the money, decides the productions. He is the locomotive.’

‘I don’t think I like wine,’ says the Veg, pushing away her glass.

‘Add more water,’ advises Taras, pushing it back.

‘You know, Taras,’ says Myrtle, who has moved her oysters aside and is smoking from a jewelled pipe, ‘the more I think about it, the more I believe I

might be useful for you. And you for me.'

'Is that so?'

'My poetry will always be my life's work, but I have a vision: a poster on the wall of a Tube station advertising a new exhibition by Taras Kovalsky brought to you by the kind patronage of Myrtle van der Werff. No! Brought to you by the Van der Werff Society for the Arts. Oh, but my daddy would just love for me to have a Society.'

Taras smiles. 'I would be delighted to help you spend your daddy's American dollars.'

'Well that,' says Myrtle, 'is what I was hoping.'

There follows much dull adult conversation of galleries and opportunities, but also good puddings: baked bananas served in rum with thick dollops of cream.

After lunch, they adjourn to the Belgravia home of a friend of Myrtle's so they can change their clothes. When they arrive at the Princes Theatre, numerous taxi cabs are pulling up in the street outside, depositing people dressed in glamorous evening wear, even though it is a sunny afternoon. They crowd through the entrance into the theatre's tiled lobby area, which is ringing with the expectant voices of those waiting to be seated.

The children, under Myrtle's wing, are guided to their places at the front of the circle. They watch as the multitude of theatregoers find their places in the stalls beneath them. Beyond the stalls and the orchestra pit, where the musicians are warming up with a see-sawing cacophony, a red stage curtain hangs from ceiling to floor. The curtain is lit from beneath. It glows.

Then the house lights dim and the murmuring audience quietens. The conductor raises his baton, the violinists tuck their instruments beneath their chins, and everyone breathes in. They wait. Rosalind coughs. The curtain goes up.

From the wings, a long-haired figure comes running, leaping high as a deer, arms raised, legs fully extended, a body in the air at full tilt. Through the small binoculars she has found in front of her seat, Cristabel watches intently. She can see puffs of dust rise from the stage boards as the dancer thumps down to earth.

The conductor gives a flourish, and the orchestra begins to play. The dancer, a muscular figure in a skintight costume, responds to the music with exaggerated movements that extend through every sinew. Some movements are graceful and arching, but some are jagged and functional. Movements that implore, soothe, reach; others that deny, stomp, insist.

More dancers run on from the wings. Lit by the stage lights, they fling themselves about, their faces emphasized by dramatic make-up. Through her binoculars, Cristabel decides some must be women as they are wearing

diaphanous dresses and dancing on the tips of their toes. She has never seen people move in this way before, and none of them seem embarrassed by what they are doing. The stage set is also intriguing. There are patterned shapes arching in from either side to create a forest bower, but when the lighting changes colour, the shapes resemble other things: a church nave, the beams of a workshop, the belly of a ship.

She trains her binoculars on the first dancer again. Despite the transparent costume, it is not immediately apparent as to what lies beneath, but she is fairly confident that the bulge at the top of the muscular legs indicates a thing that indicates a man. It is fascinating, almost shocking, to see a body so outlined and revealed. He looks naked. Cristabel glimpses drops of sweat flying from his forehead as he spins, but his face never betrays the effort he is making.

His face is bold. His eyes ringed. He is a man, but not one like Perry or Willoughby, closed off and wry. He is expressive, sensual, his arms outstretched, his mouth ajar. Occasionally, his hands frame his own face like an actress posing in a magazine. His jumps seem physically impossible – he can leap straight upwards from a standing position like a cat. He reminds her of the slender sprites that climb trees and make mischief in the Arthur Rackham illustrations in *Tales from Shakespeare*. Puck from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Ariel from *The Tempest*. Neither good nor evil; male nor female. Something else entirely.

Cristabel hears Rosalind whisper to no one in particular, 'I don't know quite what to make of that one.'

The music swells and there is a sustained note from a violin that floats high in the air and a cello part that sways underneath it, and the dancers lift each other and spin in unison and all the moving parts suddenly seem to be tied together, and there is an uprush of emotion in Cristabel's chest, which takes her by surprise. She doesn't know how to describe what she is feeling or how she has been made to feel it. But whatever it is, and however it is done, it appears to be contagious, because, glancing to the side, she sees the enraptured faces of Digby and the Veg staring at the stage, eyes shining.

She looks again at the performance, at how everyone involved is concentrating on the same aim, from the principal dancer spinning centre stage, to the unseen man high in the rafters controlling the spotlight, to the patient percussionist counting out the empty bars of space before his single soft *tink* on the triangle. It moves her the way that stories about soldiers uniting to go into battle move her, a collective endeavour in service of a single cause. She would like very much to be a part of that. No. She would like very much to be in charge of that.

After the performance, when the audience are all filing back out on to the street, blinking in the sunlight, there is a kind of milling about where they keep

looking at each other's faces, as if trying to see if the show has left a mark. Cristabel frowns at her feet. She does not want to be examined.

Myrtle is swollen-faced and exultant, blotchily streaked with her own make-up. She grabs hold of Digby's hands and exclaims, 'The ballet always moves me to tears – oh, I drown! Did you love it, beautiful boy?'

'Ever so ever so much,' says Digby. His eyes have widened to dinner plate proportions. 'I could jump like that, if I practised.'

'We'll make a dancer of you yet,' says Myrtle.

'Some of the dancing was divine,' says Rosalind, cooling herself with a lace fan, 'but the music was a little coarse.'

Taras offers his arm to the Veg as they begin to stroll southwards towards The Savoy. 'Tell me, Miss Florence. Did the ballet move you?'

The Veg says in a quavering voice, 'Goodness me, Mr Taras. I feel as if my heart is bursting out to pieces at the seams. The orchestra was so wonderful – and the magic toy shop story! To see the dolls come to life like that! *C'était très bien.*'

'What are you saying? The one at the end? With the puppets?' says Rosalind, who is walking behind them.

'Yes, *La Boutique Fantastique*, Mother. The dolls loved each other so much they couldn't bear to be parted,' sighs the Veg. 'I was thinking though, Mr Taras, because their love was so strong, they might meet in the afterlife. Like how in the Greek stories, people don't actually die, they go and live with the gods. Do you think dolls get to go to the afterlife?'

'It is entirely possible, Miss Florence,' says Taras, in the oceanically deep voice that reminds her that he came from the sea and is familiar with gods and love and all else unknown.

Digby, who is bounding his way along the pavement in a series of leaps and pirouettes, adds, 'Flossie, remember, they have to do it again tonight. And tomorrow. And the next day. So they will be together again and again.'

'Also true,' says Taras. 'The doll in the story, Miss Florence, did he love with all his heart?'

'He did!'

'But what enables us to know that he loves? His dancing. That is what we will remember, long after love is gone. Art will outlive us all.'

'Ah,' says Myrtle, 'but what inspired his art? His love. Love inspires art. Without love, there is no dancing.'

'You are too soft,' says Taras, not unkindly. 'It is your poems that will suffer.'

'I believe that's The Savoy over there,' says Rosalind. 'Has my hair survived the journey?'

Taras pauses to direct the Veg's attention towards her half-sister, who is walking behind the rest of the party, scowling at the floor, her closed-off face furrowed and intent. 'Look at Cristabella. She is already at work. Picturing her future productions. The American is right to say love inspires art, but not only love. Art inspires art. Anger, hatred, hunger – these can also inspire. But whatever it is, however it comes, there always is the work. The work of art is never done. Even when my hands are empty, I am still painting.'

The Veg nods thoughtfully. 'Cristabel is very good at puzzling away at things. For ages.'

'Many people give up,' says Taras, 'but it would surprise me if she were to be one of them.'

At The Savoy, the children are left to linger in the lobby, waiting for Perry to arrive and take them to The Ritz, while the adults head further inside, to where Mr Diaghilev sits behind a piano surrounded by admirers. The children catch a glimpse of a round man with a neat moustache and melancholy downward eyes, a dapper walrus patiently accepting compliments while expertly noodling on the piano. Gathered around him are smartly dressed men and darkly sparkling women with the tightly strung calves of dancers, and their conversation is like a song in which the verses are sung by the visiting Russians, low and rumbling, and the choruses are sung by their eager followers: the extrovert laughing Americans, the politely applauding English. *A ha ha ha! A ha ha ha! A ha ha haaaa quite right.*

It is a relief when Perry heaves into view in his colonel's uniform, hat tucked under one arm. The pale gingeriness that makes him so translucent in civilian life is eradicated by his military outfit, which fills him out, makes him a reassuring presence.

'I see the acolytes have found their target,' he says, ushering them out. 'I can't stand bohemians en masse, all shouting their radical opinions over the top of one another. Let's see how long it takes for Rosalind to notice you've gone.'

'We shouldn't upset Mother,' says the Veg.

'I'll leave a message with a bellboy,' says Perry, and hails one like a cab.

Entering The Ritz alongside Colonel Drake and being guided to a table in the Palm Court – a yellow and gold room of chandeliers and potted palms – is like the parting of the Red Sea. Chairs are pulled out for them; napkins flourished; enquiries made about the health of Colonel Drake's parents; benevolent smiles bestowed by staff and diners alike. A tiered cake stand arrives, bearing dainty sandwiches and scones to be eaten with clotted cream and strawberry jam. Perry orders champagne, saying that his grandmama believed every visit to The Ritz deserved champagne, and they each have a glass. Its sneeze-making fizziness makes them giggly and emboldened.

'I don't think I will ever go to school,' proclaims Digby grandly.

‘This is a very sophisticated place,’ says the Veg. ‘I wonder, Uncle Perry, do you think Mr Taras will marry Hilly or Philly?’

‘Hillary,’ replies Perry. ‘There’s cold marital steel in her eyes and, unless he marries her, she’s no different to all his other girls. Although, Kovalsky will have to get shot of his cumbersome first wife before the nuptials proceed.’

‘Mr Taras has a wife?’ says the Veg.

‘That’s right,’ says Cristabel, knocking back her champagne. ‘The woman with the mop. Leon told me. She’s his mother. They lived in Brussels. But she’s actually Belgium. Comes from Flemish.’

‘Other way round, dear girl. The wife is Flemish. Comes from Belgium. Quite a talented artist in her own right, I’m told,’ adds Perry. ‘Or she was before she married Kovalsky and started popping out Russian babies.’

The Veg looks perturbed. ‘I hope when I fall in love with my husband, he doesn’t have a wife.’

‘Don’t be a ninny, Veg,’ says Cristabel, through a mouthful of scone.

‘I’m not being a ninny.’

‘You are being a ninny, you ninny. If he has a wife, he can’t be your husband. Leon believes Hilly and Philly are usurpers, and he’s right.’

‘I’m not being a ninny. There is such a thing as a second marriage, isn’t there, Uncle Perry? Mother had two marriages. She says only the uneducated disapprove of true love. And do you know what,’ says the Veg, who is becoming flushed, ‘I don’t think I want to be called Veg any more. It’s not a pretty name. It’s not even my name.’

‘It isn’t,’ concurs Digby.

‘Digby never calls me Veg, so I don’t see why the rest of you can’t do the same.’

‘You’re Flossie,’ says Digby and takes her hand.

‘I am.’

Caught off guard, Cristabel flounders for a moment, chewing her scone.

‘Flossie suits you very well,’ supplies Perry.

‘It does,’ says Flossie, blinking rapidly. ‘I think it does.’

‘Who would like to hear about the time I won a medal in India and rode an elephant?’ says Perry, while simultaneously indicating to a passing waiter that he would like a whisky and the bill. ‘I had to steer it with its ears.’

After the elephant anecdote, the conversation turns to the other medals and stripes on Perry’s uniform and what they mean and where they came from – the brushes with death, the hair-raising escapades and the bravery of soldiers who defend the Empire. Then he tells them it will soon be time for them to catch the train home and asks if any of them can remember the name of the train they arrived on.

‘Did it have a name?’ asks Cristabel.

‘They usually do. And a number. Can you remember what colour it was?’

‘Blue,’ says Digby.

‘No,’ says Cristabel, ‘green and gold.’

Perry nods. ‘It is a useful habit to cultivate, remembering the details of trains. A good memory exercise. Next time, I will expect you to know the name and number too.’

After that, Perry sends for a car to take the children back to Waterloo. It is driven by a uniformed soldier who salutes the children as they climb in and again as they climb out at the station, which is emptier and echoing now.

Their train is waiting for them at the platform, so they run to it, and it sets off almost straight away. It has been such a treat to go to the ballet and The Ritz and have champagne and be driven through the city by a soldier, but now they are heading home, and it all seems to have come to a rather sudden end. Perry has told them he will arrange for Mr Brewer to pick them up at Dorchester, so there is nothing left for them to do but sit on the train as it gathers pace, heading away from the city and back towards Dorset. It is dark now. The day has ended.

When they had left Dorchester in the morning, the noise of the train had been regular and companionable – a mechanical horse, cheerfully galloping forth. But now they are leaving London and the train noise has become a desolate roar. It is a monster. It is a factory. Its black windows show only the reflections of those on board, looking tired and haunted.

Digby watches his own image carefully, lifts his chin, holds his hands to the sides of his face like the dancer, then shifts his gaze so his reflection looks back at Cristabel. She studies him, examines their monochrome side-by-side faces, then turns to her half-sister, who is reading the ballet programme for the third time.

‘I will, you know,’ says Cristabel.

‘Will what?’

‘Call you Flossie. If you like.’

‘I would like that. If it’s all right.’

‘You should have said.’

‘I have now.’

After a pause, Cristabel says: ‘Perry’s elephant story was first rate. You like elephants, don’t you?’

Flossie nods. ‘I do like elephants.’

Cristabel turns and looks out into the darkened countryside. She can see a few isolated lights in the distance like ships out at sea. Cars, she supposes. Farms. Things carrying on.

Somewhere between Southampton and Bournemouth they all fall asleep, rocked by the motion of the train, shivery with tiredness and huddled beneath a

woollen blanket loaned to them by the guard. Cristabel in the middle with a protective arm round each of her charges: the softly snoring Flossie; the deeply dreaming Digby.

Maudie Kitcat's Diary

22nd July, 1928

Mister Willoughby off in his aeroplane again so Mrs Rosalinds in a blather. Maudie do this Betty do that. filling the house with orders. Betty is my seam straight. Maudie stop staring.

You can't miss nuthin but you can't get caught watching. Like how Bill never looks at me when his wife's around but I know what he hides behind his closed door face.

Bill keeps saying, you be careful, Maudie, but no one cares what i do. they'd only care if i got a bun in the oven. that won't happen now Bill got those things. Mister Willoughby has some too. inside pocket of his dinner jacket. don't seem to notice when some go.

they forget I turn out their pockets. they forget I empty their slops & wash their bed sheets. they forget me altogether. i see them asleep sick drunk bare as babes but when they wake and find me lighting the fires, they act surprised, pulling their sheets up all modest.

apart from mister Willoughby, he dont care. Splayed out shameless as a cat in sunlight. Like that tiger they had at the circus in Weymouth. opens his eyes and doesn't say a word. watches me work. watches me look.

Picture It

July, 1928

As the summer goes on, the children slip through the widening gaps in their timetables. Mlle Aubert becomes increasingly laissez-faire about lessons, while Digby's tutor is distracted by the pursuit of fossils, and Rosalind preoccupied with her guests. Everyone has wandered away from what they were meant to be doing. It's that time of year. The July sun rests on its laurels in a wide blue sky, comfortable and unthinking. Any other weather is very lightly done, just casual wisps of high cloud.

Into this unattended golden space comes Flossie, pulling her wheeled elephant and leading a group of savage children down to the beach. She is developing a game called 'our school' in which she is a kindly teacher, providing singing lessons and rides on Edgar. Cristabel and Digby are also passing through the sunlight. Whenever they grow tired of planning theatrical productions, they visit the barn where Taras paints. Sometimes, they talk to him in French, but mostly they sit watching him work, while he pays them the compliment of ignoring them entirely.

When Taras is painting, he frequently stops and shuts his eyes, as if trying to picture something or remember something. Cristabel and Digby notice this can happen when he is away from his work: his eyes suddenly close, mid-meal, mid-stroll, as if something has surfaced within and demanded his attention. Even when open, his eyes are often inaccessible, furtive black currants. They tightly seal off the workings of his mind, but Digby and Cristabel are conscientious observers.

They have seen that, although Taras cheerfully agrees to Rosalind's frequent requests to go up to Chilcombe to meet visitors, he rarely returns from the house empty-handed. Not only does he seem adept at acquiring useful items, like teaspoons for the cottage or the details of a man who supplies oil paints, he usually comes back with something else too: subject material.

Familiar faces begin to surface in his paintings – the vicar and the local MP – along with images found in the portraits of ancestral Seagraves, suggesting that when he grows tired of the people talking to him, he turns his attention to the silent ones on the walls. His lazy geniality begins to appear more like that of the crocodile lying in the shallow water with its great jaws smilingly open. The children like him all the better for this.

They also admire his ability to always be Taras. They are frequently obliged to become cleaner, politer versions of themselves, but Taras never changes. He addresses everyone in the same manner, wears whatever he likes, and is always stained. Paint embeds itself under his fingernails, soaks into the lines on his

palms, and splatters his rolled-up shirt cuffs. He carries his work with him, along with the liquorice smell of turpentine. While most people zigzag through their days, trundling between obligations and meals, desires and interruptions, thinking about politics or pilchards or whatever else is coming along next, Taras follows a single path, that of Taras the artist.

One by one, he takes members of the household off to the barn, saying, ‘But now I must make your portrait.’ They don’t know how to say no. There doesn’t seem to be a way to do that. Sometimes they arrive to find a canvas already half filled, or a selection of props waiting for them, which gives them the simultaneously pleasurable and unnerving sensation they have already been thought about. For Mlle Aubert, there is a kitchen knife. For Mr Brewer, a handful of coins.

When Taras brings in each new model, he places them inside the barn, where they are framed by the doorway. Then there is a series of adjustments, as he positions and repositions both easel and subject. When he finally begins painting, his attention becomes disconcertingly inconstant – focused not on the person in front of him, but circling round them, repeatedly checking the light, the sky, the light, the sky. The children watch intently, hoping to pinpoint how it happens: the transfiguration of their lived reality.

Sometimes, Taras is frustrated by his work before he even starts. Once, when Mr Brewer had arrived for a sitting, Taras had punched his fist through a blank canvas, placed it on the floor, then walked calmly across the barn to pick up a new one.

‘Everything all right, sir?’ said Mr Brewer.

‘The many times I will get this wrong,’ said Taras, ‘already tire me.’

Mr Brewer scratched his moustache. ‘Whenever you’re ready, sir.’

‘No need for sirs,’ replied Taras. ‘We paint a little then have a drink, you and I, yes? I am Taras, you are Bill. Let us proceed, my friend.’

The children observe this too: his ability to acknowledge futility yet have a go anyway. To set off optimistically even if you soon find yourself back at the start. They are accustomed to all their attempts at anything being marked with a definite cross or a tick, but Taras does not appear to mind a cross. He even gives them to himself. It is a topsy-turvy way of thinking, but there is an intriguing ease to it, a widening of space. It seems a good way to do things, especially now, in this summer of laxity, this time of slack water.

Occasionally, Taras will go to the beach to do charcoal sketches of the whale, and Digby and Cristabel tag along. He is drawn, he says, to the bones of the creature, which are becoming ever more visible as scavengers pick away the flesh. He asks them to look at the bones and tell him what they see. Bones, they say. No, he says. Again. The ribs are a basket; the spine, a piano; the jaws, a wish

bone. Better, he says. Again. The ribs are hands praying; the spine, a crenellated castle wall; the jaws, a pterodactyl's beak. Better, he says. But always again.

As they walk back to the barn, Digby asks, 'When you paint Hilly or Philly, why do you chop their heads off?'

'So I don't have to listen to them when I am working.' Taras laughs, then adds, 'A woman's body is majestic. I celebrate it.'

'You celebrate the bit without the head,' says Cristabel.

He shrugs. 'Perhaps I enjoy to chop the heads off.'

He gives Cristabel a few pieces of paper and some charcoal and tells her to practise her portraits, while Digby climbs about on the hay bales at the back of the barn, pretending to be a cowboy. Cristabel draws Taras as a crocodile coming from the sea; she draws herself as a whale beneath the waves.

'What about Miss Florence?' Taras asks.

'A song thrush? No, a dormouse. No, a field mouse,' says Cristabel.

'Where is she living? What is her home?'

'She likes to be snug. A snug nest with soft jumpers.'

'Cushions to sleep on,' adds Digby, who is half listening. 'Woolly socks.'

'Show me,' Taras says, so she draws it for him. Then he asks, 'How do you draw your home, Cristabella?'

Home? She never thinks of the word 'home'; she thinks of an attic at the top of a house. She draws a thin shape for the attic, then a funnel beneath it, filled with a swirl going round and round like a whirlwind. She already knows what Rosalind is: a magpie. Willoughby: a sword. Flying things. She adds them to her drawing.

'You see,' Taras says, tapping the top of her head with the end of a paintbrush. 'You have it already. All you need. Don't forget to put your name on it.'

They work on their respective pieces in comfortable silence, Taras standing at his easel, Cristabel lying on her stomach on the grass nearby. After a while, she gets up and approaches Taras with her paper in her hand, saying quietly, 'I don't know how to draw Digby.'

She has tried, but every time she puts her piece of charcoal to the paper, she stops, because she immediately has it wrong. They both look over to Digby, who is lying on the hay bales, caught in a dusty shaft of light.

The trouble is, he is many things. The brother she wanted and the brother she has, two different notions entirely, and cousin Digby, who is not really her brother, and actual Digby, her most faithful and cheering companion. He is a drawing scribbled over and screwed up and unscrewed again and kept in a pocket always. His presence in her life like a dog sleeping on the end of your bed: a loyalty so fond and constant, you only notice it on the rare occasions when you

wake up and it's gone, and then all you want to do is get up and find it, so you can go outside and play. Or perhaps he is simply too close to her for her to see him properly, like a mirror held right in front of the face.

'Do another one of me instead,' suggests Taras.

Digby turns to them excitedly. 'There's an enormous spider over here.'

Soon, it is Rosalind's turn to stand in the barn, holding a bouquet of roses provided by Taras. She desperately wants her portrait to be painted, particularly as sullen Mlle Aubert and flighty Maudie have already had theirs done, but finds posing an uncomfortable experience. It is frustrating to be unable to see how he is depicting her.

'Can I see it?' she asks, but whenever she looks, there is only the outline of her body and a swirly blur where her face should be. In fact, as the painting develops, the void where her face should be becomes more of a void, while the flowers in her hands are lavished with detail.

'When do you think you will do my face?' she asks, glancing at the sky to see what on earth he keeps looking at.

'I am doing it,' Taras says, with satisfaction in his voice, using his thumb to smooth out ridges in the paint. 'It is a polished surface.'

'When do you think it will be finished? Properly.'

She wants it to be finished and framed. She dislikes unframed paintings. Nothing but bits of canvas stapled to wood. She and Willoughby had once gone for dinner at a house full of unframed paintings by a fisherman that resembled drawings done by a simple child. The guests exclaimed rapturously over them, but Rosalind likes her art to be more accomplished and behind glass.

Unframed paintings remind her of when Hilly and Philly had taken her to a party in an artist's studio in Fitzrovia after they'd been to see the Ballets Russes. Finally, she'd thought, as they climbed a staircase to the studio, a chance to visit bohemia. But bohemia had proved small and messy. No furniture to speak of, and the space crowded with canvases covered with garish images of typewriters and escalators. Canvases were stacked on the floor and propped up along the walls, and people in shapeless clothes were leaning against them, covering them with wine stains and cigarette ash. Someone was singing a sea shanty; a Hungarian composer was banging a saucepan; the air was thick with incense; and a Welshman with a spittle-filled beard kept shouting into her ear about cubism. They all had loud opinions about art, and they all kept tripping over it drunkenly. It was as if they had gathered together to reassure each other they were the beating heart of everything, but then had a terrible feeling that they weren't, so kept doing noisy, careless things to cover up the gaping hole in the middle of it all. 'WHAT IS SO VERY POWERFUL IS THE SENSE OF A MALEVOLENT TECHNOLOGY UTTERLY BLIND TO HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS,' bellowed the Welshman. I would like a chair to sit on, thought Rosalind.

As Rosalind stands in the barn in front of Taras, she has that thought again: I would like a chair to sit on. A triangle of sunlight comes through the open doors straight into her eyes. She remembers that Myrtle (who adores the faceless portrait of Rosalind and has asked Taras if she can buy it) knows an Italian artist who produces the kind of paintings Rosalind covets. Floor-to-ceiling portraits of women wearing gowns in Venetian villas. An artist who would make her look like a real person, but taller. It is frustrating that her artist, the one she is housing and feeding, will not look at her in that way. She can picture it clearly.

Wings and Bones

August, 1928

If you were, like Willoughby, flying above Chilcombe Mell in a single-seater aeroplane on a summer's evening, the view would be as follows: fields, hedges, cottages, a church, and then a thicket encircled by a crowd of raggedy rooks. Not a sign of the house concealed beneath the trees until you were directly above it, then a fleeting glimpse of chimneys and a snippet of lawn, before you shot out over the glimmering ocean.

Willoughby believes the view from an aeroplane accurately depicts man's general irrelevance. Seen from the air, human structures are foreshortened, merely the temporary perching places of birds. England is nothing but a Hornby train set, a model village: predictable, ticketed and neat. But beyond it lies the sea, the sky, the horizon: endless places as vast as Willoughby's beloved Egyptian deserts. A few lines of poetry from his schooldays float into his mind –

... Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

– but waft away before he can remember who wrote them.

He adores flying in the realm of the white clouds; enormous structures, casting shadows big as citadels as they glide along, moving with the slow dignity of things that believe themselves to be immensely solid. When trapped in drawing rooms, Willoughby will seek out windows with views of skies and follow the clouds as they pass, remembering that he has moved among them.

Reluctantly, he descends to earth, heading for a farmer's field about half a mile from Chilcombe, where he can land safely, and a couple of obliging farm workers with a tractor will manoeuvre his aeroplane into a barn if the weather turns. He switches off the engine for the final section of his flight, leaving just the air whistling through the wires and, somewhere below him, the rooks congregating. Their varying cries – a harsh *caw*, a ruminative *aarrrrrk*, a jocular *akakakakaka* – echo about the valley. A constant call and response: ays and nays; a corvine filibustering. Jasper claimed there was a local legend that if the rooks ever left Chilcombe, the Seagrave family would fail. Cristabel feeds them buttered toast every morning.

Willoughby purchased his aeroplane in the dreadful time immediately after Jasper's death. Days when he would wake with a jolt before dawn, his head pounding, and it would all come rushing back: his birthday party, a game of sardines, hiding in a back room with Rosalind, the window seat behind the

curtains, his hand over her mouth. Then the shouts from outside. The whinnying of a horse. Someone banging on the front door. Mr Brewer running in.

It was always four in the morning when he woke up during those fraught and funnelled weeks. The sudden start of the guilty heart. Sometimes, when he came to, he would be lying in Rosalind's bed, her body entwined around his, and that would give him a second start. He would slink back to his room, usually wretchedly hung-over, to endure the interminable wait before daylight and his first allowable drink, which would lift him enough to get through to the next allowable drink. He would resolve not to visit her room again, but she would seek him out: her brimming eyes, her pleading need, her well-chosen nightwear. He was weak. He was the roguish brother. He might as well accept his part in proceedings.

Two weeks after Jasper's death, he bought his first aeroplane – a plucky little Sopwith Snipe, built in the final weeks of the war, too late to be called into service – and that lifted him higher. He called it *May*. His favourite month of the year and one of his most favourite words when used in conjunction with the word 'you'. *May I? You may.*

Perhaps it was bizarre he was even thinking of such things – aviation, women, what Jasper called his 'bachelor activities' – when Jasper had so recently died. But his mind seemed unable to keep company with the fact his brother had gone. It was desperate, laughable, and in the face of such nonsense, his mind kept jumping up and scampering off to its favourite haunts. Even as he was walking behind his brother's coffin with little Cristabel holding his hand, he was trying to remember the name of a lissom Italian actress he'd met in Covent Garden.

Like a crude jester with a stick of jingling bells, his mind would occasionally jab him with a reminder that he had been engaged in 'bachelor activity' with his brother's wife when his brother died. It seemed terribly unfair, that combination of events; something that could never be undone, a judgement, a branding. Particularly unfair, given that he hadn't approached his brother's wife in his usual way. It had come from somewhere else, yet ended up in the same place, only worse.

What was to be done? Poked by the stick, burnt by the brand, Willoughby fled. He crossed the skies in *May*. Spent Christmas gambling in Monte Carlo. Went skiing with an Austrian fencing champion called Gretchen. Filled a bath at The Savoy with bubbles and showgirls on New Year's Eve. As long as he kept moving, it was all right. On and on and on. His flight both resistance to and acceptance of the mark singed into his side.

Whenever he soared over Chilcombe on his way somewhere else, he would feel rather sorry for it, the saggy old heap, empty and ownerless. But it wasn't empty at all. It was full of females: a newly wealthy widow, a baby girl, an

orphan daughter, a flock of agitated servants, and poor Blythe and Mr Brewer left holding the fort, two stalwart men drowning in a sea of women. It wasn't ownerless either: it was waiting for the sole remaining Seagrave to give up the game and come back to earth.

But every time he returned to England, it felt fusty and small. *May's* wheels would bump down on the turf and there would be a tingle of something bitter at the back of his nostrils as he inhaled his foggy homeland. A damp dog smell. Sodden moss. The cold green-grey of ivy. Elderly England: familiar; unimpressed; chuntering along as ever. He would refuel as quickly as he could. Get up to the clouds. Wings on his heels.

When he finally did go home to Chilcombe, after receiving a telegram telling him he was to become a father, Rosalind had clutched at him and said, 'You came back for me. I was sure you would. Please don't leave me again. I couldn't bear it. I think I would die.'

She said, 'Perhaps it was meant to be all along. You and I.'

She said, 'We're to have a son. A Seagrave son and heir.'

She said, 'So who is "May"? Is she someone I know?'

That was that. The trap was sprung. The mechanism whirred into life. There was the story Rosalind told about them – the graceful love story, the blossoming discovery, the younger Seagrave brother and the tragic Seagrave widow *turning to each other for comfort, as so many do* – and there was an intricate machinery set to spinning beneath it. It wasn't that he didn't trust her. (Although, did he?) It wasn't that he didn't want her. (Although, now he had her, did he? Off and on, he did. Off and on.) There was merely something that niggled. Something he glimpsed sometimes, between her slow blinks; something in the way her long-toed feet reminded him of a monkey seen in a Cairo market.

In sharp moments, he suspected she knew he knew she was not all her saucer eyes proclaimed her to be, but it was easier for them both to go along with it. Her devotion was soporific. He was Odysseus to her Calypso: the adventurer ensnared by a sweet-voiced nymph on an island of pleasure. He was Paris to her Helen: the beautiful stealer of beautiful ensnared wives. It was better not to question where her devotion came from or what it wanted. It was better not to look at things too closely, as a rule.

After they married – a discreet London ceremony that took place quickly enough to claim Digby (a conveniently small August baby) was born unexpectedly early – he found his view of her changed again. She seemed to meld with Chilcombe itself, like a hermit crab, so that when he thought of her, she was part of the house and all its expectations. There was Chilcombe and there was Rosalind inside it, wanting things done, fussing with furnishings. The way she would rush to greet him with attention and questions, her hands seeking out the

flesh at his waist, her fingers pressing, kneading, and tiptoeing up on to their sharpened ends, so he felt her nails digging in. A line of tiny smiling bites.

That she was his wife seemed rather unreal. Inconsequential. The fact he was married would occasionally pop into his mind during turbulent flights, when the slim possibility of his own death bounced into view; but rarely before, and never after. Even then, he only remembered it in a distant, *oh yes* sort of way, as if it was something he'd seen on holiday once – a waterfall; an ostrich.

So he returned to Dorset as the owner of Chilcombe, as husband, father and owner of the estate. He set *May* down in a field. Took off his flying hat and goggles. Then slowly followed the meandering path along the cliff edge, back to his waiting obligations.

As he does this, on a balmy August evening in 1928, he thinks that a decent summer's day in England goes some way towards redeeming the country's usual dispiriting weather. The long grass whispers and shifts. There is the *futz* of a bumblebee close to his ear.

Emerging on to the lawn, he sees, once again, preparatory activity for a theatrical production. The door to Chilcombe is wide open and Blythe and Betty are overseeing the movement of furniture, trailed by Betty's sturdy young son, while Maudie grapples with a box of floral decorations. A few rooks are pecking at the grass, but they take off as Willoughby approaches, with brisk wingbeats of air, an efficient sound like the brushing down of an expensive suit.

Digby, wearing something yellow and voile, gambols across the lawn towards his father, followed by Myrtle, barefoot in a cerise silk dressing gown, brandishing a cocktail glass, and Cristabel carrying a huge set of cymbals.

'Willoughby Seagrave, runaway brother,' says Myrtle, 'we were wondering if you would make it in time.'

'I promised Cristabel I would be here for the rehearsal, and here I am,' he replies. 'Somebody may have to remind me what part I'm playing.'

'You're Antonio,' says Cristabel.

'We're doing *The Tempest* by a fellow called William Shakespeare,' says Myrtle, turning in circles on the lawn. 'I presume you've heard of him.'

'Always have a copy of his latest to hand,' says Willoughby. 'I'm not going to ask about the cymbals, as I don't want to give anyone a reason to make a noise with them, but I would like to know why my son is wearing tights.'

'I'm Ariel, Father,' says Digby. 'A tricky spirit.'

'You mustn't let the girls dress you up like a doll, Digby,' says Willoughby.

'I chose my costume all by myself,' says Digby.

'Can we hurry up, please?' says Cristabel, setting off along the path through the trees.

Willoughby offers Myrtle his arm – ‘Shall we?’ – and they follow the children.

‘That’s quite a costume you have on, Willoughby. Is that a leather flying jacket?’ says Myrtle, bumping companionably against a tree trunk as they make their way through the woods. ‘Please don’t ask me to elucidate *The Tempest*. I haven’t been paying a great deal of attention.’

‘It has a wizard, I believe,’ replies Willoughby. Cristabel is far up ahead on the path, marching briskly. Digby has disappeared from view.

‘Prospero. He’s trapped on an island. That’s Taras,’ says Myrtle, passing her glass to Willoughby so he can take a sip. ‘Oh, and there’s a usurping brother, I forget his name.’

‘That old chestnut.’

‘There’s some drunken comic relief too. That’s where I come in.’ Myrtle takes an elaborate bow that allows her dressing gown to gape open, revealing bare skin beneath.

Willoughby glances at her swaying breasts in the benignly approving way he might look at a child’s drawings. ‘Myrtle old girl, you’re giving me quite an eyeful.’

‘Don’t tell your wife. She’ll have me flung out.’

Digby appears from behind a tree. ‘Who’s being flung out?’

‘Nobody,’ says Willoughby. ‘Digby, when was the last time you had your hair cut? What with the wild locks and the tights, it’s all rather excessive. You’ll have to smarten up before you go to school, or you’ll be eaten alive.’

‘What does excessive mean?’ says Digby.

‘You know,’ says Willoughby. ‘Overdone. Loud.’

‘Excessive!’ cries Digby loudly. His voice echoes through the trees.

‘My word, Digby, I think you’re the first person to say anything loud in these woods,’ says Myrtle.

‘I like to be loud, don’t you?’ he says, then runs after Cristabel and grabs her hand.

‘You don’t need to hold Cristabel’s hand any more either,’ calls Willoughby. ‘You’re not a baby.’ He glances at Myrtle and adds, ‘My mother spoilt me rotten. I refuse to let Rosalind do the same to him. Tell me, is Perry here?’

‘Unlike you, Peregrine is never late,’ says Myrtle. ‘Generally, he likes to arrive before you’ve even noticed he’s there.’

‘He would call that reconnaissance.’

‘Even when dining at The Berkeley?’ says Myrtle.

‘Colonel Drake is never off duty, Myrtle. Surely you’ve noticed.’

Myrtle turns to him. ‘Why isn’t Colonel Drake ever off duty? There isn’t a war on.’

‘There’s always a war on somewhere, darling. What is it now, Digby?’

‘Father, I asked Cristabel about my hair and she said many brave warriors had long hair.’

‘Cristabel, Digby needs to have his hair cut and that’s that,’ says Willoughby loudly. ‘Nobody goes to boarding school with long hair. Nobody who wants to survive anyway.’

Cristabel pauses on the path and turns round, holding a cymbal on either side of herself, like golden chariot wheels. ‘I thought only women cared about hair.’

‘Schools have rules,’ says Willoughby. ‘Digby needs to fit in.’

‘Says the man who arrived in his own plane,’ says Myrtle, taking a slurp of her drink.

‘So Digby has to have the same hair as every other boy or he’ll be punished,’ says Cristabel. ‘That’s a ridiculous rule.’

‘I didn’t make them, darling,’ says Willoughby.

‘You go along with them,’ says Cristabel, ‘and you make Digby go along with them, and if I went to school, you’d make me go along with them, but I’m not allowed to go to school, and that’s ridiculous too.’

Cristabel turns back to the path, leading the party out of the woods and along the grassy path towards the cottage.

‘Cristabel,’ begins Willoughby, ‘it’s simply one of those unavoidable things, I – good God, what the devil is that?’

The scene at the cottage has once again been transformed. The performance space is now surrounded by professional stage lighting ordered by Rosalind, and there are rows of new fold-out seats. But in the middle of the stage area stands the most surprising transformation of all: the Chilcombe whale.

The large rib bones of the whale have been removed from its carcass, stripped of flesh, and positioned upright on the ground to form a curving space, six feet high, between the barn and the cottage. They resemble twin lines of giant elephant tusks arching upwards like the sides of a galleon. Behind them, the sea is shining gold in the evening sun.

The bones have been placed far enough apart that members of the cast can move in between them or huddle beneath them, as Perry, Mr Brewer and several others are doing now, pretending they are aboard the storm-tossed ship at the start of *The Tempest*. Digby and Cristabel run to join them. A couple of hikers in shorts and walking boots have paused on the beach, watching proceedings with puzzled interest.

‘It’s quite a thing, isn’t it?’ says Myrtle to Willoughby, as they stand side by side looking at it. ‘In the love scenes, it is illuminated with pink lighting. Nothing says romance like a dead whale.’

‘How on earth did they get those great bones here?’

‘I’m hazy on the details, but your wife approved it.’

Willoughby takes out a cigarette case, offers one to Myrtle, and frowns. ‘I heard some talk of an outdoor theatre at dinner, but I never imagined this.’

‘Rosalind is hopeful it will attract more artistic types,’ says Myrtle.

‘Don’t tell me you people are going to stay,’ says Willoughby. ‘Always leave them wanting more – isn’t that what they say?’

‘You don’t like sharing the limelight, do you?’ says Myrtle.

Willoughby turns to her, his cigarette held in his mouth. ‘The same could be said of you, darling.’ He takes both sides of her loose dressing gown, pulls them together, then reaches around her waist to find the belt.

‘What do you think a psychiatrist would make of our infantile need for attention?’ asks Myrtle, swaying slightly. ‘There must be something very lacking, don’t you think?’

‘I don’t need attention,’ he says, tightening her belt briskly, then tying it in a bow. ‘All these theatrics, I mean, it’s all right for the children, but for adults – it’s hardly a worthwhile occupation.’

‘And what is it that you do, that is so worthwhile?’ says Myrtle. They are roughly the same height; they stand eye to eye.

When he doesn’t answer, Myrtle reaches out to straighten the collar of his flying jacket, with the careful tenderness of the drunk. ‘I ask myself the same question,’ she says. ‘What do I do? Why do I do it? Why can’t I settle down? That’s what my mother says. Why can’t you settle down, Myrtle?’

‘I do what is expected of me,’ says Willoughby.

‘Do you?’ She squints at him.

He smiles. ‘No, I suppose I don’t even manage that. I do very little, Myrtle, which is also expected of me.’

At that moment, Cristabel, carrying her cymbals, clambers up on to one of the new seats in front of her cast and demands, ‘Again.’

‘We’re in this scene,’ says Myrtle, heading towards the bones and pulling Willoughby behind her.

As the actors go through their scene, Cristabel stands on the seat and repeatedly crashes the cymbals together, to represent the waves of the storm. The sound is a bright metal shock followed by a shimmering reverberation.

‘Where did she get those infernal things?’ Willoughby says, rubbing his temples.

‘The local Salvation Army band,’ replies Myrtle, reclining against a rib. ‘It’s not the only thing she borrowed from them.’

At that moment, Digby appears from the barn, calling, ‘I’ve found my flute, but lost my wings.’

‘Flossie will find your wings,’ says Cristabel. ‘All right, everyone, now Ariel has his flute, can we return to Act Two, Scene One, where Ariel sends everyone to sleep with enchanting music.’

‘My son has wings,’ says Willoughby.

‘Digby looks divine,’ says Myrtle. ‘As long as you ignore the hideous noise he makes with that flute, it’s a captivating scene.’

‘Like the screeching of an owl, almost,’ says Perry.

‘Uncle Willoughby, Mr Brewer has your lines on a bit of paper if you need them,’ calls Cristabel. ‘Places, everyone.’

ANTONIO **(Willoughby)**: Thank you. Where do I start? Here? Something something hope something beyond. This writing is very small. ‘Will you grant with me that Ferdinand is drown’d?’

Enter the Whale

August, 1928

By the end of August, the Seagrave children have shed their previous lives like snakeskins. Now they are wild creatures who live in the sunlight with the savages, rampaging through the woods in theatrical costumes. On the rare occasions they go back into Chilcombe, with its cool stone floors, it is like stepping into a dark pond. Green-black and stagnant.

On warm nights, Cristabel, Flossie and Digby sleep inside the whalebones, huddled together under scratchy blankets, sharing stolen biscuits. It reminds Cristabel of when she would lift little Digby from his cradle and carry him upstairs to her bed where she could read him stories, how they slept tangled like pack animals to share warmth. They wake to the sound of the sea and when they run to the edge of the glimmering water, they find it pristine, newly created, a bale of blue silk unrolled at their feet.

Every morning, Cristabel looks at her bones with pride and relief. She had come so close to losing them. As the whale decomposed, local officials kept appearing to poke at it. They talked of burying it or blowing it up. Cristabel had begun to wish she could drag its broken parts out to sea, to let them sink beneath the waves, where at least nobody could touch them. She knew she must find some way to save it.

Then one night, up on the roof of Chilcombe, eating a bun and flicking through a notebook, she had seen a drawing of the wooden horse of Troy done by Digby – a horse on wheels, like an enlarged Edgar the elephant, with little people inside – and on the facing page, a note in her own blockish handwriting, reporting that, according to the book she is reading, Mr Melville's *Moby-Dick*, the Norse kings made their thrones from the tusks of narwhals. She had turned the page, then paused, turned back. The wooden horse. The tusks. The king.

She looked out across the trees to the ocean. Put down the bun. Picked up her pencil. Sketched lines on the page. Curved lines, like the scenery that arched over the dancers of the Ballets Russes. In between them, she drew people acting and dancing. Then she ripped out the page and clambered down the roof to find Digby.

The following day, they took the drawing to Taras, who, delighted by their ingenuity ('Ah! The jumping minds of children!'), did a more detailed sketch, incorporating wooden struts to hold the whalebones in place, and all they needed now was Rosalind's approval. In order to gain Rosalind's approval, the idea had to come through either Digby or an adult, as any approach from Cristabel was bound to fail. The children knew that leaving something so important to an adult

was a risky strategy, but feared Digby may not be taken seriously, so asked Taras to put the idea to Rosalind.

Cristabel and Digby hid in the cloakroom under the stairs the next time Taras came to the house for dinner and so were able to listen in when, amid the chatter between the second and third courses, he suggested using the whale's skeleton to make some kind of theatre. It was breathlessly exciting, to have someone in that private room of adults secretly acting on their behalf. But hearing their proposal discussed was like watching a beachball being tossed about. It bounced among the dinner guests lightly, entertaining some, patted away by others, and, infuriatingly, Rosalind paid it no attention at all, instead repeatedly asking what people thought of the escalopes served with cucumber in a cream sauce.

Their idea seemed to drift away, and they thought it lost for good, but it unexpectedly floated back into view after pudding was served, when Philly joked that they should sell ice creams if they made a theatre by the seaside.

'If we do what?' asked Rosalind, and so Taras explained 'his' idea for the whale again, only this time with more enthusiasm, as the dinner had involved several bottles of wine.

It was fortunate that, when Taras talked about the theatre for a second time, Rosalind was savouring one of the moments in life she most prized: the coffee at the end of a successful dinner. Everyone aglow with good eating, flattered and replete, not yet tired or argumentative. The conversation expansive, humorous, fond.

'A permanent outdoor theatre?' she said.

'An avant-garde outdoor theatre,' said Philly, 'created by an artist.'

'My dear old aunt used to put on pageants in the grounds of her house every Empire Day,' said Philly. 'We children would march about dressed as Boudica and Nelson.'

Rosalind suddenly remembered going to watch an outdoor performance of *Twelfth Night* at a Sussex manor. It was before the war, a time that now seemed sealed off from her. How taken she had been both with the elegant lady of the house and the perfect setting: the tiered lawn and landscaped gardens; the guests strolling beneath cedar trees. It was as if they had been given access to an enchanted place. She could remember little of the play but recalled the sound of the appreciative audience sitting on the grass, a warm collectivity that somehow mingled with the warmth of the summer evening sky. A calm and benevolent sky, overlooking human activity that was beautiful, in a beautiful place, and how rare that was.

'Your son does love to perform,' said Myrtle.

'Digby has quite a talent,' Rosalind replied, remembering too the heady sensation of seeing her son applauded.

‘A gift for pretence is hardly a talent,’ said Willoughby, leaving the table to fetch his cigarettes. ‘There’s no future for him on the stage, darling.’

Rosalind watched Willoughby depart and took a sip of her coffee. She was, she felt, somehow anti-future. It did nothing, as far as she could work out, but grip too tightly on the present.

She looked at Taras, who was leaning back in his chair, his collar undone, watching her. He never bothered to conceal his watching; he was, at least, transparent in his lack of morals. The Rasputin in her dining room.

‘It wouldn’t be ugly, would it?’ she said. ‘I don’t want anything ridiculous, that people might laugh at.’

‘It will be magnificent,’ Taras replied. ‘Besides, Hillary would never let me create anything ugly. She is fastidious.’

Hilly, at his side, smiled the faint smile of the assisting woman, then looked at Rosalind with her still gaze. ‘It would not be ugly.’

‘Very well then,’ said Rosalind. ‘Create a theatre.’

So it began: the transformation of the whale. A project nominally headed by Taras, but in reality carried out by Mr Brewer and his network of useful contacts, starting with an acquaintance on the parish council, who persuaded the local fire brigade to bring their engine down to the beach, pursued by a gang of giddy village children, where they used seawater to hose the bones clean. Mr Brewer then arranged for some men from the village – a blacksmith and a carpenter – to transport the bones to their new home by the cottage, helped by Leon and the larger savages. Once on site, they were varnished and put into position.

Cristabel oversaw these operations. She carried her sharpened flagpole with her but, while she enjoyed holding it and pointing with it, she no longer had any desire to use it as a weapon against an animal she had come to regard as her ward.

Similarly, while she composed a letter to King George to inform him she had moved the whale (mentioned in previous correspondence) on to her family estate, she couldn’t bring herself to post it. She wasn’t sure why. She didn’t want to claim the whale any more; it was no longer a conquest, it was something else. Something better. She tucked the letter under her bed and left it there.

Mr Brewer and his team even managed to extract the enormous jawbones from the rotting whale’s head, through Mr Brewer enlisting the help of the village butcher. The bones were flensed and cleaned, then placed halfway between the woods and the cottage, standing one on either side of the path that led to the theatre, forming a triumphal arch, a huge needle’s eye to pass through: an entranceway.

The whiteness of the whalebones drew fluttering moths and gnawing fox cubs, and these were not the only creatures to visit. Every year, at summer’s end, Betty and Maudie carried all the stuffed animals out of Chilcombe to let them air

on the lawn for a day or two. But this year, Cristabel and Digby borrowed a few to serve as props and decorations. Then they took more and more, until the lawn was quite depleted and the scene at the theatre a taxidermist's ball, a cavalcade of badgers, otters and quail, dancing and fighting around the bones, occasionally toppling over like stiff-limbed drunks. One bird, a great auk, was propped on the cottage porch, while several of the tiniest songbirds were tied around the brim of a top hat that Leon had taken to wearing. He tucked his cigarettes under their wings.

One morning, Leon gathers up a long rope from the barn, coils it neatly, and sets off alone towards Ceal Head. Intrigued, Cristabel trails him and finds him halfway up the coast path, peering at a tall sycamore tree near the cliff edge. He has thrown the rope over a high bough and is tying a branch to its end to serve as a swing. Once this is done, he turns and hands it to her, with a challenge in his eyes.

Cristabel takes hold of the swing and backs up. When she has gone as far as she can go, she takes a breath and jumps on to the branch before she can change her mind. She flies past Leon, past the tree, past the cliff edge; clinging to the swing as it soars upwards on its long arc, carrying her out over the sea, which rolls and crashes a hundred feet below her. There is an exhilarating moment, when the rope goes slack and she is left hanging high over the ocean, weightless as a bird, before swooping back to safety.

For the first few swings, Leon stops her when she returns to land and checks the rope, but once satisfied it is secure, he starts to push her, so she goes even higher. Every time she goes past him, he puts his hands to her back to speed her on. Then they swap so he can try it, and they continue through the afternoon, workers on the rope, with hardly a word said between them.

One night, the children decide to have a war party, like the Indian braves of the Wild West.

Cristabel says Indian braves must make a sacrifice. She retrieves her sculpture of Sekhmet the fire goddess from the attic so they can build a bonfire in front of her. They use driftwood as fuel, and it catches quickly, sparks flying upwards between the bones.

What now? they ask her, their faces expectant.

First, she puts on Prospero's robes. Then she ties a stuffed weasel to a stick using shoelaces around its front and back paws, and the children parade to the fire to lay it across the flames. The weasel burns slowly at first, giving off a faintly chemical smell, then the dry rags inside it ignite and it roars into flame.

Cristabel uses a spade to spread out the glowing fire, the weasel burning in the middle. Then she tells them they each have to jump over the sacrificial animal to prove they are warriors.

‘I will go first,’ says Leon, taking off his top hat.

‘No,’ says Cristabel. ‘I want to.’

‘I don’t know if I can do that,’ says Flossie.

‘If you jump high enough, you won’t touch the flames, Floss,’ says Digby, taking her hand. ‘We’ll go together. You, me and Crista.’

So they do, three leaping bodies silhouetted over the bright fire, hands clasped. Then the savages follow, one by one, and they all like it so much, they burn another animal and do it again.

Sometimes, when the others are asleep, Cristabel will walk around her whale. It is most clearly her whale in the solitary blue light of night, as it was when she found it. The late summer nights are windless and still, the silver sea calm in the bowl of the bay.

When Cristabel walks through the jawbones, she remembers the whale’s downturned mouth, its vulnerable eye. When she stands in its ribcage, she recalls how she had once placed her hands on the outside of its body, and now she is inside its body, in the space created by its absent life. When she looks up, she sees the bones arching over her head against the vast starry sky like roof beams, like the skeletal beginnings of a strange new home. Something she has made from what was washed up, unwanted; something created from what was left to her.

Cuttings Kept in a Scrapbook by the Children ***DORSET DAILY ECHO, AUGUST 1928***

An amateur performance of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* at Chilcombe Mell drew a considerable crowd.

Mrs Rosalind Seagrave served cream teas for those attending. Miss Florence Seagrave gave a piano recital.

WESTERN DAILY PRESS, AUGUST 1929

A Midsummer Night's Dream was this week performed at Chilcombe, one of Dorset's lesser-known country homes.

The play was presented in a structure created by artist Mr Taras Kovalsky from the remains of a fin whale and used by the Seagrave family as a theatre. The part of Oberon was taken by Col Peregrine Drake, returned from a diplomatic posting in Persia.

Picture shows Miss Myrtle van der Werff, Miss Hillary Vaughan and Miss Philippa Fenwick in costume as Hippolyta, Titania and Helena, alongside Master Digby Seagrave as Puck and an unknown participant wearing the head of an ass.

THE LADY, AUGUST 1930

Regular readers will know how we delight in young people's artistic endeavours, so it was a joy to watch *The Tempest* at Chilcombe, in which Ariel was played by nine-year-old Digby Seagrave, heir to the Dorset estate.

His proud mother, Mrs Rosalind Seagrave, was in the front row – and quite right too, for her son has a natural sensitivity. Mrs Seagrave is hopeful a dramatic work by Mr Noël Coward will be added to the fledgling company's repertoire.

Master Digby, who attends Sherborne School, was quick to inform us he believes his cousin, Miss Cristine Seagrave, aged 14, to be the 'brains' behind their production. However, we suspect the presence of artist Mr Taras Kovalsky may explain the more diverting dramatic choices.

SOUTHERN TIMES, AUGUST 1931

This summer's theatrics at Chilcombe included a production of *Measure for Measure* in the remarkable 'whalebone theatre' along with extracts from Molière's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*.

The latter was performed in the original French on the lawn of the manor. The Seagrave children are fluent French speakers thanks to their governess Mlle Ernestine Aubert, who accompanies them on trips to her homeland.

Guests were also treated to a selection of French ‘vol au vents’ served ‘en plein air’, an occasion hardly marred by the inclement weather.

TATLER, AUGUST 1932

All eyes were on avant-garde artist Taras Kovalsky and new bride Hillary Kovalsky née Vaughan on their return to England this week after a honeymoon spent dazzling even the most dazzle-resistant elements of New York society.

The sought-after newly-weds spent time in Dorset before heading to a suitably artistic bolthole in St Ives.

Sadly missing from this year’s South Coast social hullabaloo was Philippa Fenwick, said to be sojourning in Switzerland. We wish her well.

DAILY EXPRESS, AUGUST 1933

Miss Cristabel Seagrave has returned from a year on the Continent to attend this year’s Queen Charlotte’s Ball.

The athletic debutante, as much of a whizz on the ski slopes of Europe as she is riding out with hounds, no doubt caught the eye of many a potential suitor.

But Miss Seagrave told our reporter she will be missing much of The Season as she plans to take up the reins of a production of *Macbeth* at her family’s outdoor theatre. Tally ho!

Picture shows His Royal Highness Prince George arriving at the Queen Charlotte’s Ball. Full details of royal engagements, page 4.

WOMAN’S JOURNAL, AUGUST 1934

The golden summer days draw to a close and that can only mean a jaunt to Dorsetshire, where Digby Seagrave took centre stage at The Whalebone Theatre as a captivating Henry V.

His cousin Cristabel Seagrave has recently returned from being finished in Switzerland. The ever-fragrant Mrs Rosalind Seagrave, fresh from cheering on her husband at Cowes, told us Cristabel relishes the foreign experience.

DAILY MAIL, AUGUST 1935

Our critic was somewhat bemused by an unusual production of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* at The Whalebone Theatre in Dorset in which Caesar was played by Miss Cristabel Seagrave, a young woman from a prominent local family.

However, the backdrop of the setting sun over the ocean was picturesque enough to offset any juvenile errors of theatrical judgement.

THE TIMES, AUGUST 1936

The Spanish political situation found itself reflected in a production of *Romeo and Juliet*, with Romeo depicted as a member of an 'International Brigade'.

The amateur performance in Dorset saw the cast perform in contemporary dress, following the current trend to make the Stratford Bard a modern man.

Digby Seagrave, aged 15, a charming Romeo, told our reporter he was inspired by British volunteers joining the battle for Spain. He added he hopes to take up a place at Cambridge alongside pursuing his theatrical ambitions.

The production also included elements of dance reminiscent of Mr W. H. Auden's experimental works for The Group Theatre, bravely accompanied by Miss Florence Seagrave on the piano and cymbals.

SOUTHERN TIMES, AUGUST 1937

A smaller crowd than in previous years attended the Chilcombe summer production.

The cast of *Antony and Cleopatra* battled against persistent rain showers but were perhaps also struggling against the appeal of comedy film *Oh, Mr Porter!* currently drawing record audiences to Dorchester's Plaza Cinema.

DORSET DAILY ECHO, AUGUST 1938

Work has commenced on Weymouth's new pier after judges decided on a winning design from a number submitted to an architectural competition.

Summer visitors have enjoyed seeing the foundation blocks of the attraction being moved into place.

Further along the coast, visitors have also been entertained by a production of *All's Well that Ends Well* on the Chilcombe estate.

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Act Three

1939–1941

Parties

October, 1939

Rosalind opens the front door as wide as it can go and the house inhales: a gasp of wind rushes along its hallways; the fires in the downstairs rooms bulge outwards to meet it and the candle flames leap and quiver – eager, oxygenated movements that are reflected in dancing glints along the silver trays of cocktails and the framed photographs on top of the grand piano, and on the piano itself, which is as black and slick as onyx.

Rosalind, standing in the doorway, pictures herself standing in the doorway. A slim silhouette against a rectangular glowing space. She adjusts her fox-fur stole; waits. From elsewhere, they are coming. Powering towards her in their expensive cars, headlights like torch beams funnelling through the evening darkness.

It gets dark earlier and earlier now. In the daytime, the autumn sunlight is low and rich, the countryside ablaze with trees in amber, umber and ochre. The trees on the estate stand proudly as their leaves change colour, the way people hold their heads high in front of a firing squad. But when the sun drops below the horizon, the chill is very sudden and very quick.

The grandfather clock in the Oak Hall strikes the hour. Soon Rosalind's guests will arrive, and she will have her party. Her parties have not ended. Not yet. But here comes Mr Brewer telling her they must draw the blackout curtains because the house is lit up like a target again.

'I know, Mr Brewer. I simply wanted everyone to see Chilcombe as it should be seen. We've gone to an awful lot of bother to hide ourselves from German bombers when there don't seem to be any.'

'Better safe than sorry, Mrs Seagrave.'

'The parcel tape across the windows is so very ugly, I'm sure it will scare off any invading force all by itself.'

'I'll draw the curtains, Mrs Seagrave.'

'In a moment.' Because there is a car coming up the drive and her guests are arriving. She should have a cigarette in her hand. 'Willoughby!'

Willoughby, sunk in a wingback armchair in the drawing room, rocks the whisky in his glass. He watches as Maudie empties a rumbling shovel of coal on to the fire, extinguishing the flames with a steaming hiss, then crouches beside it, puffing at it with a set of bellows until it flickers back to life. Willoughby hears a little huff of annoyance in each sigh of the bellows. Maudie has a gift for animating the inanimate, making the tools of her trade speak for her. She has

never learnt to remove herself as the other servants do, even after twenty years working in the house. She is always very much there, drawing the eye.

In a corner of the room, a jazz record rotates on the gramophone, repeating its scratchy sentimental songs. Nearby, Flossie is also circling, practising dance steps and peering out into the hall at the arriving guests. She is wearing an embroidered pink dress two sizes too small. Willoughby wonders whether Rosalind deliberately dresses the poor girl badly, or whether her outfits are an unfortunate collision between nineteen-year-old Flossie's love for shepherdess dirndl and her mother's belief that a woman's clothes should wrap her as tightly as a gift from Harrods.

Willoughby stretches his legs out in front of him, props his feet on a footstool. He's never been fond of the start of parties. 'I've never been fond of the start of parties,' he says, as his wife calls his name again. 'Dull exercises in obligation. Maudie, do you like the start of parties?'

'I've never been to a party, Mr Willoughby sir,' she replies.

'Liar. Course you have. Even in those miserable Hardy novels, the villagers sometimes go to a party. Toast each other with *zoider*. Sing songs about courting till fate intervenes and crushes all hope.'

'Never been to your sort of party, Mr Willoughby.'

'They're overrated. You'd hate them,' he says, scrabbling at his hair. 'Maudie, I'm sorry – I'm not in the best of humours. I went to report myself at Winchester today, to offer my services to my country, but they told me to go home. Suggested I might like to organize the Local Defence Volunteers instead.'

'Betty told me she's carrying a pepper pot in her apron to defend herself against the Hun,' says Maudie. 'She might need some organizing.'

'Thank you, Maudie.'

'Are you too old to fight now, Mr Willoughby?'

'I bloody well am not. Still in my forties, until next month. Perry simply needs to have a word. He'll make sure Digby does all right too. Could you wander over to the drinks cabinet and find the whisky?'

'Master Digby couldn't fight anybody.'

'You don't get to choose when it comes to war. He'll do what he must.' As he says this, Willoughby can hear disconcerting echoes of his father in his voice. He finds he cannot look at Maudie and instead keeps glancing at his lap as if expecting to find a newspaper there, while his non-drink-holding hand has raised itself up in a splayed finger gesture that means it's out of my hands / it's been arranged.

With each guest that arrives, there is a draught that blows through the house, disturbing the fires in the fireplaces so they make a noise like rippling flags.

Flossie, hovering in the doorway, reports, 'The Cunninghams are here. Her dress is beautiful.'

Willoughby offers up his glass to Maudie. 'Little more.'

'She has a white feather in her hat,' continues Flossie. 'Do you think that's a radical statement?'

'Your mother's friends often make their feelings known through headwear,' says Willoughby.

'They were married in Venice last month,' says Flossie.

'Is he the one they found in Green Park with a guardsman? I expect they've come to some arrangement.'

Flossie, adjusting her neckline, says, 'Crista says the rich never look at each other once they're married.'

'Not if they can help it,' says Willoughby, eyeing a glamorous photograph of his wife on a side table. 'Any sign of Perry?'

'Not yet,' says Flossie. 'There's an older man in a raincoat arriving now. Perhaps he's the exiled journalist from Poland. Mother says he's seen horrors beyond compare.'

'Your mother says many things. Often. Over and over.'

'He does look troubled.'

'Why don't you introduce yourself, Floss? You could cheer him up.'

'Maybe.'

'This might be the last party we have for a while,' says Willoughby. 'Best make the most of it. Do you want a drink?'

'No, thank you. There's Perry now.'

Flossie darts across the drawing room to examine herself in the mirror over the fireplace. She has spent the last few hours sitting in front of a mirror in the attic, with a grim-faced Maudie trying unsuccessfully to curl Flossie's hair with a pair of hot tongs. Betty normally does it, but they are short of kitchen staff, so Maudie had to step in. Flossie was forced to watch her own reflection repeatedly wincing every time the hissing tongs singed her hair; her face creasing with embarrassed smiling as if trying to fold itself away.

She looks at her hair. Bits of it are pointing outwards in peculiar ways, like someone giving confused directions. Her mother always tells her to tuck it behind her ears, but Flossie is aware her ears stick out a little, so prefers to keep them hidden. In this, as in much else, she feels her state of being is a series of unsatisfactory concealments, each of which reveals something else that should not be shown. To tuck back her hair reveals her sticky-out ears. To highlight her waist emphasizes her wide hips. To show off her ankles means displaying her sturdy calves. It is a series of feints and misdirections, in which she is both the magician waving the coloured handkerchiefs and the assistant with the fixed

smile holding up the white rabbit by the scruff of its neck, and somehow also the rabbit too, limply dangling, proffered up; all of which has the effect of making her permanently anxious she has somehow come loose of herself, that the doves have escaped from the hat.

Flossie's self-consciousness is not helped by Rosalind's tendency to exacerbate her daughter's most vulnerable moments. 'That weight must come from your father's side,' Rosalind says pityingly, whenever she sees Flossie struggling to button up an outfit. Or, 'You look pretty, darling. Imagine how much prettier you'll be when you lose the puppy fat.' Pricking remarks Flossie must silently absorb, just as the maids remain mute as they attempt to make her presentable, emitting only quick intakes of breath as they heave on her girdle. Her appearance seems a matter of constant effort, on all their parts. No wonder her clothes leave angry marks on her.

In the drawing room mirror, her face is shiny with exertion. Perhaps it would be better if she put on her newly issued gas mask for the evening. Over her shoulder, Cristabel appears, unblinking as a hawk.

'Crista. You gave me a start,' says Flossie. 'The Cunninghams are here and a troubled journalist. Not really any suitable candidates for my ongoing husband hunt.'

'Beggars can't be choosers,' says Cristabel, still unblinking. She has the blankly assessing gaze used by children to size up other children on first meeting; mannerless and unconcerned. Her hair has not been curled. It is jaw-length and blunt. She is wearing a thin-strapped dress that used to belong to Rosalind and doesn't suit or fit her. Her strong shoulders are hunched forward as if she were caught outside in her nightgown. She frowns at Flossie. 'Have you finished your tinkering now?'

'I wasn't tinkering. I was being saddened by my reflection,' replies Flossie.

'I've never had much time for mirrors,' says Cristabel. 'You and your mother check them constantly. Why is that? It's not as if much will change from one moment to the next.'

As if summoned, Rosalind appears in the doorway in a fluid gown of regal purple, her high heels rapping on the floor. 'Chin chin,' she says jovially, raising her cocktail glass to someone else. 'Why are you girls hiding in here? I've invited lots of charming young men. So dashing in their new uniforms.' She is vivid, heavily scented: nails painted; hair set.

'I was reviewing my hair,' says Flossie.

'Nothing can be done for it,' says her mother. 'Come and mingle. That Communist writer you like is here, with her companion who wears breeches and useful shoes. The lesbians.'

‘You always say that word as if you were holding it with tweezers,’ says Cristabel. ‘Everybody knows what they are, including you.’

Rosalind waves a hand. ‘People change their minds all the time. I wouldn’t be surprised if they were manning the defences soon. They’re rather formidable.’

‘I might join them,’ says Cristabel. ‘Do my bit.’

‘Good idea, darling. You could join the WAAF or something. You might find a boyfriend there,’ says Rosalind, taking a sip of her drink. ‘Now Flossie, a word of advice, stay away from the puddings. The only women who should eat puddings are those who look like they never do. Then it’s charming. But if you look like you regularly wolf down puddings, practically on the hour, then it’s no longer charming, it’s a lack of discipline.’

‘Are there puddings?’ says Cristabel, starting for the doorway. ‘I’ll have some before dinner. I’d rather a pudding than a boyfriend. There aren’t many men in the WAAF anyway. What do you think the “W” stands for?’

‘I know what it stands for,’ says Rosalind. ‘Where’s my husband? He has my cigarettes.’

‘I’m here and I don’t,’ says Willoughby, a voice from deep within the armchair.

Flossie turns to the mirror, puffs her cheeks out so they become inflated, then turns back to her mother and gives a little clownish shrug. Rosalind raises her thin eyebrows and leaves the drawing room. Flossie puts her hands up to her face and pats her balloon cheeks thoughtfully, enjoying the small drum noises they make, then slowly squeezes the air back out.

Cristabel consumes treacle tart, apple pie, gooseberry fool, then paces the halls like a zoo animal. There is a young man from a nearby estate at the party. A young man she has spoken to about books at a previous party. A young man she had hoped would arrive as she would like to talk to him at dinner, a fact which makes her feel so mortified and ridiculous she almost stalks out of the house and off the cliff. Through an effort of will, she forces herself to sit next to him and glowers at the tableware, eating sugar-coated muscat grapes one by one. She manages conversation in short bursts. Makes mention of her theatre. Makes mention of fascism. Little machine-gun rattles of effort.

She becomes cautiously optimistic that he is interested in her opinions, even though she keeps finding herself putting her hands into pockets that do not exist and making a sort of useless scooping gesture. She is even persuaded to dance with him after dinner and thankfully doesn’t tower above him too much. Then, just as she is admiring the sight of his laughing face in the candlelight, he mentions, in passing, a woman’s name. He mentions, in passing, an engagement.

Her disappointment is familiar. Handed this bracing draught (‘I know you’re not the marrying type, but I hope you won’t be too appalled by the idea, Crista

old girl'), there is nothing to do but gulp it down in one ('Don't be daft, Ralph. Overjoyed for you both') and put her blithely unconcerned expression back on. How sterling she is. How used to this she is becoming. It doesn't seem possible for it to be any other way.

Why is it that other young women are considered worthy of romantic attention when she is – well. She is twenty-three now. Perhaps she shouldn't bother at all. It is a language she does not seem able to learn. She sees the Communist writer and her companion in breeches heading towards her, no doubt keen to discuss tyrannical Franco and the situation in Spain, but she is suddenly too tired to make conversation. She leaves the house, heads for the lawn.

She folds her arms, cold in her thin dress, and looks up at the sky. She isn't even sure she wants a romantic relationship. Certainly not one that requires squeezing her feet into uncomfortable shoes like Cinderella's ugly sisters and standing about waiting to be asked. She cannot bear to wait to be asked. It fills her with such fury that agreeable chit-chat becomes impossible. Chit-chat! Even the phrase is infuriating. Offering inoffensive pieces of conversation to bachelors as if they were babies who needed their food chopped up. Surely there must be some other way to proceed, a more honest way, with none of this pandering.

Most days, she hardly thinks about it, or rather, she mainly thinks about it in terms of the relationships in plays, like that between Cleopatra and Mark Antony, which are far more fascinating. But then her stepmother will have one of her parties, and Cristabel is wheeled out and displayed like a piece of furniture left at an auction.

That she continues to take part is largely due to a perverse desire to prove Rosalind wrong in her belief that nobody will find her attractive, and a vague sense that it would be useful to have a partner to talk to, to have someone to escort you to events like these, so you didn't have to spend the evening being rebuffed. But to actually become someone's wife, to give up her name and her home and her theatre – that has always appeared to her a kind of bowing out.

Besides, the newspapers say there's been a rush of war weddings, young couples marrying before they are parted, so any available men are most likely being taken. War will probably make most of their decisions for them now, and in that, if nothing else, she feels it is almost a relief.

Digby, strolling over the lawn towards her – eighteen and slender in a dinner suit – says, 'You look glum, chum.'

'It's parties, Digs,' she says.

'I know, Crista. You can't stand them.'

'How can you stand them?'

'There's always someone to talk to. People are usually interesting, don't you think? And when I get bored of people, I come and find you.'

‘You’re much better at it than I am,’ she says. ‘I wish everyone would go away, Digs.’

‘They will soon.’

‘Thank goodness I have you,’ she says, tucking her arm in his.

He looks at her. ‘Shall we go up on the roof for a smoke?’

They go inside and make their way up to the attic, where Cristabel and Flossie still have two single beds in their cramped bedroom. The oppressively striped wallpaper is now covered with glossy posters for art exhibitions arranged by Myrtle and hand-drawn posters advertising performances at The Whalebone Theatre. The stuffed baby elephant is serving as a makeshift desk, with its back covered with books and a stool tucked under its stomach, while the goddess Sekhmet reclines against a glass ashtray on the window sill. Digby, as the heir-in-waiting, sleeps in a grander bedroom on the floor below whenever he is back from school, which he likens to being kept in the Tower of London ahead of your execution.

Cristabel grabs a woollen jumper from the floor and pulls it on over her dress, then kicks off her shoes in favour of a pair of Digby’s old plimsolls. They clamber out of the window and up the mossy roof tiles to the chimneys, where cigarettes and a hip flask await them. The surrounding hills are entirely black. There are no lights to be seen.

‘Crista,’ says Digby, lighting her cigarette, ‘I have to tell you something. I’m going to go. Maybe tonight.’

‘What do you mean? Go where?’

‘I’m going to join the army.’

‘The army? But Uncle Willoughby –’

‘I know. Father wants me to join the RAF. But he likes aeroplanes, and I don’t. I want to be a regular soldier, like the men in the village. Like an ordinary person.’

‘Your mother would say that you aren’t an ordinary person.’

‘But I could be, don’t you think? I missed my chance to join the fight against fascism in Spain. I don’t want to miss this one.’ He suddenly smiles at her, wide and joyful, as if he were talking of parties, not war.

‘Bloody hell, Digs.’ Cristabel takes a fervent drag on her cigarette, puts an arm around him and pulls him close. The thought of Digby going off to the army makes her stomach lurch with fear. She can feel the narrow bones in his shoulders, the restlessness beneath his skin. He might be old enough to enlist, but he is still a wriggly, excitable boy to her, his skinny legs bumping against hers. She says, ‘I don’t think this war will be like the one in Spain. You’ve never been able to beat me in a duel, let alone the Germans.’

‘I’ve played lots of soldiers onstage,’ he says, taking her hand in his before proclaiming, “‘When the blast of war blows in our ears, then imitate the action of the tiger!’”

‘It’s not a play. Why don’t you look for something closer to home?’

‘Should I volunteer to entertain the troops in Dorchester?’

‘No, just something less –’

‘Something less like a war?’ he laughs. ‘Crista, you of all people should know that we don’t get to choose our battles.’

Cristabel flicks ash from her cigarette. ‘I’ve seen Nazis. I told you what they’re like.’

‘You also told me that we’ve gone past the point where we can stop Hitler by talking about him. You said Nazism made pacifism impossible. You’ve always been very clear I should listen to you.’

Cristabel growls.

‘I simply can’t stay here,’ says Digby.

‘Why not?’ she says. ‘I do.’

‘Be fair, Crista,’ he replies, ‘you go skiing in Austria every year.’

‘That’s because I have to spend the rest of my time here, with your mother,’ Cristabel says, more harshly than she intends.

‘You could live somewhere else,’ says Digby, after a moment. ‘Father would help you do that, I’m sure.’

‘And leave our theatre to run itself?’

Digby gazes out across the trees towards the coastline. ‘Look here,’ he says, ‘I don’t know what will happen to any of this. But I do know that I want to go.’ He pauses, then adds in a lighter tone, ‘Besides, Father always tells me I am too like Mother. Too inclined to the dramatic. Perhaps I can show him I’m not. He respects a military man.’

‘He won’t respect you for being stupid.’

They sit in silence for a moment. The noise of the party continues beneath them.

Cristabel says, ‘I’m sorry, Digs. Are you set on it?’

He leans his head on her shoulder. ‘I am. I’m sorry too. You’re cross, aren’t you?’

‘Trying not to be. You better write to me every bloody day.’

‘Every day.’ There is a pause, then Digby adds, ‘I didn’t think you were afraid of anything.’

‘How dare you. I’m not.’

‘Then you mustn’t be afraid for me.’

‘I bloody won’t be,’ Cristabel says, exhaling smoke and absent-mindedly stroking his head.

In the house below, someone drunkenly begins to sing ‘Land of Hope and Glory’.

Flossie, downstairs, seems unable to find a way to insert herself into the evening. There are closed groups everywhere she turns. She has run out of introductory conversational titbits. Her hair hurts. She hasn’t been asked to dance. She would like to play the piano, but there are people in the way. The party swirls about without her.

She wanders through the Oak Hall as the grandfather clock strikes midnight and sees, through a gap in the door, Willoughby still lounging by the fireplace in the drawing room. The fire has died down to an orange glow between the coals. There are men in evening dress leaning on the mantelpiece, drinking port and smoking cigars. Flossie pauses for a moment to listen to the coded murmur of gentlemanly talk: things to be spoken of only in certain circles; things to be spoken of only in a circular, allusive way.

She imagines opening the door to join them. But she knows that even just the sight of her – a young woman – would cause their voices to tighten and rise up like drawbridges. She would be admitted with a wry, tongue-in-cheek deference (‘Ah, the younger Seagrave girl come to grace us with her presence’), but then the conversational allusions would become further angled, until all was inference. She would never get to hear what they really meant. She would never hear the way they talked without women.

As it is, eavesdropping outside the door, she can half hear the conversation as it circulates with the cigar smoke, although it is difficult to tell who is saying what. That is Perry, she is almost certain, making a disparaging comment about the French forces. And that is Willoughby, surely, saying that the only thing you can rely on in France are the good ladies of the Blue Light Café in Le Havre, no, those amenable mademoiselles never lose their heads, despite their national fondness for the guillotine.

Laughter. The clink of glasses. The rasp and fizz of a struck match.

Perry, again: ‘Remarkably short-sighted, removing the heads of those in charge.’

Willoughby: ‘They are rather short though, the French.’

Someone else now, with a booming tone: ‘One is always thankful there’s water between them and us, what? Frankly, if I were the Führer, I’d be tempted to invade them myself.’

Then someone else, equally booming: ‘Get Willoughby to take you over in his flying machine.’

A crotchety, elderly voice: ‘It’ll be over by Christmas. I can’t believe the Germans have built up an army. My son tells me those tanks they put on parade are made of cardboard. Is that correct, Peregrine?’

‘Not at all,’ replies Perry, as carefully measured as ever, a spirit level of a man.

Willoughby adds: ‘Cristabel saw some Nazi parades when she was in Europe.’

‘Did she now?’

‘She was appalled by what was going on over there.’

The crotchety one again: ‘Damn shame we lost David to that terrible American adventuress – Wallis or whatever she’s called – he could have shored things up.’

‘Wallis Simpson. Heard she learnt a few tricks in Shanghai that rendered the poor boy incapable.’

‘Two marriages behind her, she’d have picked up more than a few tricks.’

Laughter, laughter. The syrupy glug of port. Cries of ‘down the hatch’.

‘The Bavarians have backbone. There’s no arguing with that. They’ve a right to rebuild their country.’

‘What else would you do? Considering the threat from the East.’

‘Quite right. A matter of national pride.’

The booming voice: ‘It’s greed that’s brought us all to this point. Pure greed. Always been the Jewish weakness.’

‘But did you read that piece in *The Times* this morning?’

A hubbub. A symposium. A war room.

Then Perry, his assured quietness: ‘Whilst one does always hope for the best, I believe our most pressing issue is that we’ve always believed the fellows we were up against would play fair. This belief has been held even within the intelligence services, which we’ve reduced to the extent they’re now in a most parlous state. I’m not convinced that such things apply any more. Gentlemen, this will not be a gentleman’s war. Look at Guernica – a purely civilian target. To be frank, I’m not sure we’ve left ourselves time to –’

Suddenly, Rosalind sweeps past Flossie to push open the door of the drawing room, flapping her hands at the wreaths of cigar smoke, and exclaiming, ‘Here you all are. Surely we haven’t finished dancing yet?’

D to C

19th October, 1939

Kent

Dearest Crista,

It's surprisingly easy to sign up to kill people. Or be killed, I suppose. Three train journeys, several injections, a strange half-hour where I had my teeth inspected, and now I'm a private in the British Army. Private Seagrave, Second Battalion, Grenadier Guards.

A man at the recruitment office said, 'Digby Seagrave? Willoughby's boy?' in a startled manner. I couldn't help but think of that Auden poem we all adored at school: 'You've got their names to live up to and questions won't help.'

I replied, in my best Lady Bracknell voice, 'Never heard of him, I'm sure.'

Now I'm at a training barracks with a kitbag (heavy) and a uniform (itchy), along with around 100 other chaps, joking about how long we might have left to live. It's oddly like being back at school.

When I arrived, a Scots sergeant major saw me walking in and unleashed a volley of foul language in my direction, which – roughly translated – told me I looked too much like a pretty little miss to be of use to anyone and I should get used to cleaning the latrines as that's all I was good for. It was marvellous. Like standing in a hurricane.

Some things I saw from the train I thought you might like: a sheepdog leaping a high fence, flying with its feet tucked up. Clumps of sooty steam from the engine hanging in trees, like trapped clouds. Geese flying in a V-formation, keeping pace with the train. An elderly gentleman in a back garden constructing a bomb shelter alongside his vegetable patch. Men in uniform standing on station platforms, with their families waiting to say goodbye. The women somewhat pinched. The children wide-eyed, as if they knew something was happening, but weren't sure what.

I saw one man wearing navy uniform standing by himself smoking, and I wondered why he had no one to wave him off. I hope he will find some friends when he's at sea. Going past them was like travelling along a wonderful tableau. Everyone costumed up, ready to step on to the stage. I wonder where we will be when the curtain falls.

I suppose it is rather sad that I am not up at Cambridge now. A room in a college, with a gas fire for making toast. Having conversations with kindred souls. I think that version of Digby is a happy one. But here I am in

an army camp bed with a straw pillow, writing to you, and this Digby is a happy one too, as it turns out. C'est la vie!

The man on the next bed is a terrific fellow from Hull called Groves. We hit it off instantly and were soon talking about how vital it is that the coal mining industry is nationalized. All the men in his family have worked as miners. He was rather surprised to find I knew something about it.

There is – as I hoped – a true egalitarianism among the regular soldiers. My new uniform is quite the best costume I've ever worn. When Groves and I go to the local pub, the landlord greets me in the same matey way as he greets Groves. There's none of that deferential nonsense you get if you're wearing smart clothes.

Write to me soon. I'm dying to hear how my departure was received. I hope Flossie wasn't too heartbroken. Tell her I miss her terribly and I'm sorry I crept away without a proper goodbye. But it did feel splendid to do exactly not what was expected of me.

Tomorrow we will be practising murdering sandbags. If that's all the Germans have got in store for us, then I feel confident I will be home by Christmas. Groves thinks it's likely we'll be sent to France in the meantime.

Wherever we go, I remain –

Yours,

Private Digby Seagrave

PS: I've lent Groves your copy of How Green Was My Valley. He'll look after it, I'm sure.

C to D

23rd October, 1939

Dorset

Dear Digby,

Such scenes after your departure! A country house drama par excellence. Your father was furious and is now deep in the wine cellar, drinking his way through the rarest vintages. Your mother, after some grandiose Greek tragedy wailing, has announced she will be decamping to Mayfair next month to stay with Myrtle. She says she wants MERELY TO MAKE HERSELF USEFUL, but I've no doubt she will be spending her time lunching at The Ritz and going to the cinema to goggle at Clark Gable and Fred Astaire. (Flossie also smitten with Mr Astaire but has to travel to Dorchester to see him at The Plaza, and you know how she can be about buses on her own.)

(Flossie also hopelessly dejected at your departure. I will cut this scene from the final production as I don't think you will like it, Digs. She could hardly speak for crying. Do write to her soon.)

Of course, I could hardly bear it either. In fact, I couldn't at all. The more I thought about it, the more it seemed ridiculous that you should go off to fight while I stayed behind, so I decided to take up your mother's suggestion that I join the WAAF. One of the few times I have followed her advice.

I asked Perry to lend me the train fare and he was decent about it. Gave me more than enough, and now I am on a bench at Dorchester Station with my battered old suitcase. Not much in it. Bedsocks and books mainly. Hard to know what to take. At the last minute, I popped in that little statue of Sekhmet. Taras said she was the goddess of war, so I thought she'd like to come along.

Perry told me to tell the officers in charge that I've got French and German and I'm good at maths, so they make me a 'Clerk Special Duties'. I reminded him I've never had a single maths lesson, and he said, 'You're a bright girl, you'll pick it up.'

He's gone back to London now. Apparently, he has recruited Leon, of all people, to serve as his driver, although I suspect that's not all he will do. I can't imagine Leon being a deferential chauffeur, can you? Last I heard, he was working on ships and getting into fights.

I had a letter from Myrtle saying London is as quiet as a cathedral because all the children have been evacuated. Peculiar to think of a city

without children playing in the streets. She says everyone is going about their business as usual, trying not to notice the soldiers digging trenches in Hyde Park and rolling out barbed wire along the Thames.

Cities across Europe must be falling quiet now. Places we know. Streets we've walked. All the towns in Normandy where we escaped from Mlle Aubert. The Austrian resorts where I skied. Even that beautiful village in Provence where Myrtle took us for my birthday. That hotel with blue shutters. Floss in raptures over the tarte au citron. Now all empty and barricaded.

When I left, Flossie said she hoped the war wouldn't be as bad as people think. I reminded her of the Nazis I saw in Austria. Absolute HORRORS. It's only the fact that I am off to do my bit that makes me feel any better, though it was a wrench to leave Floss alone at Chilcombe. I made Bill swear to protect her for me, and the theatre too. Small Bill has gone off to join the navy and Betty is in a terrible flap, as you might imagine.

I have had an idea, about doing The Tempest next summer – Prospero should be a charismatic dictator, with Ariel, Caliban and Miranda in matching uniforms as his subjects. The island as fascist state. A backdrop of black and red banners. Or is that too obvious? One doesn't want to bash people over the head with it all. Although, one rather does.

I'm glad you have made a friend in Kent, although I have little interest in discussing domestic politics these days. We can jaw about democracy all we like, but the fact of the matter is that if Adolf wins, our country won't survive, and nor will we. Do everything your instructors tell you, Digs. Pay attention.

*My train is here! I'm off to war! Damnation to Hitler! Write to me!
Crista*

D to C

29th October, 1939

Kent

Dearest Crista,

Thank you so much for your letter. I'm thrilled right down to my muddy boots that you are off on an adventure. You were born for adventure.

The weather is filthy here. We've had downpours hammering on the corrugated roof all week and we keep having to go out in it. We've started six weeks of training with long marches and drills. It will, I'm told, 'kick us soft lot into shape'. We must do everything carrying our kit on our backs, which is extraordinarily uncomfortable, especially in cruel rain and ravaging winds.

Kent has bigger skies than Dorset. It feels more exposed. It's as if the weather must travel across greater distances to get to us, and it rather resents this. I told Groves I felt persecuted by Mother Nature and he said in his wonderful Yorkshire accent that I don't half say some peculiar things. We were slogging our way across a sodden field in a gale at the time – I thought of King Lear wandering the storm-tossed heath and proclaimed: "As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods; they kill us for their sport." Groves said he would refer me to his previous comment. I am very fond of him already.

When we were out in the unending torrent yesterday, we saw a man taking down the signs at the railway station that say 'Canterbury'. He told us they're removing all the place names at stations to confuse the Germans if they invade. I said I imagined the Germans might have maps and compasses, not to mention guns to point at people to make them tell them where they are. The man snorted and got back up his ladder.

Last weekend, there was a dance in a nearby village hall. I chaperoned Groves. He adores dancing. He was telling me he and his friends save up to go to big dance halls that have sprung floors and orchestras and there's 'nowt' (nothing) better. He was swinging girls about the dance floor soon as we arrived, a huge grin on his face.

We only had gramophone records at our dance, no orchestras. But they played one of those slow Louis Armstrong songs at the end of the night – the kind Mother likes. I can't remember what it's called, but it's all about thinking of home, and I thought of her (most likely swaying about to her gramophone, dear Mother) and Father and Flossie and you and Chilcombe and everyone there.

You all seem much further away than you are. By which I mean, I could jump on a train and be back in a day, if I wanted. But that seems rather implausible. And how would I find the right station now they're all nameless?

Anyway, I leant against the wall of the Ickham Village Hall and had a sentimental cigarette, while Groves sashayed elegantly past me, partnered by a plump and beaming WVS girl with a ladder in her regulation stockings.

I do miss you all. I talk to you every day. I hope you can hear me.

Your Digby

PS: I find your Tempest idea most interesting and have decided I will play Prospero next summer, Germans allowing. Don't tell me I'm not old enough. War will age me perfectly, I'm sure.

C to D

10th November, 1939

Gloucestershire

Dear Digs,

Snap. We're both in barracks now. Mine's a Nissen hut with iron beds and a wooden floor. There's a temperamental stove in the middle with a chimney through the roof. I'm sharing it with fifteen other recruits, and we spend much of our time trying to keep the accursed stove alight.

We're woken at six every morning, then carry out brisk ablutions in an open-ended shelter that the wind simply howls through. There's an interesting mix of characters here – I sleep between a barmaid from Lincoln and a violinist from Cardiff – but we look rather pulled together once we're in our uniforms.

It is smart, Digs. Air force blue. Peaked cap with a brass winged badge. A tunic with brass buttons and a belt with a brass buckle. All the bits of brass must be polished every day – an enjoyable task. You should see how good I am at tying a tie now.

We do a great deal of marching about while being barked at by petty tyrant NCOs. Saluting and inspections and so on. Packing and unpacking our kit endlessly before heading off to queue for cabbagey meals clutching our tin plates and tin mugs (what we call our 'irons').

It is no doubt useful to have this ritual obedience drummed into us, but frustrating to have little time for myself. That said, we're kept so busy, I fall asleep soon as my head hits the pillow.

Some of the girls here have never been away from home before. A girl called Edna from Warrington was snivelling in her bed all last week. I asked what the matter was, and she said she couldn't sleep for worrying about her family. Convinced they'll be gassed by the Germans.

I told her the best thing she could do for her family was to defeat Hitler, and that keeping active is the perfect cure for an agitated mind. That, and making plans for the future. Talking of which, I may let you play Prospero next summer, but ONLY if you agree to have the whole thing lit by flaming torches. I'll explain another time.

Anyway, yesterday Edna and I were ferrying stuff around for one of the wing commanders. I was telling her about my time in Austria and I did an impersonation of Adolf – I have the spittle-filled voice down to a tee – and the wing commander must have heard this as he came in asking if I spoke

German. I told him I spoke German and French, and although I had never learnt maths, I could pick it up and would subsequently make an excellent 'Clerk Special Duties'. He gave me a rather Perry-ish look – narrowed eyes / twitching moustache.

Turns out, things move fast if the military thinks it might have a use for you. I've been told once I've finished basic training, I'm to undergo further training for – guess what – 'Special Duties'!

Had a letter from Floss yesterday. She's had a flying visit from Myrtle, who is finding war extremely enlivening – isn't that funny? Apparently, she's rounding up exiled artists to tuck under her majestic wings, and hosting receptions for stateless politicians. She told Flossie she'd had a brief but SOUL-SHATTERING affair with a Norwegian submariner and couldn't look at a pickled herring without weeping but was otherwise very jolly about the whole thing.

One of Taras's cryptic postcards has somehow made its way to me here too. Rather tattered, like it's been round the censor's office a few times. A picture of the Statue of Liberty with a sketch on the back of a hybrid creature. Do you remember how we used to pore over his postcards? Looking for symbols, like trying to tell our fortune in tea leaves.

Strange to think of everyone we know being in new and unexpected places. It's as if the war has shaken the world like a set of dice and we're all tumbling off in different directions. Which is an apt place to sign off, and say that I hope you are well, wherever you are. And wherever you are, my thoughts go with you.

Your Crista

Blackout

November, 1939

The attic windowpanes are damp with condensation. Flossie wipes them with her cardigan sleeve. The day outside is lightless and indistinct – the mist-covered sun resembles a sickly full moon, gauze-wrapped and ailing. Blustery gusts of wind hurry crowds of leaves across the lawn, while the bare branches of trees reach and wave.

There is a kind of skitteryness about November, thinks Flossie. It is a month both ominous and nervous. The crisp displays of October, all its smart oranges and yellows, have been spoiled and scattered about as November rushes in, dragging winter behind it like a trail of rattling cans.

Cold wind shakes the windows, but the house itself is quiet. Digby gone. Crista gone. Many of the staff gone. No house guests. Taras and Hilly have sailed to America, while Philly is with her parents in their Scottish hunting lodge, and Perry, Leon and Myrtle are in London. Only Willoughby and Rosalind remain, but Rosalind will soon be leaving for the capital, and Willoughby is so preoccupied, he may as well not be there at all. Down in the village, evacuee children are arriving to be billeted with local families: pitiful creatures wearing labels and clutching gas mask boxes, come to fill the empty rooms left by departing sons and husbands. Mr Brewer has been organizing their distribution.

Flossie turns back into the attic where the glow of her bedside lamp and the flickering fire in the fireplace console her. As much as she worries about her missing siblings and all that war might bring, part of her still enjoys the annual descent into winter: the battening of hatches; the tunnel leading to December and the fairy hollow of Christmas, her favourite time of year. She probably shouldn't think about such frivolities, but it feels miserly not to, especially when things seem so bleak. She remembers the Prime Minister's subdued voice on the wireless when he told them they were at war with Germany. How tired he sounded. Poor Mr Chamberlain. He wouldn't mind if she thought about something cheering.

She plants herself in the rocking chair by the fire, tucks her feet up, pulls a blanket over her lap, and tries to imagine the sparkling lights of Christmas, as if it were a distant inn on a windswept moor or a lighthouse glimpsed across a stormy sea. It is a poignant sensation, as if she were telling herself a story; a magical scene glimpsed through a pinhole camera.

Flossie often feels a romantic wistfulness beside a fire. She can see it in other people too: they build up a good blaze, then sit back and contemplate it with a faraway expression. She finds it pleasant to indulge this feeling without

interruption from Cristabel ('What are you moping about now?') or Digby ('Floss, come and play Charades with me'). She has her book, her diary, her knitting – everything she needs. She could have Maudie bring up something on a tray for lunch, so she doesn't have to go downstairs. She could do a jigsaw. She could read her book right through to the end.

Flossie watches the flames and listens to the quietness, which, after a while, seems to become a tangible presence in the house. Something that rests calmly outside the attic, waiting for her to become used to it.

Two floors below, in the dining room, Rosalind watches her husband push aside a half-eaten plate of food in favour of a glass of wine and a crumpled copy of *The Times*. She is struggling to think of something to say. It is a curse, the way every conversational topic is now weighted down with war. The weather: war. The children: war. The estate: war. Willoughby himself: why he should be fighting the war. Or why it is important she understand why he should be fighting the war. Or why the war he should be fighting is so tremendously complicated that it is far beyond her comprehension. This last point is completely acceptable to her. It is impossible to understand.

Most conversations are now concluded by the snap of a shaken-out newspaper held before her husband's face. Men and their newspapers and their wars. Rosalind has been here before. It seems to continue quite happily without her, whatever she does. The way they talk about it with such relish, as if it were a subject for debate, as if it didn't mean dead boys. Thousands and thousands and thousands of dead boys, all over again.

'I wonder what Digby is doing,' she says.

Willoughby noisily turns a page. 'Training. Drills and so on. He'll need it. Suspect they'll be sending him to France soon.'

'He'll be all right, won't he? I couldn't –'

'How many times, Rosalind? We know what war requires. It requires courage. Sacrifice.'

But why, she thought, should war always get what it wanted?

'Willoughby, do you remember when Digby was a baby? His eyelashes –'

'Look at this,' he says, prodding the paper with a finger. 'Russia is invading Finland. The situation in China is appalling. The world is descending into barbarism. We don't have a choice.'

Surely they had a choice. They always had a choice. They chose extravagantly and at length. Fabrics, perfumes, tables in restaurants. People waited for their choices; praised their choices.

But her husband continues to sound forth on incomprehensible things: Belorussia, Maginot, *Reichstag*. Capital letter words. Headline words. Rosalind suspects there must be similar conversations happening in dining rooms across

the country: a buzzing swarm, incessantly circling above Britain at a furious pitch. Whenever you tried to swipe at them, they simply shifted into a million disparate parts and reformed.

She waits for a servant to appear and, when this doesn't happen, pours herself more wine, sloshing a little on to the tablecloth. The stain spreads as she rubs at it with a finger. She says, 'Well, darling, you said it yourself – it'll make a man of him.'

'Ridiculous of Digby to join the army. Even more ridiculous not to go in as an officer.'

'It was ridiculous.' Rosalind takes a sip of wine, then rounds the table, heading to the seat at her husband's side. 'Although, you said it would knock the nonsense out of him.'

'What you learn when you fight alongside other men, when you live and die together, there's nothing like it,' says Willoughby.

'Please don't talk about dying.' Rosalind leans forward to place a hand on his leg, but his eyes are still on the newspaper. Digby's eyes are never so preoccupied. They are always with you as if seeing you for the first time. Her sweet, beautiful boy. Gone to be a soldier. She hopes fervently that Perry will find him some kind of special position sooner rather than later.

She waits for Willoughby to notice her. His face is often long gone from her, these days. She receives only glimpses from his profile, the thinnest slivers of attention.

'He'll be grateful for it in the long run,' Willoughby says. 'Best thing I ever did.'

'I'm sure.'

'He needs to buckle down.'

'He does.'

Rosalind has a desperate feeling she will be echoing his words for ever. She is a parrot; she is a cave. She needs him to look at her to make it stop. It is in the word 'buckle' that she sees an opening. She slides her hand up his thigh.

'Willoughby, I have one of my heads coming on,' she says, trailing her hand further upwards, giving merely the tiniest tug on his belt. 'I might go upstairs, darling.'

There. The lift of an eyebrow shows she has snagged a forgotten corner of his interest. The newspaper is lowered. With that, she stands and walks out of the room, trailing an invisible thread behind her, a fly fisherman sending out a long whisking cast after a legendary pike.

Flossie, up in the attic, hears footsteps on the stairs far below, then the house falls silent. Maudie has been in to top up the coal scuttle, but Flossie barely noticed her or the fact it is getting dark outside. She is deep in her latest romance

novel from the Boots lending library – *Nobody Asked Me* – following the intertwining paths of the orphaned heroine and the strangely distant hero. Alison loves Julian, Julian loves another, another loves Alison; she pines, he pines, we pine. His *firm, uncompromising mouth*, his *bruised and burning kiss*, his *half-indifferent, half-caressing voice*. Flossie traces the pattern of their story, as looped and neat as a bow.

At some point, a meal arrives on a tray, appearing as if by magic (which is almost true: Maudie has carried it up three flights, and the bread pudding contains raisins Betty had to go all the way to Dorchester to find, travelling on her son's bicycle because the bus service has been reduced on account of the petrol rationing), and Flossie eats mechanically, her eyes never leaving the page. By not allowing any interruptions, she can remain safe in the cocooning cinema of her mind. Her *flood of furious tears*, her *unsteady lips*, her *wild and useless impulses*.

One floor below, Willoughby rolls over. Where did he go, when he did that? Rosalind wonders. Where did he go when he turned away and raised the wall of his shoulder to her? There was no way of knowing then if his eyes were open or closed. The back of his body was so adamantly uninterested in her, it seemed possible he no longer had eyes at all. To tap his shoulder as they lay in bed together made her feel like a storybook mouse, an interloper with minuscule paws. *Pat, pat, pat*.

'What is it?' he would always say. But why did it have to be something? Why couldn't it simply be a little chat that would tell her she wasn't in some way repulsive to him now, that he was grateful for her efforts, rather than distractedly bothered by her, as if he were trying to get off a train and she were a stranger attempting to tell him he'd left his hat behind. Excuse me, sir, I'm awfully sorry to bother you, sir. What is it? It's just your hat, sir. It's just your wife, sir. *Pat, pat, pat*.

Rosalind cannot imagine feeling so immovably solid in the world. To feel someone else's attentions as inconsequential flutterings you could brush off. The desperate feeling rises again. She reaches for the pot of sleeping pills on her bedside table.

There is a knock at the front door that nobody answers. Betty and Maudie have gone to a meeting in the church about air raid warnings. Mr Brewer is rounding up more evacuees. There is a pause, then more knocking, louder this time.

Up in the attic, Flossie lifts her head. Why isn't anybody answering it? She puts down her book. There it is again, a banging echoing about the house. Feeling suddenly nervous, she stands up and patters down the stairs in her stockinged feet, buttoning up her cardigan. It seems a long way to the front door. 'One moment,' she calls, and her voice is ribbon thin – a silly affectation.

Opening the door to peer out into the night, she sees the butcher's wife with a bicycle. 'Sorry to trouble you so late, Miss Flossie. I've been round the back but there was no reply.'

'That's perfectly all right. How can I help?'

'Well, Miss Flossie, we haven't had payment for the last two weeks.'

'Oh, goodness. Who usually pays you?'

'That would be Mr or Mrs Brewer.'

'They've been ever so busy. I'll speak to them as soon as I can.'

'Very well. Do you know if it will be pork or beef for you this week? Miss Cristabel usually does the orders. We have missed our talks with her.'

'Crista's gone off to be in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force. Everyone's doing their bit, aren't they?'

'Certainly are, Miss Flossie.'

'Well, we've got to, haven't we? All mucking in!' Flossie's voice has become the jaunty voice she keeps finding herself using. A slightly mad way of talking. Brisk phrases batted back and forth that serve as a kind of mutual bolstering. 'When do you need the meat order by?'

'We'd need to know this evening, Miss Flossie. If we was going to get it to you by Sunday. There's a lot of deliveries to be done. Everyone's stocking up.'

'Of course. Pork or beef. Pork or beef ...' Flossie pauses, and for a terrifying moment, meat in all its varieties becomes an abstract concept, entirely beyond imagining, but thankfully, before she starts to panic, her brain rights itself, like a happy canoe, and she says, 'Pork, please. I've never really liked beef.'

'Thank you, Miss Flossie. Pork's my preference too,' says the woman, then pedals off down the drive.

As the sound of the bicycle diminishes, the darkness surrounding Flossie seems to intensify. She walks along the drive, wondering if she will still be able to see the woman, but the bicycle has disappeared into the night. The cottages in the village are usually visible through the trees, but Chilcombe Mell has also vanished beneath the blackout, as completely as the butcher's wife.

Everyone has gone into hiding. The animated lights of houses and shops and vehicles that used to dot the valley now seem as inconsequential as glitter. There is only black: the black silhouettes of trees, and the black Ridgeway looming above them, a featureless wall against a clouded sooty sky. Flossie remembers Taras saying the most important ingredient of black paint was the charred remains of animal bones. 'Bone black', he called it. How fragile normality is, she thinks, how easily reduced to nothing.

She hears the husky yelp of a fox in the woods, and turns to walk back to the house, quickly at first, on account of a fearfulness that has begun to scabble at her heart, but then more slowly, steadying herself. She tells herself she has

nothing to be afraid of, but a voice inside says she does have a great deal to be afraid of – just about everything, in fact.

Flossie looks at the house as if she were a stranger arriving on a lonely night. Chilcombe is lifeless, sealed up, emitting nothing but a thin needle of light from Rosalind's room, where the curtains are not properly closed. If Flossie knocked on the door, nobody would come running down the stairs to open it. She is on her own. And there are decisions to be made.

Postcard

19th November, 1939

Dear Father,

I know you must be busy, but I wanted to send you a postcard, in case you hadn't seen my last letter. As you can see from the picture, I'm in Dover and you will know what that means. Morale is good. We are keen to get going, although I wish I had time to visit Dover Castle. We have a perfect view of it from the docks and it looks glorious! I believe you would like to see me here, in my uniform, although I know you had a different uniform in mind for me. Many officers I meet remember you from the last war and tell me what a fine soldier you were. As I said before, I think of you and Mother every day, and I hope to make you proud.

Your son,

Digby

Note on Pink Notepaper with a Box of Turkish Delight

22nd December, 1939

Mayfair

Dearest Flossie,

I pray you are not lonesome in that aching old house beneath the rook-filled trees. Did you receive the Harrods hamper? I helped your mother pick it out. She sends Christmas wishes, and so do I.

London is haunted and watchful with the lights off. We wander the pitch-black streets, calling out to one another, while above us, silver barrage balloons float in the night air like giant tethered fish. I wear a full-length white fur coat, so am immensely visible and glide like the ghost of a queen.

Sweet Flossie, I will raise a glass to you tonight. But first: a Beethoven concert at the National Gallery – what bliss! They've taken down the paintings and filled the empty rooms with music, so we gather there, tinkers and tailors and soldiers and sailors and even Americans. Then to The Berkeley, where we will dance and spin till the darkness lifts. Oh, this unimaginable life!

Myrtle x

PS: I saw Cristabel last week. Her imperious face all furious angles. Perry will find her something important to do, never fear.

Christmas Card

23rd December, 1939

Middlesex

Leon,

Generous though it was of you to offer to relieve me of my virginity before Adolf kills us all, I'm afraid you have made several assumptions that cannot go unchallenged. One: that I still have it. Two: that if I do still have it, I would share that information with you. Three: that if I do still have it, I wish to dispense with it. Four: that if I do still have it and wish to dispense with it, I would consider you a suitable candidate. Although there may be foolish women who fall prey to your swarthy Belgian brute routine, please remember I knew you before you learnt how to wear clothes. Can you tell Perry that his suggestion worked and I'm now in Special Duties, based not far from London? And can you or he take me out for lunch? UTTERLY sick of military slop.

Cristabel

PS: Tidings of the season

C to D

20th January, 1940

Middlesex

Dearest Digs, wherever you may be,

I intended this letter to be a summation of my ideas for The Tempest thus far but must confess it is hard to proceed with theatrical plans without you. I confess too that the possibility of us putting on a play at Chilcombe this summer seems ever more unlikely. Flossie says the land at the cottage is being dug up so they can plant vegetables. Potatoes are to be grown in The Whalebone Theatre. Perhaps they will prove more popular than my recent productions. But we should plan for after the war. A victory performance, naturally.

It is IMMENSELY frustrating not to be able to talk to you. I feel I am repeatedly serving tennis balls over a net with nobody to return them. But anyway, here's an idea: wouldn't it be something to have the audience for The Tempest arrive by boat?

Ah, the long silence; the pock, pock, pock of the unreturned ball bouncing into a dusty corner.

There are many silences in my life now. I am being trained as an 'Operations Plotter', so I exist in basement rooms filled with cigarette smoke where the only sounds are brusque orders. We are being taught to translate radio signals on to a large plotting table, where little metal pieces representing aircraft are pushed around by WAAF's holding long rods. Similar to how I used to move characters around in our cardboard theatre, but with significantly less dialogue.

Thus far, we have only been doing training exercises, but if Hitler gets his act together and sends bombers over, we will do it for real. The hours are long. Sometimes when I come out of our burrow, I have no idea if it will be day or night.

I'm starting to think military training is largely a way of stopping people talking. I said as much to Perry – he and Leon took me out for lunch – and he replied, 'Dear girl, think of it as strategic. Silence gives us more time to consider our next moves.' He told me I should emulate the patient angler, who learns to let the river run by.

I countered by saying that lives could be lost if we spend our time staring at rivers. Perry said lives will always be lost in war, adding, 'It becomes a question of numbers.'

You can imagine how I growled at that. Leon did too. But Perry merely smiled and said anger is only useful if deployed strategically. He told Leon that an untrained dog will get itself shot, then told him to stop baring his teeth and take me to the Café Royal.

I wondered if Leon might take offence, but he simply laughed in his Blackbeard buccaneer way. Sometimes I forget he is Taras's son, but he has the same volcanic quality. You never know how he will react.

We went to the Café Royal and Leon was entertaining, albeit in a rather vulgar way, for several hours. Told me about his rackets adventures in the merchant navy and how Perry is teaching him useful things like how to strangle people with piano wire. He started to show me but had to take off at pace after he got a message from Perry. He would make an excellent Mercutio, don't you think?

Bother it, Digby. It is SO peculiar to not have you to talk to. Perry says I may not see you for months, years. An inconceivable idea. I can't face it. But I must.

Write to me, write to me, come back, come back. No, don't listen to me. Stay and fight and be as brave as you can. I'm counting on you to do that.

I will too.

Your Crista

Notebook Pages

France, somewhere

May 26th, 1940

Dear Crista,

I doubt I will be able to send this, but it comforts me to write to you.

We're in retreat. Became separated from our battalion somewhere near Arras. It was horrible. Only five of us left now, including Groves and me. We're running from the Germans, heading back to the Channel.

Never been so tired but I can't sleep. Can't remember the last time I took my boots off. I'm shaking all the time – look at the state of my handwriting! I find myself going over and over peculiar things. Speeches from Shakespeare. The items in my bag. The names of our men.

We march for miles, then sit in a ditch and wait because we aren't sure what to do next. Sometimes we meet other British troops, and we look at each other expecting somebody to have a better idea of what's going on, but nobody does.

We dug a shelter yesterday and turned up the skeleton of a German soldier from the last war. We could see the metal buttons from his uniform, lying about in his bones like loose change. Seems absurd we should be back in France trying to kill each other all over again.

I'm still not used to seeing dead bodies. Not even those from twenty years ago.

May 27th

We spent today hiding in our shelter while the Germans relentlessly shelled a copse 500 yards away, trying to hit a British anti-aircraft gun and its crew. The noise of shells is abominable: a shrill shrieking, then crunching explosions that rattle the teeth in your head. The chap next to me shouted, 'How many times do they need to bloody kill them?'

We plan to head off across the fields tonight. It's easier at night. In the day, the roads are clogged with hundreds of French people heading who knows where. Vehicles and carts piled high with luggage and furniture. Old men bent double under sagging bundles. Mothers in headscarves dragging along crying children. I saw one woman carrying a baby that was so motionless and blue I wasn't sure it was still alive.

I can hardly believe it, but apparently German planes have been flying low over the roads and gunning people down. Targeting unarmed civilians.

Groves said, 'They've got that much spare ammo, they can use it up killing children.'

The French people didn't want to look at us. I found that hard.

May 28th

Yesterday we were lost in a forest until Groves spotted a couple of trees scored with knife marks. It was exactly how you used to mark our route through the woods at Chilcombe. The trees led us to a trail, littered with cigarette ends from troops who'd already passed through.

We stopped for the night in an empty house, only recently deserted. Two glasses of vin rouge on the table. Half a loaf of bread. The oven still warm. I found some candles, and we sat about the table in our filthy uniforms, tearing off hunks of bread, feasting like thieves. Groves has never had wine before. He said he could develop a liking for it.

We took turns to sleep in an upstairs bedroom. Groves and I went up together. As I was taking my pack off, we heard German bombers flying overhead. We watched through a gap in the curtains, like children peering up for Father Christmas.

Groves said it gave him the shivers to think they might be heading to England, so I put my arm around his shoulders. Felt such a long way from home.

May 30th

Hard to describe how it is here. Hard to believe that only a few weeks ago, these were ordinary towns, with gardens and families, and children going off to school. It is like a great machine has rolled through France, crushing the life out of it. The roads are littered with burnt tanks, dead horses, dead people. Flies everywhere. We march past, trying not to look.

The men keep asking me to do 'some of my Shakespeare' to take our minds off things so I have become a one-man travelling theatre troupe. I recite soliloquies as we trudge along. Strange to remember that, not so long ago, the theatre was all I thought about. Henry V proving popular. I tried a little Auden on them too. They liked him more than you do.

We have been leaderless for days now and the men seem to look to me, despite the fact I am as inexperienced as they are. I might even be the youngest of the five of us. Groves says it's because of my 'fancy wireless voice'. I asked if he minded my voice and he said he didn't at all.

His voice is rich and earthy. Full of humour. Every morning he pretends to take a breakfast order from us all, as we lie about in a pile, muddy and exhausted. 'The usual for you, sir? Smoked haddock? Fresh coffee?' Somehow, it's funnier because he does it without fail every day.

Slept in a pigsty last night. Lice crawling all over us. 'Least someone's eating well,' said Groves.

June 1st

We're not stopping any more. We must get to the coast.

We are buoyed whenever we see a cheerful British officer, waiting by a bridge to point us in the right direction, saying, 'You'll be home in time for last orders, lads.'

There seems to be a type of good humour that arises in some people at the most trying times. Groves has it too. His spirits never flag. He says we have to get out of here because he's smoked all his cigarettes and nearly all of mine, and he can't abide the French variety.

As we march along, the men chant a song. It starts, 'I don't want a bayonet up my arsehole, I don't want my bollocks shot away,' and goes on from there. I am grateful the French people we pass probably don't understand what the men are chanting, but I understand why they are chanting it. It doesn't seem to be a grand war that we are fighting, simply something we want to get out of with bollocks intact.

June 2nd

We are on an edge. Behind us is a town on fire. In front of us, grey sea.

To the left and right, thousands of men on a long shoreline. Every now and then, German planes come over and reduce our numbers. We are, as Groves says, absolute sitting ducks. I've stopped counting the number of dead bodies I've seen.

A beach full of fighting men, but we spend most of our time sitting in sand dunes, smoking with trembling hands. Yesterday morning, a German plane came screaming over and the man in front of me shot himself in the head, to save them the bother. Behind us, we can hear their artillery getting closer. There is nothing to do but wait. That is a heavy feeling.

Sometimes we see big British destroyers anchoring offshore. They can't get near to the beach as the water is too shallow, so smaller boats pick up a handful of men at a time and ferry them out.

We file obediently into the sea, watching as those at the front of the queue get taken off to where we long to be with every fibre of our beings. The water is full of wreckage and so glossy with oil, it looks like consommé. Then the destroyers leave for England without us, and we trudge back to the beach, shivering in our wet uniforms.

We've been here for two days now. The nights are the worst. The darkness and fire. The Germans have bombed something that held petrol and it belches poisonous clouds over the beach. Last night, poor Groves couldn't stop coughing. He buried his face into my shoulder, and I put my arms about

him to try to shield him and wished us away from this place more than I have ever wished anything.

June 4th

It was about midnight. We saw a small boat going past the beach so a pack of us rushed into the sea. It was a Norfolk fisherman with his sons. They already had a crowd of soldiers on board.

The boat was moving away, but we hung on to the edge, begging them to take us too, being pulled out deeper and deeper. I kept going under and the fisherman leant over shouting, 'Grab my hand, son.'

The pack on my back was weighing me down as the fisherman tried to heave me out of the water; then Groves was beside me, shoving me upwards. As I tipped in, I saw one of his hands on the edge of the boat, gripping the wood, his knuckles white. When I scrambled to my feet, it had gone. I tried to see over, but other men were being hauled in, and the boat was moving faster.

I shouted at the fisherman that there were men in the sea, but he pushed me away, saying they had hardly any fuel left. As we headed off, I could make them out – men in the black water, slipping under the surface, their eyes and mouths gaping wide open as if they couldn't believe it. Their faces. Their tin helmets. Then just their hands, still reaching.

I shouted his name. I kept shouting his name until a British naval officer told me he'd happily shoot me if I continued to impede the evacuation.

It seemed quite ludicrous, given all the trouble the Germans were going to, trying to bomb us and shell us, for our men to die in such a simple way. To open their mouths to the water and go down without a peep.

I don't know if he saw me or heard me.

I was very sick on the boat on the way back across the Channel.

We came ashore at Ramsgate where women from the Women's Institute greeted us as if we'd been victorious. They gave us hot Bovril and clean socks. I was given a postcard to send to my family to let them know I am all right. I am all right. I am on a train full of filthy soldiers asleep on each other. It is a sealed train. They have locked the doors so we can't run off now we're back.

Here are some things I have seen from the window: wounded French soldiers lying on stretchers singing the Marseillaise; a turning windmill in an open field; a poster advertising the film Pack Up Your Troubles.

I keep thinking of him. Drifting in the sea, a hundred yards off a French beach. Bumping into the legs of other drowned men. He would be so surprised to find himself there.

Incomplete Letter

Chilcombe

25th June, 1940

Dear Crista,

Of course I packed up your books before putting the evacuees in the attic! There was no need for a telegram. I don't think they would touch them anyway. They are very sweet but terrified of everything, especially cows. Betty says the ones her sister has are riddled with nits so we should count ourselves lucky.

I told them my beloved stuffed elephant was there to guard them, but this made them cry, 'on account of its insides coming out', so I have dragged Edgar and his leaking innards down to Mother's room, where I am sleeping. Both his eyes fell out en route, which gives him a rather beggarly look, the poor dear.

Did you know Mother has silk pillowcases? Betty says they do wonders for your complexion. I have been lolling on them indulgently and will have an entirely new face by the end of the week.

Digby left to go back to his barracks this morning. What a pity you couldn't get leave at the same time. I think he misses his friend Groves. He showed me a photograph of them in Kent. He believes he will be sent to North Africa next, and they will train him up as an officer.

He was terribly upset by the fall of France. We all were. Maudie says Weymouth is full of refugees from the Channel Islands, who have brought their tomato crops rather than let Germans eat them. Everyone thinks we will be invaded next. Do you believe that? Mr Brewer says our backs are to the wall and, as we've left most of our weapons in France, we will have to fight the Nazis off with saucepans.

Army lorries have been trundling through the village all week, taking sandbags and barbed wire down to the beach, and the Local Defence Volunteers are doing drills in our woods. Once they've practised killing each other with chair legs and wooden rifles, they come in for a cup of tea and sit round the kitchen table cheerfully saying things like, 'We're for it now,' and 'We're next on Hitler's list.'

It is dreadful to think we are readying ourselves for battle, but I suppose we are. We've wrapped the table lamps in brown paper and taken all the paintings off the walls, so we don't get crushed by a falling ancestor if a

bomb drops. Mr Brewer has removed the glass cupola, so it's just a hole in the ceiling covered with tarpaulin now.

The wireless is on constantly, so the voices of important people echo about the place. I don't like being shouted at by Herr Hitler, but it is reassuring to hear our new Prime Minister. They say it has given our troops a lift to have Mr Churchill in charge. We've even had a telephone installed in the study 'in case of emergencies', though I must say it feels rather like an emergency already, and nobody seems sure who we should ring if matters get worse.

Mother rang yesterday from The Savoy looking for Uncle Willoughby, but he's gone to stay with Lord Someone-or-Other in Ireland. He sent me a postcard saying they still have decent whiskey in the pubs there, so he was going to do his bit for England by drinking them dry. I didn't tell Mother that.

We don't ever seem to have proper meals any more. It's as if we can't stop, because if we stop, our fears might catch up with us. Do you ever feel scared, Crista? I sometimes think I am the only one –

Flossie thoughtfully chews her fountain pen. It is always difficult to write to Cristabel. She wants to appear brave and resourceful, but worries she sounds like one of the briskly cheerful Government posters pinned up outside the village church.

POTATOES Feed Without Fattening And Give You ENERGY!

Help Win the War on the Kitchen Front: Above All Avoid WASTE!

She doesn't know how to address her sister. She wants to ask her if she too has convulsive moments of terror so sharply powerful that she has to sit down and weep. She wants to ask if Cristabel fears for Digby as much as Flossie does, but it seems like a breach of decorum, as to admit the possibility of fear admits the possibility of Digby hurt, of Digby shot, of Digby blown up, of Digby never coming home, and that cannot be done. That would be pulling a stone out of the wall that might bring the whole castle tumbling down.

Keep it under your hat! CARELESS TALK COSTS LIVES.

Flossie puts down her pen and puts the letter in a drawer. A postcard will do instead. A brief message saying only the essentials and none of the things that matter.

C to D

16th September, 1940

Bentley Priory, Stanmore

Dear Digs,

Not much time to write between shifts. We are on a four hour on, four hour off pattern and I must get some sleep. It's been relentless since bombs started falling on London. After so long spent wishing the war would hurry up and start, it's now not going to give us a moment to take a breather.

Our quarters are decent. I'm at Fighter Command, based in Bentley Priory, the type of grand house your mother always aspired to. Nothing like decrepit old Chilcombe. There are a few people here with an interest in the theatre. We talked about putting on a show in the concert room. I proposed Henry V, but then the senior officers got wind of it and decided they want to do comical skits dressed as women. I'm unsure why this should be comical, but they've put me in charge of lighting, so there we go.

I rather suspect this letter will be one I can't post, as the official line is that we don't tell anyone what we do here, but I want to talk to you about it, so I will keep this for when you are next back on leave.

It is very hush-hush. Us WAAF's have become adept at saying vague things about 'working with wirelesses' when asked, then changing the subject. There's an occasional advantage to the assumption that if you are a woman, your work must be trivial.

It's not trivial at ALL. We are tracking German aircraft as they come over the Channel, plotting their routes on a table map using coloured counters like tiddlywinks. Senior officers look down at the map from viewing balconies, like wealthy people in boxes at the theatre. They monitor what's going on and dispatch RAF fighters to meet the incoming Germans. Air raid warnings go out from here too.

It's easier if I pretend they are tiddlywinks in a giant board game. If I think about the fact there are real people involved, I can't concentrate. Some girls wear headsets and can hear the crackly pilots' voices over the radio. That's all right when they're saying 'Tally ho!' and 'I've got him!' but it's not all right when you can hear them screaming.

On one of my first shifts here, I had quite a start when I realized twenty enemy raiders were heading straight for Chilcombe. For a moment, I couldn't think what to do. It was a sunny morning, and there I was, using a stick to push counters over the sea, closer and closer to home. Floss would

be there, I thought. Probably with her nose in a Mills & Boon book, completely bloody oblivious. For a moment, I considered trying to get a message to her, but one cannot desert one's post.

Then it came in over the radio that the Germans were attacking a Royal Navy ship in Portland Harbour. More than a hundred men died, but all I could feel was a sort of flattened-out gratitude. It's ghastly when you are thankful that other people are dead, rather than your people.

Flossie told me later they heard explosions and thought the invasion was starting. Apparently, Mr Brewer and others have hidden weapons up in a burial mound on the Ridgeway, as part of some sort of secret defence scheme. He says he didn't run from the Germans the last time and has no intention of doing so now, even if they drive their tanks on to our lawn.

When I was a child and I imagined defending Chilcombe, I always pictured myself charging down the drive on a horse, waving a broadsword. I thought about that a lot, you know. Everyone in danger – Cristabel to the rescue! Sometimes, I would lie in bed and imagine that everyone I cared about was dying and only I could save them. (Then I would have a creeping fear that I was going to make them die, because I was foolish enough to imagine it, and thereby somehow inviting it. That was a chilling feeling.)

But now my country is being attacked and I cannot charge at anyone. Only this morning, the officers on the balcony were looking down at my corner of the map, where I was inching my lethal tiddlywinks closer to Sussex, and it seemed very wrong that such things should occur, and my only role should be to show it happening.

I must have become slow in my movements because an officer behind me muttered, 'Still with us, Seagrave?'

'Yes, sir,' I said, and hurried my counters along.

I must be able to do more, Digs. Being here is no doubt a privileged position, rather like an overseeing god, and I am trying my best to be that kind of god, the aloof type that wisely lets events unfold. But I cannot help but feel I am more like those other impetuous gods, that fly down to the battlefield and intervene in the world of mortal men.

Perry says you're probably sweating in a tank in North Africa. Do be careful. We're in the thick of it now, aren't we?

Your Crista

A Nightclub in Piccadilly

March, 1941

There is a fervency to these dangerous Blitz nights. This one especially – a moonlit Saturday, a hint of spring in the air, and, despite everything, people heading out into the streets. The authoritarian darkness of the blackout makes their activity seem a forbidden escape, a midnight feast. It's after lights out, as Rosalind's mother used to say. The city is as tall and shadowed as a forest and they run between its legs like children.

Thousands of Londoners go down to the Tube stations to shelter there every night, whether bombs are falling or not. They tuck themselves under blankets, play cards, sing songs and knit. But there are others who make for different underground haunts: the basement grill at The Ritz; cellar bars in St James's where jazz bands play until the early hours; discreet nightclubs beneath the West End pavements that never stop serving. Places accessed via steep unlit steps, their clientele descending into the black earth to find caverns alive with laughter and light.

Rosalind has lived too long to join patriotic singalongs in grimy Tube stations when she could instead have a chilled glass of something, and she has always preferred the few to the many. A couple of gins to steady her nerves and she is high-stepping along the debris-strewn streets, broken glass crunching beneath her heels, navigating by means of the white lines painted on the kerbs, joining those going out on the town.

Every route through the lightless city is now an unpredictable one. It is a shadowy moonscape and the bombs change its shape every night. Landmarks evaporate, streets are roped off, and dust falls over everything. Air raid wardens in helmets and overalls poke long poles at the smouldering remains of buildings until the debris shifts and tumbles like coal, acrid smoke drifting along the roads like fog.

The plinths of famous statues stand empty, they have taken down Eros and boarded up the fountains, and the facades of bombed-out buildings are just that – facades with nothing behind them, no floors or ceilings or inhabitants. Houses hang open, sliced in two; bedrooms, bathrooms, all the intimate spaces exposed to public view. Nothing is sacred. It is a production set, and the scenery keeps changing. It is a production set, and the cast are here one day, gone the next. Only the sky is lit up, criss-crossed with movie-star searchlights while air raid sirens slide up and down the scale.

Rosalind is going to meet Myrtle in Piccadilly, but it doesn't matter if she's persuaded to stop in at a bar or two on the way. It's different now. Not everyone is

in formal evening wear and there are so many in uniform. Flying Johnnies and Navy Jacks, as Myrtle calls them. Officers, aircrews and guardsmen. Does she know how to jitterbug? Yes, she does. Is she married? Yes, she is. But Willoughby hasn't looked at her for such a long time, and perched on a twisting bar stool, she can turn to have her cigarette lit in such a way that the green silk of her dress pulls tight across her thighs; see the men's eyes fall thankfully upon them. It is a mutual exchange. One more cocktail, the ice cubes knocking in the glass, and her face in the mirror in the ladies' room is high and triumphant. There are attentive men waiting for her to return to their company. Her husband is absent. Her mother is dead. She knows how to jitterbug.

When she and the men walk out together, rough women call from shadowy doorways, shouting for the men to come back for them later, saying they can't go off to fight Hitler without a bit of fun first, saying, come on, dearie, don't leave me lonely. Rosalind cannot disapprove, even though she should. She feels it as a communal benevolence, a blessing for the brave boys. She hopes they never have to resort to such things, but who could deny them their indulgences? It is as if everyone is living as she has always lived: in a dance towards pleasure as a means of distraction. They have joined her, with drinks in their lifted hands.

They go to the Café de Paris nightclub, nodding to the doorman as he pushes open heavy doors to let them in. They hurry down two flights of stairs, and she catches herself in a gilt-framed mirror lit from beneath and notices the sinews in her neck, taut as twin cable lines. She pauses, looks closer, wipes away a lipstick smudge at the corner of her mouth. She is always grateful for unscrupulous lighting, the kind favoured by medical professionals and stage actors: those who know the face is a canvas. She believes women should be objective about their appearance; too many will sail past mirrors if they are enjoying themselves, foolishly assuming that happiness somehow transforms them. One must unlearn such fond indulgence of oneself.

Men can turn away from you so easily. They can talk among themselves and forget you are there, and it is nothing to them. She cannot blame them. They are strong and male and prepared to die for their country and she is a woman in her forties with a décolletage that is starting to look like crêpe paper. She has a smile ready for the times they discard her – a winsome smile and a charming way of clasping her hands together that allows everything to continue. She couldn't let them feel awkward, even though it is nothing to them. It is not nothing to her. All she has ever wanted is to be wanted, but not in a coarse way. She is a parrot, a cave. She is weary of trying to be all the things they might want her to be, but what else is there to do?

From across the city comes the wail of the evening's first air raid siren. They are used to it now. Bombs have been dropping on London for months. They are

so far underground, it is perfectly safe, and the owner has stockpiled champagne so they will never run out. The men head to the bar.

The nightclub interior has been designed to look like the ballroom on the *Titanic*: a polished dance floor surrounded by tables with white tablecloths and stylish lamps, overlooked by a curved balcony where Rosalind catches a glimpse of Myrtle waving a hand to indicate she has found them a good spot. A broad moustachioed man wearing many medals is sitting in front of her, sipping whisky.

On the other side of the dance floor is a sweeping double staircase, where glamorous dancers in feather headdresses are waiting to descend. The famous band in their dinner suits are tucked beneath the staircase, tuning their instruments, adjusting their music stands.

As Rosalind is handed a drink, the band starts up. A little shuffle on the cymbal – *ta-tah, ta-tah, ta-tah* – and the trumpets’ swaggering answer – *pa-PAAH-pa! pa-PAAH-pa!* – and the audience start tapping their feet and nodding their heads even before the rest of the band comes swinging in, because they’ve all heard this one on the wireless, it’s ‘Oh Johnny, Oh Johnny, Oh!’ and you can’t help but want to dance. The band leader is swaying like Fred Astaire as he waves his baton, effortless and light, an elegant young Black man with a white bow tie. The dancers on the stairs have their hands up by their faces and are moving side to side in unison.

Somewhere overhead, the distant throbbing of enemy bombers and the rattling barrage of London’s anti-aircraft guns.

One of the soldiers takes Rosalind’s glass from her hand and puts it on a table in order to twirl her smartly on to the dance floor. Finding her body up against a broad chest in a khaki uniform, she is suddenly reminded of Willoughby the young officer pulling her close, as if he had every right to, even while she was still married to his brother. Such a treat to acquiesce, to drop all the effort of not making an effort, and to be claimed by him. The most longed-for surrender. The most handsome of men. She closes her eyes, and they sway together, and the evening is just beginning.

Outside, German aircraft are following the path of the Thames, which shines like a silver ribbon in the moonlight, leading them into the city. They drop bombs as they go. Cylindrical high-explosives fall from the bellies of the planes and descend at whistling speeds on to Barking and Limehouse and Whitechapel and Blackfriars and one dropped above Piccadilly comes plummeting down and

down and

down and

down and

down and

down

through a
small
exposed
ventilator shaft
which carries
it cleanly
twenty feet
underground
into the
gallery
above
the
resident
band
of
the
Café
de
Paris
where it
explodes
in a gas-blue flash
sending a shock wave of air
hot as a furnace blast
punching across the space
carrying before it cymbals and
chairs and sheet music and feathers
and instrument cases and musicians and parts of
other musicians and silk gowns ripped from dancing bodies
a high-velocity mosaic of glass shards stilettos forks oboes
ashtrays lacerating through the aircrews and their dates and the
waiters with plates just arriving at the tables until the nightclub
and its contents are a hurricane-blown dandelion clock
hurtling out to the edges
all single things now in flight and intermingled
part of
everything.

The decision of the bomb is final: there will be nothing here but air, and the clear space left behind. The lights go out. The ceiling collapses on to the dance floor. The Café de Paris is open to the night sky. Smoke rises from the rubble.

Note on Pink Notepaper with a Bouquet of Roses

17th March, 1941

Mayfair

Darling Flossie and Cristabel,

'Women should always leave first – men like you better when they think you're on your way.' Rosalind told me that. She said the best method she knew to catch Willoughby's attention was to walk out of a room. She excelled at it. Such sinuosity. That statement returned to me today when I saw her funeral notice in the newspaper. She left first, the poor sweet. Although I believe she may be relieved by that. She never wanted to grow old.

I tried to live by her words for a while. I endeavoured to plan my exits well, to synchronize my movements in accordance with the potential interests of men. But I don't have time for that now. The world doesn't have time. War has compressed us – and we ignite. Besides, I have never wanted to leave rooms. I enjoy being in them: talking, drinking, proclaiming my verse!

I won't be able to attend Rosalind's funeral, though I know you won't be burying any of her in that cold church. I'm sailing to New York tomorrow, with crates of paintings I hope will be safer there, and meeting Taras and Hilly for a new exhibition of Taras's work. I'll also try to persuade America to hurry up and join the damn war. But I'll be back at Christmas, with armfuls of nylons and oranges.

You know, the strangest thing about the Café de Paris was the silence. The fireman who pulled me out told me if you are very close to a bomb, you don't hear it. One moment I was raising a toast to dear Winston, then there was a jolt of energy, as if time itself had shuddered, and everything stopped.

When I looked again, my companion for the evening was dead, although decent enough to remain seated at the table, and there was grey dust falling over everything like the fluttering ash of Pompeii.

Give my sincere condolences to Willoughby and Digby. Think of Rosalind with fondness and forgiveness and keep her picture on the wall, but remember there is more to life than being looked at. Vanity is a small box of mirrors. Let none of us squander these days. May we all leave last.

With love,

Myrtle xx

Exhibition Catalogue

KOVALSKY IN ENGLAND

Thursday May 15th to Saturday July 5th, 1941

The van der Werff Gallery, New York

7 cents

Proceeds to the American Red Cross

Preface by Myrtle van der Werff

So often the cry comes: what good is art in war? The galleries of Europe stand empty. Paintings are burnt by those who deem the modern element 'degenerate'. Now is the time for battle, not art, say the voices of reason.

We raise our voices in reply: art is our weapon! That artists in Europe suffer demonstrates how much they are feared by the Nazi menace we must oppose. To let fascists crush art beneath their jackboots, to fail to protect those who move us most profoundly, this would be a loss to humanity.

Among those who have fled persecution is Taras Kovalsky. Mr Kovalsky trained in France as part of the 1920s 'School of Paris' – émigré artists that included Messieurs Modigliani and Chagall.

Although two of the works displayed here appeared in London's International Surrealist Exhibition in 1936, Mr Kovalsky prefers not to align himself with any particular movement. However, it is right to say that among the Surrealists he found brother artists. Those who break down the barriers entrapping civilized man. Those who prize the irrational plumage of dreams, the rainbow lights of gasoline.

Visitors to this exhibition will be greeted by *Woman of the Roses*, an arcane image of the unconscious. Its faceless figure deftly undoes the conventions of portraiture. And how fine the roses, how blood-like, as compared to the ghostly pallor of the hands!

Cristabella the First shows a girl fiercely rendered in textured oil paint. With a wooden sword in her hand, she is not one of Mr Gainsborough's quiescent children with a beribboned hoop. This tangled tomboy is a feral Huckleberry Finn of the fairer sex. *The Burning* is born of similarly dark portents and dynamic colour (that inexhaustible orange! that viscous black!).

At a time when Europe is again enduring the spasms of war, these ominous images from an artist sprung from the crucible of conflict carry a formidable power – it is a rallying cry we cannot fail to answer!

TITLE

1. *Woman of the Roses*

DATE MEDIUM

1928 Oil

2. *Mademoiselle Aubert Takes Up Arms* (lent by the 1928 " Galerie Mouradian, Paris)
3. *Maudie at Chilcombe* 1928 "
4. *Zeus Encounters the Whale* 1931 "
5. *The White Horse that Displeased a King* 1930 "
6. *Miss Florence* (lent by Willoughby Seagrave, Esq., 1929 Drawing Dorset)
7. *Bones by Moonlight* 1931 Gouache
8. *Infinity Found in the Seashell* 1933 "
9. *Bill* (lent by the Zwemmer Gallery, London) 1929 "
10. *Cristabella the First* (lent by Willoughby Seagrave, 1929 Oil Esq., Dorset)
11. *Altercation in the Memory* 1935 Photographic collage
12. *The Burning* (lent by the Zwemmer Gallery, London) 1934 Oil

OBJECTS

13. Dorset hag stone
14. Fossil
15. Burnt weasel

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..... / / / / /
..... / / / /

Act Four

1942–1943

Captives

June, 1942

They see her coming across the field and still their movements. The sun is bright. Their eyes are shadowed beneath work caps. They wear regulation shirts and trousers. Some have twine for belts, some have the letters 'PW' stitched on to their sleeves. They have been camped in the field for three days now, but this is the first time Flossie has been to see them.

She notices their cautious, neutral silence as they watch her approach; how the warm air seems to solidify until she struggles to move through it, stumbling on the rutted earth.

A stout figure wearing British uniform removes his hat. 'Miss Seagrave,' he says. It is Sgt Bullock, his face florid in the heat.

'Good afternoon, Sergeant. I have come to collect the men who will be working in the stables,' says Flossie, wiping her hair from her eyes. 'Mr Brewer had to go to London.'

'Very well,' says Sgt Bullock. He turns to the German prisoners of war: five men who are living in a camp on the estate while being sent out to work on the nearby farms, where they are short of labour. Some of the men are to look after the few remaining horses at Chilcombe, which are also being put to work in the fields.

The prisoners are living in a large tent surrounded by wire fencing. They are guarded by Sgt Bullock and a pair of young British soldiers who have been billeted in Chilcombe Mell vicarage. Flossie does not know where the Germans have come from or what they did before they were taken captive, but she notices one has burns on his face and wonders if they were pilots.

Sgt Bullock, who is in charge, signals for two to step forward. As they do, they lower their heads and remove their hats: one is dark, the other blond, his hair almost white in the sun. 'They've been thoroughly checked,' says Sgt Bullock, as if the men themselves were horses.

'What are their names?' Flossie says. 'What are your names?'

The dark-haired man looks at her, his expression wary. 'Mattner,' he says.

The blond one is slower to raise his head but, when he does, he has a slight smile. 'I am Hans Krause,' he says, carefully pronouncing each word.

'I am Miss Seagrave,' she says.

'Miss Seagrave,' he says, and her name is unfamiliar in his accent.

Sgt Bullock scowls at the prisoners. 'One foot out of line and there'll be trouble.'

Flossie leads Sgt Bullock and the two Germans back across the field, over a stile, and towards the stables at the rear of the house: a strange parade. Approaching Chilcombe, she imagines her mother watching her – the way Rosalind would lean against the landing window, cigarette in hand, gazing flatly at the outside world. It is a curious thing to picture. Rosalind has been dead for over a year, although her bedroom still holds her scent. Betty says it is trapped in the upholstery fabric.

Whenever Flossie used to creep into her mother's bedroom as a child, it was always so suffused with perfume, she could feel its stickiness at the back of her throat. She would play with the make-up on the dressing table or open the wardrobe to run her fingers along the silky rainbow of dresses hanging inside. On a shelf above the clothes were hat boxes and a voluminous lace wedding veil that was a Seagrave family heirloom; Rosalind's clothes hung beneath its delicate netting like shimmering fish. After she died, Flossie donated Rosalind's best dresses to a second-hand shop in Dorchester and gave the rest to Betty, to be cut up and reused. They were too small for anyone else. She kept the veil.

Flossie leads Sgt Bullock and the Germans to the stables. Inside, the horses snicker for attention, their nostrils flaring. Sunbeams slant in through half-circle windows, columns of hayseed and dust.

'Have you worked with horses before?' asks Flossie.

Mattner nods. Krause grins. He has a gap in his front teeth. He reaches out to the nearest horse in its stall. 'My father has farm,' he says. His hands on the animal are expert, calm; it noisily gums his palm.

Flossie says, 'You will need to clean out the stables and make sure the horses are fed. We had two men who did this for us before, but they are – they had to leave us.' It seems oddly gauche to have to explain to the Germans they are short of staff because the staff are away fighting the Germans. She also isn't sure how much English they understand.

'These animals will need to get used to dragging a cart behind them,' says Sgt Bullock, dabbing his face with a handkerchief. 'You're lucky to still have them. The authorities have requisitioned most hunting horses. No room for luxuries when you're fighting a war.'

'I think my Uncle Willoughby had a word with the authorities,' says Flossie. 'He knows most of them.'

Sgt Bullock sniffs.

'Krause, Mattner, if you have any questions, do ask,' says Flossie. 'I can't speak German, but I'm sure we can muddle along together.'

Krause looks up from the horse and says, 'My English not good. But horse, for me, is home.' He claps one big hand on his chest, roughly where his heart is, and smiles at her.

‘Thank you, Krause,’ she says. ‘I think this will work out most amenably, don’t you, Sergeant?’

‘That remains to be seen, Miss Seagrave,’ says Sgt Bullock. ‘These prisoners have proved themselves competent workers in the fields. They may be of some use here.’

His words are designed to remind the men of their limited range. It offends her somehow, his reduction of their capabilities. ‘I’m sure they’ll be marvellous,’ she says, and hears her own English voice, high and girlish, echoing in the vaulted roof.

‘You two, wait outside,’ says Sgt Bullock. ‘Miss Seagrave and I have other matters to discuss.’

‘Do we?’ she says, as the Germans leave.

He turns to her. ‘I was led to understand that quarters were to be provided for myself inside of the main house. Earlier today I took the liberty of finding a suitable bedroom and have established myself in the unoccupied room above the dining room.’

‘That’s Digby’s room.’

‘It appeared to be wholly vacant.’

‘It is now, Sergeant Bullock, because Digby’s with the army in North Africa. But he will come back.’

‘I believe in other parts of England the country houses adjoining POW camps have been entirely taken over for the war effort. I am sure we can come to some less formal arrangement. Please, call me Terence.’

Krause and Mattner come to the stables every morning. After the first few visits, Sgt Bullock does not accompany them, preferring to oversee the prisoners working in the fields from the comfort of a fold-out canvas chair before returning to the house in the evening, where he has taken to sitting at the dining table, smoking cheroots and helping himself to Betty’s home-made parsnip wine while listening to the wireless. He is prone to making sweeping pronouncements about ‘the Yanks’ and ‘the Boche’ whenever they are mentioned, as if the BBC broadcasts were merely a prompt for him to provide his more knowledgeable opinions. Any dissenting viewpoint is met by blustery guffaws.

Flossie avoids him. He is a noxious, toad-like presence, squatting in her home. Whenever he sees her, he stands up and makes a movement towards the drinks cabinet, saying, ‘Can I offer you anything by way of refreshment, Miss Seagrave?’

She waves him away, a gesture she recognizes as her mother’s – not one she ever imagined she would need – saying, ‘Sergeant Bullock, if you’re going to smoke those things, I’d be grateful if you could open a window.’ Her tone of voice, she notices, is also borrowed from Rosalind.

‘He isn’t bothering you, is he?’ asks Betty, when they are drinking tea in the kitchen. ‘No funny business?’

‘No. I simply wish he weren’t here,’ says Flossie.

The irritation of Sgt Bullock’s presence is exacerbated by the fact both Mr Brewer and Maudie are absent – and it is only their absence that reveals what unexpected allies they have become. Mr Brewer has always been busy with the Home Guard, as well as running occasional mysterious errands for Perry, but now it is his profitable sideline in discreetly supplying expensive restaurants with unrationed eggs and poultry that takes up most of his time. Meanwhile, Maudie has gone off to Weymouth on fire watch duties, where she is spending her nights stationed on the roof of a building with a whistle (although Betty has made dark remarks about Maudie’s interest in defending Weymouth being more to do with the influx of sailors into the town than any kind of civic duty).

The evacuees have returned to London and so only Betty is left in the house. Now in her mid-forties, Betty has become a round hen of a woman, always clattering in the kitchen or complaining about her kidney troubles or fretting about her son being in the navy.

After Rosalind’s death, Betty seemed to descend immediately into middle age, almost as an act of protest. The common sense she had as a young woman solidified into pessimism, and the war and its tribulations have only served to reaffirm that life is disappointing, the newspapers full of lies, and nothing she does will make a blind bit of difference.

Flossie finds this sour fatalism exhausting, not to mention Betty’s inability to leave a kettle alone. There is Betty fussing in the bottom of the house, Sgt Bullock pontificating on the ground floor, and all that is left to Flossie is her mother’s bedroom (too full of her mother and too hot) and the attic (too full of her much-missed siblings and even hotter). She picks up her spade and heads outdoors.

Every morning, Flossie walks through the woods to The Whalebone Theatre, following the path through the trees. But the theatre is no longer a space for performance – it now overlooks a large vegetable plot, created and tended by first Betty, assisted by Maudie and Flossie, and now Flossie alone. Several of the bones are entwined with sweet peas, which twist their green tendrils around the whale’s ribs like ribbons round a maypole.

Flossie finds it hard but fulfilling work, nurturing her plot of earth. Betty was a no-nonsense but effective teacher of agriculture, having overseen the house’s kitchen garden for many years, and Flossie soon began to relish the satisfaction of seeing her own amateur efforts become edible. Her garden does not have the neat uniformity of Betty’s, which, despite no longer having gardeners to tend it, holds determinedly to its methodical Victorian design, with

soldierly rows of terracotta rhubarb forcers and espaliered apple trees trained to grow flat against the walls. But Flossie's garden, with its wayward mix of useful vegetables and sentimental flowers, is all hers.

It is peculiar, but the theatre has become a home from home for her again, as it was when she was a child, but now it is one she inhabits by herself. If the weather is decent, she will spend the whole day working outside, sitting in a comfy spot at the base of one of the bones to eat her packed lunch. If it rains, she will shelter in the barn, and if she wants a cup of tea, she will go into the cottage, where the kitchen is just about useable.

Both the barn and the cottage are still cluttered with miscellaneous pieces of theatrical equipment. Costumes and props. Dog-eared scripts. It gives the place a rather ghostly atmosphere, as if a performance had been abandoned halfway through, which, thinks Flossie with a guilty twinge, is not so far from the truth.

It had been getting harder and harder to find people willing to perform in Cristabel's productions. Harder still to find audiences who wanted to watch an amateur Shakespeare play in the rain when they could see Errol Flynn or Gracie Fields on the big screen in Dorchester. Digby was due to head off to university, to start a new life in Cambridge, and Flossie wanted to get married. She cannot imagine Cristabel without her theatre, but what is a theatre without a cast or audience? Then the war came, and everything was stopped, and nobody knew if it would start again.

Which is why gardens are so useful, thinks Flossie. You don't have to think about all the questions that hang over them. You only need think about digging and weeding the patch of soil at your feet.

When she has finished her toil, Flossie will walk back to Chilcombe to feed Mr Brewer's chickens, who are living in one of the smaller outbuildings that used to belong to the gardeners. The head gardener's old wooden desk is now covered by roosting birds; flowerpots and seed packets are scattered among feathers and eggs. The latter she will collect in a basket.

It is when she is here, at the back of the house, that Flossie will often see Krause and Mattner. Sometimes it is jarring to remember that they are the enemy, especially as Krause is so friendly. He always waves or lifts his work cap. She seems to see him more than she sees Mattner. Perhaps because he has lighter hair.

When she is passing the stables, she will sometimes see Krause working, his broad back bending as he checks the horses' hooves. Sometimes he turns, from that bent position, and smiles at her. There is an informality in this, somehow. Because looks should be returned face-to-face, upright, and yet here he is, grinning over his shoulder, a horse's hoof in his hand. She can't help but smile back.

‘Miss Seagrave,’ he will say, and it is like a joke between them, though she is not sure why.

‘Krause,’ she will reply, somehow incapable of saying anything else or doing anything other than smiling and drifting away, looking down at the eggs in her basket as if they had materialized out of thin air. Such curious objects: both beautiful and alien. When she touches them, they are still warm, newborn. She can’t remember what she is meant to be doing beyond laying her fingertips on the speckled shells of the eggs.

She is similarly befuddled one morning when Krause comes to help her with a heavy wheelbarrow. She can only wave her head slightly from side to side by way of thanks, as if she were the one with limited language. It is such an odd reaction, this failure to converse. She decides it must be a form of social anxiety; a dumbshow occasioned by the fact he is an enemy prisoner, making etiquette challenging.

When Sgt Bullock suggests that Krause, with his farming knowledge, could occasionally work at the vegetable patch, Flossie is so keen to signal that she is capable of coping with this unexpected proposal that she finds herself insisting upon it, in a haughty tone that surprises them both.

Sgt Bullock quickly agrees that yes, of course it must happen, although later that day, he becomes more pressing in his request that she listen to his after-dinner political monologue, and she feels these things are somehow connected, a form of realignment, so is unable to refuse.

When Krause first arrives at the theatre, Flossie has a sudden panic she has made a terrible mistake. She can hear Cristabel in her mind, furiously roaring about enemy aliens. But Krause, who is escorted by one of the British soldiers, is intrigued by the bones, and explaining about the theatre in a way he can understand, given the limitations of her German and his English, proves such an entertaining diversion, she soon forgets her doubts. The soldier seats himself in the cottage porch, half-heartedly watching them while practising card tricks.

Krause gets to work pulling up weeds with enthusiasm. ‘I always belief I would work on farm, but I did not belief it would be England,’ he laughs.

Flossie laughs too. ‘It is funny how things work out.’

‘How did you belief you would be?’ he asks.

‘Well, I didn’t think I would still be here, to be frank,’ Flossie replies. ‘I thought I’d do the usual things, you know. Be a debutante. Do you know what that means?’

The German shakes his head.

‘Well, debutantes are presented to members of the royal family and get proposed to by eligible young men, but I didn’t get to do that because of the war.’

‘Ah,’ says Krause, looking none the wiser.

Flossie mimes putting a wedding ring on her finger and tries again, a little louder. 'I thought I would find a husband. A kind one. Go and live in his house. Have children.'

'Now vegetables,' says Krause.

'Yes,' says Flossie, surveying her plot. 'Not what I expected, but I do like them. I suppose I never imagined I would be the only one left at Chilcombe. The theatre really belongs to my sister. But it's not a theatre any more, is it?'

'Garden,' says Krause cheerfully.

After being introduced to the vegetables, Krause comes striding down to the bones every few days, trailed by the bored young soldier with his pack of cards. Pleasingly, it transpires that Krause and Flossie work well together, establishing a shared language of smiles and nods over trowels and twine. Working side by side means Flossie does not have to look at his face often, so is able to keep her strange shyness in check, although she is very aware of the nearness of his face, in profile.

Krause knows more about practical tasks than she does but is considerate in showing her what needs to be done, rather than trying to take charge. He even politely pays attention when she shows him the 'Dig for Victory' leaflet, though it must be largely gibberish to him. She has carried it in her coat pocket since it was issued by the Ministry of Agriculture at the start of the war, as it includes a useful table stating when crops should be planted, and advice on how to have 'health-giving vegetables every week of the year', concluding: DIG WELL AND CROP WISELY. Although mystifying at first, it has proved invaluable.

Flossie even plucks up the courage to get the bus to Dorchester to buy some shirts and overalls, so she is properly outfitted for her labours. The woman in the shop says approvingly, 'You look like a Land Army girl, Miss Seagrave.' And she does. The practical clothes suit her far better than the flouncy garments her mother used to buy for her. The Flossie in the changing room mirror looks freckled and strong. Sleeves rolled up. Hair tied back in a headscarf. A Land Army girl.

Flossie looks again at her reflection. She seeks out mirrors more frequently these days, but it is not in order to find her flaws, as it always used to be. Beyond her enjoyment of her new clothes, there is something else: a seriousness in her gaze that her eyes keep wanting to meet, as if she and her reflection were engaged in some kind of ongoing silent exchange.

One afternoon, when she and Krause are digging a new bed for lettuce, they hear the noise of a fighter plane. It is a throaty purring, like a large lawnmower, that comes and goes on the wind. They look up and see it coming over the Ridgeway, smoke pouring from its tail.

Though fighter planes in the skies above Dorset are no longer as common as they were at the start of the war, some still occasionally appear, and every time she sees one, Flossie is astonished by how close they come – flying low across the valley like Willoughby used to do, sending the rooks fleeing from the trees. This one now, a Messerschmitt with its engine guttering, passing so closely over their heads that Flossie can see the two crewmen in the cockpit. She watches as the plane heads out to sea, losing altitude rapidly. She hears Krause sigh, and wonders if they will be the last people to see the men alive.

Once, in the summer of 1940, she had been walking on Ceal Head when a German bomber roared overhead, pursued by a Spitfire. Both flew out of sight and then, a short while later, she saw the Spitfire return, and the pilot did a victory roll across the bay, turning effortlessly in the sky like an otter corkscrewing through water. It was as if he were performing his celebration just for her, and she jumped and waved at him. At that time, when everything had been so dark and precarious, it had been a moment of pure joy. She isn't sure she would feel the same now.

‘Were you a pilot?’ says Flossie. She points up.

Krause shakes his head, points down, and makes a gesture like a wavy sea. ‘*U-Boot.*’

‘A submarine. Gosh. Did you like it?’ she asks.

He laughs and shakes his head again, before putting both hands over his head and ducking down, in a gesture indicating a cramped space.

‘Yes,’ she says, ‘you are tall.’ She reaches her hand up above his head, as if measuring his height. They both laugh. He holds his hand out over her head, and gives a shrug, to indicate that she is not quite so tall. They laugh again. But then there is something about the fact they have drawn attention to the whereabouts of his head in relation to hers, that makes them suddenly embarrassed, and they turn quickly back to their work.

He is German. He is the enemy. Cristabel's voice in her head frequently reminds her of this. She remembers too Rosalind's insistence that she only socialize with nice young men from good families. Krause, the son of a farmer, would not be acceptable. But if he wasn't, how would it be?

When Flossie pictures herself and Krause under other circumstances, she imagines meeting at a railway station somewhere, or in a restaurant. She spends a great deal of time considering what she might look like, stepping off a train or pushing open a restaurant door, and walking towards him. In these imaginary scenes, she does not summon up his face or his body, she sees only herself, as seen by him. He exists in these daydreams as an audience member, an admirer.

But there are other times when he comes into her mind unbidden. Sometimes, very early in the morning, before she has properly woken up, she will

have the sense of him there, behind her closed eyelids. An outline against sunlight. His back and shoulders. She can't remember if she has ever seen this in real life, but it is as vivid as if she had. More vivid, in fact, as it carries with it a dream's strangely breathing weight, as if it were a living moment unlocked in the shifting time between sleep and consciousness.

She is grateful they cannot have much conversation as, increasingly, she does not want to have much conversation with anyone. When she and Krause finish their work, he is escorted by the British soldier back to the camp for his evening rations: soup with bread and margarine. After he has gone, Flossie will delay going back into the house in favour of wandering to the edge of the lawn, where she will sprawl in the shade beneath the trees, with an open book she does not read but uses as an occasional defence against Sgt Bullock or Betty.

Flat on her stomach with her chin propped on her elbows, Flossie will watch the dusk fall. From her low angle, the unmown lawn is a dense jungle, the house barely visible through the greenery, like Sleeping Beauty's castle. With nobody to prune them, the roses by the front door are overextending themselves, and the formal hedges have gone haywire, having a hundred silly ideas at once, multiple branches springing loose from their preset shapes. Insects zip about unchecked, drawing freehand vectors in the last of the light.

Flossie rests her head on her arms and squints into the setting sun, her eyelashes flickering at the edge of her vision. Her own flesh is very present and close. The cool softness of her upper arm against her mouth, her breath in the cave of her arms. She presses her open lips to her skin to see how it feels, closes her eyes. The shifting whisper of long grass. The rapid beating of a blackbird's wings as it suddenly takes flight.

Flossie's Diary

July, 1942

1st

Worked at vegetable patch all day. Sgt Bullock filling house with smoke from his revolting cheroots like a satanic mill until Betty persuaded him to go to the pub.

2nd

Very hot. Dug onions. Mr Churchill said on the BBC that we are 'still fighting for our lives'. Resolved to dig more onions. Sgt Bullock keen on The Shipwreck and will be taking his evening meals there from now on. A nation rejoices!

3rd

Mr Brewer back from London with a box of tinned peaches. Air raid on Weymouth last night. Thought of Maudie on her rooftop and said a prayer. Betty says I shouldn't worry as Maudie has more lives than a cat. The German word for sunshine is 'Sonnenschein'.

5th

Teaching Krause about The Wizard of Oz. Told him I've seen it five times. Entertained ourselves by trying to sing 'If I Only Had A Brain'. Krause slightly handicapped by not understanding the words, though this made him rather Scarecrow-y.

9th

Beautiful Schumann concerto on the radio. Tried to play it on the piano afterwards. Most of my favourite composers are German. I said as much to Mr Brewer and he raised an eyebrow in that 'well, well, well' way of his.

11th

Got the gramophone from Mother's room to play Schumann records in the kitchen. D and G are my favourite keys. One yearning, one reassuring. Betty says it all sounds the same to her.

12th

Cary Grant got married again. I lit a candle and had a moment of mourning. Letter from dear Myrtle. She says there is no fruit left in London, only cardboard bananas in the shop windows. Imagine! She intends to wear some as earrings.

13th

Sgt Bullock, Mr Brewer and Betty went to the pub, so I had a bath in Mother's bathroom. Took the gramophone with me. Arranged some roses in

a jar on the window sill and they caught the evening sun perfectly. Strange to have lovely moments during a war. Never used to like being in the house on my own, but I do now. Sometimes.

16th

Radishes for Mr Churchill. The German for freckle is 'Sommersprosse'. Hans knows the English words for freckle, sunshine, rainbow and scarecrow. He can say 'There's no place like home' like a Teutonic Judy Garland.

17th

Betty suggested we sell some vegetables to her cousin who is a greengrocer in Dorchester. At first, we couldn't think how to get them there, but clever Hans pointed out there is an old horse-drawn carriage at the back of the stables. Mr Brewer retrieved a dead mouse from inside it and said, 'Maybe you shall go to the ball, Cinderella.'

20th

Postcard from Digby! Such joy to have even a few words from him. I cried. Sometimes I forget how much I miss him. I know it's ridiculous, but I do wish he could meet Hans. They'd get on so well.

24th

Hans tried to tell me a German joke about cabbage today. He was laughing so much he could hardly speak. I didn't understand any of it but couldn't help but laugh too. It does make the day go quickly when you can laugh. Runner beans have come on wonderfully.

25th

Betty has spoken to her cousin and he will buy our vegetables! We are open for business! Hans and I spent the day loading the carriage for our inaugural delivery trip. Our soldier chaperone is coming with us. Useful to have another pair of hands. Betty said when Mother and Father were married, they arrived at Chilcombe in the carriage. How romantic!

26th

Well, we made it to Dorchester and back. It was not what I expected. I've become so used to Hans, I had forgotten that some people might not like to see a German. He took it much better than I did.

30th

I must try to keep up my diary. I've never known how to fit a day into a few lines. Words are quite inadequate, such a lot of the time.

Tempo Rubato

August, 1942

All day they have been working outside in the heat. The sky a relentless blue. When the sun finally starts to set, they walk back through the woods pushing a wheelbarrow full of radishes and runner beans, trailed by the soldier. The footpath is cracked and dusty. Although there are a few weeks left of summer, the countryside is already drying out. The fields around Chilcombe are pale as straw, the hedgerows full of papery seedpods and feathery grasses; things are coming apart from themselves, fraying at the edges.

As they arrive at the front lawn, Flossie allows herself to remember that the house is empty. Mr and Mrs Brewer have gone to the cinema to see *One of Our Aircraft Is Missing*, and Mr Brewer invited Sgt Bullock to join them. Sgt Bullock said he would be grateful for an evening's entertainment and off they went.

There had been a look during that conversation. Mr Brewer had looked at her for a moment. It was a look notable only for its perfect blankness. It said nothing at all. There is, Flossie realizes, a power in saying nothing at all. She is becoming more familiar with silences, learning there are many different kinds.

Flossie and Hans take the wheelbarrow round to the outbuildings at the back of the house, where nettles are sprouting from cracks in the flagstones. Together they wordlessly load the vegetables into the wooden crates waiting in the carriage. Tomorrow, Flossie and Mr Brewer will be taking the carriage and its cargo to Dorchester.

Then Hans goes into the stables to check on the horses, while Flossie goes into the kitchen to wash her hands in the old Belfast sink that is as big as a cattle trough and filled with unwashed saucepans. The soldier sticks his head through the door and says he's going to nip down to the village for a pint. He has taken to doing this most days and she had hoped he would today.

'It's been such a hot day, you probably need a drink,' says Flossie, in a voice that seems too loud for the kitchen. She peers into the ancient mirror that hangs on the wall. The glass is dull and grease-stained, but in its murky depths she spies herself: rosy, suntanned, her hair tied back in a yellow headscarf.

She runs the tap and fills two tin mugs full of cold water, then goes to the back door. When Hans emerges from the stables, she holds them up and makes a movement with her head that means: come in. He frowns slightly, then, wiping his hands on his trousers, follows her into the kitchen. She hands him a mug, saying, 'The house is empty. They've all gone.'

She watches as he looks around. It is a room he has never been in before: a cavernous tunnel filled with black ovens and decorated with a ragged Union Jack

flag Betty has pinned to one wall, along with patriotic photographs from the picture papers. A pile of grubby tea towels lies on the flagstones, waiting to be laundered, and the feathers from a plucked chicken drift about the floor. The big kitchen table is covered with magazines, books, tobacco tins, gramophone records and an old wine cooler filled with onions. The copper jelly moulds that used to line the high shelves now balance by the sink, holding soil and seedlings.

Flossie puts the mugs on the table and gestures to say he should sit down. She finds bread and a jar of shrimp paste and makes thick, amateurish sandwiches, which they eat in contented quiet. She sees him look at the clock. She does not want to get him into trouble, but she would like to show him the main house, so, after they have eaten, she beckons him to follow her along the corridor and up the narrow stairs to the Oak Hall, and he does.

Hans enters the hall, eyeing the fireplace and the wood panelling, looking up at the tarpaulin covering the hole where the cupola used to be. He is frowning but does not appear overawed. He glances at her, and she realizes that his concern is not whether he should be allowed in the house, but whether she is doing something that might reflect badly on her.

‘I thought you might like to look round,’ she says.

Hans walks to the grand piano, running his hand along it in such a familiar way she suddenly knows there is a piano somewhere in Germany he is touching now. He points at the piano and says, ‘You?’

She nods.

He points at it again and she laughs. He does it again, and she laughs even more, then she pulls out the piano stool and sits down, saying, ‘Well, why not?’

Hans looks shy for a moment. ‘I hear,’ he says.

‘I beg your pardon?’

He mimes playing a piano then points towards the back of the building. ‘In the stables. I hear you play. Is good.’ He cups one hand behind his ear and nods encouragingly. They are formal in this echoing hall in a way they have not been before.

She opens the piano lid. She has, once or twice or ten times, imagined playing in front of him. How strange to find herself doing it in reality. The grandfather clock ticks like a metronome.

For Flossie, playing the piano involves an element of willed forgetting. She finds it different to acting. Whenever she performed in her siblings’ theatrical productions, she would be constantly going over her lines, because if she stopped thinking about them, she would lose them for ever. It is the same anxiety she feels when holding a birthday cake with lit and melting candles: that there is a rapidly closing window of opportunity for things to work out well.

But while acting required all its component parts to be dragged into her mind and forcibly held there, music requires blankness. Whenever she is ready to play a piece, she will sit at the piano, rest her hands on the keys, close her eyes and wait until she can feel nothing. Pure emptiness. Then she can begin.

With nothing in her mind, how does she know where to begin? (She just does.) How do her hands move without instruction? (They just do.) She does not look at her sheet music when she plays, and reproducing what it transcribes is not an act of memory, it is something else. In fact, if she finds herself consciously trying to recall the music as written, she will invariably hit a wrong note. Instead, with one foot tapping gently to keep time, she angles her head to one side, as if waiting to hear it somewhere in the distance. It is like that, if it is like anything: a listening; an admittance.

She closes her eyes. There is something beating in her ribcage that is high and fluttering and she calms it with her breath, waits till it comes.

Throughout her life, the piano has been a friend to Flossie. A place to sit when she could not settle. A place to go when she had no other place. As a child and as a young woman, she could often be seen perched on the piano stool, playing music to herself.

A few weeks before she died, Rosalind, wearing a white dress that clung to her like pouring cream, had found Flossie there. 'Playing the piano in an empty room is rather tragic, darling. Why don't you come through to the drawing room? There's quite a crowd this evening. Myrtle's going to recite some poems about the end of civilization.'

It was February. Heavy rain had rattled noisily against the windows.

'I'm all right,' Flossie said, pressing down on a single note. She could never play properly in front of her mother.

'You're playing very quietly.'

'I'm not really playing anything.'

'I remember my mother always told me to "keep myself up to concert pitch",' said Rosalind, straightening one of the photographs on top of the piano. 'I didn't even play an instrument.'

'I'm all right,' said Flossie.

'If you're sure.' Her mother's voice was somehow insubstantial. The sound of the rain teeming down outside seemed clearer: its consistency and thoroughness. Rosalind belonged to the murmur of exclusive rooms with cleverly positioned lamps and curtains drawn against the weather, where women would arrange themselves and men would watch. A closed circuit.

For a moment, Flossie considered offering to play something for her mother's guests. Long enough had passed since the last time she suggested it that Rosalind might think it an entirely new idea and therefore novel enough to be

included in her evening. The words reached Flossie's mouth but went no further. She tapped her fingernails quietly on the ivory keys.

Rosalind glanced at her, as if Flossie had said something, and for a second, they eyed each across their respective silences until Rosalind turned to look at her reflection in the surface of the piano, then left without a word, leaving Flossie to the piano and the rain.

When she reaches the end of the piece, Flossie plays the final chord, then lifts her hands. The music hangs in the air, leaving a silence that thrums slightly, charged by the sound that has travelled through it. When she looks at Hans, his eyes are shining. 'Bach,' he says, his voice shaky.

It occurs to Flossie that the music she adores may contain other places and times for him. When she thinks of Germany, she sees lines of troops goose-stepping across cinema screens, but somewhere behind that must be the Krause family farm – where his father keeps horses. She imagines an older man with broad shoulders like Hans, carrying hay.

'I didn't mean to make you sad,' she says, grimacing apologetically.

He mimes playing the piano. 'My grandmother.' Then he puts one hand on his heart and pats, as if reassuring it.

Flossie closes the piano. There is an entanglement around her then, made up of competing impulses, the most insistent of which is telling her to be a gracious hostess, to escort her guest to the drawing room and offer him a drink. But that is what the house expects her to do, and already they are somewhere outside what is expected, and she does not want to go back.

She does not see him as a guest to be charmed. Nor does she see him as a prisoner to be controlled or feared or shouted at in the street. She sees him as someone who, through no fault of his own, has found himself at Chilcombe and is trying to make the best of it – as she does. She sees Hans Krause, who helps her with the vegetables, who is kind to the horses, who sings like the Scarecrow, who makes her laugh.

'Let's go out,' she says and goes to the front door, feeling a twinge of regret that she must always be the one who leads. It is with this in mind that she pauses in the doorway to allow him to catch up with her, and then deliberately walks at his side, matching his pace as they cross the lawn. The afternoon has become evening, golden and full of birdsong, and they head through the dappled woods, taking the route they always take.

On the narrow path, they walk side by side, and occasionally bump arms, at first accidentally, then deliberately, jokily; then deliberately, fondly; then deliberately, quietly, until the only thing left is for the hands that keep brushing past each other to seek each other out and hold on. With hands clasped, they continue to walk along the path, looking straight ahead, as if unable to admit to

their hands' odd behaviour. Their hands, however, have no such compunctions – they squeeze each other and intertwine their fingers, as familiarly as old acquaintances.

Having become joined in this way, it is easy for Flossie to pull Hans past the bones and the vegetables, and down to the sea. She has no reason to make him go there, but there is a pleasure in pulling his hand, in taking him somewhere. The beach is empty, and a fresh breeze comes off the water. In contrast to the straw-yellow, sun-parched land, the sea is a deep, vivid blue. From all around the bay comes the plunge and fizz of waves reaching the pebbles then sliding back into the ocean.

Coils of barbed wire have been put along the top of the beach, running behind a row of upturned fishing boats. Up on Ceal Head there is a new brick pillbox, a lookout position usually occupied by a man from the Home Guard. They both glance towards it, then Flossie taps Hans's arm, to remind him of the faded letters stitched on to his shirtsleeve: PW. He covers them with his hand, then, with a curious courtesy, turns away from her to pull his shirt over his head. She is startled for a moment, until he nods at the sea. Then she understands: they are a couple from the village, stealing down to the beach for an evening swim.

His chest is ghostly white compared to his tanned face and forearms. With an impish grin, he quickly pulls off the rest of his clothes – dusty boots, work trousers, greying underwear – and runs naked across the pebbles to the sea. Flossie is too surprised to be outraged. His spontaneous whoop of joy as he crashes into the water makes her laugh out loud, then she holds her hands to her face and looks around. The beach is still empty.

Hans splashes happily about like a dog, then swims away from the shore, before turning to look at her from the water. It is as if the change of element has released him: his open face, always quick to smile, has a new expression. He is no longer earth-bound, no longer on English soil. He beckons her.

Once again, it seems her hands have a measure of independence. She is still looking at Hans in the water, feeling astonished by his daring, but her fingers have begun unbuttoning her blouse from top to bottom. All her buttons are dealt with in this way, clasps and zips too. If she doesn't look down at herself, it is easy to take the undone items off, one by one, and allow them to drop to the beach.

Keeping her underwear on, she steps gingerly down the shingle to the water's edge. She has never swum naked, not even as a child. Digby and Cristabel always did, but Flossie was more modest. (Although, it occurs to her as she wades into the sea, it seems unlikely that either Digby or Cristabel have ever been swimming with a naked German prisoner of war.)

The water is colder than she expects. She finds herself on tiptoe, gasping, but forces herself to submerge. She swims briskly out to where Hans stands, calling,

‘I can’t remember the last time I swam in the sea!’ as if they were on a day trip. He gestures at her head, drawing her attention to the fact she is still wearing her headscarf. She tries, ineffectually, to untie it, while standing in a slightly huddled position in the water to keep herself under the surface, until he bends down to her height and reaches around her neck with both hands to gently unknot it.

Once again, it seems easier, as his arms are already encircling her, for him to simply rest his hands at the nape of her neck, one thumb softly stroking the skin it finds there. And as their faces are now so close, it seems natural for him to lean in quickly, as if ducking under something, to press his mouth to hers.

They stay in this position, their bodies carefully held apart, as the sea moves around them, but their kiss too has its own momentum, and it impels them to inch their feet closer until their bodies meet underwater and above. Flossie presses herself against him, firstly, to conceal herself, and secondly, later, because she wants to.

After some time, he hands her the headscarf. ‘I might as well have kept it on my head,’ she says, and finds her voice superfluous. Conversation, language, English – it seems unnecessary now. She has another way. A language-less language in which she wants to tell him many things. She touches his chest, his neck, his face; runs her fingers along his mouth.

They swim further out, then bob in the water like seals, looking back at the shoreline. The beach appears very far away, in the same way that their bodies seem distant when seen underwater. How easy it is to separate, from the land, from the shape of yourself. England is an unprepossessing layer of beige and green; it hardly seems worth fighting over. They move together and he holds her face in his hands as they kiss. The lavish freedom of the sea. Its lifting freedom.

But the sun is sinking, and they must go back. She can see it in the set of his jaw. She can feel it in the tight ache in her chest. She smiles at him and taps an imaginary watch on her wrist. When they return to the shore, he helps her up the steep rise out of the water, then steps back to look at her as she stands there, with the sea behind her. He holds up an imaginary camera. She does not fold her arms across her chest, as her internal voice is telling her to; instead, she places her hands on her hips and raises her chin. There, she thinks. For you.

‘*Schöne,*’ he says.

Then the moment is gone, and they are scrambling up the pebbles and hastily pulling their clothes on to wet bodies and squelching damp feet into recalcitrant shoes. They head back through the woods, solemnly holding hands like a couple going to a railway station to say goodbye. At the edge of the lawn, he strokes smooth one of her wayward pieces of hair, and it is the most loving way anybody has ever touched her. Then they let go of each other’s hands and Flossie walks back across the lawn to the house and Hans takes the path that leads to the fields.

The Sun and the Moon

September, 1942

Somehow, it is never a surprise to look up and see Colonel Peregrine Drake. He has the rare quality of being able to materialize expectedly. Cristabel, having tripped on an unlit staircase and broken her wrist, is skulking about the gardens of Bentley Priory on a sunny day in early September, ineffectually raking leaves with her left hand, when she glances up to see him strolling towards her.

‘Good afternoon, Section Officer Seagrave,’ he says. ‘Never had you pegged as a gardener.’

‘I’m not,’ she replies. ‘Only doing it till this gets better.’ She waves her plaster cast at him.

‘How long till they let you back to work?’

‘It’s a straightforward break.’

‘Of course it is.’

‘Should be healed after four very dull weeks.’

‘How about a trip back to Chilcombe?’

‘I would need to book leave.’

‘I’ve already spoken to your commanding officer. He agreed an angry and wounded Cristabel Seagrave is better off spending a few days in the country than stamping about here. Leon’s waiting round the front with the car. Grab your things.’

The car is a military staff car, a khaki-green Humber, with a long bonnet and large mudguards. The engine is running: an efficient rumble. As Cristabel approaches, she sees a uniformed Leon smoking in the driver’s seat, while Perry is in the passenger seat, rifling through a file of documents. Cristabel opens the rear passenger door, throws her kitbag on to the back seat, then clambers in.

‘Off we go,’ says Perry, closing his file, and the vehicle accelerates down the drive in a swirl of leaves.

Cristabel looks out of the window as they travel through the neighbouring villages. It is the civilian world, preoccupied and unknowing, no longer one they inhabit: a place of ration books and tiled fireplaces and raffles for the local Spitfire Fund.

She catches Leon looking at her in the rear-view mirror. She returns his gaze directly, with eyebrows raised, before turning purposefully to the window. When she glances back, some moments later, he appears to be watching the road, but then flicks his gaze to the mirror, to let her know he knows she has looked. His half-smile is infuriating. She is aware of the peculiar inequality of being a woman

transported in the back of a car, with two men in the front. She wants to fold her arms, but her plaster cast makes it difficult.

‘Digby’s at Chilcombe,’ says Perry, turning to face her.

‘What? He’s back from Africa?’

‘In one piece too.’

Cristabel lets out a breath. ‘Thank heavens.’

Perry turns back to the front, saying, ‘Lieutenant Seagrave has been in England for a while actually, but we’ve kept him busy. Additional training. He’ll be coming with me tomorrow, but I thought you might like to see him first.’

‘Thank you,’ she says. ‘What sort of training?’

‘Additional,’ Perry replies, with a smile in his voice.

They drive through Middlesex and Hampshire, then descend into the winding lanes of Dorset. Cristabel is aware that Leon looks at her occasionally but does not mind so much now. They head south, passing thatched cottages, post offices, army camps. Three years of war has made the county look weary: the paintwork on pubs is peeling; outdated War Office posters flap from telegraph poles. There are hardly any other vehicles on the roads, just the odd bus or military truck and, once or twice, a horse-drawn wagon piled high with hay.

When they come up over the Ridgeway, it is late afternoon. Sheep are scattered along its high top, grazing on the burial mounds, while calling gulls pass overhead. The sloping fields are a gently rolling eiderdown, and the sea in the distance is hazy and shining, appearing to evaporate upwards into a sky that is sherbet-striped in pink, amber and blue.

They swoop into the valley and through the village and up the winding driveway to Chilcombe where Mr Brewer, in a greatcoat and bowler hat, is waiting for them outside the house. Leon turns off the engine and gets out of the car to open the door for Perry, while nodding at Mr Brewer.

Perry collects his files, saying, ‘How peculiar to arrive at Chilcombe with no Mr or Mrs Seagrave to greet us.’

‘I’m here,’ says Cristabel, extricating herself from the back of the car before Leon can open the door for her.

‘Colonel Drake,’ says Mr Brewer.

‘Always a pleasure, Bill,’ replies Perry.

At that moment, Flossie appears in the doorway carrying a bundle of firewood and wearing canvas dungarees tucked into an old pair of riding boots. ‘Is that Crista?’ she says. ‘Oh, it is! It is!’

The firewood is dropped and Cristabel finds herself unceremoniously pulled into the arms of her half-sister, who is saying, ‘I know you don’t like emotional scenes, but I can’t help myself, you’ll have to put up with it. Oh, you feel skinny, Crista, are you eating properly? Is your arm all right? I’ll stop squeezing now.’

Come inside, come inside. The fire's lit in the kitchen. Hello, Perry. Hello, Leon. Gosh, don't you look smart in your uniforms.'

They file into Chilcombe, which Cristabel notices has reversed from its previous state. Before the war, the working elements of the house were kept out of sight downstairs, while the rooms above were opulent scenes of leisure. But now the main rooms have become dark storage spaces full of unused furniture and sacks of potatoes, while the heart of the house has sunk to the servants' kitchen.

Betty is there to welcome them, wearing a floral apron and fussing with the kettle, while Mr Brewer shoos a chicken outside, then gestures for the new arrivals to sit at the cluttered table. There is the scraping of a chair as Sgt Bullock attempts to get to his feet with a sloshing glass of parsnip wine in one hand; Hans is waiting at the back door with a bucket of apples, and they are all haughtily observed by a tabby cat perched by the sink. Flossie lights a candle squeezed into an empty brandy bottle, and this throws its flickering half-light around the subterranean kitchen on to the current inhabitants of Chilcombe: a makeshift, make-do-and-mend scratch band, holed up at the perilous edge of England.

'Where's Digby?' says Cristabel.

'Gone for a walk up the Ridgeway,' says Flossie. 'He'll be thrilled to see you. We didn't know you were coming too.'

Perry takes the seat nearest the range as Sgt Bullock, who has managed to become vertical, salutes.

'Sit down, man,' says Perry. 'No need to stand on ceremony.'

'An honour, Colonel Drake,' says Sgt Bullock, reseating himself.

Leon has found a wall to lean against, where Mr Brewer seeks him out. They shake hands, offer each other cigarettes. Watching them, Cristabel realizes that, despite their differences, they are of a type: middlemen, fixers. Both have found their way into the armed forces, where their particular skills could be polished and legitimized: Mr Brewer was Perry's batman in the first war; Leon fulfils a similar role now.

She tries to imagine the confidences that pass between them, the nature of their work. Leon, a cigarette held rakishly in his mouth, senses her watching and turns his eyes on her. She gives her blue WAAF jacket a tug with her left hand to straighten it out, then stands behind Perry's chair with her arms behind her back.

'You must be one of the prisoners,' says Perry, as Hans is turning to leave. It is a very Perryish manoeuvre, to find the person trying to depart and to pin them, like a butterfly, in place. Perry switches smoothly into German to say, 'I hear you've made yourself quite indispensable.'

Hans begins to back away, saying in German: 'Thank you, sir. I'm merely trying to repay the kindnesses that have been shown to me.'

‘He’ll be returning to the camp now,’ says Sgt Bullock.

‘Krause is a harmless lad,’ says Mr Brewer.

Perry gestures to the seat next to him. ‘Why don’t you join us, Krause?’

‘I won’t have enough food if the German’s staying,’ says Betty.

‘Leon, pop back to the car – there’s a box containing some provisions for Mrs Brewer,’ says Perry. ‘We can take tea in the kitchen. Won’t that be novel?’

‘We always do, these days,’ says Flossie. ‘I can’t imagine eating anywhere else. The dining room seems miles away.’

‘Food was always half cold by the time we got it there,’ says Betty.

There is a convivial moving around and organizing, while places are taken, and tea is served. Hans sits down next to Perry and the tabby hops on to his lap. Hans strokes the cat as Perry quizzes him genially on whether he ever hears from his family in Germany, while Betty loudly gives her opinion of that unspeakable man Adolf Hitler. There then follows an exclaiming over and sharing out of the edible goodies Perry has brought with him – fruit cake and chocolate bars – followed by Betty insisting that Perry accept a basket of fresh eggs in return, which Perry holds politely on his lap until Leon takes it out of his hands.

Amid general conversation and cake sampling, Cristabel hears the German say to Flossie, ‘The cat sleeps again, Flossie,’ and sees her sister laugh, and she wonders at this familiarity with a member of the enemy forces.

‘Where did the cat come from?’ Cristabel asks.

‘He turned up in the stables,’ says Flossie. ‘Hans feeds him scraps from his rations. We’re going to call him Toto.’

‘Miss Flossie always did have a soft heart,’ says Betty, putting a knitted cosy on the teapot. ‘Remember how she would look after that awful elephant as if it were a living creature.’

Flossie laughs. ‘It’s true. I would put food in his mouth, and it would go all rotten and I’d have to take it out again.’

Leon, in his dark voice, adds, ‘I had to pull that elephant around for hours when we did the plays. It was a horse and it was a camel and it was a ship and it was a dragon.’

‘Sometimes Digby would be riding on it,’ says Flossie.

‘Sometimes Cristabel would be standing on it giving orders,’ adds Perry, looking at her.

‘I’m going to walk up the hill to find Digs,’ says Cristabel.

‘I’ll come,’ says Flossie.

Flossie and Cristabel walk out together. They leave the estate, circle the edge of the village, then head towards the steep footpath that leads up to the Ridgeway, Flossie striding ahead in her boots. ‘Watch that stile, the bottom plank is loose,’

she says at one point, comfortably at home in the countryside in a way Cristabel has not seen before.

The footpath zigzags through gorse and brambles as it rises up the steep escarpment and, when they look back, the evening sunlight is doing thoroughgoing work, lovingly picking out the lines of strip lynchets on the fields below – marks left by those who farmed the valley thousands of years before. The path itself is ancient, a chalk footway engraved on the land.

They climb high enough that they can look down on a mob of rooks pursuing a kestrel round the valley: a swooping avian dogfight. At the top of the path is a prehistoric burial mound, a ten-foot-high grassy lump the shape of an upturned bowl, on the summit of which lies Digby. He is lying flat on his back, so still and tranquil he must be asleep.

Cristabel scrambles unceremoniously up to him, ending up on her knees by his side as he rests there, his eyes closed. Flossie follows but waits a little way back. For here is the brother. The deeply dreaming brother. He is narrower, stronger. His dark hair military short. He is wearing his army boots together with some old clothes of Willoughby's: baggy flannel trousers and a loose white shirt, sleeves rolled up to reveal tanned forearms. He has one hand flung above his head, as he did when sleeping as a child. He lies beside a small cairn of cigarette ends, and the rich light of the setting sun casts him in bronze.

'Digs,' says Cristabel. He stirs and opens his eyes, and there is no moment of surprise, just a faithful look of recognition, as if he had always known she would be there when he woke. He pushes himself up and they hug each other like sailors, with a side-to-side motion, slapping each other on the back, Digby receiving some awkward thumps from Cristabel's plaster cast. She can feel him bury his face in her shoulder for a moment, hears him exhale a muffled 'Crista'. Then Flossie is there with her arms around them both, squeezing them furiously, before they all pull apart and look at each other, and suddenly Digby's face is changed and there is an elusiveness in his expression, a tired squint.

'Oh, my sisters,' he says. 'Crista, have you hurt yourself? What's wrong with your arm?'

'It's nothing,' she says. 'Tripped over.'

'You look wonderful in your uniform,' he says. 'It suits you perfectly.'

'Isn't Digby brown?' says Flossie. 'Betty says he looks like an Arab.'

'Very brown,' says Cristabel. 'Tired too. Those are sizeable bags under your eyes, Digs. Are you sleeping all right?'

'Hard to sleep in the desert,' he says, then smiles. 'I've thought about coming home so often and now I'm here, it doesn't seem real. Let's lie down for a moment. It's heavenly to watch the seagulls flying overhead.'

The trio lie down alongside each other and look up at the sky.

‘Do you remember when we all had measles?’ Digby says.

‘I was just thinking that,’ says Flossie. ‘They let us share one of the big beds.’

‘I liked that,’ he says, taking a hand from each of them.

‘Three spotty dormice curled up together,’ says Flossie.

‘My eyes were too sore to read so Crista read us *The Iliad*,’ says Digby, ‘and Floss sang her favourite Christmas carols.’

“‘God rest ye merry gentlemen, let nothing you dismaaaaaay,’” sings Flossie in her sweet contralto.

They lie in contented silence, Cristabel occasionally glancing at Digby. It is such sustenance to see him. The actual him. After so many months.

‘How peaceful it is,’ says Digby. ‘I haven’t been in a peaceful place for a long time. When I was walking up here, I saw some smoke coming from the village, and I assumed it must be something on fire. An aeroplane or a tank. It was only a bonfire.’

‘What was it like over there, Digs?’ says Cristabel.

‘Hot,’ he replies, pulling a crumpled pack of cigarettes from his shirt pocket. ‘Sandy. Beautiful. Everything shimmered and moved. Sometimes I could see why Father loved it, but sometimes it was hell.’

‘Hell?’ says Flossie.

‘My men were burnt alive in their tanks. I could hear them. I couldn’t do anything about it.’

‘Goodness, how awful.’

‘I don’t mean to be gruesome, Floss, but that’s the truth of it. I wish it wasn’t.’

‘The BBC say the Allies are winning in North Africa,’ says Cristabel.

‘Hard to tell when you’re there,’ says Digby, lighting his cigarette. His voice is airy, strangely nonchalant.

Cristabel looks at him. ‘Perry says you’ve been doing extra training. Has he got you some sort of special position?’

‘You know, Mother always wanted Perry to find me a “special position”,’ says Digby. ‘Although I think when she said “special”, she actually meant “safe”.’

‘What kind of special position?’ asks Flossie.

‘Oh, never mind about that,’ says Digby, tapping his cigarette pack with his lighter. ‘Where did you get those handsome boots, Floss?’

‘I found them in the stables. I think they were my father’s. Stuffed the toes with newspaper. Rather smart, don’t you think?’ Flossie clicks her heels together.

‘Did your German friend teach you that?’ says Cristabel.

Flossie blushes. ‘Don’t be like that, Crista. He’s not one of those.’

‘Krause’s been nothing but charming to me. If Floss likes him, so do I,’ says Digby. After a moment, he adds, ‘I keep expecting to hear the church bells ring, but they don’t any more, do they?’

‘They haven’t rung for years,’ says Flossie. ‘Have you been away that long? They’ll only ring if we’re being invaded or if it’s the end of the war, though I don’t know how we’ll tell which is which.’

‘Did you have a funeral for Mother in the church?’ says Digby. ‘I know you wrote but I can’t remember.’

Cristabel nods. ‘Flossie and I were there. Perry too. I sent you a copy of the service.’

‘Did Father go?’ asks Digby.

‘He stayed in Ireland.’

‘Anybody know what he’s doing there?’

‘They still have horse races in Ireland,’ says Cristabel.

‘And whiskey,’ says Flossie.

‘I went into Mother’s bedroom yesterday,’ says Digby. ‘I almost expected to see her come swaying towards me with a drink in one hand, saying something like, “So many people are doomed to fall in love with you, darling!”’ Digby changes the pitch and intonation of his voice to perfectly mimic his mother’s, making it high and breathy.

‘She never said anything like that to me,’ says Flossie, laughing unconvincingly.

‘Oh, Floss-chops,’ says Digby, leaning his head on her shoulder. ‘She said all sorts of silly things.’

Cristabel pushes herself up with her good arm and sits looking out across the valley. She is puzzled as to why Digby seems to have forgotten the details of his own mother’s funeral, when she had taken such care to share them with him. It reminds her of his odd reaction to the news of Rosalind’s death, how he hadn’t seemed to take it in. It is also irritating that Rosalind can still upset Flossie, even when dead. She wants to say something about these matters but is aware her previous attempts at sisterly wisdom have often emerged as strict instructions, rather than kindly advice, and it seems important she should guide her siblings now, at this rare meeting.

‘You know, Floss,’ she begins carefully, ‘you shouldn’t worry about that.’

‘About what?’

‘What other people say about you. It gets in the way. It’s like walking through life with an umbrella up.’

‘An umbrella?’ says Flossie.

‘You don’t need an umbrella.’

‘I don’t often have one,’ Flossie says. ‘It’s only when I think about Mother, I suppose.’

‘You’re the lady of the manor now, Floss,’ says Digby.

‘The house is a state,’ says Flossie, ‘but my vegetables are thriving. I will have to show you.’

‘You must,’ he says.

‘Only if you tell me about this special position,’ says Flossie, kicking his foot.

Digby laughs. ‘I’m not supposed to tell anyone. Loose lips sink ships and all that.’

‘You don’t have to tell us,’ says Cristabel.

‘I’d asked Perry to keep me in mind if anything interesting came up,’ says Digby. ‘I was sick of tanks. He got in touch in July. Said he’d been asked to wheel up some extra bodies for a friend. Sent me to a place in Northumberland Avenue. Lots of sandbags outside. People dashing about. Had an interview with a couple of chaps. One asked if I was afraid of death. I said I didn’t think about it much any more. He said that made me very suitable.’

‘Suitable for what?’ asks Flossie.

‘They’re vague on the details, but that appears to be the way of things. It’s freeing, somehow. Not knowing. They did a fascinating thing with a piece of paper. Wait, I’ll show you.’ Digby stubs out his cigarette, then rummages in his trouser pocket and finds a folded square of paper. He unfolds it to reveal an ink blot which has been pressed together to make a symmetrical shape. ‘Tell me what you think it looks like. Don’t consider it too much.’

‘A heart?’ says Flossie.

‘I couldn’t make up my mind,’ he says. ‘At first, I saw a butterfly. But turn it this way, and look – a dog.’

‘What does it mean if you see a dog?’ says Flossie.

‘I don’t know,’ says Digby, folding up the paper. ‘I’m not sure what they were looking for, but whatever it was, they must think I have it.’

‘What do they want you to do?’ asks Flossie.

Digby peers up into the sky. ‘I can’t let you in on the details, Floss, but the general idea is to make life difficult for the Nazis in France.’

‘Digs, if it is secret, then you shouldn’t tell us anything about it,’ says Cristabel, feeling increasingly concerned.

‘Crista, I can only speak French – they’re not likely to send me to Greece, are they?’ He sits up between the two women, looks across the valley to the ocean. ‘Last time I was in France, we found an abandoned house in some woods. Groves and I drank wine by candlelight.’ He opens his cigarette packet and lights

a new one. 'Every time I look at the sea, I think of dear Groves. "Of his bones are coral made." Cigarette?'

'You're smoking a lot,' says Flossie, with a glance at the pile of stubs beside him.

Cristabel studies Digby. She sees his jaw is moving slightly, his fingers tapping themselves together. She realizes now that the breezy postcards he has sent from North Africa have told her very little. Bright brave faces. Beneath his deliberately casual tone, she can sense a jitteriness inside him, an erratic energy, like a fly trapped in a glass. He doesn't seem able to meet her eyes for long. If he were still a boy, she would put her arm around him, but he is twenty-one years old now, a young man who has spent nearly all his adult life at war, and the hunch in his shoulders tells her he does not want to be calmed or comforted, however much she wants to comfort him. She scratches the skin around her plaster cast, considers another tactic.

'I'm sorry about Groves,' she says. 'War can be cruel.'

'When you lose friends, it's more than cruel,' says Digby.

'Losing people is part of life, sadly,' Cristabel replies, instantly regretting her vicarish tone of voice.

Flossie says quietly, 'That doesn't mean you stop caring about them.'

'I didn't say that,' says Cristabel, more crossly than she intends. There is a sense of strain, of the distances and demands that pull between them.

Digby says, 'Do you think I don't know about war, Crista? Or do you think I can't do it without you?' There is a glassy sharpness in his voice she has never heard before.

'I think nothing of the sort,' she replies. 'I know very well how brave you are.' It is strange, because, although she is saying it to reassure him, she realizes she does know how brave he is, but has never told him so. Perhaps she hasn't even admitted it to herself. She couldn't risk him not relying on her. But he has never faltered, not even as a toddler, gamely following her into bramble bushes and freezing streams.

'Do you?' he says.

'I do,' she says, and it is like a relinquishing.

He looks at her and he is fully there for a moment then gone again, fiddling with his lighter, flicking it on and off. 'I am a good soldier. I am. At first, it was because I wanted Father to see I could be, but now it's for the men. I can't let them down.'

'You won't,' says Flossie.

'When I had my interview in Northumberland Avenue, they asked whether I would be looking over my shoulder if I was sent away. You can see what they were thinking. They don't want a distracted fellow.'

‘What did you say?’ says Cristabel.

‘I said I didn’t want to look back.’

‘Well, that’s something,’ says Flossie.

‘Let’s look forward then,’ says Cristabel, gesturing clumsily at Chilcombe with her plaster cast. ‘To next summer, when you’ve won a medal, Digs, and we’ve won the war and we put on *The Tempest* and you play Prospero.’

Digby laughs. ‘Hitler is doing a much better job of performing Prospero than I ever could. What is happening to the world has come entirely from his mind. The power of that!’

‘All right, we’ll do *Twelfth Night*,’ says Cristabel.

‘I think about that a great deal,’ says Digby. ‘The fact this is somebody else’s dream. It explains perfectly why none of it seems real.’

She puts a hand on his arm. ‘Hamlet, Digs. We haven’t done him yet. We could go up on the roof and discuss casting tonight.’

Digby exhales a plume of smoke. ‘Plenty of time.’

‘Look,’ says Flossie, ‘Mr Brewer’s flashing a torch to tell us dinner’s ready.’

‘Jolly good,’ says Digby, getting to his feet. ‘I’m famished.’

The trio head back down the path into the valley: Digby leading, Flossie and Cristabel following. The setting sun is on their right, glowing pink as it sinks behind the line of hills. As soon as the sun has gone, the air is colder, and the world a few degrees less glorious. On their left, an almost full moon rises over the fields into a pale sky.

D to C

18th September, 1942

Dear Crista,

Well, here I am. At a training school hidden on a large estate deep in a forest. Perry and Leon dropped me here on their way to London.

When Perry left, he said, 'If you see me again, you must never mention that you saw me here. This place does not exist. Colonel Drake works for the War Office. That's all you know.' Then off he went. Oberon, King of Shadows, disappearing into the forest with a car boot full of Betty's eggs.

You'll notice he said 'if you see me again' not 'when you see me again'. He is careful to be correct, isn't he? Once upon a time, I imagine that would have hurt my feelings, but now it feels as close to the truth as one can get. I am at a place that does not exist, and soon I may not exist – and if I cease to exist, will anyone know how or why or where? I might be one of those poor evaporated souls labelled 'missing in active service'.

One might imagine that the more precarious things become, the more sombre I might feel, but I find a pleasure in this double life. A relief, almost. I suppose it might work to my advantage that I have always been acting, in some form or other.

Some chaps find it hard to take it seriously. Last night, the instructors dressed as Nazis and interrogated us, and it was rather ludicrous, but isn't everything, if you stand far enough back? The fact we are being sent to France with made-up names and radios designed to look like biscuit tins is ludicrous. The fact we are at war is ludicrous!

One of the most popular instructors here, Rufus Hendricks, was an actor before the war. He says when all this is done, he will put me in touch with some decent agents. He teaches us about disguises. How a few adjustments to your hair and the addition of a limp can mean you go into a café as one person and come out as someone else.

He personally is always very smart. A man of neat lines: neat parting, neat moustache, neat fingernails. Careful hands. He taps on his desk with a cigarette to make a point.

Today he told us that our cover story is the life we will outwardly lead in order to conceal our real purpose. He said, 'If questioned, stick to your cover story. Do not be clever. Do not be fast. Do not let them think this is a game of wits, because why would it be? You are a dull, honest citizen.'

Next week we are being sent off to nearby towns to practise being dull, honest citizens who happen to have secret missions they must carry out before the clock strikes twelve – a scenario designed to test what we have learnt in the classroom.

I feel apprehensive at the thought of rejoining the outside world. It reminds me that it exists. I start to wonder about Father and Flossie and you. I have been avoiding thinking about you as, whenever I do, I can hear you telling me I should not be writing this down.

Ah, here you are again. I'll stop now.

Yours both here and not,

Digby

Blank Piece of Paper

Left on the desk in Digby's room, that when held in the steam from a kettle revealed the following:

While demonstrative of a certain amount of ingenuity, it is not entirely surprising to find a letter hidden under a loose floorboard during a routine room check at this particular training school. I've put it in the wood burner to save you the trouble of having to do it while being berated by the security officer. Remember that you are under surveillance here too. Be thankful that it was delivered to me. Listen to your sister.

RH

Vignettes

September, 1942

The two men look into the night: side by side; driver and passenger. They are silhouetted profiles in the darkness. The only lights inside the car are the glowing tips of their cigarettes.

‘How long were you in the cellar for?’ says Hendricks, who is driving.

‘About six hours, sir,’ says Digby. ‘It didn’t occur to me the door might lock behind me.’

‘You were unlucky the barmaid called the police,’ says Hendricks.

‘If only she’d been calmer. All rather embarrassing.’

‘You’re not the first of our students to end up in custody.’

‘Thank you again for coming to get me, sir.’

The narrow dots of the car’s taped-up headlights reach tentatively into the blackout, catching the trees that line the roads: a pale casting of branches, ghostly capillaries. Once or twice, the glassy eyes of a deer at the roadside.

Hendricks says, ‘Let’s imagine for a moment that you had been found by the Nazis instead of a nervous barmaid. How would you have explained being in that cellar?’

‘I would have said I was leaving, and I’d taken a wrong turn, sir.’

‘Most people leave a pub through the door they came in.’

‘I suppose I acted on impulse when I saw I was being tailed.’

‘A good operative is prudent, not impulsive. We’ll leave it there for now.’ Hendricks changes the subject. He asks about Digby’s family, his past.

In the cocoon of the car, it is easy to talk. Their voices are disembodied, ownerless. They share the outlines of themselves, vignettes of who they were before.

‘I imagine my family may seem unusual,’ says Digby.

‘Rather like the organization you are involved with now,’ replies Hendricks.

‘Perhaps that’s why I like it. When I was at Sherborne, the difference between my family life and my school life seemed so vast, I felt I was going about in disguise.’

‘Aping the enemy’s manners,’ says Hendricks, ‘learning his language.’

‘Exactly. The only place I felt comfortable was on the school stage.’

‘How did you find it in the army?’

‘Not unlike school, ironically,’ says Digby, lighting a new cigarette off the end of the one he is smoking. After a moment, he adds, ‘Dunkirk was difficult.’

‘Heard it was a dreadful scramble.’

‘I lost a friend there. Groves.’

Hendricks nods, makes a sympathetic noise.

Digby says, 'We joined up at the same time. Thought we would go through the whole thing together, then he was gone. In the first act. I still can't believe it. I was so close to him. I could have reached out.'

Hendricks nods again. After a while, he says, 'I have a friend. A radar operator. He's stationed up in Orkney. I miss him very much.'

The ordinariness of the statement is disarming. Digby feels something is enclosed within it, but it is uttered so casually, it resists the suggestion of enclosure. He cannot find a reply to match it.

Hendricks says, 'What was his name? His first name, I mean. Your friend.'

'Sam. Sam Groves. He was from Yorkshire. Loved dancing.'

'Sam Groves,' says Hendricks.

The night moves past. It is three in the morning and starting to rain. The car's windscreen wipers squeak across, revealing and concealing the blurred world outside. They drive through silent villages with not a single light showing in the windows.

'Do you know the Kipling poem about smugglers?' says Digby. 'How you must not peek out when they pass?'

Hendricks supplies the lines, in a suitably dramatic tone. "'Them that ask no questions isn't told a lie. Watch the wall my darling while the Gentlemen go by.'"

'You remember it perfectly,' says Digby.

'Interesting they're described as "gentlemen",' says Hendricks. 'Nobody would call us that. I've heard our organization described as the Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare. They say our operatives are no better than assassins.'

'But we aren't assassins, are we?' says Digby. 'I simply want to do something that makes a difference. I'm sick of feeling helpless.'

The windscreen wipers squeak past a few times, then Hendricks says, 'It does take a certain kind of person to do this work.'

'What do you mean?'

'Our most effective operatives rarely make mistakes because they leave no room for them. They would leave people behind if they had to, without a second thought.'

'I've done well in training. Apart from tonight.'

'You have,' says Hendricks. 'I can see exactly why they recruited you. You are so nearly very good at this.'

'I can be useful in France, sir.'

'There are many ways to be useful. It's easily arranged. They'd transfer you to another branch of the service with no adverse marks on your file. I think they rather respect those who admit they're not up to it – and not many of us are. It's a cold, unflinching business.'

‘I’m not going to let anybody down.’

Hendricks glances at him. ‘Digby, you should not consider a lack of suitability for this work to be a failure. It is not a failure. War might depend on people who don’t flinch, but humanity rather relies on those who do.’

The car veers slightly, bumping across rough ground, but Hendricks quickly recovers. In the darkness, it is hard to make out where the road ends and the verge begins. Digby looks out of the side window.

Hendricks says, ‘It’s not just your own life you risk. Last month, we sent a wireless operator to Brittany. He stayed with a farming family.’

‘You don’t have to tell me this,’ says Digby.

‘The Germans tracked him quickly. They made the children watch as they killed their dog. They made the parents watch as they beat the children. They tortured the father until his heart gave out, but left the mother alive, so there was someone to share what they’d done. Then they took our man away, for their sport. We don’t know where he is. We don’t know where the children are either. They ran away. Two girls. Six and four years old.’

‘You don’t have to tell me this. Tell me what you’ve been doing today.’

‘I’ve tried to be useful,’ says Hendricks, after a moment, and he turns up the long drive to their destination.

Outgoings

September, 1942

Flossie finds the letter informing her she is required by law to make herself available for vital war work buried in a heap of post on the kitchen table, covered by unpaid bills. It is several months old. Flossie suspects she may have deposited it there, during one of her periodic attempts to restore order to the house by shaping the chaos into little piles.

She takes the crumpled letter with her on the bus to Dorchester, where the Women's Land Army has an office in one of the council buildings, and is there interviewed by a preoccupied middle-aged woman her mother would have described as 'very county'. There is a poster on the wall that reads: 'JOIN THE VICTORY HARVEST!' with a picture of a young woman holding a pitchfork and smiling at a sunset.

'It'll be thoroughly vile work,' the woman says. She is sitting at a desk behind an ancient typewriter, a stack of forms, and a framed photograph of a spaniel. 'Have you ever got your hands mucky? Are you sure you wouldn't prefer something secretarial? Most girls your age do.'

'I'm quite decided,' replies Flossie. 'I want to be a Land Army girl.'

'Well, you look a hearty type. As long as your medical is satisfactory, I'm sure we can find a use for you. Have you experience with cows?'

'No, but I do have some chickens and a large vegetable plot.'

The woman snorts and writes something on a form.

Flossie adds, 'As big as an allotment, if not bigger.'

The woman turns the form over as if to examine the other side.

Flossie says, 'There are German prisoners working on my estate and they were asked to assist me with my vegetable plot. That might give you an idea of how large it is.'

The woman looks up. 'Your estate?'

'Chilcombe. Do you know it?'

'Why, yes. It has the outdoor theatre.'

'The Whalebone Theatre,' says Flossie. 'Have you been?'

'I'm sure I must have.'

'It's my sister Cristabel's creation. Full of vegetables now, but once the war is over, I've no doubt it will start up again.'

'Do you know,' says the woman, 'I believe I recognized you when you came in, Miss Seagrave. Perhaps we have met. You said you had Germans working for you?'

'Five of them.'

‘How do you find that? I could hardly bear to be near them.’

‘They’ve been useful, actually. Most hard-working.’

‘If you leave, who will be at the house to keep an eye on them?’ says the woman.

‘That’s a good question,’ says Flossie, frowning. ‘There would only really be our housekeeper Mrs Brewer there. She doesn’t like to have anything to do with them.’

The woman rolls her pen in her fingers. ‘I believe this could be resolved.’

‘Do you? That is a comfort.’

There is a shuffling of forms on the desk, then drawers are opened, and new forms are produced. The woman says, ‘There are some Germans being sent to Southampton to build houses, replacing the ones their countrymen have dropped bombs on. There’s a gentleman in an office along the corridor dealing with it. Perhaps yours could join them.’

Flossie smiles weakly, but says nothing, momentarily uncertain of her voice.

The woman continues, ‘As for the Land Army, we do have some girls stationed here, in lodgings in Dorchester. They go out to work on farms in the area, then return to their quarters in the evening. If you were to join them, you could feasibly get back to Chilcombe now and again. Might that allow you to keep a watchful eye on that estate of yours?’

‘I suppose it would,’ says Flossie.

‘However, we still have the issue of your vegetable plot, Miss Seagrave. We can’t let it go to waste. But that is easily rectified. It simply needs to be added to this form,’ says the woman, brandishing a piece of paper.

‘What does that form do?’

‘This form identifies Chilcombe as a property requiring the assistance of Land Girls. Chilcombe hasn’t been on this form before, but once it is on this form, it comes under my jurisdiction.’

‘Does that mean I’d be sent to work on my own estate as a Land Girl?’

‘Heavens no. That veers perilously close to favouritism. We would send a couple of other girls, keep things ticking over. Besides, I’m sure you’d prefer to have British girls working on your estate rather than sinister Nazis. What say you?’

‘They’re not all sinister,’ says Flossie.

‘We’ve got to stick together, haven’t we?’ The woman fits the form into the typewriter and begins noisily winding it into place. ‘We’re not in the business of making people’s lives difficult.’

‘No, quite,’ says Flossie, standing up and extending a hand for the woman to shake. ‘You must come to Chilcombe one day. I’m afraid it’s not what it used to be, but you would be most welcome.’

The woman stands and returns the handshake fulsomely, with both hands, as if she has been awarded a rosette.

On her way out of the building, Flossie finds a lavatory at the end of a corridor. She quickly locks herself into a cubicle, where she closes her eyes and takes some calming breaths. Having Hans sent to Southampton was not at all what she intended when she came to join the Land Army. The thought fills her with dismay. Obviously, she hadn't expected him to stay for ever but she hadn't really considered him leaving either.

How can he be sent away when she imagines him with her most places? He is there with her today. She has chosen him a perfect outfit, a linen suit with a pale blue tie to bring out his eyes. They are going to stroll round Borough Gardens then go to an imaginary tea room for salmon sandwiches and other things you can't have any more. It doesn't even need to be salmon. It could be ham. Anything rather than queuing up at one of the Ministry of Food's British Restaurants to be served something brown and dispiriting from a large tureen by a harassed volunteer in a stained apron.

It is no doubt a good thing to have restaurant meals supplied by Government initiatives, but, thinks Flossie wistfully, wouldn't it be lovely to have an ordinary meal, in an ordinary way. No ration books or powdered egg. Choosing whatever you fancy. Saying yes, let's have a pudding, why not?

Flossie has a pang of longing for the ordinary. Its unremarkable freedoms. Being able to keep the lights on. Leave the curtains open. To pick up a newspaper without a feeling of dread. It is such a slog, at times, to keep trundling on. They might all be in this together, but this has been going on for ages, and she doesn't particularly want to be in it any more, with lots of other people, everybody tired and fed up. She wants to be somewhere there isn't a war on, in a clifftop restaurant as the sun sets, with charming waiters bringing many dishes, and no time limits and only one person.

She sighs. She wishes it could be like that, but it isn't. Ever since their time at the beach, something has changed between her and Hans. Whenever she sees him at the stables, they smile at each other, but their mouths stay closed and their eyes say they are sorry, though she is not sure what they are sorry for.

Sometimes, when she is on her own, she feels a pressing, panicky urge to find him, to throw her arms around him – and what? What happens then? Do they run away together? Where would they go? No, it is more simple and more impossible than that. She wants to throw her arms around him because she wants to throw her arms around him. The panicky feeling is due to the fact she can't. In a sharp, clear moment, she can feel how that panic could grow unmanageable enough to make a woman want to give up everything.

She looks at the leaflet in her hand welcoming her to the Women's Land Army, assuring her in emphatic capitals that she is IN THE WINNING TEAM. FEED THE NATION, it exhorts, WHILE THE MEN ARE AWAY FIGHTING. She thinks of Digby. She must be brave too.

Looking up, she sees a mass of graffiti on the back of the cubicle door. Insults, jokes and declarations of love, authored and annotated by those who have passed through the building. She reads 'Try Sheila at The Old Ship, she's easy' and 'Captain Barnes has 12 inches', followed by 'And no bleeding clue what to do with it!!!' It makes her smile, despite herself, this scrawled conversation between strangers.

She rummages in her handbag, finds a lipstick, uses it to write her initials on the door and draws a heart around them. Then she steps back and admires her handiwork. There she is: FLRS. Florence Louisa Rose Seagrave. One of the gang.

A reverse charge call arrives from Weymouth a few days later. It is Maudie.

'Bill said you got Germans at the house.'

'Good evening, Maudie,' says Flossie, standing by her father's desk in the study. 'Yes, that's right. Are you in a pub?' She can hear raucous laughter, a jangly quickstep played on an out-of-tune piano.

'Red Lion,' says Maudie. 'You're not going to get yourself in trouble, are you?'

Startled, Flossie blushes. 'I haven't – it's not like that.'

'Does anyone know?'

'Oh, gosh. I don't think so. Oh, Maudie, do you think I'm awful?'

'I don't care what you do, Miss Flossie. But I do know you can't keep a secret to save your life and it would be bad if people were to find out. For both of you. You'd never hear the end of it.'

'We don't. It's not like that,' says Flossie, utterly mortified.

'I heard you the first time, Miss Flossie,' chuckles Maudie. 'You might be more cheerful if it was like that.'

In the background, Flossie hears a woman shout, 'Has she got rid of him yet?' and an American voice saying, 'Tell Florence I think she has the kindest eyes.'

'Who's that?' asks Flossie. 'What have you told them?'

'Sally, works behind the bar, and Donald, he's from Missouri. His family do – what was it you said?'

'Poultry production.'

'He's keen to meet you. I've shown him your picture,' says Maudie, and then, in a low voice, 'looks like that Errol Flynn.'

'Why have you got a picture of me?'

'From when we was in the paper, doing the plays. No one believes me, less I show them the picture.'

Flossie hears a door banging open and the sound of more American voices. 'Sounds busy there, Maudie.'

'Not too bad. There's a dance over on Portland, Saturday, if you're interested. Plenty of GIs going.'

'Who would I go with?' says Flossie.

'Me,' says Maudie.

For a moment, Flossie is flummoxed. To go to a dance with Maudie the maid seems a ridiculous idea. Although, it then occurs to her that Maudie is someone she has known her whole life. Someone who has, in her own way, always looked out for her. She remembers Maudie's peculiarly unemotional caretaking when they were children, the food she provided when meals were forgotten, the way she would lie with them, arms folded, if they had nightmares. There had been nothing soft or maternal about it: it was an orphan recognizing the need of other orphans, with an orphan's lack of sentimentality.

And now here she is again, with her brisk dispersal of doubt and faff, with her straightforward invitation to a dance on Portland.

'That's very kind of you,' Flossie says. 'I think I would like that. I miss dancing.'

'Kiss the German goodbye, Miss Flossie. Then we'll go out and celebrate before they send you to the farm.'

'I picked up my Land Army uniform today. Betty's in the kitchen trying to steam my hat to make it look less like a pudding basin.'

Maudie laughs. 'Don't wear that. We have Americans to impress.'

'Cheerio for now,' Flossie says and puts the receiver down.

When Flossie walks back into the Oak Hall, she pauses by the piano. Maudie's talk of GIs and dances has made her feel she is betraying Hans somehow. She knows someone as practical as Maudie would tell her she doesn't owe him anything, but that seems a cold way of looking at it. Hasn't there been a series of exchanges between them? The sandwiches she made for him from her own rations. The sweet pea flower he gave her, now pressed between the pages of her diary. The way they touched. It wasn't much, but it was all they could give.

She cannot see how she can discount it, not least as it hasn't ended at all. It cannot end because it cannot start, so it is something that always might be. Something possible but inaccessible. Flossie thinks of Dorothy in her wooden house, whirled by the tornado to a magical land, then taken back home to Kansas, knowing Oz will always exist, even when she isn't there. Never entirely discarded.

(Just as Flossie's yellow headscarf will always be tucked in the back pocket of a hard-working German prisoner, when he is clearing bomb sites in Southampton and cropping sugar beet in Hampshire and lying awake in a

cramped bunk in a draughty prison camp, trying to compose letters in a language he does not know and so will never send. ~~Frekkels~~, he will write. ~~Seairero~~.)

In the last week of September, the prisoners' tent on the Chilcombe estate is taken down and the camp dismantled as quickly as a travelling circus. All that's left is a pale patch of flattened grass, like a fairy ring. Flossie looks at it, reminding herself of what Maudie said about how horrid it would be for Hans if anyone were to find out. She would hate it if anybody thought badly of him.

Flossie is full of a jumble of feelings; she has avoided the camp and the stables for days. She is not even planning to watch the Germans leave, but when she hears the military vehicles start up outside the house, she finds herself sprinting across the lawn to catch them. She sees Sgt Bullock departing in a staff car, trailing cheroot smoke, then spies Hans sitting in the back of a truck. He is so pleased to see her that he shouts her name and stands up to wave, hitting his head on the low roof of the vehicle with such a bang that the other men laugh and reach out to hold him steady.

Flossie reaches the back of the truck as it starts to pull away. 'I'm sorry I didn't come to say goodbye before,' she shouts over the noise of the engine.

He shakes his head and smiles. 'It is nothing. You will feed the cat?'

'I will, I promise,' she says, suddenly engulfed in exhaust fumes as the truck moves off down the drive. 'Good luck, Hans. I don't know what I would have done without you.'

He smiles again. He is still standing, held in place by a scaffold of men. He puts one hand up, pressing it against the ceiling of the truck to steady himself, then places the other on his heart.

'Yes,' says Flossie, nodding. She puts one hand on her own heart.

As the truck gathers speed, Hans waves at her as fondly as if they were saying hello not goodbye.

'Goodbye!' calls Flossie, and she waves until the truck goes out of sight. Then there isn't anything else to do but go back to the house, where Mr Brewer is waiting at the front door. She walks towards him, saying, 'If I appear to be emotional, it's because I have never been good with goodbyes. Of any kind.'

Mr Brewer says nothing but offers her a cigarette, which she accepts, and he lights.

'Could you please talk to me about something?' she says with a sniff. 'I don't mind what. I just need things to keep carrying on.'

Mr Brewer is about to say something when Flossie adds, 'Maudie says out of sight, out of mind.'

'Sounds like Maudie,' says Mr Brewer.

'I don't think I can smoke this cigarette,' says Flossie, her face beginning to crumple. 'I don't even smoke.'

‘Let me take that, Miss Flossie,’ Mr Brewer says calmly, removing the cigarette from her hand and reaching into his pocket for a handkerchief. They stand together for a while, as she holds the handkerchief over her face. Then he suggests they go down to the kitchen for a cup of tea.

Two cups of tea and three digestive biscuits later, Flossie feels less forlorn. Toto has curled up in her lap and she is comforted by his soft, purring warmth. Mr Brewer has occupied himself with discreet tasks around the kitchen, so she has time to pull herself together. After a while, she feels well enough to talk to him, and they chat lightly about the Land Girls and where Flossie will be staying in Dorchester. Then Mr Brewer sits down at the table facing her and says, ‘As a matter of fact, there is something I wanted to discuss with you, Miss Flossie.’

‘Yes?’

‘An opportunity has arisen. The pub in the village is for sale. Betty’s father. He’s selling up.’

‘Oh yes,’ she says.

‘I’ve always considered acquiring a property, something to fall back on in my later years. When my son comes out of the navy, be nice to think he could work in a pub with his old man. They’d let us have it for a decent price.’

‘Are you in need of a loan of some sort, Mr Brewer?’ asks Flossie.

‘I see it more as a mutual investment opportunity.’

‘Oh. I don’t know anything about that kind of thing. I don’t have any money. That sounds silly, because I must do, but I don’t know where it is. You pay all the bills.’

‘I do,’ says Mr Brewer. ‘You were right too, if I may be so bold. You don’t have any money.’

‘Don’t I?’

He nods his head upwards to indicate the main house. ‘This place has been running at a loss for years.’

Flossie frowns. ‘Has it?’

‘You’ve got some hefty outgoings but no tenants. No farms. No capital interest. You’re living off savings, but there’s not much left.’

Flossie has never received any monetary education, but as Mr Brewer continues to talk, she quickly has a sense of her family’s financial situation: a one-sided tale of grand outward gestures, with a finite point looming into view. She also has the sense that she is entirely the wrong person to be faced with this issue, which surely requires someone as purposeful as Cristabel.

‘What do I do?’ she asks.

‘I can do my best to help you, Miss Flossie,’ says Mr Brewer, ‘but it might not be a pleasant experience. People get accustomed to things being a certain way.’

‘None of those people are here though, are they?’ she says. ‘Nobody’s here.’

‘They aren’t. You’re in charge now. Which is why you might want to consider any available opportunities to help you balance the books.’

Flossie thoughtfully strokes the cat on her lap. ‘Is that advice?’ she says, after a while. ‘Or is it what you want me to do? Because I feel that, if I read that statement in a book, I wouldn’t be sure.’

Mr Brewer smiles at her slowly, and she has the sense that he has joined her in the conversation for the first time, that the polite Mr Brewer who does such a good job of making himself absent when required has been discarded. ‘It’s business,’ he says.

On the day she is to leave Chilcombe to join the Land Army, Flossie walks down to the beach to sit on the shore, taking off her regulation boots and socks, and burying her bare feet in stones that clack like maracas, watching long-beaked cormorants floating on the sea. Every now and then, they dive beneath the surface, appearing minutes later some distance away, surfacing with brisk head shakes, eyeing her with haughty indifference.

It is a warm, hazy morning: one of the rare gift days strung through late September like jewels. A single breaking wave runs slowly round the semicircle of the bay, smoothly as a cymbal brush. The water close to the shore is a tinfoil turquoise; further out, a darker Prussian blue.

Flossie paddles at the water’s edge. The sea is so clear she can see through to her feet. The pebbles by her toes are the same as those on the beach, but under the warp of water they are sealed off and remote, possessed of some mysterious, polished quality. When she reaches in to pick some up, they are further away than they appear – and her pale hand fumbling underwater is the disembodied arm of a puppeteer. But when she takes them out of the water and holds them in her palm, the pebbles seem disappointingly small, diminished. She drops them back.

She strips down to her underwear, undressing perfunctorily as if for a doctor, then wades in. She floats on her back, hearing the tinny slop of salt water in her ears, its buckety clank and slosh. All other sounds are muffled and distant. There is only the water and her breath and the weight of her body hanging in the water. It is something like illness, the way the sea forces the self very close to itself; a state you are sunk in.

She tells herself she has done the right thing by not letting matters go any further with Hans. She has been a sensible girl. She has protected her reputation. She tells herself that there will be other men, other loves, other swims. That there won’t always be this ache in her chest, as if something vital had been stoppered up inside her.

Above her, the dome of the sky; below her, the pebbles on the sea floor. Bobbing between the two: Flossie breathing out, in, out, in.

When Mr Brewer comes down to the beach to call her, saying her lift has arrived, she walks out of the sea in her underwear, picks up her uniform and boots, and continues past him without saying a word.

Night Flight

October, 1942

After take-off, the Lysander flies at 5,000 feet. Inside, Digby and another agent asleep in sleeping bags. No cloud, a full moon. Perfect conditions for a flight across the Channel.

Beneath them,

gulls

gulls

gulls

Radio waves following them until they find the aeroplane then

bounce back

towards

a receiver

on a tall mast

a red blip

like a

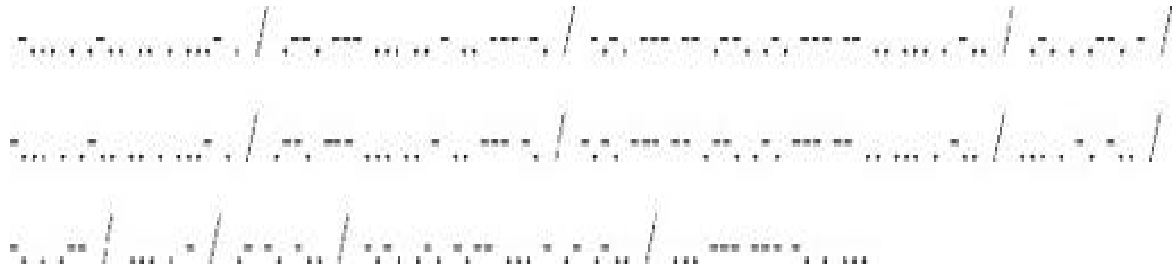
heartbeat

on the screen

of a drowsy

radar operator.

The night air thick with invisible communication, dots and dashes, Braille bumps in the atmosphere, messages for agents, or those pretending to be agents:



the static of radio stations, snatches of canned laughter, orchestras, news.

Cristabel awake

The

chalk

edge of

England A fishing boat The sea

scattered with

moonlight.

Below the waves, the ocean's black vault: rusting submarines, broken ships. Corpses from Hamburg, Iowa, Oslo, inside the vessels they sank in, waving in the currents like a ghastly crop, arms aloft, semaphore messages, unreceived.

A Sober Cannibal

December, 1942

October sinks into November sinks into December. The days contract. The sun hardly bothers. The grey sky descends on to the earth until there is only a narrow gap beneath it. People scuttle along, close to the ground, wrapped up in themselves. There is not much space left for anything else.

Cristabel walks the cliffs, the cold wind whipping at her coat, while the waves below rumble and crash. She has come back to Dorset to spend a few days of leave but finds it hard to be in the house. She strides up the deserted coast path to Ceal Head with her chin tucked into her neck, her hands shoved into her pockets: a single strut beneath a sagging canopy of cloud.

There has been no word from Digby for over two months, which means he has probably gone into Occupied France. A letter from his superior officer reassuring her that all is well sounds so much like a template letter, she is convinced her suspicions are right. Cristabel carries the thought of Digby working undercover with her everywhere. It makes her mute and tense. She cannot get used to the idea. Instead, it becomes more agitating, more awkward: a lumpen, wriggling child growing heavier in her arms. What if his French isn't good enough? What if he trusts the wrong person? What if the Germans find him, a British operative behind enemy lines – here her mind shuts down.

It is late afternoon. The daylight has faded. Rain is starting to blow in from the sea. Cristabel catches a glimpse of her whalebones standing at the edge of the fretful waters, like King Canute attempting to command the tides. She stalks home through the puddles, retreats to her attic eyrie to brood.

Betty briefly appears to stoke the meagre fire and offer tea, but Cristabel does not want tea. She does not want anything. She cannot even bring herself to light a lamp. She puts on her pyjamas, then lies rigid in her narrow bed, listening to the rain battering on the roof.

She tells herself they wouldn't have recruited Digby if he wasn't up to the task, but she has seen enough of military life to know this is not always true. Perry once said it was a question of numbers. She looks across the room at Flossie's empty bed, now covered with Cristabel's kitbag and clothes. She imagines Flossie lying on a camp bed in her Land Army lodgings in Dorchester; Digby hiding in a French farmhouse. Above them all, the sky teeming down. She turns her face to the pillow.

In the middle of the night, she wakes up and does not know why. There is only the wind and the rain. Then suddenly, the clatter of small stones hitting the attic window. Cristabel lifts her head. It happens again. Another handful of gravel

hits the glass. Unmistakable; a deliberate summons. She quickly flings back the bedcovers and goes to the window to push it open.

She leans out and peers down through the darkness, which is paint-stripped with the silver flurry of raindrops. Standing on the lawn at the front of the house is a figure in an army greatcoat, dark-haired, looking up at her with a hand sheltering his eyes. The tinsel hiss of the rain, the tumult of the wind in the trees, the spilling over of what she carries in her heart: for a single inhalation, it is her brother returned. But then he raises his other hand and salutes sardonically, and he is taller, broader. Leon.

She exhales and looks at him, he at her. She raises her own hand to her forehead by way of salute, gestures towards the back of the house, and then turns to pull on a tartan dressing gown, which flaps out behind her like a cloak as she heads downwards, padding through the house in her bedsocks, scooting along corridors to the kitchen, where she unbolts, unlocks and pulls open the back door, and in he comes, shaking droplets of rain from his black hair like a wet dog.

‘Do you have any food?’ he says, in his strange accent. ‘I am hungry.’

‘Why are you here?’

‘Bread. I see bread. Is there cheese?’

‘Leave it alone. Why are you here?’

‘I am collecting an order for Colonel Drake. Bill is providing items he requires for Christmas. I think a pheasant and some wine and so on. I had a flat tyre, so I am late. Where might Bill store such things? I bet it will taste better than this dry bread.’

‘I don’t know where Bill stores things.’

‘Yes, you do, Cristabel Seagrave. You know where everything is in this house. Colonel Drake will not mind if we have a little of his food. Come, we can eat a – what do you call it? A midnight feast.’

They look at each other. He is gnawing a hunk of bread and grinning. He is rain-soaked, unshaven, and his uniform is dishevelled: the collar of his coat is turned up on one side; his shirt open at the throat; his boots loosely laced. He has a damp cigarette tucked behind one ear and, about his neck, he wears a striped knitted scarf in unexpected colours: yellow, pink, green.

‘I do know,’ she concedes. ‘In the wine cellar.’

He disappears. Cristabel hears the sharp meow of a cat startled then reassured, Leon murmuring to it in Russian. When he reappears, he is carrying a pork pie and a bottle of wine. ‘Is there a fireplace up in your attic?’

‘Yes, but –’

‘Come, come. It is freezing in here. We will go up. Like we did as children, eh?’

She shakes her head but picks up tin mugs and a couple of apples, squeezing them into her dressing gown pockets, and follows him up the stairs, saying, 'You're leaving mud everywhere.'

'You don't care about that.'

'I might.'

'You don't. What are you wearing, Cristabel?'

'It's my grandfather's dressing gown. It's perfectly serviceable. Did you knit that scarf yourself?'

'A kind old lady gave it to me in a café.'

'Did she mistake you for a proper soldier?'

'She thought I was charming. Why is it so dark in here? Do you not have electricity?'

'Only sometimes. How did you know it was me in the attic?'

'Bill told me Flossie is at a pig farm or some such.'

'She's in the Land Army.'

'Digby is away. It would only be you.'

'Why did you throw stones? You could have knocked at the door.'

'It's more romantic. Like Romeo.'

'It's nothing at all like Romeo. He doesn't throw gravel.'

'I can't remember,' Leon says, as they arrive at the attic where, with his hands full, he pushes open the door with one booted foot. He peers down the shadowy attic corridor, looks up at the sloping ceiling and says, 'The roof is lower.'

'You're taller,' says Cristabel, and he is. Tall and wide-shouldered as a swimmer, but still with a trace of his teenage skinniness. Back when they were young, he was nearly always bare-chested, faded shorts low on his hips, a stolen cigarette and a narrow-eyed gaze. Long-haired gutter boy. Artful dodger. Suddenly she can see the young Leon very clearly, peering up at a tree on Ceal Head, when he had thrown a rope over a high bough to make a swing that flew out over the ocean. She remembers him looking up at the tree, as he is now inspecting the attic ceiling, yanking the rope and then handing it to her for the inaugural flight.

Cristabel moves past him into the girls' bedroom and lights the oil lamp. Following her, Leon deposits what he is carrying on Flossie's bed, piling it on top of Cristabel's clothes. He takes off his coat and scarf, then sits on the bed to pull off his boots, glancing at a half-complete jigsaw puzzle on the bedside table.

'It's Flossie's,' says Cristabel. 'I hate jigsaws.'

'I remember. You used to cut the pieces with scissors to make them fit.' With his boots off to reveal much-darned socks, Leon throws a packet of Lucky Strike in Cristabel's direction. She sits on her bed, helps herself to a cigarette, and

watches as he opens the wine using an enviable pocketknife with useful attachments. As she hands him the mugs so he can fill them with wine, she notices his knuckles are scraped and there is a new scar on one of his wrists.

He passes her a mug, then gets up to rattle the poker in the fireplace until the flames start up again. This done, he pulls a blanket on to the floor to serve as a picnic rug and settles himself down in front of the fire to carve up the pie. There is a practised efficiency to his movements, the sense of someone adept at setting up camp.

He notices the cardboard theatre on the floor and pulls it towards him. 'Do you still play with this?'

'I don't play with it. I use it as a model when planning productions.'

Leon carefully slides the paper backdrop – white clouds and blue sky – out of the theatre and looks at it. 'Is your theatre still standing?'

'Of course,' she says. 'Although at the moment, it holds vegetables rather than audiences.'

He smiles, slides the backdrop back into place. 'I am glad it is still there. It nearly killed me to drag those bones from the beach.'

'It works well, but it could be better.'

'How better?'

She clammers off the bed and sits next to him on the blanket, pulling the cardboard theatre towards her. 'The audience are all on one level.' She uses the two apples to serve as audience members. 'If you are sitting behind someone in a large hat, your line of sight is completely restricted.'

'Lift them up,' he says.

'How?'

'Like a Roman amphitheatre. Raise the audience so they can see more.' He pulls a pillow from the bed, puts it in front of the cardboard theatre and places an apple on top of it. 'There's an amphitheatre in Nîmes. We used to go for the bullfighting.'

'I didn't know there was bullfighting in France.'

'Only in the South. Maybe not now the Nazis have moved in.'

'I suspect that's the kind of entertainment they enjoy,' replies Cristabel. 'I had considered some sort of raised seating, but I didn't know how to do it.'

'Stones from the beach. Sand. You have materials. Find a spade and a wheelbarrow. Build it up.'

'Would it be resilient if it was made out of sand?'

'I believe so. A mixture of sand and stones,' he says, placing another apple on the pillow. 'I could build it for you if I wasn't collecting pheasants for Colonel Drake. I always like to build things.' He taps one of the apples. 'These people. They have the best view. They pay the most.'

‘Did you want to be a builder?’ she asks. ‘When you were younger, I mean.’

‘Nobody asked me what I wanted to be. I ran away to sea, then Colonel Drake took me in, and now I collect his pheasants.’ He picks up one of the apples and bites into it.

Cristabel thinks for a moment, then points to his scraped knuckles. ‘You don’t only collect pheasants.’

He laughs. ‘No. Sometimes I collect people.’

‘Where from?’

‘Beaches, mostly. Late at night. Sometimes they want to come. Sometimes not.’

‘Is that the kind of thing Digby will be doing? Perry sorted something out for him.’

‘No, Digby is an officer. Speaks good French. He’s probably in a chateau. They won’t let me talk to anyone. My accent is too Russian. Everyone fears the Russians.’ He says this with satisfaction.

‘Do you know if Digby is in France?’ she asks. ‘Did Perry talk to you about that?’

Leon eats his apple. ‘Colonel Drake knows I never listen.’

She nudges him with her elbow. ‘Tell me.’

‘I think it likely,’ he says, eventually.

‘Digby’s French is good, but not perfect,’ she says. ‘I wish I was there instead.’

‘Maybe you will go. There is talk of women agents. They are running out of men.’

‘They’re sending women into France?’

‘It is easier for women. A young man attracts the attention of the Germans. A young woman? With a smile and a wave, she can go on her way.’

‘Could I go?’ says Cristabel. ‘Would they send me?’

‘Speak to Colonel Drake. I’m only a pheasant collector.’ He gets to his feet and begins to heave Flossie’s bed across the room, pushing it next to Cristabel’s.

‘Leon, what on earth are you doing?’

‘These beds are the beds of children. I am making a bigger one,’ he says, pushing the two beds together before lying down on top of the covers.

Cristabel frowns but then climbs up on to the bed next to him, putting her mug of wine on her bedside table. ‘When are you seeing Perry? Tomorrow?’

‘I believe so.’

‘Could you take me with you? So I could speak to him.’

‘Perhaps,’ he says, closing his eyes. ‘I am tired. I will agree to anything.’

She lies down, folding her arms and looking at the ceiling, occasionally glancing over at Leon. Her mind is whirring with thoughts of talking to Perry and

persuading him to let her go into France. She chews her bottom lip. She cannot stop her feet from fidgeting.

She looks at Leon again, his long body next to hers. She has never been alone in the house with a man before. His shirt has come untucked from his trousers on one side, revealing a gap of skin. After a while, she says: 'Have you read *Moby-Dick*?'

'I am uneducated. I don't read.'

'You should. You would like it.'

'Tell it to me then. A bedtime story.'

'Well. At the beginning, there is a scene where the whaler Ishmael must share a bed with a tattooed savage called Queequeg, who sleeps with his tomahawk.'

'Sounds an interesting man.'

'They meet at a tavern and are forced to share a room,' says Cristabel, then adds, 'did you want to go to sleep?'

He opens his eyes, turns to her. 'I can't. Somebody is talking.'

'I was reminded of a scene in a great work of literature and thought I would share it.'

He puts his hands behind his head. 'What happens in the tavern?'

'They sleep together,' she says, after a moment. 'Ishmael says it's better to sleep with a sober cannibal than a drunken Christian.'

'I didn't think it was that kind of book,' he replies.

'It's not. But they do sleep in the same bed.'

'Does anything happen between them?'

'Hard to say.'

'Maybe it happens when they are at sea,' says Leon. 'It is often the way with sailors.'

'Ishmael does say that Queequeg puts his arms around him in a "bridegroom embrace".'

They look at each other for a moment, then Leon slowly reaches towards her to unknot her dressing gown.

'What are you doing?' she says.

'What you are asking me to do,' he says. 'What is this, a reef knot?'

'A double reef knot.'

'I might have to cut it with a knife.'

'You most certainly will not.'

He skilfully unties the cord of her dressing gown to reveal her stripy pyjamas. 'There,' he says. 'You are now free of your grandfather's ugly gown. You can take it off.' She opens her mouth, but Leon speaks first. 'Cristabel, if you want me to go downstairs and sleep in the cat's basket, I will. But do not try to

tell me you are saving yourself for a husband or any of that, for I am too tired for speeches.'

'I'm not saving myself for a husband,' she says. 'Or anyone else.'

'Nor should you,' he says.

'Although, some men prefer women who keep themselves, you know. Not that I care.'

'What kind of women do you think I prefer?' he says.

'I have no idea.'

'I have sent you many postcards, Cristabel.'

'Most of them obscene.'

'Exactly,' he laughs. 'They were so funny. That one from Plymouth – do you remember the picture? The little husband and the big wife in the deckchair.'

'They were all awful,' she says, smiling.

'What's more, when I am in London, I take you out for meals whenever you instruct me to.'

'Meals paid for by Perry.'

'These are small details.' He tilts his head to one side. 'Are you nervous?'

'What do you mean, nervous?'

'Are you nervous to have a man in your room? Is that why you want to tell me stories?'

It is a taunt like those he goaded her with in childhood and she recognizes it as such. She knows how to proceed from here. 'How dare you,' she says, sitting up to take her dressing gown off. 'Do I look nervous?' There is something imperative inside her then, something bold, pushing her on. Just as she had once held her palm over a flame, she now starts to unbutton her pyjama top.

Leon props himself up to watch her, his face still holding his usual combative half-smile, but there is something different in his eyes now, something quieter. His smile is secondary to his gaze, which is travelling over her as she takes off her top. She is lit by moving firelight and he reaches across to touch the skin of her collarbone, runs his fingers along it.

'Are you cold?' he says.

'No,' she replies. 'You won't be. You've kept your shirt on, after all.'

'So I have,' he says, sitting up to take it off.

Now they are matched: opponents stripped to the waist. Leon has a line of dark hair running down his chest. There is a purple bruise on his ribs, a blotchy tattoo on his upper arm.

Cristabel nods at it. 'You really are a savage. What is it?'

'A lost bet in a bar in Danzig,' he says.

'No, what's it meant to be?'

'It's a ship. Look, it has sails. A little flag. Do you need spectacles?'

‘No,’ she says, and reaches out to touch it, as casually as she can. ‘This looks nothing like a flag.’

‘What looks nothing like a flag?’

‘This, here.’

‘Touch it again so I can be sure of which bit you mean.’

They pause then, like boxers circling each other in the ring. She traces the outline of the ship, then the inky ocean it sails on. The fire throws its shadows round the room. Outside, the rain continues to fall. Then Cristabel moves first, leaning over and pulling him towards her, before she loses her nerve.

Coffee, Tea

December, 1942

Cristabel surfaces slowly from sleep as if from a great depth. It is akin to the pleasure of waking up the morning after a long day at the beach; to gradually come to in a body well used and well rested. She stretches with satisfaction, raising her arms and curving her back, lifting her body from the mattress and extending the full long length of herself like a bowstring till she can lay her hands flat on the wall behind her bed, remembering as she does so that she found the same position during the night. The echo of the movement runs through her like a quiver.

She opens her eyes. It is early morning, still dark and raining solidly, but a low glow comes from the remaining coals in the fireplace, and some light comes through the open window where Leon is leaning on the window sill smoking. He has pulled on his trousers. She can make out the bare skin of his back, the line of his spine. How curious it is to know she has touched that skin, felt those shoulder blades shift beneath her hands. How satisfying to observe him, while aware of that knowledge. She has no desire to move. She is replete as a conqueror. She wiggles her toes.

He glances at her, smiles, then turns back to the window, saying, 'I am so hungry, if there were still horses here, I would kill one and eat it.'

'There are, but you can't,' she says. 'We have lots of eggs though.'

He fires his cigarette from the window, neat as a dart, pulls the window closed, and picks up his shirt and boots. 'Then why are we up here? Put some clothes on, Cristabel Seagrave. I must eat.' As he passes her, he leans down and presses his mouth to hers, an urgent, rough kiss, his stubble prickly against her skin, and suddenly everything they have done and newly discovered is with them again. She reaches up to push her hands into the thick hair at the nape of his neck as he glances at the clock on her bedside table and, with his mouth still open to hers and their breath passing between them, he says, 'We have half an hour before we need to leave.'

Breakfast is dry bread eaten in the car with a flask of black coffee they take turns to swig from. Cristabel is driving, as Leon claims he is too weak from hunger to turn the wheel. Once in the passenger seat, he adjusts his position to look at her, saying, 'Besides, I always like to watch you drive.'

'What do you mean?' she says, grappling with the gear stick as they head up the Ridgeway.

They are both back in their military uniforms: Cristabel's has been washed and pressed by Betty; Leon's has not. The car is Perry's sturdy military staff car,

the khaki Humber. Their kitbags and the box of food and wine for Perry are piled in the back seat.

‘When we were younger, that summer when Bill taught us to drive,’ Leon says. ‘I liked to watch you. You would get so furious with your mistakes.’

‘I thought you just liked laughing at me.’

‘I liked that too,’ he says, brushing crumbs from his stripy scarf.

‘That old car was a bugger to drive. Heavy as a tank. I don’t know how we ever learnt anything.’

‘You weren’t even meant to be learning. Bill was only meant to teach me.’

Cristabel laughs. ‘Oh, yes. I had forgotten that. I had arranged it, then thought to myself, “Hang on a minute, why’s he getting to learn, and not me?”’

‘Poor Bill. Going up and down the drive with us for weeks.’

‘I had to sit on a cushion to see over the steering wheel.’

‘I tell you though, if you learn to drive a car that size as a child, military vehicles are no trouble at all,’ says Leon. He holds two cigarettes in his mouth to light them, then hands her one.

‘Let’s hope so,’ she replies, and accelerates.

After a while, Cristabel says, ‘Where are your brothers and sisters now? Your mother? Are they all right? Do you hear from them?’

He exhales a wobbly smoke ring. ‘One brother dead. One missing. One in Spain. Two sisters alive, I think. My mother, I don’t know. She was in Ghent when the Germans arrived.’

‘That must be a worry. Do you hear from your father?’

‘I see from the newspapers he is alive and well and fighting the Nazis from the safety of New York City.’

‘Myrtle still sees him. If you wanted to get in touch, she could pass on a message.’

‘I could get a message to him if I wanted to.’

‘Of course,’ she says, then, ‘I’m sorry about your brothers.’

‘I am too,’ he replies, then pulls a piece of leftover pork pie from his pocket and eats it between drags on his cigarette.

It is overcast and rainy. The empty roads are covered with puddles, potholes and the odd stray sheep, mud-sodden and full of grievance. Five days before Christmas, but the country is low-lit and undecorated. Each Christmas of the war seems a shadow of the one before: less food, less drink; more empty places at the table.

The war and all its deprivations seem relentless, but for Cristabel, there is a strange and guilty thrill running through it, for it is exactly this thinning of the ordinary that allows the unordinary through. How can it be that she loves this murky, blighted and pockmarked England more than she loved its peaceful green

predecessor? Because she can drive a car through it, in a uniform; because she can be with a man in it, without marriage; because she can die for it, if she can persuade Perry to let her try.

‘Tell me,’ she says, for she wants to talk about everything now, ‘where did you get those things – the, what did you call them, “johnnies”?’

‘I get mine from the Americans. Theirs are bigger, you understand. Why do you want to know?’

‘In case I need more.’

‘Was that your first time, last night?’

‘Why do you want to know?’

‘I already know. I am asking to be polite.’

‘You’re never polite.’ She glances at him. ‘Yes, then. It was. The way I’ve heard it talked about, I thought it would be something of a horror show. Bloodied sheets and all that. But it wasn’t like that at all. I wish somebody had told me. Have you been with a lot of women?’

‘Not as many as I would like,’ Leon says, then swears in Russian as the car bumps into a pothole, sending ash from his cigarette all over his lap.

‘That was a good curse,’ says Cristabel. ‘I haven’t heard that one before. What does it mean?’

‘Life is screwing me,’ he says, brushing ash from his trousers.

‘You swear in Russian and talk to cats in Russian,’ she says. ‘And now I know you speak Russian in bed too.’

‘Cats prefer Russian. Some women prefer French.’

‘How many women have you been with?’

‘I don’t count.’

‘I would count. Are they all different?’

‘It is early in the day to have this conversation, Cristabel.’

‘Are you embarrassed?’

‘Not embarrassed. Mainly hungry, a little tired.’

‘Very well then. Explain to me how women are different in bed. What do they like?’

‘I will show you later,’ Leon replies, wrapping his scarf about his neck. ‘I’m going to sleep. Wake me in an hour and I will take over driving.’

‘I didn’t say goodbye to Betty,’ says Cristabel, after a moment.

They get to London in the afternoon and find Perry in the unexpected environs of the café at Fortnum & Mason, where well-to-do women take tea after shopping in the department store. Perry has meetings there, explains Leon, because he finds people are less argumentative in the presence of cake. At a piano in the corner of the room, an elderly man in a dinner suit is playing Christmas carols; paper decorations hang limply from the walls.

As they arrive, an angry-looking French general in full uniform is leaving the table. Leon and Perry exchange glances and Leon follows the man out. Perry turns to Cristabel and gestures towards a three-tier cake stand, as if he had been expecting her. 'Help yourself, my dear.'

Cristabel takes off her hat. 'We didn't mean to interrupt your meeting.'

'It had finished,' says Perry. 'Sometimes, it's hard to remember that the French and the English are on the same side. We spend a great deal of time fighting each other.'

'About what?'

'They want to be more involved in our work, but they're impetuous, the French. Prone to playing both sides against the middle. It's tidier if we keep our activities separate,' he says, shaking out a napkin. 'Please, sit down. To what do I owe this honour?'

'I want to do more for the war effort,' Cristabel replies, sitting at the table. 'I'm sick of pushing tiddlywinks about.'

'What you do is vital. Tea? Plenty left in the pot. My French friend is not a fan.'

'I could do more. I've heard women might be used undercover in France.'

'Who on earth could have told you that,' he says, lifting an eyebrow as he pours tea, adding, 'I hope you aren't thinking you might find Digby there.'

'Not unless I was instructed to.'

'You would not be instructed to.'

'Does he need to be found?'

'No good agent needs to be found. Milk?'

'Yes.'

'Sugar?'

'Three, please.'

Perry carefully deposits sugar lumps into her tea with a pair of silver tongs, then says, 'Cristabel, let me state for the record that, officially, we don't use women in any combat role.'

'Other countries do. Did you see in the newspapers about that Soviet girl sniper? She has over three hundred kills. They invited her to the White House.'

'A useful piece of propaganda,' he says, passing her a cup and saucer.

'You don't believe it?'

'I imagine she has some skill, but she is clearly of more use as a newspaper story – why else would she be at the White House? Besides, we are English, not Russian. There would be uproar if we sent wives and mothers to the front line.'

'I'm not a wife or a mother. Do you think I might have a chance?'

'You're a capable girl. They'd investigate your background, of course. I hope they wouldn't find anything alarming there.'

‘They wouldn’t.’

‘Your stepmother had some interesting friends, but I had Kovalsky checked out myself, and he’s a dinner party revolutionary, nothing more.’

‘You had Taras checked?’

‘Better safe than sorry,’ he says, pouring his own tea. ‘Besides, it was useful for me to know what sort of family my chauffeur comes from.’

‘Would you get rid of Leon if Taras was involved with something iffy? That’s hardly fair.’

‘Not necessarily. Leon has useful qualities. Speaks many languages. Not afraid to get his hands dirty, and, most importantly, has no desire to have my job.’ Perry looks at her for a moment, then adds, ‘He doesn’t seem to have any ambition at all, beyond seducing my secretaries.’

To her surprise, Cristabel feels a twinge of jealousy, deep in her body, but lifts her eyebrows in what she hopes is a nonchalant manner and says, flatteringly, ‘Someone like Leon could never do your job.’

Perry stirs his tea, then says, ‘If I were to recommend you for certain confidential tasks, Cristabel, I would suggest that you be stationed a long way from your brother. To lose both Seagraves would be – what’s that line from the Wilde play?’

“‘To lose one parent may be regarded as a misfortune; to lose both looks like carelessness.’”

‘I knew you would know it,’ he smiles.

‘Is it likely that we would be lost? Be honest.’

‘I am not one to speculate,’ Perry says, ‘but I am given to understand the odds of survival for an agent in France are roughly fifty per cent. One in two.’

To demonstrate, he pulls a coin from his pocket and spins it on the table. It rotates so rapidly it becomes a globe, then he quickly lays his hand over it before it falls.

He says, ‘Cristabel, have you given any thought as to what you might do after the war?’

‘Happily, the war seems to have removed the necessity of considering that,’ she replies, revolving the cake stand to examine its offerings.

‘In many ways, war is fought to determine what happens afterwards,’ says Perry. ‘The general I was speaking to when you arrived, for example, has strong opinions on the large number of Communists who have joined the Resistance since Russia came over to our side. He fears if the French are helped to victory by Communists, then Moscow will have a hand in their future.’

‘If Communists want to join the fight, why on earth would we stop them?’

‘They are rather overt in their methods. They want to draw others to their cause – a form of recruitment, if you will. Or a sign of insecurity.’

‘Insecurity?’ says Cristabel, helping herself to a chocolate eclair.

‘Undercover operatives should need no applause,’ says Perry, handing her a napkin. ‘They should act like mosquitoes, delivering painful bites without ever being seen.’

‘But winning is the main thing, surely? Pointless to tie ourselves up in political knots. Goodness, this tastes like real cream.’

‘It is. And you are right: winning must be our aim. But even before the war began, men were considering how to be in an advantageous position at its end. I cannot believe that the formidable Cristabel Seagrave hasn’t also considered her own future,’ he says, adjusting his cup in its saucer. ‘What it might be like to marry. To have a family.’

Cristabel scowls. She has always found this line of questioning tedious, a petulant tugging on her sleeve, and now, when they are discussing how to win the war, it seems wholly irrelevant. ‘I don’t have time to think about that.’

She glances at him and sees an odd expression flicker across his face, before he looks away from her, saying, ‘Ah, here’s Leon. I did not expect him back so soon. It would appear our French colleague did not require a lift back to his quarters.’

Leon arrives at the table and holds his hand out to Cristabel. ‘You should not eat all of that cake. You should share it with me.’

‘I drove us most of the way here,’ she replies.

‘Precisely,’ he says, ‘I need that chocolate item to recover.’

‘How dare you,’ she says, and takes a large bite, but puts the remainder in his hand.

‘When do you have to get back to your duties, Cristabel?’ asks Perry, who is watching them while pushing the coin on the table around under his finger, like a man considering a bet at the roulette wheel.

‘This evening. Could Leon give me a lift back?’

‘No, I don’t think so,’ replies Perry. ‘It’s not his car, after all.’

She looks at Perry across the table, but he does not meet her gaze. He says, ‘I’ll tell you what I’ll do, Cristabel. I will make a call, on your behalf. I will make a suggestion that you are considered for some specialist work in the field. Beyond that, it is up to you.’ He picks up the coin and hands it, smiling, to a passing waitress.

Captain Potter

January, 1943

The letter inviting her to attend a meeting with Captain Ebenezer Potter of the Ministry of Pensions is as deliberately innocuous as the room she meets Captain Potter in, at the back of a hotel in Whitehall. Judging from the floral curtains and patterned carpet, the room used to be a bedroom. It is entirely empty but for a wooden table – on which stands nothing but a packet of cigarettes and a saucer being used as a makeshift ashtray – and two wooden chairs, one of which is occupied by Captain Potter.

‘Cristabel Seagrave,’ he says, rising to shake her hand. ‘Good to meet you. Did you travel to London this morning?’

‘No, I stayed overnight with a friend.’

‘Excellent. Do sit down. How are things at Fighter Command?’ he says, and she sees he has no plans to conceal the fact he already knows a great deal about her.

‘Busy,’ she says.

Capt. Potter is middle-aged, wearing an army uniform, with dark Brylcreemed hair and a lively, watchful gaze. His mouth is held in a tight line, almost amused, as if holding something in. He says, ‘Section Officer Seagrave, you’ve been asked here because we believe you may be of value in the war effort. We understand you are fluent in French and spent time in France while growing up.’

‘My stepmother sent me there as often as she could.’

‘She didn’t go herself?’

‘We went with our governess, Mademoiselle Aubert. We stayed in boarding houses in Normandy. She took long naps, while we roamed the streets like urchins.’

‘By “we” you mean, you, Florence and Digby Seagrave. Cigarette?’

‘I do. Thank you.’

‘You then went to a Swiss finishing school, where you learnt some German.’

‘I wasn’t there for long. I have the basics but could never pass as German.’

‘But you could pass as French?’

‘I believe so.’

He lights her cigarette then his own, before switching into French to say, ‘I hear you have an outdoor theatre at your home. Do you perform?’

She replies in French. ‘As a child, I did, but as an adult, I prefer to act as director.’

‘Even a director must take to the stage at the end of a performance, to accept her bouquet.’

‘I am uncomfortable with that custom, as it happens. I feel it diminishes the collective achievement of the cast.’

‘You avoid the limelight?’

‘I don’t seek it out, if that’s what you’re asking.’

‘Do you find it difficult to accept orders?’

‘Not if they’re sensible.’

‘Can you ride a bicycle?’

‘Yes.’

He leans forward on to his desk, switching back into English, to ask, ‘Tell me, as an intelligent young person, what do you make of the Nazis?’

‘I despise the Nazis and everything they stand for.’

‘Then what do you think Herr Hitler’s followers see in him?’

‘Without wanting to sound facile, the Nazis I saw in Europe seemed most taken with their uniforms. Their parades. The grand display of it all. Even before we were at war, they could pretend they were warriors.’

‘What young man doesn’t want to be a mighty warrior?’ says Capt. Potter.

Cristabel says nothing. There doesn’t seem to be an answer to that question.

‘What about the young women who are devoted to our friend Adolf,’ says Capt. Potter, rolling his cigarette between his fingers. ‘What do you make of them?’

‘I don’t know what to make of them. I used to stay with a woman in Austria who was enamoured with the Nazis. Listened to all their speeches. I could never understand why.’ She remembers it clearly: the cramped sitting room in her mountain lodgings; the wireless broadcasting the staticky roar of far-away thousands applauding; and the harsh German voice proclaiming that while *man gave to life the great lines and forms, it was the task of women to fill these lines and forms with colour*. How the woman had clapped. What was it that so delighted her? wondered Cristabel. Was it simply the word colour? Like a child pleased by bright flowers.

‘How do you get on with other women?’ Capt. Potter asks.

‘I can get on with anyone if I have to. Why?’

‘I’m building a picture of your character. Would you describe yourself as a political individual?’ says Capt. Potter, though she doubts that is his real name, just as she doubts the existence of the Ministry of Pensions.

‘I know right from wrong.’

‘Your family situation is unusual,’ he says. ‘Your father died when you were young. I mention this because I believe a woman’s loyalties invariably follow her

father's. A little girl worships daddy, so if daddy is loyal to his country, then it follows she will be. But if she doesn't have a father –' Capt. Potter lifts his hands.

'I didn't have a mother either,' Cristabel replies.

'Did you ever imagine what it might be like to have had parents?'

She shakes her head. It has never occurred to her to picture an alternative upbringing. Her father was there and then he wasn't, and the solid shape of his death blocked out any other possibilities. Her mother, however, was never there, and Cristabel guards her indifference to this fact fiercely. It is an absence no one can touch.

'Captain Potter,' she says, 'there are many of my generation who lost parents. I cannot believe I am the only orphan you have come across.'

'Sadly, no,' he says. 'I am merely curious about how character is formed in the absence of parents. Before the war, I was a writer, so I think a great deal about character. You must too, with your interest in the theatre. What is it in our upbringing that shapes us?'

It is strange, but at that moment Cristabel thinks of Leon, as she had seen him that morning, in his bedsit at the top of a building near St James's Park. He was half naked, a towel tied about his waist, shaving at the sink in the corner, the razor blade scraping over his skin. His room overlooked rooftops and air vents, drainpipes and gutterings, and far below, a backstreet, home to hotels and members' clubs, quiet comings and goings, a doorman waiting in a top hat.

There was nothing of sentiment in his room. No books, no photographs. Only a wireless and a bottle of rum. He shared it with a man in the navy, who was away for long stretches at a time. They divided the room with a sheet hung from the ceiling. It was an empty, temporary space designed to be left easily. A backstage space; an overnight camp. It made sense to her.

She thought of how, having had no instructions to follow, no examples to live by, Leon had been left to raise himself, and had done so as a resourceful child would, using the tools to hand – and she had done the same: made a model of herself and set it to work in the world. They were rough copies, children's drawings; Mowglis who had taught themselves to walk upright and put on clothes.

Leon's dark eyes in the mirror watching himself become presentable, the practised running of the blade, its rough debriding. Waiting at the end of his single bed: their military uniforms.

'I don't believe parents are always necessary,' she says.

'Would you say then that being an orphan fostered a spirit of self-reliance?'

'Possibly. I was thrown upon myself a good deal, but never at a loss for things to do.'

‘What would you say to someone who believes a young woman should not be called upon to fight a war?’

‘If I can be of use to my country, then I should be made use of.’

Capt. Potter nods enthusiastically. ‘I have great faith in the women I recruit. They operate more successfully on their own. Keep a cool head. Men are so used to being in the company of other men, they come to rely on it.’

Cristabel lifts her mouth in a smile, puts out her cigarette.

‘What are your current domestic circumstances?’ asks Capt. Potter. ‘If I were to recommend you for further training, who would run your family home? Given that your cousin Digby is also on active service.’

She wonders how much Capt. Potter knows about Digby. She says, ‘I believe my sister Florence is more than capable of managing the estate, which is curious, as I am not sure I would have said that before the war.’

‘War is a great uplifter,’ says Capt. Potter, slapping his hands on the table. ‘For a fortunate few, war allows us to rise in ways that would otherwise be impossible. We can bring the very best of us to bear.’

She has the sense that he is enjoying the conversation and wishes to draw out the interview as one might extend a game of poker or a fencing match. There are men, she has observed, who enjoy this kind of interaction with women, but how to conclude the bout to attain the result she wants without offending him? Is he the type who would wish her to flourish her rapier and bounce coquettishly about for a while longer, or would he want her to go for his throat? She thinks for a moment, remembers how much she hates parlour games, and hears her Uncle Willoughby in her ear. ‘Both hands on a broadsword, Cristabel.’

She says, ‘Captain Potter, you talked about loyalties. I am loyal to my family. I am loyal to my country. But that is not why I am here. I am here because I cannot stand injustice. The thought of Hitler and his thugs marching across Europe as if they owned it thoroughly revolts me. It’s arrogant bullying on the grandest scale and I hate it. I hate them and I hate it. I want to go to France as soon as I am able and, if sent, would do whatever is asked of me to defeat the enemy. Whatever is asked. Can you make that happen?’

Capt. Potter steeples his fingers; his eyes are very bright. ‘Someone will be in touch.’

New Recruits

March, 1943

In the back of the car, Cristabel folds her hands in her lap. She doesn't ordinarily feel nervous.

She is wearing a new khaki uniform, that of a subaltern in the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry – a civilian corps, which, she has been told, allows her to be trained to carry arms. Women in the military are forbidden to take part in combatant duties, but, perversely, women civilians are less restricted. She is in an unmarked car, a huge Chrysler with black curtains covering the passenger windows, being driven to a manor house in Surrey that serves as a preliminary training school for undercover operatives. The driver is a young woman, also in khaki uniform.

Cristabel is not sure if she should make conversation. The peculiarity of being a uniformed woman in a car driven by a uniformed woman has underscored the feeling she has had since hearing Capt. Potter had selected her to be trained for confidential work: that she has stepped through the looking-glass. It is both exciting and disorientating, and she feels unusually jumpy, as if at the start of an opening night. She looks at her hands on her lap, checks her fingernails are clean.

The car slows to a halt. Cristabel pulls back the curtain. They have arrived outside an Elizabethan manor surrounded by pine trees. Its sloping tiled roofs and multiple chimneys remind her of Chilcombe, but there are uniformed people, young men and women, coming and going in the grounds: her first sighting of other new recruits. In the hotel where she met Capt. Potter, she had seen only the doorman who let her in; the rest of the building was disconcertingly empty.

She takes her bags from the driver, who wishes her good luck in a solemn tone, then walks to the main entrance, where she is let in by a staff officer who knows her name. There are timetables on the walls in the hallway, alongside maps dotted with pins. Cristabel heads automatically towards the main staircase, but the staff officer diverts her along a corridor to the narrow stairs at the back of the house, telling her she is to share a bedroom on the top floor with another woman, who is there when she arrives. A petite, dark-haired woman, patting Papier Poudré across her nose. She greets Cristabel enthusiastically, with a kiss on each cheek in the French style, saying, 'Welcome to the madhouse! I'll be in the bar when you're ready, ducks.'

Cristabel unpacks the few things she has brought with her, places the goddess Sekhmet on her bedside table, checks herself in a mirror. She draws herself up to her full height and lifts her chin, takes a deep breath, tries a smile, then a nod.

She goes back downstairs to find the bar. It is in what Cristabel imagines used to be the drawing room and now holds a mix of occasional tables, armchairs and a makeshift corner bar, behind which is the petite woman, pouring them each a Dubonnet and bitter lemon. She cries, '*Bonjour, chérie!*' as Cristabel enters. Several uniformed men reading newspapers in the armchairs look up at the new arrival with curiosity.

'Isn't it a little early to be drinking?' says Cristabel. It is ten in the morning.

'They keep the bar open all day. It means they can weed out anyone with a reckless taste for booze,' replies the woman. 'They say they don't like it when their girls drink, but what they mean is they don't like it when their girls drink them under the table.' Her accent is a cheerfully haphazard mix of French and cockney.

'Don't start that again, Sophie,' groans one of the men. 'I've not recovered from last night yet.'

Sophie winks at Cristabel and hands her the drink. 'Here's to you, ducks,' she says. 'I'm Sophie Leray. Lovely to meet you. Try not to fall over.'

There are twelve new recruits, two women and ten men, and they train together. While training with the WAAF had been a series of drills repeated endlessly, training at the Surrey manor is curiously like being a guest at a country house, with group activities interspersed by regular meals.

Each day starts with an early-morning slog round an obstacle course, the women wearing borrowed battledress, followed by a cooked breakfast. Then they learn about codes and build Meccano models, or play variants of the memory game where items on a tray are concealed with a cloth then removed, one by one. After lunch, they throw hand grenades into a nearby chalk quarry, or swim in the chilly outdoor pool beneath the pine trees. In the evenings, they dine in full uniform, then walk to the neighbouring village to go to the pub, where they are eyed by curious locals.

'They didn't teach us this at school,' whispers Sophie one morning, as they write out the Morse code alphabet.

'I didn't go to school,' replies Cristabel, her brain crowded with dots and dashes.

'You didn't miss nothing,' Sophie replies.

There are elements of the training which Cristabel tackles with ease – like climbing a tree and coming down it via a rope, Sophie at the bottom shouting, 'Saints alive, did you grow up in a jungle?' – and, having been hunting, she is familiar with firing a gun, although pistols are new to her, and learning to take them apart and put them back together is an enjoyable exercise. But some lessons are more challenging.

One morning, they are summoned out on to the lawns where mats have been laid out on the grass. A couple of conducting officers are already there, stripped to the waist like Ancient Greeks, their arms behind their backs. The PT instructor in charge, a muscular man with a Lancastrian accent, wastes no time in informing the recruits that they should pay attention, as what they are about to learn could save their lives.

Using the two half-naked men as demonstration models, the instructor rapidly runs through a series of wrestling moves. How to use your enemy's weight against him, how to throw him to the ground. He grabs one of the men, then flings him over so he lands on his back with a thump.

'Who's next?' he says. 'What about one of you girls? I've been told you want to go up against the Nazis.'

'Most men buy me a drink before they ask for a wrestle,' says Sophie.

'Most women know better than to think they can fight a war,' says the instructor, rolling his eyes. 'Hitler won't have time for your excuses, miss, and nor do I.'

Cristabel steps forward on to the mat. 'All right then.'

She hears one of the male recruits say, 'Go easy on her, eh?' So she adds loudly, 'But don't go easy on me.'

The instructor laughs, then approaches, hunched low, with his arms held out in front. Feeling self-conscious, Cristabel tries to mimic his actions, but as she is studying his footwork, he sweeps her legs out from underneath her, flipping her on to the mat with a smack that knocks the air from her lungs. Looking down at her, the instructor says, 'You're a lanky one. Got a long way to fall.'

One of the conducting officers pulls Cristabel to her feet, and she is about to leave the mat, but the PT instructor grabs her again. 'Try it with him,' he says, pointing to the conducting officer. 'Get lower this time. We've a war to win here, ladies.'

Breathing hard, Cristabel finds she has gritted her teeth. She crouches down, holds her arms out. The conducting officer approaches her and grabs her by the shoulders. 'Grab me,' he hisses, so she grabs his shoulders in return, her hands gripping his bare skin. His face is very close to hers, his eyes serious. He makes sudden movements, pushing or pulling her forwards and backwards. Once, he hooks a leg behind hers, but she kicks herself free. Knowing no techniques, she tries to rush him, to barge him to the ground, and he is knocked back a few steps, but quickly recovers, and she finds herself again hurled to the ground, this time with the conducting officer on top of her, pinioning her to the mat, his elbow across her throat. 'Sorry,' he says in a whisper. She can feel him breathing, the movement of his ribcage against her chest.

'Are you done yet, miss?' says the instructor, peering down at her.

The conducting officer lifts his elbow, so she can speak. ‘No, sir,’ she says. The instructor smiles. ‘That’s the spirit.’

That evening, Cristabel sits in the bath examining the bruises on her hips, the grazes on her elbows. The session had improved as she had grown familiar with the techniques, but she was consistently caught out. The male recruits were quicker to get stuck in, they seemed to have no reservations about manhandling each other and rolling about in a tangle of limbs. Most of them must have learnt it at school. Even as young boys, they would have wrestled, played rugby, become familiar with the bodies of others. She had been taught to hold herself apart. Don’t touch that. Hands off. Where are your gloves?

She looks at her hands. She could probably count the number of people she has ever touched on the fingers of one of them. Digby and Flossie. Leon. Maudie and the nanny who looked after her as a baby. She doesn’t know if her mother held her. Wouldn’t remember if she had. And now: the sweaty shoulders of a conducting officer; the muscular arms of the PT instructor (‘Get a hold of the flesh, girl!’); the waists, backs, necks and legs of her fellow students. Sophie, who put an arm round her as they walked, exhausted, back to the house.

On her upper arm, she can see a line of red marks left by the fingers of one of her opponents, like a set of bloody fingerprints.

The instructors and officers at the house are familiar types – brusque military men or smooth Old Etonians – but the students are more diverse. They are British, French, Czech, Belgian, Mauritian, Canadian, or a combination. Only a couple have military experience, the rest have been selected for their language skills and whatever ineffable qualities Capt. Potter saw in them. They include a journalist, a teacher, a racing driver and an acrobat. Sophie, who has a French father and an English mother, worked in her father’s dress shop in Hackney until she saw an advert in the newspaper looking for bilingual secretaries.

The nature of their work, what they are being trained for, is curiously intangible, and the conversations between instructors Cristabel overhears in the bar are so vague, she suspects they must be deliberately so – that on this side of the looking-glass there is a purposeful smudging of the specific. This air of secrecy is infectious. Although Cristabel often wonders if Digby came through the house before her, she never asks about him. It feels important she concentrate on the task in hand. She pushes all thoughts of Digby to the corner of her mind that ruminates at three in the morning.

She has the sense that the recruits’ role is a puzzle they are both part of and attempting to figure out. She is reminded of the scenes in films where a detective brings together the guests at a house party to inform them he is investigating a murder and the murderer is still among them: the deliberate lightness of the guests’ responses – *oh heavens, surely not* – their eyes on each other.

As the weeks pass, she gradually uncovers that the organization she is involved with is a new venture set up to send agents into occupied countries. The French section is headed by a man called Colonel Buckmaster. She meets him briefly one day when he visits the manor, and he is as pale and unremarkable as Perry, lofty and murmuring, with the abstract air of someone consistently bothered by high-level things.

The organization is hidden beneath a blur of similarly unremarkable pseudonyms: the Inter-Services Liaison Bureau, the Joint Technical Board. Its official name is the Special Operations Executive, the SOE, which waggish instructors joke should stand for 'Stately 'Omes of England', given its frequent use of manorial buildings, but most simply refer to as 'the Org'. It sits outside the regular military forces and the established Secret Services and, like most untested new arrivals, is considered something of an amateurish gamble, not least because it is willing to use civilians as agents – and some are women.

A few of the instructors seem particularly disgruntled by the presence of female recruits and make their feelings known through sarcastic comments or jokes at the women's expense, especially after a few rounds in the pub.

'They think having women here will spoil their fun,' says Sophie, carrying their drinks to a table, ignoring the remarks coming from a couple of instructors at the bar. 'Wars have always been just for the boys. That's why they like them so much.'

Although Cristabel is disappointed by the juvenile jibes and a little stung by claims that she lacks a sense of humour, she resolves to ignore them. She is grateful for Sophie's companionship. To be the only woman among jeering men would be hard; a team of two, sharing a table and a pack of cigarettes, is a united front.

Besides, she has not much time to think about it. The fledgling agents' schedule is intense and at every stage they are observed by officers assessing them for suitability. Not all of them will make it through. Being watched adds an air of seriousness to proceedings. Each activity, however absorbing, is also a test. Every lesson completed, a tick in a box.

Cristabel finds this simplicity satisfying: it takes all her focus and allows for no margin of error; a system as pure as a machine. At the end of the day, she dives into the ice-cold swimming pool while the air around her is snapped into pieces by the sound of nearby pistol practice. The bang and gurgle of engulfing water. The crack and recoil of guns. When she gets into bed at night, sleep hits her like a punch.

The recruits are sealed off in the bubble of their strange new world. It is repeatedly impressed upon them that what they are learning is never to be shared. They have signed the Official Secrets Act; are forbidden to make telephone calls;

and their letters are so heavily censored, it seems pointless to write any. Cristabel feels a little empty without her written monologues, her outlets for pronouncements and opinions, but also somehow new. Stopped in telling the story of herself, she is whoever she is when she wakes up. Quieter. Alone. Alone with others who are also alone.

‘You can use the lav first,’ says Sophie from the neighbouring bed, with a sleepy smile. ‘I’m not getting up this early, however loudly they honk that bloody trumpet.’ In the morning, without her make-up, she looks as young as a child.

Sophie had a fiancé, Bob, a fireman who died in the Blitz. A baby son called Paul is with her parents in Hackney. She has an American admirer now, who sends her Elizabeth Arden lipsticks from across the Atlantic: defiant reds. She applies the colour before they go to the pub, sharply outlining the contours of her mouth, as she tells Cristabel, ‘Since my Bob went, nothing’s seemed to touch me. I was in such a slump, then this came along. I was just glad to say yes to something. The sitting around was killing me.’ She uses a tissue to blot her lipstick, pressing it to her mouth like a kiss.

In the pub, she continues, ‘It’s something different, isn’t it? You and me, we’d never meet in ordinary life. Unless you came into my papa’s shop looking for a frock.’

‘I don’t go into shops if I can help it,’ says Cristabel, taking cautious sips of the fruit wine Sophie is insistent she try.

‘You don’t know when it’s your round either,’ says Sophie, giving her a friendly shove.

There is a lot Cristabel doesn’t know, as it turns out. As she listens to her fellow students’ tales of family meals and holidays, she realizes that her home life is uncommon. She watches Sophie – her chatty charm, her popularity – and feels, for the first time, the difficulty of being forged by a family that has left her strangely shaped. Unsure of the usual, its manners and textures.

However, there is one thing she knows: how to listen to a big house. The night the instructors creep into the students’ bedrooms to test their reactions, Cristabel is behind the door, ready for them.

‘How did you know they were coming, ducks?’ asks Sophie, over breakfast.

‘I grew up in a house like this,’ says Cristabel, eating her porridge.

‘But you didn’t have people tiptoeing about in the dark.’

Cristabel thinks of her vigilant younger self, hiding up on the roof. ‘It wasn’t so different.’

‘Blimey,’ laughs Sophie. ‘Remind me never to go to your house. Though I don’t imagine I’d get an invite anyway, someone like me. Probably have to buy a ticket.’

Cristabel frowns. ‘That won’t be necessary. You’d come with me.’

‘We’ll do that then, shall we? When all this is done,’ says Sophie. Her tone is teasing but there is a query in it that Cristabel treats seriously.

‘We will,’ she says.

After three weeks in Surrey, the two weakest students are removed and the rest travel to Scotland for a month of further training – one instructor calls it ‘a toughening’ as if they were pieces of leather. They stay on the remote west coast in a granite Victorian residence. Located on the edge of a loch, tucked beneath a craggy mountain, the house has been chosen for its isolation and, like the manor in Surrey, has had its name removed and replaced with a number. The instructors here are hunters, mountaineers, polar explorers: men who will teach them the art of survival.

The recruits are sent on endless marches, tramping through mist and rain, eating only what they can kill. Cristabel is grateful for Maudie’s long-ago lessons in rabbit-skinning. They make shelters from tree boughs, fires from dried cattle dung. Physicality, she finds, is levelling: they are all equally tired, equally sodden. In their struggles, they become a team, loyal to each other in a teasing, affectionate way. United against the instructors, the insects, the peat bogs, they talk of the nights out they will have in London, when it’s all over.

It no longer matters who they are or where they come from. It does not even matter that some are male and some female. Cristabel is the best shot, a burly Czech man the best cook. There is a camaraderie among the recruits that Cristabel has never experienced before. She realizes that, for all she resents the unfair advantages given to the opposite sex, she does not want to be a man, she only wants it not to matter that she is a woman. She wants this. This friendship, this acceptance. To be valued for what she can do, rather than told what she can’t.

Together, the recruits learn how to jump from a moving train, how to signal with an Aldis lamp, how to send and receive coded messages on a wireless set. Sophie, so fastidious about her appearance she curls her eyelashes every morning, proves an equally fastidious wireless operator, her nimble fingers several times faster than the rest of them, even in sheeting rain. They practise loading and firing weapons in darkness; learning to shoot from the hip in a crouched position, always firing twice, to make sure.

A pair of ex-policemen teach them methods of silent killing learnt in the backstreets of Shanghai. It seems ludicrous that one can be taught how to end a life in the classroom, that it can be reduced to a succession of simple steps. *A quick snap upwards and backwards*. There is a rumour that a student killed an instructor by accident this way. There are many rumours like this – warning fables of unwary agents and their fatal mistakes, or the minuscule errors that gave them away in the field: the one that sipped soup from a spoon not a bowl, the one

that wore gloves with 'Made in England' stitched inside a finger, the one that looked the wrong way crossing the road.

One of the ex-policemen, an amiable man in his fifties, shows them how to use a lethal stiletto blade that has been specially made for them, designed to penetrate even the thickest military uniforms. Perfect, he says, for close-quarters fighting and 'sentry removal' – an interesting euphemism, thinks Cristabel, as if the sentry had been moved somewhere else, rather than left for dead with a hole in their ribcage.

'Anything can be a weapon,' says the ex-policeman, 'but this knife is a particularly good one.' He holds it up. They are in a downstairs room at the house, where long windows look out over the grounds to the deep blue loch beyond. The recruits are seated in fold-out chairs, each holding a knife of their own, while the ex-policeman is leaning against a desk alongside a straw-filled dummy in a suit and Homburg hat.

He continues, 'It's not for the faint-hearted. With a gun, you can shoot a man in the distance, easy as shooting a pigeon. With a knife, you need to get as close to him as you do to your sweetheart.'

He puts the knife on the desk, takes a sip from a teacup, and says, 'Pulling a trigger, anyone can do that. But if your brain starts getting in the way when you're holding a knife, that's fatal.'

'I don't think my brain's ever got in the way of anything,' says Sophie, to laughter.

The ex-policeman smiles politely. 'It's not always a tidy affair either. You might need to get your hands round his throat if the job is incomplete. Then you need to get away and forget him. That's the most important part.'

Cristabel holds her knife loosely across her palm, sensing how sweetly it balances between slender blade and brass handle. She looks away, allowing the feel of it to become something known to her hand, gazing out of the window over the sloping lawns, where there are windowless brick structures used to simulate solitary confinement, to the loch, where they will be submerged to test their ability to withstand cold. Each day gets a little steeper now, the path narrower, the oxygen thinner.

The ex-policeman says, 'Who can remember the most vulnerable parts of the target's body?'

Cristabel raises her knife.

Sometimes, they canoe along the coast, skirting rocky reefs and white sandy beaches. On clear days, the sea is an impossible turquoise, and when the sun sets, the sky is streaked with extravagant pinks and purples, lighting up the mountainous islands they can see from the shore. At these times, Cristabel feels an intense happiness; an almost painful awareness of being alive and breathing.

The movement of the canoe through the water, the steady beat of her forward trajectory, the sunlight on the sea.

There are buzzards in the high peaks near the house. She sees them sometimes, rotating on the updraughts, drawing circles in the sky with long-fingered wings, their plaintive cries falling to earth. Once, on a morning run through the countryside, she had come across one standing on the ground, one yellow claw gripping a wriggling rodent. It was bigger than she imagined. A shaggy-coated king in a feathered cape of russet and cream, with a hooked beak and a powerful, undeviating stare. They had examined each other, and she felt its gaze as the assessment of an equal.

A whistle blew in the distance. The buzzard took off with its prey, its pale underwings flashing upwards, and Cristabel ran back to the house, hearing nothing but the sound of her own blood pounding in her ears, the rushing wind.

Full Moon

June, 1943

It is a humid June night. The house and its inhabitants are restless. Cristabel hears taps running, bed springs creaking, someone calling in their sleep. Lying on her bed, listless beneath the weight of unmoving air, she can hear sluggish raindrops falling outside. Her alarm goes off. It is 22:00 hours.

She puts on her dressing gown and goes for what they call an ‘early breakfast’. She is the only one seated in the dining room beneath a fizzing electric light, where a tired female ensign brings her tea and toast. The windows show nothing but night and rain. As she is methodically eating, she sees Joan, a conducting officer from the Org, coming towards her.

‘Chin up,’ says Joan. ‘The forecast is better for later. I bet you go tonight.’

‘You say that every night,’ says Cristabel, helping herself to another piece of toast.

She has been staying at the ‘departure school’ for a week. A Georgian mansion hidden in leafy Bedfordshire, it houses RAF personnel from a nearby airfield and agents waiting to fly out to Europe. Every night she has been driven out to the airfield, and every night her scheduled flight has been called off because clouds have covered the moon. The pilots require the moon to navigate, so have only a twelve-day window around each month’s full moon to attempt their flights to France. Because of this, they are known as ‘Moon Squadrons’, and they stare up at the night sky with the fervency of astronomers, lovers.

‘Let’s get you dressed and ready,’ says Joan.

Back in Cristabel’s room, Joan helps her into the clothes of the character she will become in France: Claudine Beauchamp, a student of literature visiting relatives in the countryside to recover from a long illness. Claudine wears woollen underclothes and a winter vest – Joan says it gets cold on the flight – a beige blouse with a carefully fabricated French label inside the collar, a brown woollen jumper and a grey tweed suit. On her feet are lisle stockings and sensible black walking shoes, deliberately aged.

Claudine’s hair is longer than Cristabel’s used to be, and pinned up at the back, due to Sophie’s insistence that she cannot go to France looking like a tomboy, a *garçon manqué*. In her jacket pocket, she has a pair of glasses, a book of French poetry, and a Lancôme lipstick which, thanks to Sophie, she can apply to her lips, if required. Cristabel puts her hand in her pocket to find its compact case. She likes the shape of it even if she is reluctant to use it.

The black Chrysler that carries her to the airfield purrs carefully along lanes slick with rain, past high hedgerows dotted with pale dog roses. The gated airfield

has the feel of a temporary place, a few camouflaged Nissen huts standing in a soggy meadow. It is mainly active at night to avoid attracting German attention, its pilots taking off and landing in darkness. Large Halifax bombers, long-nosed shadows, wait on the concrete runways, ground crews huddled beneath them, carrying out mechanical checks in hooded waterproofs.

The airfield's secrecy is such that the building where the agents wait for their flights has been designed to look like a farmer's weatherboarded barn, but when Joan pushes open the door, the familiar military fug of cigarette smoke and male conversation drifts out to greet them. Cristabel takes one last look at the night sky, still covered with cloud, then steps inside.

It is a hollow building with no windows, full of aircrews studying maps, playing cards and drinking coffee from Thermos flasks. A Labrador dog lies sleeping in one corner. She sees the agent she will be flying out with, Henri, being fitted into his parachute suit. It reminds her of the barn at her theatre, where they changed into their costumes and waited to go onstage.

Henri is a Frenchman, one she trained with in Scotland, although he was not called Henri then. She knows his real name, his children's favourite games, his love of fishing, his quiet thoughtfulness, but that must all be packed away and left behind. He is only Henri now. She catches his eye and nods.

Joan takes Cristabel to a table and gives her a set of false documents – birth certificate, ration cards, travel permits – perfect forgeries in which her own solemn face looks back at her, with its new hairstyle and its freshly plucked eyebrows. She is even given a crumpled photograph of an older French couple: her new parents. Then Joan goes over the operational details of the mission.

Cristabel knows her mission inside out. After successfully completing her training, she had been summoned to London, to Org HQ – appropriately hidden in a building in Sherlock Holmes's Baker Street – and was there told that she was being sent to France to work as a courier. The Org has divided France into different areas called 'circuits', and within each one, there is an organizer, who is in charge, along with a courier and a wireless operator. Women are either couriers or wireless operators.

Cristabel is to work for an organizer known as Pierre, based in a circuit called Shepherd. Part of the Org's work is to arm existing secret forces, so Cristabel will be dropped into France alongside canisters full of weaponry to be distributed among Resistance fighters. She has her cover name, Claudine, and a field name, Gilberte, which is how she will be known by her fellow agents.

'Why does Pierre need a new courier?' she asked.

There had been an exchange of blank looks in the office.

She added, 'I only ask because, if he or she were caught because of an error, I wouldn't want to make the same mistake.'

They told her Pierre would fill her in, then she and Henri were taken to see Colonel Buckmaster, their head of department, who had regarded them with a curious rapid blinking before saying, 'Good luck to you, children,' and pressing gifts into their hands. Cristabel's was a gold powder compact. She handed it to Joan as they left the office. 'I'll never use it.'

'You can sell it, if needs be,' said Joan, passing it back. 'Besides, a mirror can be useful for checking who's behind you.'

There followed a few days of kicking their heels in London before travelling up to Bedfordshire. Cristabel spent this time studying Michelin maps of France and memorizing the details of contacts. Once, Joan took her to the bustling Lyons Corner House on Oxford Street for lunch, and as they left, Cristabel saw Philippa Fenwick, arm in arm with a dashing RAF officer, coming out of a fashionable department store on the other side of the road. Philly glamorous in a red summer dress with a polka-dot scarf in her hair, exclaiming animatedly.

Cristabel almost lifted her hand to call out. She could imagine Philly's immediate response – 'Darling! What a thrill to see you! So noble in your uniform!' – but kept herself in check. She shouldn't want to be seen now. She stepped back into a doorway and watched Philly's bright figure disappear, her laughter echoing down the street.

One of the Halifax crew, the dispatcher, who is responsible for getting the agents out of the plane at the right time, approaches Joan and Cristabel in the barn, and gives them a thumbs up.

'Is the jump on?' asks Joan.

'Definitely clearing up,' he replies.

'That's good news, Gilberte,' says Joan, who is careful to use her charge's code name, even here.

Joan straps packages of French banknotes across Cristabel's body and helps her put on her pistol and holster, before zipping her into her camouflage jumpsuit. In its many pockets are Cristabel's knife, a flashlight, a compass, a fine silk scarf on which is printed a map of her circuit area, and a spade to bury the parachute. Joan then hands her a small box containing two cyanide suicide pills.

'You have to bite down on them before you swallow,' says Joan.

Cristabel wonders how they know this. 'I don't want them,' she says.

'Useful to have the option,' replies Joan briskly.

Cristabel puts the pills in one of her pockets, then sits down on a chair so Joan can bind her ankles to protect them. Looking down at the bindings, she thinks of the puttees worn by soldiers in the last war, those bandaged legs of upright men photographed outside their barracks, arms folded. She then waddles to the doorway of the barn to get some air, feeling as bulky as a badly wrapped parcel.

It is still raining. As Cristabel smokes a cigarette, a limousine with curtained windows pulls up outside and a tall figure in uniform steps out and heads to the barn, before stopping suddenly, and turning to her. 'Are my eyes broken or do we know each other?'

'We don't know each other at all. What on earth are you doing here, Leon?'

'What a surprise this is,' he says, looking her up and down. 'I have been sent here to collect someone. He is being brought back from where you are probably going, *n'est-ce pas?*'

'I won't be going anywhere unless it stops raining,' she says, offering him one of her new Gauloises.

'Your hands are not shaking though,' he says approvingly. 'I like this outfit.'

'This outfit is incredibly hot,' she replies, lighting his cigarette.

'Perhaps you might be better off –'

'Not now, Leon,' she says, but she is smiling.

'You will be grateful for it in the aeroplane,' he says. 'Do you know something I learnt this week, the Spanish call parachutes the white rose of death. Almost romantic, no?'

'Almost.'

'One moment.' He goes to the car, returning with a hip flask, which he passes to her. 'We must toast to your mission.'

She takes a cautious sip, grimaces.

Leon glances at his wristwatch. 'My guest will soon be arriving.'

Cristabel thinks of the pills in her pocket. 'Leon, just in case –'

He raises a hand to interrupt her. 'In Russia, we do not talk between the first and second drinks.'

'You've never been to Russia,' she replies, but takes another wincing sip from the flask before handing it back to him. 'Leon, I might not come back, you know.'

'Many will not,' he says, looking into the barn and waving to greet someone. Then he turns to her. 'You will come through this, Cristabel Seagrave. Your heart is strong.'

'I don't mean to be sentimental,' she says.

'When were you sentimental?' He places a hand on her chest. 'This is not sentiment. This is what will keep you alive.'

She lays her hand over his, rather awkwardly. 'I feel I should say something profound. Like in a book.'

'I don't want anything from a book.' He leans in and kisses her, holding it for a moment. 'Come and see me for a vodka when you get back.'

Cristabel looks at him, his thick black hair, his dark eyes, the way his mouth moves between expressions, never quite settling. She knows, very suddenly, the

exact taste of his mouth, when it opens to her. Then she looks past him, up at the sky. 'It's stopped raining.'

The Halifax dispatcher appears beside her, nods at the moon, now almost fully visible through thinning cloud. 'Looks like you're in luck.'

Suddenly Joan is there too, and between them, they help her into her heavy parachute, fit its straps on to her shoulders and fasten her rubber jump helmet on to her head. They escort her and Henri through the puddles and across the runway to the plane, where the pilot and his crew greet them with handshakes before heading into the depths of the machine. Joan shakes her hand firmly and wishes her all the best. Cristabel looks back only once, sees a tall silhouette in the entrance to the barn, then she is hauled up into the belly of the Halifax.

Inside the fuselage, the aeroplane is a hollow tube, filled with pipes and metalwork, smelling of petrol. The seats have been taken out to make room for additional fuel tanks, so Cristabel and Henri must sit on sleeping bags on the floor, leaning back on their cumbersome parachutes, next to a stack of carrier pigeons in cardboard boxes, each box fitted with a mini parachute. The weapons containers that will be dropped with the agents hang under the Halifax in its bomb racks. The pilot has disappeared into the nose of the plane and the rear gunner has descended into his glass bubble at the back; Cristabel can hear the exchange of radio messages, preflight checks.

More suddenly than she expected, there is the rattle of the propellers starting up, one after the other, then the droning growl of the engines as the Halifax begins to move across the runway. 'I'd get some sleep if I were you,' says the dispatcher, draping a blanket over the pigeons.

Cristabel nods. She is unable to talk. She has been in an aeroplane before during her parachute training and found take-off a uniquely terrifying experience. Once up in the air, she can breathe again, but the machine's bumping, jolting transition from land to sky she finds gruelling.

'All tickety-boo?' asks the dispatcher, as they accelerate down the runway.

'Yes,' she manages, before closing her eyes and allowing the roar of the machine to lull her, the noise of its four engines like a swivelling fan, moving close then moving off, a circular hypnotic sound that shuts out everything.

The Halifax leaves England and flies over the Channel, gaining altitude to avoid flak as it approaches the French coast. The barrage of German anti-aircraft guns wakes Cristabel. The plane is climbing steeply and everything inside is sliding and shaking; she can feel its vibrations fuzzing through her hands, mechanical thuds and rattles, little wobbles of effort. The dispatcher is sitting nearby. 'They can't hit us up here,' he says cheerfully, and she wonders how many other agents have also woken at this point, startled to find themselves being shot at in their sleep.

She heaves herself up to peer through a small circular window, and catches a glimpse of the Channel far below, listing at a strange angle, its moving surface like the criss-crossed texture of skin, flecked by white waves. Then the plane veers sharply, the sea lurches out of sight, and there is the electric crackle of flak, puffs of black smoke. She sits back down, finds something to hold on to.

Once safely into France, the pilot flies lower to navigate by the moonlit rivers. The dispatcher opens the exit hatch to drop the pigeons in their boxes, each one carrying a piece of rice paper and a pencil, in the hope that messages will be sent back with them to Britain. Cold air rushes in with such a noise that the dispatcher must yell to be heard. 'If I got one, I'd put it in a pie!'

Cristabel can see straggly wisps of cloud passing beneath them and the shadow of the Halifax gliding over the fields and farmhouses like a dragon. She imagines people hearing it pass overhead. French people. German people.

It is three in the morning by the time they near the drop zone, the area where a reception committee should be waiting for Gilberte and Henri. The Halifax flies even lower, skimming across the land at 900, 800, 700 feet, close enough to the ground that the crew will be able to pick out the flashes of torches.

Suddenly, the aeroplane slows, banks around. A message comes through from the pilot on the intercom and the dispatcher opens the exit hatch again, beckoning the agents, saying, 'We've spotted them. Action stations.' He tightens their straps, then clips their parachutes to a static line in the fuselage, which will yank open the parachutes when they jump. He gives each a final pat on the shoulder, then crouches next to them as they wait by the hatch.

Cristabel looks at Henri's concentrated face as he stares down at the land. She wonders if he is thinking about his family, somewhere in the country beneath them. She puts her hand on his for a moment and squeezes it, and he turns to her, and they embrace awkwardly, saying, '*Bonne chance*,' into each other's ears.

'The containers go first,' instructs the dispatcher, 'then Gilberte, then Henri.'

Cristabel nods. They always sent the women first during training to make sure the men would follow, and she prefers it that way. Less time to get nervous.

The Halifax steadily circles again. The light over the hatch flashes red and the agents peering through the hatch see the containers suddenly go whisking past on their parachutes. Cristabel edges closer, letting her legs hang over the edge. Then the light changes to green, the dispatcher shouts, 'Go!' and she goes without hesitation, out into space.

There is a rapid heart-stopping drop as she plummets into nothing, then a jolt as she hits the slipstream, the breathy swish of the silk canopy opening above her and another sharp jolt as the parachute catches and spins her, the stars flinging past in a whirling blur, a wild moonlit dance. Then the movement steadies and she is sailing serenely, and this is the part she loves the most, the part that never

lasts long enough. The weightless exhilaration as she glides above the land, soaring like a hawk, the air whistling by.

All too soon, the ground comes rushing up to meet her and she lands with a thud. A second later, her parachute hits the ground behind her, with a great *flllump* like a pile of bed sheets. She scrambles to her feet, and is disentangling herself from the harness, when she sees figures running towards her. For a second, she holds her breath, groping about for her pistol, then hears they are shouting in French, '*Bienvenue!*' The Halifax banks overhead, she catches a glimpse of the pilot in the cockpit peering down at her, before it roars away into the night, giving a farewell waggle of its wings.

Awake

June, 1943

Flossie lies in her dorm bed, listening to the thunder of German bombers flying over Dorchester. She closes her eyes, trying to pretend it is only a noise, aware that all around her, other girls lie stiff and silent in their beds, also feigning sleep – just as she imagines the pilots in the planes might only focus on their navigational instruments, blocking out thoughts of what they carry, or that they might die soon. All of them conscious; none of them wanting to be. Outside in the street, a dog barks madly: a sole protest.

How does it become normal for death to fly over your head? Flossie wonders. How does it become normal to carry on as if it were normal? She remembers how, when her mother was killed, it was at first a shock so immense that it seemed inconceivable. But now it is an old fact, a faded newspaper cutting. One absence of many. It is funny what you can get used to.

On her bedside table are photographs of Cristabel and Digby in their uniforms. A framed studio portrait of Rosalind balances behind them. The other girls often admire Flossie's sophisticated mother, although this no longer pleases Flossie as much as it once did. She remembers Myrtle saying that there is more to life than being looked at and thinks perhaps this is something else she is getting used to – the end of wishing that she could be like her mother. Beside the photographs, a pressed flower serves as a reminder of Hans, and other wishes.

Flossie finds that letting go of wishes is not always a relief, more a parting. The wish still exists, it has simply taken another road. She can sometimes see it, over in the distance, waving from a high hill. The trick, the task, is to continue on her path, even so.

The noise of the bombers diminishes as they fly further inland, heading to their targets. Flossie feels certain she will not sleep again, knowing that an alarm clock will be going off soon, to rouse her and the other Land Girls for their early start, but she does, fitfully.

The girls greet the alarm with groans, getting dressed under their bedcovers, pulling on jumpers and dungarees. They turn out into the morning, the only ones awake in the empty streets but for the air raid warden on his way home, and climb into a cart behind a tractor that takes them bumping out to the milking sheds, grumping companionably, leaning against each other.

'I didn't want to get out of bed,' says Flossie.

'It wouldn't be the same without you,' says Barbara, while Irene offers her a lemon sherbet from a paper bag. Shirley tucks her arm in Flossie's and begins to

whistle. Flossie takes the sweet, looks back at the sleeping town as they head out to the fields, and thinks: I am so far from where I thought I would be.

But she is up and moving, awake early enough to see the morning countryside still folded into soft layers by the mist, the gentle weft of fields and water meadows, the river winding through, the sky growing light in the east, the first baby curls of chimney smoke from the farm cottages, and the birds already singing out from every hedgerow: still alive, still alive.

Claudine, Gilberte

June, 1943

Where she lands is not where she thinks she lands. Those that meet her give her the place name of somewhere a hundred miles away, to protect the location of their landing site. She does not discover this until several days later, and it stays with her – that even those who greeted her so warmly would also lie to her, cheerfully, if required. That is how it goes here.

The reception committee are members of a local Resistance group. Men and women, thin-faced and lean; the men dark with stubble, the women stockingless. They quickly round up the agents, their parachutes and canisters, bundle them into the back of a noisy truck running on charcoal, and carry them to an isolated farmhouse, where an old woman in a headscarf serves them cassoulet and several glasses of rough red wine.

She, Gilberte, watches her hosts, reminding herself of how the French use bread to mop up their leftovers, how passionately they argue together. They talk of Charles de Gaulle, the exiled French commander in London, whose speeches they listen to on the BBC. They want to know what life is like across the Channel, what the British think of Stalin, when the Allied invasion might be – the long-awaited *débarquements*. Gilberte says she doesn't know. She has heard talk at HQ that the invasion might come as early as September but keeps this to herself. She lets Henri do most of the talking, saves her energy for eating.

After the meal, the canisters are opened as eagerly as Christmas presents. They contain cases of grenades as tenderly packed as Fabergé eggs, along with Sten guns and ammunition, cigarettes and chocolate bars, and a few folded notes from the women who packed them, encouraging words, drawings of hearts and flags.

Gilberte and Henri leave at dawn to walk to a railway station, where they separate to go to their respective circuits, with only the briefest of glances. Gilberte feels a lurch of sadness as Henri disappears into a train, as if he were all that is left of everything. But then her train arrives at the other platform, and she boards it quickly, carrying with her a canvas suitcase containing banknotes hidden in a secret compartment and a gun stashed in a tin of talcum powder.

Walking along the moving train to find a seat, she feels lit up in a spotlight, sure every other passenger can see immediately that she is a tall English girl wearing someone else's clothes. She has just taken a seat when she sees her first German: a Wehrmacht officer coming down the corridor.

She has often wondered how it might be when she meets her first German in the field – whether she will be filled with hatred or fear – but he is merely a man

in a uniform with a shaving cut on his chin. He could be a bus conductor, a park keeper. He holds his hands behind his back and strolls along, in a self-inflated balloon of his own authority. The people on the train barely glance at him.

She stares out of the window as the officer nears her, watching the countryside pass by, its vineyards and villages, then feels him stop to look at her. She turns towards him, expecting to be addressed, but then sees that he is looking at all the passengers in that way, simply to show that he can. She drops her eyes to the floor. The officer walks on. She pulls the powder compact from her pocket to give herself something to do: Claudine Beauchamp looks drawn, a tightness around her mouth.

They are almost at their destination, when the train comes to a sudden halt outside a village station, its brakes screeching. She sees from the expressions of her fellow passengers that this stop is unexpected but not entirely unexpected. She presses her head to the window and sees, further up, waiting at the side of the train to board it, men in grey uniform and some in plain clothes.

She senses the woman in the seat opposite her, a housewife with a bag of shopping, regarding her with interest, so sits back in her seat. What, she wonders, would Sophie do? She would put on her scarlet lipstick and hold her head up, ready to smile.

Claudine is not that kind of woman, but she can be another kind: the studious kind that uses train delays industriously. She rummages in her jacket and pulls out her French poetry and her unflattering glasses. She puts on the glasses, rests her feet on the suitcase under her seat, looks up at the woman, gives a tiny lift of the eyebrows that does for, 'Eh, these checks, typical,' then opens her book.

By the time the men reach her carriage, she has read the same page at least twenty times. They are SS officers: more dangerous than the ordinary soldiers of the Wehrmacht. She can see the metal skull – the *Totenkopf* – on the black band of their hats. The men in suits and long coats are most likely Gestapo: Nazi secret police, more dangerous still. They greet the passengers and, in courteously formal French, ask to see their papers. She glimpses her unsmiling face in her forged documents as she passes them over. The men turn the papers in their hands with a disconcerting slowness, as if weighing their quality. One of the SS officers, thin and greying, says, 'What are you reading, mademoiselle?'

She realizes she cannot recall the title of the book without looking at it, so replies, 'Poetry, sir.' She has decided Claudine is shy and deferential. She does not speak much because her French does not have the local accent, although whether an SS officer would notice this, she does not know.

He says, 'I enjoy your French poetry. Verlaine. Baudelaire.' The men behind him are having a low conversation in German that she cannot make out.

He holds his hand out and she passes the book to him. He leafs through it. 'Do you read for pleasure?'

'I am studying them,' she says, her voice a dull monotone.

'Which is your favourite?' he asks.

She can only think of the poem she had been staring at when they arrived – something insipid about breezes – but cannot remember the title.

'I haven't read them all yet,' she says, and feels within herself the slight drop in confidence that accompanies a less than perfect answer.

He looks at her, then one of the others says, 'The next carriage.' Her book is returned, and the men move on.

Half an hour later, the train starts up again. Gilberte spends the remainder of the journey reading slowly to calm her nerves, choosing a few favourite poems to memorize, thinking all the time of Hendricks, the actor-turned-instructor at her final training school in the New Forest, who had insisted that their cover story could not be a mask they put on, it had to be a life, fully inhabited. There could be no gaps.

She remembers too the strangeness of meeting Hendricks, knowing he had taught Digby. How she had longed to ask about her brother but was determined not to mention him, lest Hendricks think she were only there because of him. How Hendricks had rescued her by mentioning Digby himself, a discreet aside in a quiet moment, a comment about Digby's acting ambitions. 'Yes,' she had said, 'he loves to perform.'

'Do you?' Hendricks asked, and she said no. She did not mention her theatre to anyone at the Org. Perhaps Digby already had, but she felt it inappropriate. It was slightly cumbersome somehow, embarrassing to explain, in this clipped, military world. There was no room for it. Hendricks had tapped a cigarette on his desk and nodded.

When the train finally arrives at its destination, a busy market town, she is directed into a queue where her forged travel pass is again inspected, this time by officious French police. She keeps her head down, speaks only when spoken to. She sees, in her peripheral vision, a family pulled from the queue, waiting anxiously in a pen of their own luggage.

After leaving the station, she makes her way through the town to the hotel where she is to meet her organizer. Unremarkable Claudine walks in a steady trudge, carrying her suitcase. There are Germans everywhere, eating at tables outside cafés, sauntering along the streets, as if they were tourists not occupiers. The Germans have cars, the French bicycles. The Germans browse in shops, the French queue outside.

On the walls, she sees faded advertisements for long-ago circuses overlapped by new posters calling enthusiastically for Frenchmen to work in

Germany: images of muscular men with hammers, GERMAN WORKERS INVITE YOU TO JOIN THEM! She knows it is not an invitation: the Germans have introduced an order, the *Service du Travail Obligatoire*, requiring able-bodied men to work in the factories of Germany; it is partly this that has swollen the ranks of the Resistance, with young Frenchmen preferring to escape into the countryside than labour in the Reich.

The hotel is hidden in a backstreet. Run-down and unappealing, with faded paintwork. Carefully pushing open the creaking front door, she finds an empty reception area, but an old man mopping the parquet floor says quietly, 'Room six,' so she carries her suitcase up the stairs and knocks on the door. A young Frenchman opens it and lets her in. The room is dark, its shutters closed. Another person is inside, a man in his forties with a black moustache, sallow skin, and shadows beneath his eyes. He is sitting on the bed, holding a pistol in his lap, and watches as the first man questions her, until he is satisfied that he knows who she is, and that London has sent her.

Finally, Pierre gets up from the bed to shake her hand. 'I am glad you are here, Gilberte,' he says. 'You understand that we have to be careful.' His French accent is flawless. She knows he has been working undercover for over a year, and there is no trace of whoever he was before, except perhaps in the shadows under his eyes.

'You lost a courier,' she replies.

'We didn't lose her,' he says. 'They found her. You must keep moving.'

She does. She never stays in the same place twice. She sleeps on night trains, in haylofts, in wine cellars. She cycles hundreds of miles, carrying messages the length and breadth of their circuit area, her glasses and poetry tucked in her pocket. After a few encounters with German patrols, she never writes anything down, she commits it all to memory, and chants the messages to herself, as she pushes round the pedals on her bike. She gives Pierre her gun and her cyanide pills, deciding she would rather be discovered without them, if she is to be discovered. She keeps her knife. A woman can justify carrying a knife.

Pierre has also heard that the Allied landings may come in September and the activity in his circuit is increasing steadily, as the dogged Moon Squadrons provide more supplies for the fighters hiding out in the mountains and woods. He and Gilberte work constantly: contacting Resistance leaders; finding sites for parachute drops; collecting and distributing arms, equipment, food, money.

There is, she finds, a freedom in this unrelenting pace and purpose. This rapid, alien life that requires total immersion. In England, she had felt discomfort in all the places she was meant to be – drawing rooms, dining rooms, even those within her own home. English girls of her class were designed to be removed from their family homes by a husband; unremoved girls were a waste of

resources; they required increasing amounts of resolution merely to exist within buildings that willed them gone.

Now she is self-propelled, nothing but necessary movement: a *fille anglaise* come to fight with the French, welcomed by a network of bakers and nuns and mechanics and railwaymen and the widows of soldiers, who give her a bed for the night and a glass of cognac, and send her on her way with a kiss on each cheek and the word '*courage*'.

One morning, she is sent to take money to the leader of a Resistance group hiding deep in a forest. It is a rainy day and the trees drip with a slow ticking. The forest is so dense, and the trees are so tall, the air feels immobile, thickened, as if the men were hiding in the weeds at the bottom of a lagoon. The occasional fighter plane passing high overhead is a faraway buzzing, a hoverfly seen from underwater.

The men – mainly local farmers and their youngest sons, wearing berets and hobnail boots, along with some war-weathered Spanish Republican fighters – eye her with interest: a woman in their forest. She thinks of the Lost Boys in *Peter Pan*, making their homes in the trees. How she had loathed that play, with its suffocating clamour for mothers; petulant Peter bleating at Wendy to stay and do their darning, as if that's all she were for.

From a hidden section in the base of her rucksack, she retrieves a hefty brick of cash and hands it to the group leader, who has an ammunition belt strung across his chest like a Mexican bandit.

'You should have better security on the road into the forest,' she says in Gilberte's increasingly regional French. 'I saw your sentry long before he saw me.'

The leader counts the money, says nothing.

'I would like a receipt for that, please,' she says, then rummages in the bag to pull out a bottle of brandy. The men lean forward. She hands the bottle to the leader. '*Vive la France.*'

He pulls out the cork, takes a gulp, then hands it to the men behind him. '*Vive la liberté,*' he says, and beckons her into the camp.

Sous Terre

October, 1943

When the Shepherd circuit collapses, it happens very quickly. Their wireless operator is captured by the Gestapo in the attic above a pharmacy where he sends his coded messages to London, and the boy who works in the pharmacy runs a full five miles to inform Pierre and Gilberte.

The first forty-eight hours after an agent is caught are the most perilous. The wireless operator – manacled to a prison wall, battered and bleeding – is expected to hold out for that long without giving anything away, whatever is done to him, to give his colleagues a chance to scatter.

The last time Gilberte sees Pierre, he is in the yard of the farmhouse that serves as his base, throwing papers on to a bonfire, yelling at her to go. *Allez!* She heaves her bike from its hiding place in a cowshed and cycles away, stopping only to throw her glasses in a stream, untie her hair, put on some lipstick and roll her skirt a little higher. A German on a motorbike passes her and she smiles at him so brazenly, with all Sophie's outlandish charm, that he nearly drives off the road. She hates herself entirely for a moment, but pedals furiously on.

She has a contact in the next village, a hairdresser who takes her in, finds her new clothes – a floral dress and cork-soled shoes – and styles her hair, so it sits in a roll on the top of her head. When Claudine Beauchamp steps out into the world again, she is carrying a shopping basket and wearing a wedding ring, a young French housewife, with a photograph of her baby son in her purse.

She takes another train, and another, and another, only boarding at the last minute, carefully changing carriages to ensure she is not followed, sticking methodically to her training. She gets off the train at village stations rather than risking checks at the larger ones. She avoids hotels where she might be required to write her name in guest books. She hardly sleeps, she barely eats.

As the trains chunter steadily through the countryside, past lines of pollarded trees and slow canals, she reads her poetry book, placing her newly painted fingernail underneath each word to direct her tired eyes – following Victor Hugo as he tells her:

*Je suis fait d'ombre et de marbre.
Comme les pieds noirs de l'arbre,
Je m'enfonce dans la nuit.
J'écoute; je suis sous terre.
I am made of shadow and marble.
Like the black feet of the tree,*

I dig into the night.

I listen; I am underground.

When the train stops, she hears car doors slamming. A dog barking. Ordinary noises that might not be ordinary. In clandestine work, as in a play, there are no insignificant details. If you have a gun in the first act, it must go off by the third. Everything must be noticed, considered. Is the car a military vehicle? Is the dog large or small? In some shuttered-off part of herself, she is aware this ceaseless mode of thinking is exhausting, but believes it better to be awake and tired than asleep and dead. The barking dog is silenced by its irate French owner. The train pulls away from the station.

She returns to Victor Hugo, the engaging puzzle of translation. Does digging *dans la nuit* mean he digs through the night, or that he digs into darkness? Does *m'enfonce* in this context perhaps imply a covering of the self? Her brain is a spade that turns over everything.

Eventually, she makes her way to a village in the mountains, walking miles up steep, dusty roads to get there, her cork shoes crumbling, her feet blistered. A Resistance contact takes her to a wireless operator, hidden in a storeroom full of rabbit skins, who gets a message to London, and a message comes quickly back saying that London wants her to return by the October moon. The wireless operator tells her there are rumours that a large circuit in Paris has collapsed, sending Allied agents across France tumbling like a line of dominoes.

On a high plateau outside the village a week later, a Lysander aeroplane lands to drop off two new agents and to scoop her up, lifting her out of the game.

London is grey with fog. None of the grimy windows of Org HQ seem to close properly. Draughts whistle through. Radiators clunk ruminatively but remain cold to the touch. They have tea but have run out of sugar. One of the secretaries usually makes sure everything is topped up, but she hasn't come in for a week. The two uniformed men who are conducting Cristabel's debriefing look at the sugar bowl as if baffled by its emptiness. They offer her conciliatory words. They welcome her home.

'Have you heard from Pierre?' she says. 'Is he all right?'

They elide the subject of Pierre and move on to what they know of the situation in Paris: the collapse of the Magician circuit. It is this, they believe, that has led to the capture of agents in other circuits, including Shepherd, and the round-up of many Resistance groups. Magician was ambitious in its reach, its contacts numerous, its web spread far and wide.

The men have a folder in front of them, which they look through occasionally, as if checking details. Cristabel realizes she has not seen them in the office before. They tell her there were suspicions Magician had been infiltrated as early as July, when the wireless operator repeatedly omitted a security check,

even after being reprimanded by London. A wireless operator should know the check must precede every message sent back to HQ.

‘To omit the check would surely mean the operator was signalling they were in enemy hands?’ says Cristabel, thinking of Sophie, who would never make such a mistake.

The officers nod. They say they have since, sadly, come to that conclusion. Cristabel considers the word ‘since’.

She says, ‘Look, I don’t know anything about Magician. But I can tell you about Shepherd. I know a good deal about that.’

Again, the men skate past her. They say that they believe one of the British agents in Magician, code name Gabriel, was not picked up by the Gestapo and is still at large in the city. They have received reports he has been sighted. But they have not received any word from him, nor does he seem keen to leave his blown circuit area. They are concerned – she notes the soft words, the kid gloves – that he may be compromised.

She waits for the question.

The men look at each other. It is, they say, unusual for an agent’s identity to be revealed, but given the importance of security work at this pivotal time in the war effort, they believe it necessary. The agent known as Gabriel is her cousin, Digby Seagrave. Might she know if he had any contacts in Paris? Had he been in touch with anyone there, before the war? Is there anywhere he might go?

She is grateful at that moment for the mock interrogation she had undergone in the New Forest and the instructor who advised her to always answer the question in front of her, rather than appear to be anticipating what might come.

‘Our governess was from Paris,’ she says. ‘Ernestine Aubert. I don’t know if she is still there.’

‘Did you ever go to Paris with your governess?’ they ask.

‘No,’ she says. ‘We went to Normandy.’

‘Did you go to Paris with anyone else?’

‘No. The only other place in France we visited was Provence. Our friend Myrtle took us there for my twenty-first birthday.’

‘Any other family holidays?’

‘None at all.’

That is helpful, they say. They write a few notes. They understand the situation might be difficult, given the family connection, but has her cousin ever given any indication that he might have – *sympathies* – no, perhaps it might be better to say – *doubts*. Had he doubts? Was there, did she know, any reason for him to fail to carry out ...?

The sentence peters out. She knows she is expected to fill in the gaps but chooses not to assist them with this. ‘I am unsure what you are asking me,’ she

replies. 'I have had no contact with my cousin since last year. I don't know what he is doing in Paris. I cannot imagine what you think I would know. Surely this isn't why I've been brought back?'

The irritation in her tone is met by calm indifference. They say she was brought back for her own safety following the collapse of her circuit. They are looking for information because they are concerned that Gabriel may be contaminated, either through his own volition or through enemy interference.

One of the men moves a piece of paper from the folder and slides it in front of the other, who looks at it and then says, 'You spent some time in Austria. Is that correct?'

'Skiing,' she says, realizing then, at that moment, why she is being questioned by men from another department: it is because she is no longer part of her own team. She is related to a possible enemy agent. She is under suspicion.

Later that day, she catches a crowded train back to Dorset, squeezing herself into a window seat where she stares out at the evening sky as they leave London behind. Dark clouds are banked up over the countryside, solid as a battleship, and smatterings of rain trickle across the window. There is a single band of lemon light at the horizon, like a gap under a door. The leafless trees along the railway line are nothing but clumps of branches, skeletal witchy fingers pointing up madly, a thousand bare accusations.

She is so sunk in thought that, when the ticket inspector, making his way along a corridor packed with standing passengers, asks for tickets please, she automatically rummages in her coat pocket for Claudine's *papiers*.

A sailor sitting alongside her, kitbag balanced on his knees, stinking of beer, says amiably, 'I'm always losing my ticket. I'd lose my head if it wasn't screwed on.' His large body rocks against her with each bump on the rails. She has an urge to pull out her knife and stick it right in his face. But she doesn't have a knife any more, and she doesn't have her *papiers*. She has a single ticket to Dorchester. ('We'll be in touch if we need you,' the men in the Org had said, 'and if you have any word of your cousin, we'd be grateful if you would let us know. Immediately.')

Shadow Play

November, 1943

Sleeplessness is a hard habit to break. Awake at five, Cristabel walks down to the ocean, the only one alive but for the herring gulls and their mournful soundings: long calls, then repeated squawks. *Dash dash dot dot dot dot. Dash dash dot dot dot dot.*

The pre-human world before sunrise has a wild and rushing freedom. The sea is thick, momentous, a north-easterly wind pushing it high and hard. There is a sense of immense activity. The long grasses along the coast fold and shiver, fold and shiver, rippling in waves.

The pebbly beach under Ceal Head is deep in shadow, the cliffs black shapes against the sky. The first gold light of dawn will fall on the distant seafront buildings of Weymouth, before edging its way round to Chilcombe.

At the theatre, leaves are scattered across the ground. The vegetable plots have been dug over and covered with a layer of compost. Someone has taken down all the raspberry canes and tidily tied them with twine.

Pushing open the doors of the barn, Cristabel finds spades and wheelbarrows. She kicks them out of the way, clambers through to the back of the building where, underneath a pile of sacking, she finds a stack of wooden scenery, a jumble of stage lights and trunks full of costumes. A few fraying stuffed animals. A papier mâché wine goblet. She pulls things out, one after the other, brushing the dust from them.

By seven o'clock, the space between the bones has been filled with bits of scenery laid out flat – a castle wall, a tree, a gate – along with a few costumes, props and stuffed animals. The sun has crept over the horizon, blessing Weymouth with its first light, but the theatre is still in shadow, and she is cold. In the cottage she finds an old picnic kettle and a wobbly brass Primus stove that she coaxes into life, turning the sooty yellow flames into a hissing blue, then balancing the kettle on top. The resulting beverage is more rust than tea, but she fills it with sugar and takes it outside, sitting on the scenery and holding an old, chipped mug in her hands, watching as the sunlight inches towards her.

To the east, where the sky is growing light, she can see the patrician profile of Ceal Head in sharp relief, and the jutting headlands beyond it, a series of noble noses extending into the water, like the silhouette portraits of a Victorian family, father to child, receding into the future. The sea rolls in ridges towards them, and the sound of it hitting the land in the distance, and then at points closer, is a muffled battle; and its echoes, its effects and after-effects.

A high voice behind her says, 'I've never seen a lion before.'

She turns to find a boy aged about five, in woolly jumper and short trousers. He has a scrappy terrier on a bit of string and is standing by the mounted head of a lion, in the middle of her theatrical clutter. He says, 'Why is he only a head? Where's the rest of him?'

'He's only a head so he can hang on the walls of my house,' says Cristabel. 'My grandfather shot him.'

'Oh,' says the boy, stroking the lion's muzzle thoughtfully. 'I would like to put my teacher's head on a wall. Or Hitler's head. My mum says he's a devil. What's all this stuff?'

Cristabel takes a last, gritty gulp of tea and stands up, saying, 'We used to use it in our plays. A long time ago. Thought I might as well turn it out while I'm here. I've bugger all else to do.'

'I've never seen a play,' says the boy.

'I used to put on my own plays when I was your age,' Cristabel replies. 'We used to use a bed sheet as a stage curtain. Wait, I'll show you.'

She rummages among the costumes and pulls out a velvet cloak, then she finds some twine in the barn, which she strings between the whalebones. She is draping the cloak over the twine when a woman's voice calls, 'There you are, Norman!'

Cristabel turns to see a woman who looks like a tall Betty Brewer coming towards them. One of Betty's younger sisters, she feels sure. The one that married a farmer. The woman is wearing a tin helmet and a smart, faintly official coat, with an armband.

'Oh, it's you, Miss Cristabel,' the woman says. 'We had a report of some unusual activity on the beach. You aren't signalling anybody, are you?'

'No. Sorry. Nothing like that. Joyce, isn't it?'

'That's right, and I see you've met my Norman. I hope he isn't plaguing you. What is it you're up to now, Miss Cristabel? I thought you was off on service somewhere.'

'I'm in the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry. On leave at the moment.'

'First aid? That's sensible. You never know when you might need first aid. You must give us a talk at the village hall, if you've time. We're always looking for speakers.'

'Is that the new hall?'

'Certainly is,' says Joyce. 'We'll be putting on our first pantomime this Christmas, all being well.'

Norman pipes up. 'The first aid lady knows about plays.'

'Course you do,' says Joyce. 'You did them here, didn't you? I remember hearing about them. They said people would come all the way from London to watch.'

‘Did you ever see one?’ asks Cristabel.

Joyce laughs. ‘Not the kind of thing I would be invited to. Although Betty – your Auntie Betty, Norman – she was sometimes in them. She was allowed to keep one of her costumes when she was a fairy, and it was a gorgeous thing. None of us can get into it now, more’s the pity.’

‘*A Midsummer Night’s Dream*,’ says Cristabel. ‘We did sell tickets. You didn’t have to be invited.’

‘Well, if you have the time or the inclination, Miss Cristabel, we would be very grateful to have your professional opinion of our little pantomime. The Christmas committee meets Thursdays, after the whist drive, so do pop by. I’ll let them know we’ve spoken.’

Cristabel smiles vaguely.

‘If I come here again, can you do a play for me?’ says Norman.

‘Norman!’ says Joyce.

‘I will,’ Cristabel says, ‘so you should come here again.’

‘Please don’t put yourself out on his account, Miss Cristabel,’ says Joyce, taking her son by the hand.

‘What do you think should be in the play, Norman?’ says Cristabel.

Norman thinks. ‘Creatures that eat people?’

‘Very well,’ she says.

Cristabel watches them depart – Joyce in her helmet, Norman and his dog – then looks at the whalebones, half concealed by the crumpled cloak as if wearing a disguise. She shouldn’t have said she would do a show for the boy. She can’t do it all by herself. Although, if the cloak was a bed sheet, she could shine a torch through it and do some sort of simple shadow puppet performance. He might like that.

It’s not an altogether bad idea. Perhaps she could use hurricane lamps, to cast shadows from different angles. Possibly some sound effects, like those in radio plays. She could put on the show at dusk, so the shadows stood out more clearly, and notify the Home Guard too, so she didn’t get arrested. If only Digby was here, he could do some of the voices, and then the thought of him falls across her, eclipsing everything. She closes her eyes, waiting for the pain to pass. She isn’t even sure if it is pain, it could be terror, it could be fury, but she cannot yet bring herself to look at it, to identify its separate parts.

After some time, Cristabel opens her eyes. The sun is above the cliffs now and moving slowly into the theatre. She must go back to the house soon; she has eaten nothing and is hollow with hunger. But first, a quick rummage in the barn, to see if there is anything she can use.

The Christmas Committee

December, 1943

Up at Chilcombe, Cristabel still sleeps in the icy attic though other bedrooms are vacant. On one particularly freezing night, she traipses through the house wrapped in a blanket, inspecting the other rooms. To enter Willoughby's room feels like trespassing, while Rosalind's old room now bears Flossie's mark: headscarves draped on a chair and a decrepit elephant waiting in a corner. Digby's room is dark and unwelcoming, the curtains drawn, dusty fir cones in the fireplace.

She even looks in the guest rooms, with their floral quilts and dried flower arrangements, mute and tidy as well-kept graves, but it feels ridiculous to sleep in one of those. In the end, she pulls an ancient army greatcoat of Willoughby's from under the stairs and sleeps wearing it, back in the attic.

Cristabel had seen Flossie, Betty and Mr Brewer when she first returned from London but has the sense that their lives only briefly diverted to greet her, and now continue without her. Betty and Mr Brewer are both busy with the village Christmas preparations, and Flossie is rarely back from Dorchester. Occasionally, she discovers the three of them laughing over cups of tea in the kitchen, sharing jokes and local gossip, and feels awkward in their company, aware of alliances, habits, formed without her.

She is increasingly conscious too of the pall of silence she carries with her, the fact that she can say nothing of where she has been or what she has been up to, and she certainly cannot share what she has heard about Digby or the churning mix of emotion his name now produces. It feels like a peg leg she drags behind her: a handicap they are all, in some way, aware of, but cannot bring themselves to mention. She is Ahab pacing the deck of his ship, with his *ribbed and dented brow*, his *unsleeping, ever-pacing thought*.

Any questions about what she has been doing on service are met with brusque dismissals: 'Nothing much.' 'The usual.' But they know her well enough to know that these snapped answers are a shield, even if they cannot fully imagine what lies behind them.

Her mind is riddled with thoughts of Digby. She feels sick with fear that he has been captured. To imagine the methods of torture she knows the Gestapo use – the ones she heard of in training – being administered to her brother, makes her frantic, almost frenzied. She fears she will go out of her mind purely to avoid staying in her mind with such imaginings.

But there is an anger within her too. Anger that her own war has come to an abrupt end. She knows Digby is loyal to a fault and would be mortified to know

he had caused this, but whatever the reason, she has been sent home, and not because of anything she has done, but because of someone else. This injustice seethes in a tight knot in her chest.

It appals her to think there may be a question mark by her name. That Sophie or Henri or the other agents may hear of her return from France and wonder if she is a traitor, the worst of all possible things to be, when she had been determined to succeed. At night, she wakes herself up shouting in her sleep.

When she stalks the cliffs near Chilcombe, she can sometimes see, in the distance, peculiar military vehicles moving through the shallow waters off Weymouth Beach – amphibious machines, like a cross between a boat and a truck. There are increasing numbers of American troops setting up camp in the woods on the Ridgeway, and Mr Brewer says they are evacuating an entire village further along the coast to use the area for military training. They are preparing for the invasion of Europe, she feels certain, right on her doorstep, and she can only watch.

When Cristabel arrives at Chilcombe Mell's new red-brick village hall, she finds it full of children lined up along trestle tables, diligently painting newspapers to make paper chains and tying ribbons around sprigs of holly, overseen by several young women. A further group of about eight women, aged between thirty and seventy, are seated around a table near the stage, talking animatedly. Several are knitting, one is acting as scribe. She presumes this must be the Christmas committee.

Cristabel approaches the table and introduces herself. At the word 'Seagrave' they all begin to get to their feet. There is a fluttering of polite gestures: offers of seats, offers of tea. Someone scuttles off to find another chair. Cristabel, unwilling to take a seat, finds herself standing beside a table of women uncertain where to position themselves in relation to her. Eventually, Joyce sits back down, and the others follow her lead, apart from the one who departed to find an extra chair, who remains upright behind it, holding it with both hands like a footman.

'Joyce told me you were looking for some assistance, with your Christmas production,' says Cristabel, feeling like a teacher addressing a table of students. She notices they are glancing at her old trousers, her muddy boots.

'As I'm sure you know, Miss Cristabel is from the manor,' says Joyce to the committee. 'They have the outdoor theatre, down by the beach. She has experience in dramatic matters.'

The committee makes polite noises of interest. One of the older women says, 'I remember your father. He put on a show of fireworks one New Year's Eve.'

'Did he,' says Cristabel.

Another woman says, 'What brings you back to Chilcombe, Miss Seagrave? We heard you were away on service.'

'I was,' she says. 'I wish I still was. But I'm not.'

There is an awkward pause, then a younger woman asks, 'I don't suppose you have any costumes, Miss Cristabel? Nobody has any clothes to spare, these days. I mean, nobody in the village.'

'I found a few trunks of costumes only recently,' says Cristabel, trying to sound more agreeable. 'You must come and take a look.'

There are noises of grateful surprise, a note made on a list.

'Have you had your hair cut, Miss Cristabel?' enquires Joyce. 'There's a different look about you.'

'I did it myself. Rather a hatchet job, I'm afraid. It was getting on my nerves.'

'Very practical, I'm sure, for when you get back to your first aid duties. Norman! Those berries are poisonous.'

'Let me say to you all,' says Cristabel, 'I have no desire to interfere with your pantomime. I'm merely here to offer my support, as Joyce requested.'

Joyce chuckles. 'Oh, we don't need you to interfere, Miss Cristabel. Everything's ticking along. I simply thought you might have a few words of advice. But we don't expect you to bother yourself with a village pantomime, goodness no.'

Cristabel frowns. 'I didn't mean to imply that a pantomime was beneath me. I heartily applaud your efforts. Community theatre is to be celebrated.'

There is a silence. The women look down at the table, hanging determinedly on to their polite smiles. 'Costumes would be a great help,' says Joyce.

'I have stage lights too, if you have a power source – and you surely do, in this modern hall,' says Cristabel.

Another note is made on a list and Cristabel finds herself walking purposefully in the direction of the kitchen, as if to make an inspection of the hall's electrical wiring systems, and there finds Norman spitting holly berries into the sink, which provides her with a useful excuse to remain in the kitchen for a few moments, trying to think of a way to politely leave.

'Are you sure you don't fancy a peek at the script?' enquires Joyce, coming in to fill the kettle. 'We've gone with *Cinderella*, but popular songs, so there's something for everyone.'

'Sounds marvellous,' Cristabel replies.

'Perhaps you could do something at your theatre for the children, like you did for Norman.'

'Yes, perhaps,' she replies, making her way towards the door. 'Do let me know if I can be of any more help, Joyce. My sister Flossie is usually available

too.'

'Oh, we know Miss Flossie,' says Joyce. 'In fact, you can tell her that my husband has found her an elusive ham, at long last. She had her heart set on having one at Christmas.'

Later that week, Cristabel is reading a newspaper in the kitchen, when Flossie comes in through the back door.

'Hello, Floss,' she says. 'Joyce in the village says they have found you a ham.'

'Wondrous news!' exclaims Flossie, who is in her Land Army garb, looking as corduroyed and rubber-booted as a young farmer.

'Don't we normally get one from the butcher?' asks Cristabel, putting down the paper. She is wearing a woollen hat and gloves, as the temperature has dropped below zero and even the kitchen is barely habitable.

'We don't have a butcher any more,' replies Flossie. 'He was called up last year. One has to scrape and beg to get any meat at all, these days.'

'Couldn't Perry sort you out? I was thinking of getting in touch with him, so I could ask.'

'Worth a go,' says Flossie, who has picked up the cat to nuzzle him. 'Betty and I have been dutifully saving our rations all year so we will have a few treats. Can't have Christmas without treats. Have you had a look in the larder?'

Cristabel walks out of the kitchen and along the corridor to the stone-flagged Aladdin's cave of the larder, where she finds shelves lined with home-made pickles and jams, glowing gems of jars, each one carefully labelled by Flossie with its contents and date of creation – *Summer Berry Jam, 15th August 1943* – as if the day itself, its light and life, were safeguarded inside.

'Haven't I been productive?' calls Flossie from the kitchen, where she has turned on the radio and is humming along with the music.

Cristabel carefully runs a finger along the lineage of preserves: *Quince Jelly, Rose Hip Marmalade, Damson Jam*. On the floor below are glass bottles containing blue-black liquid marked *Elderberry Wine*. She says, 'I didn't know you knew how to do all this, Floss.'

'Neither did I,' comes the cheerful reply, then Flossie singing the opening lines of 'Silver Wings In The Moonlight'.

'I'm going for a walk soon, if you want to tag along,' says Cristabel.

'Would love to, but Betty has bagsied me already – we're hunting mistletoe.'

'Righto,' says Cristabel. She straightens one of the jars, then leaves the larder, heading up the stairs to the main house, where she stands for a moment in the dusty pomp of the Oak Hall, next to the empty suit of armour.

She has, of course, spent time away from Chilcombe before the war, but had never envisaged she might one day return to her family seat and feel somewhat

excluded, surplus to requirements. She shakes her head and walks into her father's study. She will write another letter to her superior officers, requesting again that she be sent back into France, reminding them of her excellent reports from training.

She will write the letter and run down to the post office, keep herself fit, keep herself ready. That is what she will do, she thinks, standing in the cold room, surrounded by pictures of horses and stories of battle.

Riven by a Tempest

December, 1943

Cristabel instructs the Brewers to spend Christmas Day with their relatives in the village, telling them there is no point in them being at Chilcombe because there is nothing for them to do. Flossie is attending a Land Girl lunch at a Dorchester hotel, and might come back in the afternoon if she is still capable of cycling, which seems unlikely, and Maudie is staying in Weymouth.

Before she leaves, Betty hovers in the kitchen doorway with a plucked chicken, watching Cristabel light a cigarette from the stove, and says, ‘Are you sure you’ll be all right?’

‘How hard can it be?’ says Cristabel, taking the chicken from her hands. ‘I put it in the oven and take it out again.’

‘I won’t respond to that, Miss Cristabel, because it is the season of goodwill,’ says Betty.

Cristabel rummages in her pocket and hands Betty a bar of French lavender soap, wrapped in decorative paper. ‘Happy Christmas.’

‘My word, I haven’t seen soap like this for years.’

Cristabel has another bar for Flossie, which she puts on the kitchen table, thinking of the French woman who gave it to her, a young nurse who had sheltered her in the mountains before she left, pressing it into her hands saying it was a gift from France. She wonders if the woman is still alive – the newspapers are reporting the collaborationist Vichy Government in France is set on ‘crushing the hooligans’ of the Resistance.

On Christmas morning, Cristabel eyes the chicken, its white puckered flesh, then puts it in the larder where the cat can’t attack it. The house is silent and cold. A solitary Christmas, she thinks, and the thought is almost pleasing, until she wonders what kind of Christmas Digby is having, and all the dark imaginings come rushing back.

She frantically shakes the thoughts from her head until she is surrounded by nothing but the sound of the empty house. The kitchen clock. The wind outside. She cannot imagine anyone else has spent Christmas alone in Chilcombe. The festivities of the past were probably grand affairs, filled with voluminous dresses and well-wishing and do-gooding, keeping up traditions, keeping up appearances. So many things must be kept up, and so much energy spent doing so, as if they were bearers carrying the house and its customs on a palanquin. It is a mercy that she need only do what she wants.

Cristabel picks up the radio and carries it to the Oak Hall. She wants to be able to hear it in the attic, where she is going to sort through old clothes to see if

there's anything that might be of use to the women in the village. The furniture in the hall is now covered with old sheets, as the tarpaulin that covers the hole in the roof keeps flapping loose, letting rain blow in. She balances the radio on the shrouded piano, plugs it in and twiddles the dial until the sound of distant cathedral choristers comes crackling through.

When she comes back down, carrying a stash of clothing, the drums are rolling on the radio for the national anthem and then it is the King himself, in his grandfatherly voice, talking to the British Commonwealth and Empire, and its gallant allies. *Today, of all days in the year, your thoughts will be in distant places and your hearts with those you love.*

The weather outside is growing worse, gusting winds and heavy rain. Cristabel knows without looking it is two days until the full moon but suspects even the brave Moon Squadrons would not dare attempt a flight tonight. She unplugs the King and takes him down to the kitchen, where he resumes his speech. *Home and all that home means*, he says through a sudden cloud of buzzing static, *riven by a tempest such as it has never yet endured.*

When Flossie returns late that afternoon, she finds Chilcombe empty and a fuzzy radio loudly broadcasting Christmas messages from members of the services stationed in Ceylon. After a search of the house and grounds, she discovers Cristabel in the barn by the sea, covered in old sacks, a bottle of brandy at her side.

'What are you doing here, Crista? I've been looking for you everywhere,' Flossie says, shaking out her umbrella.

Cristabel opens one eye. 'Would you believe it's warmer in here than it is in the attic?'

'Why aren't you at home? It's Christmas Day.' The noisy rain on the barn roof is making Flossie's head hurt. She had been hopeful there might be hot food waiting for her at the house to soak up the alcohol she'd had at lunch.

'I've been sorting things out,' says Cristabel.

'Are you tipsy? You don't normally drink brandy. What's all this on the floor?'

'Shadow puppets. I've been making them. I might do a show for the village children. Don't worry, I won't let anyone touch your vegetables.'

'Are you all right, Crista? Have you heard from Digby at all? I thought we might hear from him at Christmas.'

Cristabel gets to her feet, staggers slightly. 'No, nothing,' she says, folding her arms. 'I was thinking, isn't it funny that we used to call you the Veg, and now you love vegetables.'

'I don't think that's funny,' says Flossie. 'Where's Betty?'

'In the village. I didn't think you would be back today.'

Flossie sighs. 'I'm not going to leave you on your own at Christmas, even if I have to cycle through a gale to get here, which I did.'

'I don't mind being on my own.'

'Well, I don't want you to be. There might only be us here, but that doesn't mean we can't have a lovely time,' Flossie says, putting up her umbrella. 'I'm going back to the house to eat ham. Will you join me?'

Cristabel rubs her forehead. 'I will. There's a chicken too. Betty left it.'

'I know,' says Flossie, tucking her arm in her sister's. 'I've put it in the oven. What have you done to your hair? You look like Joan of Arc.'

Across the bay, a storm is blowing in. On the far side of Chesil Beach, the side which takes the brunt of the weather, the churning water is marbled white and grey, roaring up the pebbles and seething back. These are big American rollers, come all the way across the Atlantic to hurl themselves at the beach in an extravagant tumble, a bruising, bullying bluster.

In Chilcombe's candlelit kitchen, the table is covered with the scattered pieces of home-made crackers and the carcass of a chicken. Cristabel, dozing in an armchair by the stove, drifts in and out of an elderberry-wine-soaked reverie.

When Cristabel dreams, she dreams of the whale. She dreams she stands on Chesil Beach, on the wet mountain of pebbles, above the turmoil of waves, watching as the whale approaches from the ocean, water streaming from its flanks in long white ribbons. She sees it dive beneath the bank like a submarine, and watches as its great barnacled back reappears on the other side, heading across the bay to where she sleeps and waits.

C to D

Boxing Day, 1943

D,

I have no reason to write this letter. I cannot send it anywhere. I simply have a pencil and a notebook, and when I have a pencil and a notebook, I write to you.

I sometimes feel I speak most clearly to you when I talk to you in my head as I am walking by the sea. Then, at other times, I feel I am only ever talking to myself, that I comfort myself by addressing a fictional you, as if I alone am rehearsing a play for two people.

This may be nonsense. I am monstrously hung-over.

I know you know I think of you always, because it seems to me you live in my mind and when you return, I won't need to tell you anything at all, because you have been here all along. Don't tell me that's not true. I won't believe it for a moment.

C

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Act Five

1944–1945

Higher Tiers

January, 1944

Cristabel is finally summoned back to Baker Street in the first week of the New Year. It is a bitter day in London, a few flakes of snow drifting from a heavy sky. Inside Org HQ, she is guided to a sparse briefing room lit only by a bare light bulb hanging from the ceiling and hears her stepmother's voice: *Lamps, darling, never overhead lights. So ageing. Practically mummifying.*

Her briefing is as polite and functional as she expected it would be. Had there been carpets in the building rather than cheap lino, she imagines a great deal would be swept beneath them. They tell her nothing has been heard from her missing cousin, but it is recognized that Gilberte is an efficient operator and there is no reason to further delay her return to the field. Their innocuous approach makes her suspect her return may simply be due to the fact they need more agents. She reminds herself that, as Perry once said, it's a question of numbers.

'You have already delayed my return to the field,' she replies, 'but needless to say, I'm eager to get started on whatever my next mission may be. I hope there are no question marks over my integrity.'

They shake their heads and talk of *protocols* and she recognizes in their stiff smiles the same sense of exasperation she feels, which suggests they too have exhausted the list of possible reasons for Digby's silence – Digby trapped and unable to communicate; Digby suffering some kind of injury or nervous collapse; Digby forced to work for the Germans under duress; Digby happily working for the Germans hoping for a Nazi victory – and come up with nothing concrete, so have turned to more pressing matters. She personally has dismissed the last option, but all else remains possible.

'Just so we're clear,' she says, 'do you believe my cousin might pose any risk to our operations in France?' It is easiest to discuss him in this objective way, as a professional issue to be assessed like any other.

They blink and say no, they are hopeful that is not the case. All reports from his training schools emphasized his loyalty to his fellow agents. Besides, there is *the bigger picture* to consider now. Cristabel nods, thinking of the increasing number of troops arriving in Dorset. She had noticed too, on her way to the briefing room, that there are camp beds set up in many of the partitioned offices, and the rooms containing the most high-ranking officers – the steely-eyed colonels and brigadiers – have a stream of visitors waiting outside. Those inside never come out, she hears only the occasional barked instruction: 'Come!'

A secretary is dispatched, and several cardboard files are brought to the briefing room. The secretary is asked to leave and to close the door behind her. A

map of Northern France is unfolded on the table.

‘The other possibility is that Digby has gone native,’ says Perry, when they meet for a drink after her briefing. He has chosen a dark Victorian pub in Whitehall, filled with pipe smoke and coughing old men in black suits: MPs, civil servants, the dry machinery of power. A monochrome backdrop into which Perry in his uniform blends imperceptibly. Cristabel enjoys it, despite herself, this exclusive sense of being in among them, wearing a uniform of her own.

She had contacted Perry, ostensibly to ask about foodstuffs for Flossie, and ended up suggesting a New Year drink, thinking he might be someone she could talk to about Digby. Perry had suggested Digby join the Org, after all, and was someone who understood undercover work. She also suspected he might already know far more about the situation in Paris than she did, given his access to higher tiers of information.

Perry continues, ‘Always a risk, using untrained personnel for covert missions. No surprise that some of them might go off piste. Invisibility can be intoxicating to the uninitiated.’ His chalk-white face is lit by the winter light slanting through the frosted window; he seems more remote than ever, austere as a saint, a cipher of a man.

‘We aren’t untrained,’ Cristabel replies.

‘Four months, wasn’t it? Between your recruitment and your deployment. Although I suppose it might do for the kind of short-term role the Org want you to perform.’

‘It’s no walk in the park,’ says Cristabel. ‘We have to liaise with an increasing number of Resistance groups, each with their own opinion of how the war should be won.’

‘Another matter far too delicate to entrust to beginners. It’s a basic rule of security that every time you increase your network, you increase your chances of discovery,’ says Perry. ‘Or, as my old mentor used to put it, three can keep a secret if two of them are dead.’

‘You recommended Digby to work in France,’ she says.

‘He speaks French – he’s what they wanted.’

Cristabel sips her drink. ‘But you wouldn’t use him yourself.’

Perry shakes his head. ‘Digby is too much his mother’s son.’

Cristabel has an image then, of the photograph Rosalind kept by her bed, of her and Digby, their fine-boned faces held together, twinned in beauty like a pair of cats.

Perry rocks the whisky in his glass. ‘There are those for whom it is natural to identify all available exits as soon as they enter a room. I believe you may have become expert at this even before your current role, given your intense dislike of social engagements.’

‘There’s a double door at three o’clock to me that opens on to the street,’ says Cristabel, ‘and a door that leads to the loos at eleven. There’s a service door behind me, at roughly seven o’clock, but I suspect that goes down to the cellars, and an archway behind the bar leading to a back room.’

‘I cannot imagine that your cousin has ever thought to look for the exits, or consider why they might be prudent,’ says Perry. ‘His mother was similarly afflicted.’

‘There was an instructor in Scotland who told us Churchill sleeps beneath a map showing all the possible invasion points of England, so his first thought on waking is to remember the threats we face,’ says Cristabel.

Perry raises his glass. ‘He’s a stubborn bugger, but he knows how to fight a war.’

Cristabel drinks, then says, ‘You wouldn’t have suggested Digby if you thought he was a risk.’

‘I believed he had a chance of succeeding,’ says Perry. ‘He has a certain charisma. Besides, he told me himself he wanted a change from tanks. With his love of the limelight, I thought he’d enjoy that noisy work your lot specialize in.’

‘Noisy?’

‘Blowing things up. Not how an intelligence organization should operate, in my view.’

‘I imagine you are about to tell me how it should operate, and that will be based on the work that your lot do.’

‘Quite right,’ he says. ‘We have people working undercover who will be there long after your lot have gone home to loud applause and newspaper articles. You will never know their names, but they are vital.’

‘What do they do?’

Perry strokes his hand across the polished table as if smoothing it. ‘They gather intelligence. Isn’t that a beautiful phrase? Blueprints. Timetables. Paperwork. It is in the paperwork of an empire that we find its weaknesses.’

‘What we do raises morale. It means the French know they’re not alone.’

‘Cristabel, it’s all very well to have a gaggle of wine-soaked Frenchmen up a hill ready to fire guns when the Allies arrive, but unless we know the exact whereabouts of German coastal defences, the Allies have no chance of arriving.’

She concedes his point. ‘Both, then. Both are important.’

‘For now,’ he replies, ‘but the morale of the French peasantry is unlikely to be a priority after the war. Which is why your organization will come to an end once we are victorious. Somewhat ironic, to think you are working towards your own demise.’

‘You don’t know that.’

‘It’s been agreed. At the highest levels.’ He gestures to the men sitting around them. ‘There’s no need for two intelligence organizations. Yours will go – and what will you do then?’

Cristabel looks around at the inhabitants of those rarefied levels. She cannot imagine they are often asked what they will do next. Their ascendancy appears as simple as riding an escalator, from public school to Oxbridge to Sandhurst to the City or Parliament, grouse shooting, fly fishing, picking up a wife as one might collect dry cleaning, sons, port, cigars, the dark red rooms of self-interested decisions.

Whereas she is always stopped and queried. A series of roadblocks, identification checks. Reminders she is not where she ought to be.

‘I don’t think beyond the war,’ she says. ‘I think about my friends in France. The peasantry.’

Perry’s mouth twitches. He has always been irritated by the French and this has been exacerbated by his dislike of de Gaulle, who – right on cue – he begins to talk about now, saying de Gaulle is impossibly arrogant, an exiled general who acts as if he had an army at his command, rather than a borrowed apartment in Mayfair and an occasional slot on the BBC.

Cristabel has more sympathy for the isolated Frenchman. She knows that an unwillingness to bend can sometimes be your best, your only, weapon.

‘He gives them hope,’ she says.

‘He gives them an illusion,’ sniffs Perry.

‘Hope is an illusion,’ she replies. ‘That’s why it’s powerful.’ She sees him look at his watch, and says quickly, ‘Perry, your undercover people, might they know where Digby is and what he’s doing?’

‘France is not my department,’ he says, and she sees he has somehow removed himself, shut himself off like an owl. She is aware then of an isolation in Perry, something he has always kept close to himself. Something small and once alive, held in a clawed hand that no longer registered it held anything.

She says, ‘If I asked you, could you find out?’

He regards her. ‘Are you going to ask me?’

Cristabel feels this is a moment he has been expecting and has already weighed up; she has a sense of him waiting on the other side of the question. She knows too, sharply, with a sensation that feels wrenching, that she cannot allow herself to be beholden to him, even if he can tell her about Digby.

‘Why would I need to ask, Uncle Perry?’ she says. ‘I’m sure if your agents have any information about a British operative, they would share it with us, as a matter of course.’

His smile is milky as venom. ‘Uncle,’ he says. Then, ‘Disingenuousness does not suit you, Cristabel.’

She says nothing, feels squirmily guilty, childlike.

He says, 'I have an appointment at White's. I would invite you, but I can't. It's a gentlemen's club.' He stands up, brushes down his jacket. 'Very particular about who it admits. Poor Master Kovalsky must wait outside, like a faithful hound. You'll be all right on the Tube, won't you?'

Cristabel makes her way down to the Tube to travel to the Bloomsbury hotel booked by the Org, where she will be staying until it is time to go to the airfield. The train is musty and half empty; a stout businessman dozes in the seat opposite her. She picks up his discarded newspaper and, as the train roars through its black tunnels, reads about the partisan fighters holding out, against expectation, in Yugoslavia and those harrying the Germans in Poland and the Balkans. She thinks of all those who are, at that moment, hiding in ruined buildings, holding borrowed guns in sweating hands, mouthing final prayers.

She scans the small ads. The births, marriages, deaths. Lost at sea. Killed on active service. Parents appealing for information of sons in POW camps. Coins and medals bought for cash. Frigidaires and fur coats for sale. A young widow seeks support for her children. A society clairvoyant hopes her friends and clients will have a peaceful and victorious 1944.

At the bottom of the page, an advertisement:

FUTURE REQUIRED

Young Army Officer will require a situation on cessation of hostilities that calls for energy, resourcefulness and organizing ability

Write Box M557, *The Times*, EC4

She realizes then what she should have told Perry. That speculating about the future is a luxury allowed to those who assume they have one. The train rattles into her station. She leaves the newspaper beside the sleeping businessman and heads to her temporary home.

My Dear Lads

March, 1944

Cristabel had always wanted her life to be a story. In every one of her beloved Henty adventure books, there had been an introductory letter from the author that began ‘My Dear Lads’. It gave her the feeling of being in a club – a club bound for great things. Henty never talked down to his lads. They were as familiar with life’s certainties as he was: that the British Empire was the finest in the world, but there was courage to be found on all sides, because, dear lads, we all have battles to fight.

Apart from Uncle Willoughby, Henty was the first person to address her with affection. He was the first to insist upon the importance of her own behaviour and the first to suggest that she could leave an impression on the world, which meant that she existed.

Because of this, whenever she now tucks her military pistol into its holster or zips up her camouflage parachute suit, she feels solemn and justified, as if she is finally inhabiting her rightful story. After all, the world Henty described was one that constantly seethed with wars, where a plucky lad need only hop aboard a brig and cross the ocean to find himself military attaché to the Prussian Army, or leading a musket platoon through the dawn mist, and young Cristabel had marched alongside them, wooden sword held high.

But alongside that feeling of rightfulness, there is an unease too, a slight embarrassment. She is discomfited by a nagging sense that by stepping into her story she might somehow be seen. Because the imagined place of the child within the story does not show the child herself. Because had the Duke of Wellington or Admiral Nelson ever looked down and seen that a small girl had joined their forces, that girl would have been sent home.

She has never doubted herself, and sees no reason to start now, but it is becoming clearer that she is where she is – sitting on the floor of a Halifax, bumping through turbulence over Northern France – only thanks to a series of time-limited loopholes. She is an anomaly. The parachute suit she is wearing is not designed for a woman: it is tight across the chest, long in the arms. She does not fit comfortably into this story, and she had always assumed she would, that it would be something she could join as easily as stepping in line with a parade.

That was how it had felt, during training in Scotland, and her first mission in France: that she was marching in line with others. But now, after seeing how quickly she could be discarded if the Org took against her, and after talking to Perry, she is not so sure. Perry is probably right to say that the Org won’t exist

after the war, and even if it does, it's hardly likely to keep her on, to let her climb the ranks, become a brigadier.

She wraps her arms around her knees and frowns. It is disconcerting to consider it like this, and equally disconcerting to discover that it hurts. But Uncle Willoughby always told her you should never bother yourself with what the top brass are up to, just worry about the man in front of you and the one behind.

As she pulls on her jump helmet, she wonders what Henty himself would have made of her, had they ever met. She imagines his slight puzzlement at the sight of a woman in military clothing, followed by a hearty greeting. He was, after all, from a time when men were referred to as giants and their way of addressing the world was to boom over its heads. How much she had wanted that sturdy voice; someone to tell her that she was right.

The dispatcher pulls open the hatch and lets fly with armfuls of British propaganda leaflets, whirling into the darkness like confetti. He shouts, 'Visibility's getting worse.'

Cristabel edges forward, so he can clip her parachute line to the fuselage, and peers down through the hatch on to a grey layer of cloud. She can see nothing: no roads, no fields, no reception committee. She will be jumping blind. Wind howls through the rattling plane and her fear rolls itself into a ball in her throat, which she swallows repeatedly, trying to push it back down.

The dispatcher has a shouted conversation with the pilot over the intercom, then shuffles towards her to speak into her ear. 'We can't see anyone down there, but we're not going to get a better chance. You want to give it a go?' She nods. She has already had one failed attempt to get into France in February, she doesn't want another. The dispatcher relays her decision to the pilot, the light goes from red to green, and she jumps before she can change her mind.

The cloud comes rushing up and she braces instinctively, knees up, elbows in, as if it were solid, but she slices straight through it. Her parachute opens with a *whoomph* as she tumbles through the cloud, a damp foggy mass that leaves her spinning and disorientated. Then suddenly, she is falling out the other side and a French hillside comes slamming up to meet her. She lies on her back, winded and gasping, grateful to have landed on earth rather than the roof of Rouen Cathedral. She looks up, but the plane is nowhere to be seen. Her story too has disappeared, and she is back on her own. She pulls herself to her feet.

It takes several hours of trudging through fields and along country lanes – leaping into a ditch every time she hears a car – before she reaches a railway station. From there, she travels to the small Normandy town where she finds the organizer who should have met her when she jumped. He is a no-nonsense Welshman, field name Antoine, and he barely registers her late arrival, leading her immediately out to a storeroom at the back of the garage where he is based.

‘It’s bloody relentless here,’ he says, heaving an ancient bicycle from beneath a pile of cardboard, a man’s racer with a high crossbar and drop handles. ‘This is yours. Hope you’ve strong legs. Weighs a ton.’

‘I’ll manage,’ she says. ‘Why relentless?’

‘Everyone’s running out of patience. French and German. All very keen to know when the Allies might appear. We’ve a flood of new recruits, but none of them know how to hold a gun, and we’re so short of wireless operators, our poor girl is sending messages for three different circuits. She never sleeps. Did you bring any uppers? Those tablets are the only thing keeping her alive.’

Cristabel nods. ‘She can have mine.’

He rummages in his pockets for a few slips of paper. ‘I need you to take some messages to her this evening. Mostly from me to London, and mostly furious. I’ve had it up to here with badly packed canisters that don’t contain anything we need.’

‘Where is she?’

He describes the address, then adds, ‘I think you might know each other. She said I should look out for a tall English girl with a posh voice as you apparently owe her a few drinks.’

She finds Sophie – field name Sidonie – masquerading as a district nurse and living in a remote stone cottage surrounded by endless rows of apple trees. It is bizarre and wonderful to see a familiar face so far from home. Sophie has already outlasted the wireless operator’s expected lifespan of six weeks by several months, but when she hugs her, Cristabel can feel how thin her training companion has become. She has the feverish intensity of someone on borrowed time.

‘It’s so good to see you,’ Sophie says, her eyes shining. ‘I can’t wait for us to get back home and have that big night out. I think about it all the time. Seeing everyone again.’

‘The invasion will come soon,’ says Cristabel. ‘They’re ridiculously busy at HQ.’

‘We’ve heard that for a while now, ducks,’ says Sophie. ‘The French think Stalin will get here before the Allies do. They say he’s going to shout across the Channel to Winston to let him know it’s safe to come over.’

‘Do they really?’

‘They do – and meanwhile, the Gestapo keep themselves busy. They’re such bastards, I can’t even tell you. But men never take rejection well, do they?’

‘I’ve some messages for you from Antoine,’ says Cristabel, rummaging in her pockets. ‘They have to go to London tonight.’

Sophie leads Cristabel to an upstairs bedroom where her wireless equipment is hidden inside a narrow chimney. She says she normally works on the hoof, but

there are so many messages now, Antoine found her a place to stay, where she can work uninterrupted.

‘Been here since January,’ she says, lifting the leather suitcase that contains her kit on to a desk. ‘Home sweet home.’

‘What are these?’ says Cristabel, looking at a stash of envelopes tucked behind a clock on the mantelpiece.

‘Letters,’ she says, ‘I thought it might look funny if I stayed here but never got any post, so I’ve been writing myself some letters. From an imaginary aunt. It’s nice to have a bit of company. You can have a read if you want, but she’s not much of a writer.’

Cristabel smiles. ‘What does she write about?’

‘Oh, she has this little son,’ says Sophie, sitting at the desk, ‘nearly two now, would you believe. She talks about him. What he’s up to. That kind of thing. Let’s have your messages then.’

Cristabel holds them out silently. Sophie snaps open the two metal clasps of the case, then takes the messages from Cristabel without looking at her.

The wireless is a metal radio set covered with black dials that fits snugly within its custom-made case. Sophie quickly sets it up, plugging in the crystal that determines its frequency and unravelling its aerial, which is a 100-foot length of wire that must be trailed out of the window. Then she takes Cristabel’s messages and transcribes them into code, using a pencil and pad she keeps in a hidden compartment in the lid of the case.

This done, she puts on her headphones, pushes up one sleeve so her wristwatch is visible, looks at Cristabel and says, ‘You staying?’

They both know that as soon as she begins to tap out a message on her Morse code key, she is putting them in danger. The Gestapo are so adept at tracking radio operators that Sophie must start, transmit, receive, pack up – hauling in the wire, winding it up, putting away the code pad, innumerable fiddly tasks that cannot be rushed – and hide the case in less than twenty minutes before detector vans can pinpoint her location.

Cristabel nods. ‘Yes, I’ll stay.’

Sophie pulls a pistol from a holster hidden under her blouse and hands it to Cristabel. Cristabel moves to the window and looks out over the orchard to the open countryside. A clear line of sight. She thinks of all the messages Sophie must send without anyone looking out for her and feels a spike of anxiety. She knows a wireless operator’s work is dangerous, but it is one thing to know it, and another to see how isolated her friend is, how far from help.

Sophie puts her finger on the Morse key and begins to transmit Antoine’s messages. Cristabel can hear, very faintly, the pizzicato beeping of code. During training, Cristabel had found the rapid dots and dashes impossible to follow.

‘Don’t count,’ Sophie used to say, ‘listen. It’s like a song. *Dah dah didy didit.*’

Cristabel looks at her now. Sophie has closed her eyes to hear the code come singing through the airwaves, pencil poised above her notepad. The Org call their operators ‘pianists’ and the name suits them: it is delicate, vulnerable, listening work. Those skilled at it are so prized they are usually shuttled from place to place to keep them safe, travelling separately from their equally valuable sets, which are carried for them by couriers, and reuniting in anonymous locations, like forbidden lovers. But Sophie and her set have made a home here together. Cristabel notes the box of matches on the mantelpiece, the black papery ashes of burnt messages in the fireplace. She kicks at the grate to disperse them.

Sophie pulls her headphones off and passes Cristabel a decoded message as neatly written as homework. ‘You best get going, ducks,’ she says. ‘There’s a drop tonight. One person, five containers.’ Then she begins the process of packing away her equipment.

‘The WAAF girls in the receiving station compete to take your messages,’ Cristabel tells her, as she helps Sophie fit the suitcase back into the chimney.

‘Do they? That’s nice,’ says Sophie, looking pleased. ‘I forget there’s girls there. I only ever think of it as “London” – one person, doesn’t say much, probably a bloke.’

‘They say you have magic fingers,’ says Cristabel, handing back the pistol. ‘You never make a mistake.’

‘Good to know I’m good for something,’ Sophie says, tucking away the weapon, then giving Cristabel another fervent hug. ‘Come a long way from Hackney, haven’t I?’

‘You have,’ says Cristabel, nodding. ‘You’ve done very well.’

Sophie kisses her friend on both cheeks. ‘It’s smashing to have you here,’ she says. ‘Now get going or Antoine will throw a fit. *À bientôt!*’

Cycling away, Cristabel looks back at the cottage, miles from anywhere, surrounded by the regimented lines of apple trees, growing shadowy in the dusk. She thinks of Sophie carefully burning the notepaper on which she writes her messages, a small flame held in her fingertips.

In the dead of night, Cristabel cycles to the landing site, flying along moonlit lanes on her racer like a breakaway rider in the Tour de France; standing up on the pedals as she climbs hills, hanging over the handlebars on the descent. Antoine has gone on ahead in a baker’s van, and she finds him there, on the edge of a field in a group of beech trees, checking his watch, already angry. He says the plane is late and there are too many people waiting to greet it. Cristabel catches a glimpse of a group of young Frenchmen beyond the trees, smoking and talking, guns tucked in their waistbands.

‘Why are there so many of them?’ she hisses.

‘Somebody in the village is bloody leaky,’ he says.

By the time they hear the Halifax approaching – a low thrum that steadily becomes louder – the sky is already growing light in the east. Running out across the field in the grey half-light to signal to the pilot feels terribly risky. The white parachutes floating down, swaying leisurely, seem like giant billowing targets. The new arrival – a middle-aged Frenchman greeted enthusiastically by his countrymen – is similarly slow-moving. He cannot be an agent, she thinks, he seems perfectly happy to stand in an open field with a parachute strapped to his back. He even stops to pick up a handful of soil.

‘*On y va,*’ says Antoine. ‘*Vite!*’

They hide the containers in the woods, because it is too light to risk taking them anywhere, then bundle the man and his parachute into the back of the baker’s van so Antoine can drive him to the nearest railway station, the rest of them following on a motley selection of bicycles. Only Cristabel takes an alternative route and, when she arrives, is shocked to discover they are all still together, standing in a group on the platform. She scans the other passengers. There seem to be a lot of people waiting for this early train, some of whom do not appear to have any luggage.

‘This is ridiculous,’ she says to Antoine, opening her mirror compact as if to check her face.

He says in a low voice, ‘They say they must stay close to him to protect him.’

‘Who is he?’

‘One of de Gaulle’s lackeys,’ says Antoine. ‘On his way to Paris.’

‘Do they want to put a sign around his neck to make sure everybody knows?’ she says, snapping the compact shut and putting it into her rucksack.

‘Let’s get him to the safe house, Gilberte, then we can leave them to it.’

The train comes steaming into the station and the group board it together, heading for the First Class carriage. Antoine follows but sits apart from them, reading a newspaper. Cristabel stands in the corridor of the next carriage where she can see Antoine through the adjoining door. There is a clamour of alarm bells ringing in her head. She can hear herself breathing over the noise of the train moving off.

It only takes three things: the movement of Antoine’s newspaper, as he lowers it with deliberate slowness; the fleeting glimpse of a figure in a black raincoat moving through the First Class carriage; and an irate Frenchman raising his voice.

Cristabel pulls down the nearest carriage window as far as it will go. The train is rattling through misty countryside, the sunrise an orange glow on the

horizon. There is a shout in First Class, a barked instruction in German. *Hände hoch!* She sees trees coming towards her and grips the rim of the window with both hands, putting one foot up on the window ledge. Glancing back down the train, she sees another group of men pushing their way along the corridor towards her. She lifts her other foot on to the ledge, crouches for a moment, poised in the window like a long-limbed bird. Then a shot rings out and she takes flight.

She shouldn't have landed the way she did, awkwardly on one foot, turning over her ankle in a way that made her shriek with pain. She shouldn't have walked on that injured ankle. She shouldn't have gone back to the place they had just left.

She should have scattered. She should have fled.

She did at least avoid the skyline, hobbling and crouching across the rutted fields, biting her lip to muffle her involuntary cries of pain, lying flat beneath a briar hedge when a German patrol car passed, and staying flat, gripping the soil with her hands. She did at least, when they had moved off, crawl over the earth on her stomach, using elbows and knees, until she could finally make out Sophie's isolated cottage in the distance. And she did at least, when she was close enough to see the front door of the cottage hanging off its hinges, stop. She let herself look at it – a broken tooth in a punched mouth – and she let herself look at it again, then she made herself turn around and crawl away through the apple trees.

Les Enfants Perdus

March, 1944

Cristabel has an address, one she committed to memory sitting in a draughty office in Baker Street. A possible safehouse. A roadside bistro on the outskirts of Rouen that is part of an escape line that smuggles people out of France. She cannot walk all the way there on her injured ankle, the pain is dizzying now, so she takes a chance and waves down a boy driving a horse and cart, spins him an improbable tale of having fallen while out hiking, and offers money if he will give her a lift. He glances at her mud-covered skirt and blouse, but says nothing, just gestures with his head to say she can get into the cart.

As they bump along the narrow lanes, she sees dark smoke rising into the sky behind them: something is burning. The boy glances back, shakes his head, sets the horse at a trot. He drops Cristabel within hobbling distance of the bistro, a half-timbered building with window boxes of geraniums.

Inside, she finds an old woman cleaning glasses. Cristabel recites the meaningless code phrase – *I have visited the countryside with my Uncle Maurice* – and receives the coded reply – *I remember Maurice well* – and that is about all she can stand of conversation. The old woman hurries her through to the stockroom at the back of the bistro where Cristabel takes off her rucksack and sits among crates of empty cider bottles, feeling tears making their way down her face, though she herself stays still and does not make a noise. She leans against a crate, rests her head.

Later, the old woman brings her a dry hunk of bread and tells her that someone will come for her that night. He is a doctor so has a car and a pass that allows him to travel after curfew. When he arrives, Cristabel is loaded on to the back seat of a small Fiat, told to lie down and covered with a blanket. The doctor, a short man in his fifties with curly hair and a greying beard, gives her a handkerchief and tells her that if they are stopped, she must bite her lip and spit blood into it.

The car journey is slow and steady, and even though Cristabel isn't ill, she feels the floating tranquillity of being a patient, watching the night sky go by from her recumbent position. When they are stopped – once at a Wehrmacht roadblock and once by French militia – and she spits blood, as instructed, the sharp satisfaction of the bite and the red stain on the handkerchief seem very true. The soldiers shine their torches at her in the back seat and she coughs and holds the handkerchief to her mouth so they can see the bloody evidence. She hears the doctor say in a grave tone that he suspects tuberculosis. The soldiers move away, the darkness encloses her, and the car rolls through the night.

At the doctor's house, she is helped inside and put to bed. The doctor gives her something for the pain in her ankle, which has swollen to double its usual size, and says it will help her sleep. She hears him say that a strong dose of painkiller is as good as being tucked up by your grandmother, but she has no reply and no voice to reply with, so closes her eyes.

When she opens them again, she sees wooden beams in the ceiling above her and shafts of golden light coming through gaps in shutters. The light is disorientating, it has the rich slant of evening, and she can hear convivial voices outside. She checks her watch: she has slept through the day. She heaves herself out of bed, hops across the wooden floor to the landing and gingerly makes her way down a narrow set of stairs. She is in a low, long house, with stone walls, large fireplaces and tiled floors. There are a few pieces of old furniture: a scrubbed wood table, a sagging bookcase, a brass lamp.

Stepping outside, holding on to the door frame for balance, she sees the doctor with a handsome woman in her forties, and a girl aged about seven. They are seated around a table underneath a walnut tree, which stands on the edge of a small meadow surrounded by woods. All rise to greet her. 'Come,' says the doctor, 'you must be hungry.'

'I must be going,' she says.

'You can't go anywhere on that ankle,' he says. 'Eat with us, and afterwards, I will look at it. But first, sit. Tell us what we should call you.'

'Claudine,' she says and allows herself to be helped to a seat at the table, which is covered by a white cloth and has a jar of flowers at its centre. The woman, who introduces herself as Wanda, the doctor's wife, busies herself making up a plate of bread and cheese, slices of peppery cured sausage, hard-boiled egg, lettuce, radishes. There is a glass of red wine, pungent and earthy, poured by the doctor – Édouard, he tells her, with a hand on her shoulder – and a toast proposed by Wanda to friendship and victory.

After the meal, Édouard lifts her foot on to a chair and gently examines her ankle. He frowns. 'It could be fractured,' he says. 'We need a splint, and you will have to rest it.'

'It's not safe for me to be here,' she says.

'You can stay in the attic,' he says. 'We keep the radio up there. You won't be the first person we have hidden here, Claudine.'

'Can you find out what happened to my organizer and our wireless operator?' she says in a low voice. 'Antoine and Sidonie. They are British agents.'

'I will make enquiries,' he says. 'But now you must rest. Or have more wine. Both are beneficial. Doctor's orders.'

A few days later, while rebandaging her ankle, Édouard tells her quietly he has heard Sidonie and Antoine were caught due to a local informer. Alerted to the existence of the British agents, the Gestapo had patiently waited until the parachute drop was carried out in order to capture Antoine, those arriving from England, and their useful containers. They then rounded up Sidonie, carried out a brisk series of reprisals – burning farms, shooting civilians – and took their captives to Fresnes, a prison in southern Paris.

Cristabel has heard of Fresnes: it is where they keep Allied agents and Resistance fighters, where they try to make them talk. Her mind flinches at the thought of what might be done to her colleagues, for she thinks neither would give way easily, but at least they are alive, for now. She wonders if the Gestapo were watching Sophie's cottage when she visited. Had they seen her? Or worse, was she the one who led them there? She feels nauseous considering it. Was it possible she had let her security lapse?

'Our son also passed through Fresnes last month,' Édouard says quietly. 'They caught him distributing Resistance leaflets at his school.'

'Where is he now?'

'Somewhere else, we hope. We do not know. We can but pray.'

'It is hard, not to know,' Cristabel says.

He looks at her. 'It is hard.'

'What will happen to the informer?' she asks, after a moment.

'Nothing yet. I am told she will be taken care of.' His mouth twists. 'I am never comfortable with that aspect, but they tell me it is necessary.' He then continues winding the bandage around her ankle, before adding, 'You should stay here for a while, Claudine. Until you can walk. We will try to get a message to London to say you are safe.'

Cristabel stays with them through April and into May. The weather grows warmer. The first swallows arrive, scything in great arcs about the house. They hear nothing more of Sidonie and Antoine, but Édouard uses a contact to send a message back to London via neutral Switzerland, letting them know that, although her circuit no longer exists, Claudine has survived – and encouragingly, her face has not appeared on any wanted posters, suggesting that she survived unseen.

Despite this, Cristabel changes her appearance, as far as she is able, dyeing her hair using strong-smelling chemicals acquired by Wanda, ending up a streaky auburn colour. Wanda finds her different clothes too: summer dresses and cardigans left by a previous fugitive, someone else who needed to shed their skin.

Hidden in the attic, Cristabel props herself up by the radio to listen to the *messages personnels* on BBC Radio Londres, broadcast after the six and nine o'clock news. They are surrealist snippets that remind her of Myrtle's poetry –

My gold tiger walks at night, Natalie remains in ecstasy – but hidden among them are coded messages meant for Resistance groups. These she passes to Wanda and Édouard to share with their network.

Cristabel also suggests that local *résistants* visit her if they require weapons training, and they come almost shyly, as if attending their first dance, with rusty pistols hidden in their satchels. Young farm boys, middle-aged teachers. She takes them out into the meadow, leaning on the wooden crutches Édouard has found her, and has them aim at ancient oak trees, bullets splintering the craggy trunks.

There are no other houses in sight, only cool, spacious woods, and the house itself has a calm, unhurried quality. It lies close to the earth, with a red tiled roof and blue-grey shutters. Swathes of rosebay willowherb fill the garden, where chickens peck at the dirt. Every morning, Cristabel sees Wanda carefully setting the table for breakfast; Édouard serving his daughter with great tenderness.

Wanda is Polish. A few other émigrés who live nearby often visit in the evenings, sitting at the outdoor table to share scraps of news from their home country or reminisce about their old lives. Sitting in the sun-dappled garden, the war seems like a distant, unfathomable row. A spoilt child's monstrous game. Its thunderous throwing and stamping.

After meals, Édouard's daughter Annick climbs on to his lap, and he adjusts his position to accommodate her, one hand stroking her head, one reaching for his glass of calvados. Cristabel notices that, for both, this arrangement is so familiar as to be almost unconscious. Annick brings with her an old camera she wears round her neck, a battered black Leica, and gazes through the viewfinder as her father talks.

'My girl will be a photographer one day,' Édouard says. 'She wants to capture everything.'

'Or a detective,' Annick says. She turns the camera towards Cristabel.

'Oh, you shouldn't take a photograph of me,' says Cristabel, holding up a hand.

From behind the camera Annick says, 'It hasn't got any film in it. Father will get me a roll when there is some in the shops.'

Édouard catches Cristabel's eye over his daughter's head. 'You will have to come back another time, so she can take your photograph properly.'

'I will,' says Cristabel.

Annick says, 'Claudine fires guns. My brother could fire a gun.'

'He will come home to us soon, God willing,' says Wanda.

'Don't forget, Mama, he is a fast runner,' says Annick. 'The fastest in his class.' She grips the camera, squints through its little blind eye. The shutter closes, opens.

Édouard frequently encourages Cristabel to take part in their after-dinner discussions beneath the walnut tree. 'Tell us what you think, Claudine,' he will say, and although she usually comes up with an excuse as to why she prefers to listen to him, she will later lie in bed, having conversations with herself about what she does think, discovering it is less clear cut than she supposed. It helps take her mind off Sophie and Antoine. Digby too, although he often interrupts her internal debates with chatty opinions of his own.

If they talk about books, Édouard will sometimes leap up to run inside and pull novels from his bookshelf, saying, 'I cannot believe you have not read *Madame Bovary!*'

'I don't read romance,' Cristabel says, remembering the stash of romance novels by Flossie's bed, their gaudy covers. 'It seems so frivolous.'

Édouard cries, 'Frivolous! Romance is risk and passion and all the things that make a life.'

'Without passion we are only machines,' says Wanda, with a look at her husband.

Wanda's statement sounds like something Taras would say, and Cristabel hasn't thought of Taras in a long time. It is a surprise to find him here, at this table in a Normandy wood, although it is a place where he would feel at home. A place where exiles gather to talk of passion.

Cristabel cannot remember ever talking of passion, though she feels she might like to, if she could work out how to begin. She props her chin in her hands and finds that Leon appears in the back of her mind, as if waiting for her in the trees that circle the house. She remembers their closeness in the darkness, how she had felt she could ask him anything. Would she talk about passion to Leon? She tests the word in her mind. Imagines her mouth close to his ear. No, not passion. She would talk to Leon of want.

Looking up, she catches Wanda's gaze and feels flustered, as if uncovered. Wanda smiles.

The men and women who come to the house to learn how to fire guns are keen to do more than shoot trees, but with only a few weapons and no wireless, they are limited. However, Cristabel remembers an Org instructor saying *subversion is one of the most potent weapons to undermine the morale of the enemy* and instructs her band of volunteers in how to carry out small acts of insurrection, activities designed to impede, to slow up, to frustrate. To this end, they cut telegraph lines, puncture fuel tanks, block roads and sabotage railway lines.

But each act of rebellion comes with a risk, and when she joins Édouard, Wanda, Annick and their friends at the table in the garden, where they light candles as the night falls, she feels she is drawing danger towards them like a net.

One afternoon, when they are walking through the woods, Cristabel tells Édouard she is worried about staying with them. 'I don't want anything to happen to any of you.'

He shakes his head. 'No, you must stay.'

'I will find myself a new hiding place, if you don't.'

'You might have discarded your crutches, but you are still limping,' Édouard replies, but seeing her expression, adds, 'I will try to find something.'

They continue slowly in silence for a while, Cristabel hobbling along, until Édouard asks if she knows the French phrase *les enfants perdus* – the lost children. She shakes her head.

'I think of it often,' he says. 'It has a military meaning. It describes a small troop who volunteer to make a dangerous attack. To go first. In Dutch, it is *verloren hoop*. In English, *forlorn hope*. They were not expected to survive, but if they did, they were promoted. It was a chance for those with nothing to lose.'

Édouard looks up at the canopy of trees. 'When my son did not come home, I was sick. I suffered nausea, as one experiences in a boat. As if I could no longer move through the world without being sickened by it. My beloved boy. I became quite maddened by the idea of him walking through the front door. I used to sleep by it, in case I could hear him. In case he couldn't quite make it to the door. I could help him.'

He looks at her. 'I cannot help him, Claudine. But I can help you.' He reaches to grip her hand for a moment, then turns back to the path.

It is when she is sitting in the attic that she hears it. It is a warm evening. The roses that climb the front of the house have started to bloom; they are apricot in colour, many-layered flowers, with a somnolent scent that drifts in through the open window.

Annick is playing in the garden, while Édouard and Wanda are in the kitchen. BBC Radio Londres is softly intoning its nonsensical messages, and Cristabel is sitting cross-legged with her notepad and pencil, having put down *Madame Bovary* in order to concentrate. The bandages have been taken off her ankle, but it still aches, and she is rubbing it with one hand when the announcer says: *Les sanglots longs des violons de l'automne*. The six-word phrase from a poem by Verlaine that means an Allied invasion of Europe is imminent.

For a few seconds, she cannot breathe. She freezes, as if expecting the outside world to explode into rioting around her, but the woods stay silent, there is only birdsong. The radio announcer continues, unperturbed. Cristabel scrambles to her feet and hurtles downstairs. 'Édouard! Wanda! They're coming!'

Let's Face the Music and Dance

May, 1944

Flossie is in the old walled kitchen garden at the back of the house, one third of which is now occupied by a couple of young pigs Betty has acquired from her farming brother-in-law. Mr Brewer has fenced off an area for them to roam about in and constructed an ingenious domed shelter from corrugated iron. The idea is that they will permanently solve the Christmas ham problem, but Flossie, seeing them eagerly trotting to meet her, with their shy eyes and albino eyelashes, prefers not to dwell on this.

She has called them Fred and Ginger and, as she tips a bucket of potato peelings into their pen, she sings to them – tapping her feet in rhythm to the tune – and they grunt happily as they eat: throaty rumblings and little puffs of air. They take such satisfying pleasure in their food.

It is a bright, blowy Saturday in May and Flossie is once again an outsider in her own home. There are now six American officers billeted inside Chilcombe. They are attached to the infantry units camped in the woods on the Ridgeway, up by the burial mounds, where large signs warn:

CIVILIANS ARE FORBIDDEN TO LOITER OR TALK WITH TROOPS!

This does not deter the star-struck village children, who hang about the camp, hoping to be thrown a stick of gum or a packet of Life Savers sweets.

There are so many Americans now, it is as if Dorset has become a giant campsite and car park for the US Army. Despite ongoing efforts to widen roads and strengthen bridges, several large military vehicles have become wedged in narrow villages, and the spring hedgerows are covered with dust as heavy convoys grind up the country lanes.

In order to avoid being spotted by German aircraft, the Americans have covered their vehicles with camouflage netting and squeezed themselves – their troops, their tents and support units – into every available hiding space, every wood, every copse, every leafy lane. If any German planes do appear, all the anti-aircraft guns in and out of range open up with such an intense barrage of fire, the raiders either turn tail immediately or face a rapid immolation.

Flossie does not mind her American lodgers. Despite a tendency to always lean on or lounge across furniture ('It's like they've had their spines removed,' says Betty), they have made themselves popular through their willingness to share exotic treats like evaporated milk and tinned fruit. Their good-natured generosity often reminds Flossie of Hans, although it saddens her that they are made far more welcome than he ever was. They are treated almost as celebrities in the

village and have even managed to convert Betty to the joys of AFN radio – the American Forces Network – igniting in her an unexpected enjoyment of the rhythmic jazz of Louis Jordan and Count Basie. ('It's got a bit of pep,' she says, tapping her hand on the kitchen table.)

There are Black American troops camped up in the woods too, although Flossie notices they are segregated from the white troops and carry out different duties. Whenever she cycles back to Chilcombe from her Land Army shifts in Dorchester, she sees them driving supply vehicles about. Betty has told her there have been fights in Weymouth between white and Black troops, and that white American soldiers visiting The Shipwreck tried to insist they should be served before some Black soldiers, but the locals were having none of it. ('Besides,' says Betty, 'the coloured gentlemen have beautiful manners.')

Flossie is conversing with Fred and Ginger when she hears it: the roar of a military motorcycle tearing up the drive. There are always people coming and going from the house, so she knows that if someone has arrived to see her, she will soon be called. After a while, she hears one of the Americans coming through the kitchen, saying, 'I'm sure she won't object, she's a doll. Why here she is, you can ask her yourself.'

The motorcycling visitor is in duffle coat and dark trousers, the type worn by officers in the navy. He is sturdy and fair, clean-shaven and square-faced.

'Ask me what?' says Flossie, turning to face them, wiping her hands on her dungarees.

'If we could use your lawns,' says the man. He has a Scottish accent and a steady gaze.

'Use them for what?'

'Games,' he says. 'Rugby. Football –'

'Baseball,' says the American.

'Tug of war. Anything really,' says the visitor. 'We're looking for a space where our men and the American troops can enjoy a little outdoor recreational activity. A way of keeping up morale. Any breakages, we'd be sure to pay for.'

'I don't see why not,' says Flossie. 'There are a few fields you could use too, if you could find someone to mow them.'

'We could get our boys to do that,' says the American.

'That would be kind,' says the Scottish officer. 'One more question. I happened to notice you have a gramophone in the hall upstairs.'

'I do.'

'I've been carrying around a set of records since the war began, hoping for an opportunity to put on a musical evening. I don't suppose you'd be willing to –'

'Lend you my gramophone?'

‘I was thinking you might host it here,’ he replies. ‘If it wasn’t too much of an imposition.’

Flossie thinks for a moment. ‘We’d have to have a clean-up. The place is covered with dust and there’s a hole in the ceiling.’

‘Our boys could help with that too,’ says the American.

‘Very well then,’ she says, and holds out her hand to the motorcycling navy officer. ‘Flossie Seagrave.’

He returns her handshake. ‘George,’ he says.

His accent, she thinks, might be a Highlands accent. It has a lilt to it. ‘Just George?’

‘George is what the men call me,’ he replies. ‘That or Padre.’ And it is only then that she notices the white dog collar of a military chaplain tucked behind his duffle coat.

George comes roaring up the drive the following weekend with a box of records strapped to the back of his motorcycle, which he delivers to Flossie with a promise there are more to come. She is surprised to find they are not the popular big band songs that she expected, but Elgar, Haydn, Mendelssohn. George tries one on the gramophone and turns up the volume as loud as it can go, to test the acoustics, and swelling strings fill the full height of the hall.

‘I’ve never tried it that loud before,’ says Flossie. ‘It sounds splendid.’

‘What about the gallery, how does it sound up there?’ he asks, and she darts up the staircase to stand on the gallery overlooking the hall.

‘I like it here too,’ she calls, ‘rather like being in the gods at a theatre.’

‘Perfect,’ he says. ‘I knew as soon as I came into this room it was made for music.’

Flossie comes back down the stairs, saying, ‘We should make more use of it really, but it’s awfully cold, even on a sunny day.’

‘I’m very grateful to have the chance to listen to these again,’ he says, patting his box of records. ‘We don’t have a gramophone on the ship.’

‘You’re on a ship?’

‘Most of the time.’

‘What do you do on board?’

‘I’m a listening ear mainly,’ he says, ‘but I hold services too, up on deck, wearing my full rig and regalia. I’ve had to learn to preach over the sound of the ocean.’

‘Who will be coming, to listen to the music?’ she asks.

‘Those that need it,’ he replies.

The next day, a party of Americans set to work to make the Oak Hall habitable again. They attack their tasks with the enthusiasm of infantrymen in a state of peak physical fitness with not much else to do. They form lines to carry

away unwanted furniture to stash in the outbuildings; climb on the roof to hammer planks over the hole in the ceiling; and clean the hall from top to bottom, even polishing the suit of armour until it too is battle-ready.

‘Our main problem,’ says Flossie to Betty, as they watch the Americans scrubbing the flagstones, ‘is a lack of seating. I’m not sure how many are coming, and they can’t sit on the floor. We should make it beautiful and comfortable for them, given that they – well, they won’t be in Dorset for long.’

A young private from Milwaukee, wiping the floor near Flossie’s feet, looks up and says, ‘We’re pretty used to sitting on the ground, ma’am.’

‘I could find you a cushion, at least,’ says Flossie. ‘We have plenty of cushions. And pillows. And bedding. Actually, that might be a way to do it.’

She asks the private if he and his colleagues can round up every cushion in the house, along with any spare mattresses and bedding. The mattresses are arranged around the edges of the hall, topped with pillows and cushions, so the guests can sit on them, leaning up against the walls. More are scattered around the gallery so a further layer of listeners can recline up there. Eiderdowns and blankets are draped over the mattresses to make them look more enticing, and Flossie finds some candlesticks so the hall will be flatteringly illuminated. Betty is tasked with finding decent coffee to serve in the interval, and the Americans promise fresh doughnuts from their mobile canteen. Flossie even has the Americans chop her some wood so she can light the fire for the first time in years.

It is when she is standing in front of the fireplace, looking at the mirrors on the walls, that she thinks of her mother and realizes what else she should do.

George, who is turning out to be a resourceful man, manages to commandeer an army bus to bring the attendees of their first musical evening up to Chilcombe. The sun is beginning to set as they arrive, the rooks gathering noisily in the trees. Flossie, waiting in the doorway, watches them disembark. They are mainly Americans, in short bomber jackets with their hats worn on one side, with a few British Navy officers in dark double-breasted jackets. Some ordinary sailors too, in woolly blue jumpers. George, who has travelled on his motorcycle, is wearing a smart navy jacket over his shirt and dog collar. She sees the men looking up at the ivy-covered house, and then their eyes fall to her, where she stands with Betty and Bill.

It had taken a while to find it, given that all she wears these days are her gardening clothes, but found it she had, and Betty has adjusted it, so it fits her properly: a cornflower-blue dress she had once worn as Miranda in *The Tempest*, now transformed into an evening gown. A little Edwardian perhaps, with its square neckline and softly draped layers, more like the decorous tea gowns of the 1910s than the spinning dance frocks of the 1940s, but hopefully it will serve its purpose: to create an air of ceremony. Flossie believes that, if the men are to sit in

the hall and listen to the records as attentively as she hopes they will, they need to enter it formally. The Brewers, on either side of her, are also smartened up: Bill in a three-piece suit and tie, Betty in a black dress with white collar.

She greets her guests warmly, one by one, as they file past her into the candlelit hall, holding their hats in their hands. Once inside, they make themselves comfortable on the mattresses, looking around at the paintings on the walls, or into the house's shadowy upper reaches. Betty moves among them handing out ashtrays. Their chatter, Flossie notes approvingly, has dropped to the level of an expectant theatre audience, and their faces are lit by the flames blazing in the hearth. The scene reminds her of a medieval castle or a Viking longhouse: men gathered about a fire in a tall dark room.

Flossie has positioned the gramophone on a table in the middle of the hall, next to a vase of tulips, so it will take centre stage from the start. She has been through George's records and added a few of her own to put together a programme to console and uplift, while making full use of the hall's fine acoustics. She walks to the table, waits for the men's conversation to subside, then carefully slides the first record from its sleeve and fits it on to the gramophone. She lifts the needle and guides it into place.

After the first night, it becomes a twice-weekly event. A core group of regulars develops, one of whom is a professional cellist from Chicago, who comes with requests for music he hopes one day to play himself, but the other clientele changes frequently, with George bringing new visitors.

Flossie wonders how George identifies those in need of music, or in need of whatever it is that music provides. She cannot see any common link between them. Most seem cheerful and untroubled, although some, she notices, have a nervous manner, a fidget to their hands. One evening, he brings three dark and handsome men who are part of the Free French Forces, so she plays a stirring Leclair concerto to provide a taste of their homeland, only to discover they are from Corsica, and have never been to France.

It is difficult too to gauge the men's reactions to the evenings. When the Americans come up in the daytime to charge about her lawn with footballs, they play-fight like puppies, teasing each other constantly. Nothing is allowed to be serious. It is, she imagines, an effective way of keeping their terrors at bay. But on the musical evenings, they are quiet, almost withdrawn. Some take off their boots and sit cross-legged in their socks, like schoolboys.

Looking at them, Flossie frequently thinks of Hans, how moved he was when she played the piano. She does not often play Bach to the men, as his music carries so much of Hans, but if she does, she will look around the room, observing their faces – tipped back with eyes closed, or staring up at the high

windows, locked in their thoughts – and she will remember another soldier, missing his home and family, just as they do.

The men rarely look at each other as the music plays, there is a courtesy in allowing each man his space to listen, and some do not look at Flossie as they leave, although she always tries to end the evening with something light. But if they return, they might come with flowers for her, or something they have made themselves – a carved wooden bowl, a hand-drawn bookmark – totems of consideration. In return, she challenges herself to find a new outfit for every musical evening, racing back from the milking sheds of Dorchester to rummage through fading old costumes.

‘They probably think the English dress like this all the time,’ grumbles Betty, polishing her shoes.

‘I know it seems silly,’ says Flossie, pinning up her hair, ‘but I want to make an effort.’

The men repeatedly request that she play Elgar’s ‘Nimrod’, even though it appears to affect them powerfully. She finds it hard to watch them fight to maintain their composure as the kettledrums roll and the score ascends to its heights. It must cause them something close to agony. Perhaps, she thinks, that is what they require: something that allows them to follow their pain as it rises, in its most beautifully orchestrated form – one that insists on the inevitability of whatever will come, and then releases them, gently, with that knowledge. It is not comfort it gives them, she realizes, but acceptance; not an anaesthetizing of sorrow, but a clear articulation of it.

In the last week of May, one of the American officers tells her that the musical evenings must come to an end. The sailors are to return to their ships and the soldiers are to be sealed into their camps for their final briefings; the only place they will go now is France.

On the last night, she glances at George, who is in his usual place, sitting on the stairs, and sees that his hands are knitted together, his eyes closed, his brow furrowed. But as the music fades, he opens his eyes and slips automatically into his pastoral role, standing to put a hand on the back of a soldier making his way down the stairs.

As they go outside together, watching as the bus full of waving men makes its way down the drive, Flossie asks, ‘What do you do now, George?’

‘I go with them,’ he says.

‘What?’ she says. ‘You don’t fight, do you? You don’t have a gun?’

‘No, I don’t, which is a shame because I’m a crack shot. But I go with them, all the same.’

‘Couldn’t they let you have a gun just for this? Seems a little unfair.’

‘I’ll be on a warship. It has big cannons.’

‘Well, make sure you stand behind one,’ she says, and he laughs, although she feels immediately that her comment is flippant, inadequate.

‘Would you mind keeping my records safe for me,’ he says. ‘Until I come back. And if I don’t –’

‘Oh, don’t say that, George,’ she says. ‘I didn’t get this ridiculous dress on just to sob all over it.’

‘It is quite a dress too,’ he says.

‘Rather flamboyant, I know, but sometimes it’s good to dress up.’

‘I quite agree,’ he says, lifting a hand to his collar.

Flossie laughs and says, ‘It has been great fun, to be honest, to get out of my dungarees. To listen to your wonderful music. I’ve enjoyed it, very much.’

‘The men won’t forget it,’ he says. ‘This place. Your kindness. You. I won’t either.’ He gives her a quick smile, and looks at her for a moment, then straightens his jacket, nods smartly, and walks to his motorbike. She watches him kick the machine into life and set off down the drive, then she heads round the side of the house, in her trailing silver gown, to feed her pigs.

The Knight of Swords, The Star

June, 1944

Madame Camille, Weymouth's mystical psychic adviser to kings and queens, stands in her window watching men march along the harbour, laden with rifles and rucksacks. A tent has been set up by the Red Cross to hand out doughnuts to the Americans as they head to their boats – a sugared taste of home likely to soon be regurgitated on a bumpy Channel crossing. The wind has been gusting all day and the sea churns and rolls.

It has been good for business, she will say that. Having the Americans in town, with more money than they know what to do with. Every day, a new young man with a cigarette tucked behind one ear, asking about his future, trying to laugh it off.

She had hidden the Tarot cards they kept flinching at, the grislier images, and put those that looked like victory towards the top of the pack. The Knight of Swords. The Chariot. There's no truth in a doctored pack, but that's how she thinks of it: the act of a doctor. A spoonful of medicine. Off you go, boys. That'll see you right. It won't, of course. She's seen the cards that catch her sleeve, flip themselves upright. They speak of calamitous cost, slow struggle.

Madame Camille watches the troops filing into their vessels, moored one against the other across the harbour. She knows some souls never leave this realm for the next. She looks at the stubborn lines of grey faces beneath metal helmets, packed into their flat-bottomed landing craft like tinned sardines. They won't want to go.

Dusk. Maudie sits on her rooftop and looks out over the town. Weymouth is hushed. Expectant. The pubs and cafés are empty. The homes that billeted soldiers, took in sailors, now have a spare bed, neatly made. Behind the town, there is a new field hospital, where doctors sit waiting, rolling bandages.

Maudie opens her diary. She's kept a list of all her men. Noted where she met them, if they came back with her, what they were like. They've swept in and out like the tides since the war began and brought their countries with them. From Austrian refugees playing waltzes in the tea rooms to Black Americans singing spirituals in the churches, and all of them swinging hard every Saturday night, when the big bands took the roof off the Co-op Hall.

One Black soldier told her when he first arrived, it was strange for him to look a white person in the face, that he had to learn to lift his chin. This, he says, lifting her chin, would be unthinkable. It is all unthinkable, but she likes to think about it. She pulls a pencil from her boiler suit pocket to add another.

5th June, 1944

Warren

smells of soap. Americans smell better. they can't hold their drink though & you can smell that on them too. you can learn a lot about people by their smell. you can learn a lot on the roof of a chip shop in Weymouth, though it's not called Weymouth any more. the papers call it a 'south coast town' so the Germans don't catch on to us. all the sticks of rock with Weymouth written in the middle have been disposed of like bombs.

names don't matter anyhow. names are just a peg for hanging things. i see a name in my diary & remember how it felt. sometimes a game, sometimes a fight. sometimes one when you thought it would be the other.

Warren means: his hands, his mouth. what he looks like out of his uniform, stretched out on a blanket on a rooftop by a radio playing Billie Holiday. he calls me a tall drink of water, but he is a river and i will lay myself along him.

he says if he makes it through, he will leave the Army. he says they're happy to use him, but they don't want him in the front for the photographs. he sees no point in working for white folks who don't want his handsome face in their photographs. he asks what i will do after and i wonder what

Warren reaches up, takes the pencil from her hand. He says he will have to go soon. He says let's not waste this.

When Maudie next opens her eyes, it is two in the morning, and she is alone. She looks up to find what has woken her and sees a steady stream of aircraft making their way across the star-filled sky. More than she has ever seen before. Bombers, troop carriers. Aeroplanes towing gliders. One after the other after the other after the other. An endless airborne convoy. A deep resonant hum. She kicks off the blanket Warren has covered her with and lies naked on the roof, watching them pass, letting the night air cool her skin.

The Americans

July, 1944

In the first week of July, Édouard takes Cristabel bumping along the lanes to the nearest town in his old Fiat, saying he has seen some Americans in a Jeep. ‘They were enormous!’ he cries, over the shrill whining of the car engine. ‘And they were chewing gum! I thought perhaps they only did that for the movies!’

They find them – a three-man scouting party – in a hotel bar, where the town mayor has spread a map across a table and is pointing at it. The Americans are suntanned and dusty, in battledress, boots and helmets, with their hands on their hips. They are the first of the invading force to arrive in the town and seem like emissaries from another planet.

Cristabel approaches them and says, in her most English English, that she is a British operative working with the local Resistance. She suggests that if they doubt her credentials, they should contact Baker Street, London. The Americans look at her, taking in her badly dyed hair, crumpled frock and the tatty sandals loaned to her by Wanda. ‘Do you speak French?’ says the one who appears to be in charge, a first lieutenant.

‘These people believe I am French,’ she says, gesturing at the mayor and the hotel barman, as representatives of Normandy. A dismissive sniff comes from the barman, who is pouring cognac into three tulip-shaped glasses.

‘We need a translator, who knows the area,’ says the lieutenant. He turns back to the map. ‘Tell me about this road through the woods.’

After the lieutenant makes a few phone calls from the hotel office to check her identity, Cristabel finds herself in the Jeep, giving the Americans a rapid tour of the local countryside. She sits alongside an unsmiling soldier who has a machine gun balanced on the edge of the vehicle. Sometimes they stop and the lieutenant will fire questions at Cristabel to translate for a wide-eyed farmer. Where are the Germans based near here? How many are there?

Local people come to their front doors to stare at the vehicle as it flies past, uncertain what it signifies. They know that the Allies have landed on the beaches of Normandy, but they also know that the fighting has been fierce and the battle for France is not yet won.

The Americans drive through sleepy shuttered villages, with cobbled squares and dribbling fountains. Past sun-warmed stone walls and patchwork fields. Wide European skies. They even hurtle through a small town Cristabel once visited with Mlle Aubert, Flossie and Digby, a lifetime ago. They were lost, looking for a guest house. There was a bar where they asked for directions. A noisy ceiling fan. Mlle Aubert’s yawning boredom.

‘We might have another job for you,’ says the lieutenant, after a while. ‘Could you get into Paris?’

‘Yes,’ Cristabel says quickly.

‘We’re keen to know more about the strength of German forces in the city. We can’t get close to it, and we have to head back to Saint-Lô tonight, but if you could –’

‘Yes,’ she says again. ‘Tell me what you need. How to contact you.’

Édouard insists he will drive her as far as he can, using his doctor’s pass. There are hardly any trains running. Most of the railway network has been put out of action, either by Allied bombing or Resistance sabotage, and as Édouard and Cristabel head towards the capital, they see British bombers flying overhead, dark lines of crosses in the evening sky. German military vehicles, covered in tree branches, sometimes race past in the opposite direction. Cristabel has her handkerchief ready to cough blood, but Édouard’s Fiat seems of little interest to them now.

They are stopped only once, a few miles outside Paris, at a roadblock, where a single Wehrmacht soldier checks Édouard’s pass, then nods them through.

‘He looked barely older than sixteen, did you notice?’ says Édouard, as they drive on. ‘What a place for a boy to find himself.’

‘They must be running out of men,’ Cristabel replies, checking she has all she needs in her rucksack: papers, money, cigarettes, knife and Édouard’s copy of *Madame Bovary*, which he has insisted she take.

Édouard pulls into a side street to drop her off. He leans over from the driving seat to kiss her on each cheek multiple times, and to give her a bag of turnips, telling her she should say she has been to visit friends in the country to get food.

‘I must go,’ she says. ‘I don’t want to be caught out after curfew.’

‘Please be careful,’ he says.

‘I will come back,’ she replies. ‘I promise. Thank you for everything.’

He hugs her tightly and she hears him say, ‘Dear child,’ almost to himself, then he pulls away and nods. ‘Go. Go, quickly. We will see you again.’

The Americans have given her a contact – an agent called Jules, someone they say is one of their most reliable operators in Paris – and a restaurant where the contact can be found. Cristabel finds a cheap hotel to stay in overnight. Even as an undercover agent in a grotty hotel in the middle of a war, it is exciting to visit Paris for the first time. She leans out of the window, listens to the city. Somewhere out there is Digby.

The following day, she pins a carnation to her blouse, as requested, and heads to the restaurant to find Jules. It is not the backstreet bistro she expected, but an expensive establishment on the wide avenue of the Champs-Élysées, where

the outside tables are occupied by long-booted Nazi officers enjoying the sunshine. It is strange to see them so relaxed knowing that only a few hundred miles away, battle is being waged.

She goes in under the pretext of asking a waiter for directions, scans the clientele but sees nobody likely, and is about to leave when a hand reaches out from a nearby table and grabs her wrist.

‘Didn’t you see the newspaper?’ says a woman in slow, regal French. ‘I spread it out on the table most carefully.’

Cristabel turns to find the newspaper she had been told to look for, open on a table in front of an individual she had glanced at and then discounted, a rather grand woman in her fifties, in a fashionably striped skirt in grey and black with a matching jacket buttoned over a formidable bosom, and silver hair neatly set beneath a smart feathered hat. She has a broad-featured face and around her neck hangs a conglomeration of items: a cluster of beads, a pince-nez on a silver chain, and a silk scarf pinned with a horse-shaped brooch. On her strong hands are jewelled rings in dark colours: rubies, garnets. A fur stole hangs from the back of her chair and a crocodile handbag containing a small dog sits at her feet.

‘I’m glad you’re here,’ says the woman, getting out of her seat. ‘I’m quite desperate to leave. They’ve brought in a new chef, and it’s been a disaster.’ She picks up the stole and the handbag, pulls out a substantial bundle of banknotes from under the dog, and places the money on the table. As they head towards the street together, she pauses and takes Cristabel by the arm. ‘But we must be glad to see each other.’ She kisses her on each cheek, once, twice, three times. ‘Now we go.’

Her name is Lieselotte de Brienne. She is, she tells Cristabel as they walk along the sandy, tree-lined paths of the Jardins des Champs-Élysées, half German and half American – ‘a complicated mixture’ – but has lived most of her life in France, having married a wealthy French industrialist, who is currently at their summer home near Avignon. ‘He has never loved Paris as I do,’ she says. Before the war, she hosted regular salons in her Paris apartment – gatherings of writers, artists, politicians – and has continued to do so throughout the Occupation, which is what brought her to the attention of the American secret services, who suggested she might invite some high-ranking Nazi officials, keen to mingle with French intellectuals.

‘I’m just French enough to flatter their egos,’ she says of her German visitors, ‘just German enough to remind them of their mothers, and just American enough to make them think I’m a little foolish. That’s the main thing, you understand. They think I’m only interested in caviar and gossip, so they say things they shouldn’t in front of me. Or if not me, the sweet girl I bring in to top up their glasses. But I’ve talked about myself for long enough. What do you do?’

‘I work for a British organization –’ Cristabel begins.

‘Not that. What do you actually do? Outside of all this,’ says Lieselotte, extracting her dog from her bag to put it on the path, where it trots beside her.

‘I’m not supposed to –’

‘If you never relax your security precautions, I’m afraid our conversations will be very dull.’

‘That’s precisely the point of the precautions.’

‘Tell me as much as you are able, and we will do what we can,’ says Lieselotte, as they come to a halt in front of a decorative fountain that has stopped running, standing dry-throated in its empty stone bowl.

Cristabel pauses. ‘I have a theatre.’

‘A theatre? That’s wonderful.’

‘It’s not. It could be. But it’s not.’

‘What do you put on there? What are your themes?’

‘We did Shakespeare. I wouldn’t say I had themes, although we once tried to introduce elements inspired by the war in Spain. One of my actors was keen on the idea. But, looking back, I think it was heavy-handed.’

‘I am never convinced by political theatre. I do not like to be hectored,’ says Lieselotte. ‘Do you direct?’

‘I do.’

‘Well, that is perfect. An aspiring theatre director is exactly the kind of person I would take out for lunch. I was struggling to think of a reason why I would meet a consumptive art student or whatever they said you were pretending to be. Have you seen the new production of *Antigone*? At Théâtre de l’Atelier.’

Cristabel laughs. ‘I haven’t been to the theatre in a long time.’

‘Then we will go. Everybody is talking about it.’

‘I’m here to find out about German military readiness, not go to the theatre.’

‘One does not preclude the other. Do we let them take all our pleasures? I think not,’ says Lieselotte. She leans down to retrieve her dog and pop it back in her bag. ‘We will try our luck at Lucas Carton. They can usually find me a table.’

She guides Cristabel out of the park and around the Place de la Concorde, an open square with a giant obelisk at its centre. Large black and red flags of the swastika hang on the imposing buildings overlooking the square and, at its corner, there is a road sign giving directions in German in an angular font, pointing out places for soldiers – *Soldatenkinos*, *Soldatenkaffee* – with a new one added at the bottom: *Zur Normandie Front*. The only vehicles that move through Paris are German: there is no petrol left for the French.

‘I wanted to ask you something,’ says Cristabel, as they walk to the restaurant. ‘Two of our people are being held in Fresnes. Code names Sidonie and Antoine. If you can find out anything about them, we would be very grateful.’

Lieselotte nods. 'Where are you staying?'

'I'm in a hotel on the Left Bank.'

'There is a restaurant on Boulevard Saint-Germain where we can leave messages with the sommelier. I will give you the details,' says Lieselotte.

As they arrive at the entrance to Lucas Carton, a handsome Wehrmacht officer is coming out, accompanied by a young woman in a silk dress and high heels. Seeing Lieselotte, he greets her with extravagant courtesy, swooping to kiss her hand.

Lieselotte says, in German, 'Dear Herr Schulte, I hope we will be seeing you on Thursday, as usual.'

'I would not miss it for the world,' he replies, then gestures towards Cristabel, saying, 'Will your friend be joining us?'

'I hope so,' says Lieselotte. 'Claudine is a theatre director. I have been telling her about Anouilh's new production of *Antigone*, she's yet to see it.'

'Then you must let me get you some tickets,' says the German eagerly. 'It is a fascinating play.'

'Ah, but Claudine is doubtful about the morality of attending the theatre in a time of war,' says Lieselotte, in a teasing tone. Cristabel notices that Lieselotte's German is faster and more familiar than her French.

The officer smiles at Cristabel and says in careful French, 'The Ancient Greeks believed it was a citizen's duty to attend the theatre. I agree. I will buy for you some tickets.'

'You are too kind,' says Lieselotte, and he bows, before leading his companion away.

'I cannot accept theatre tickets from him,' says Cristabel, as they enter the restaurant. The elegant interior is lined with Art Nouveau wood panelling and curved mirrors, reflecting fashionable French diners and uniformed Nazis, served by waiters in white jackets. The two women are shown to a table in the window.

'You can and you will,' says Lieselotte, settling her dog beneath the table. 'We should take everything we can from him. It's not his, after all, is it? Nothing they have is theirs. In the meantime, you must accept something from me. I would like to buy you some clothes and send you to my hairdresser. I don't think I will take no for an answer.'

Lieselotte orders a bottle of champagne, then looks out of the window, at the Parisian women going past on bicycles, in white-rimmed sunglasses and red lipstick, their hair worn high at the front or tucked beneath turbans in bright fabrics, pedalling in wedge-heeled shoes with their skirts blowing high up their legs, flying like flags down the Boulevard Malesherbes.

'Look at those magnificent girls,' says Lieselotte, 'such defiance.'

Over the next few weeks, Cristabel regularly sallies forth on her own bicycle – one she steals from outside a shop, leaving a note of apology and a roll of cash, the going rate for a bicycle in Occupied Paris being almost the price of a car – and makes her way through the city and its outskirts, to surreptitiously investigate the whereabouts of German troops.

She locates the buildings where German units are based and ventures into nearby cafés and bars, tentatively seeking contacts who might tell her more about the strength of the forces. Any useful information she uncovers, she gives to Lieselotte to pass to the Americans.

Cristabel becomes practised in the art of asking neutral questions that might lead her to someone willing to talk. She finds that being seen to drink alcohol helps, so she can give the impression of being someone who has forgotten the need for caution. A gossipy drunk woman is irritating, but not suspicious, and there are plenty who are drinking their way through the war. A cheap brandy on an empty stomach rather takes the edge off it all too. Even Uncle Willoughby, who made war sound like the greatest adventure, was rarely without a drink in his hand, and now she sees why.

Her previous missions in France mean she is accustomed to the agent's heightened state of self-awareness, but now she feels doubly layered. For there is the work she is doing for the Americans and there is another part of her constantly scanning the city for Digby. It is not counter to her mission, but it is not her mission, and it gives her a slightly scrambled feeling, as if she were a radio switching between stations. She sets herself a limit of two drinks a day, determined to remain focused; she can play-act the rest.

Her dirty rucksack has been replaced by a smart satchel, and she wears an outfit provided by Lieselotte, a blue-and-white checked summer dress, and Oxford brogues with wooden soles, which she wears, like the Parisian women, with ankle socks. She has a matching scarf tied in her neatly trimmed, newly brunette hair and a pair of sunglasses, for it is hot and golden in Paris in July. The locals are lining the banks of the Seine, descending the stone steps that lead down from the city to the river, where they lie on the sun-warmed embankments beneath the rows of tall trees.

Time seems to be suspended in Paris; the population exists in a state of limbo. News of the Allies' advance is hard to come by, for neither the BBC nor the Germans will give details, and there are so many power cuts, it is hard to find a working radio. Sometimes, dark smoke blows all the way from Normandy, to float across the city, concealing the sun above the sunbathers like a huge, visible premonition, but of what, they are unsure.

The city is a stopped clock, a watched pot. There are queues outside the shops, lines of women leaning against walls, fanning themselves in the heat.

Food, always in short supply, is now hardly supplied at all, and signs appear in shop windows listing all the things they no longer have in stock. There is a proliferation of signs and posters. Announcements about curfews, announcements about death sentences, and the garish *Affiche Rouge* – red posters with images of captured *résistants*. The Parisians stand and look and talk in low voices. Cristabel pushes her bike past, scanning the mugshots, their bruised, staring faces.

There are rumours the Nazis have concealed dynamite beneath every bridge in Paris; there are rumours that someone tried to blow up Hitler himself. Guards appear at the doorways of hotels frequented by Germans. Streets are cordoned off by military vehicles. There are sporadic displays – the French march on Bastille Day for the first time in years, the Germans parade their troops down the main avenues – but nothing amounts to much.

Mostly, it is quiet. So quiet that when a German tank clanks through the city, it can be heard from several streets away. A mechanical monster, turning its turret with impassive slowness, pointing its gun at different buildings in turn: at a bank and a department store and a second-floor apartment, where they have chickens on the balcony. Like a child saying: *I'm going to get you, and you, and you.*

Cristabel cycles past as it sits in the middle of a tree-lined boulevard, an impassive metal monument. Restaurant owners come to their doors to look at it, then go back inside to wipe tables. She pedals onward, heading south, to the edge of the city. She keeps going until she finds a spot where she can see the massive Fresnes Prison in the distance: a grim row of stone detention blocks lined up behind a perimeter wall, overseen by a watchtower.

She can make out the lines of barred windows and imagines those inside. Young rebels like Édouard and Wanda's son. Captured agents like Antoine and Sophie. A prison full of the brave. She wonders what the Germans will do with them when the Allies arrive. It's me, she thinks. I'm here. Then she turns tail and heads back to Paris.

An Apartment in Paris

July, 1944

One thundery, humid day, Cristabel cycles to the north of Paris, to have a look at the Clignancourt Barracks, rumoured to house French volunteers in the SS. Though unable to get close to the barracks themselves, she sits in a nearby café for the morning and takes note of the type of military vehicles driving in and out, while eavesdropping on an interesting conversation about troop morale.

Afterwards, she cycles back through the city, taking a circuitous route to avoid the road closures. She stops briefly at a kiosk to buy a newspaper, and the newspaper seller says with a grin, 'Have you heard – the Allies have liberated Saint-Lô.'

The excitement of this news gives her renewed speed, and she is soon flying down towards the Seine when she notices a street sign – Rue des Rosiers – and comes to a halt. Rue des Rosiers was where Mlle Aubert's mother lived, above a shop. Where she had taken in sewing and hoped her family would one day be restored. It comes back to her in a rush. Chilcombe's stuffy attic schoolroom. Mlle Aubert's bitterness at her family's fall from grace.

Cristabel walks with her bicycle into the narrow, cobbled passage, peering along it. The buildings lean close together, they look older than other Parisian buildings. Some are boarded up or have broken windows. She sees scrawled graffiti, the word *Juif* painted on a front door. An old woman wrapped in a shawl sits on a doorstep. Cristabel offers her a cigarette and quietly asks if she knows a Mme Aubert who once lived in this street.

The old woman laughs, and her laughter sets off a cascade of throaty coughing. Eventually she says, 'She doesn't live here any more. She's gone up in the world. With her new friends.'

'Do you know where I could find her?' asks Cristabel.

'Why would you want to find her? We will find her, when this is done. You can tell her that.'

'I will tell her, if you tell me where she is.'

The old woman says nothing. Cristabel turns, as if to walk away, and the woman says, 'For the cigarettes.'

Cristabel hands over her cigarettes, and the woman says, 'Rue Beaujon. Near the Arc de Triomphe. Look for the best-fed concierge in the street. She's plump as a goose ready for pâté de foie gras.'

Cristabel is aware that it is not entirely advisable to try to find Mme Aubert, someone with a faint connection to her true identity, but she is curious, not least

because she thinks there is a chance that Digby might also have been curious, had he ever seen the sign for the Rue des Rosiers.

Besides, it is a very faint connection, and the Allies might be here by next week. She feels the wind is behind her, and she feels this again when Mme Aubert proves extremely easy to find. She is standing in the street outside her *loge*, shooing away two jeering boys. She is a fleshy, sixty-something version of her daughter, with the same dark moles and unsmiling face, wearing a black dress, her grey hair knotted in a bun.

Cristabel shakes her head sympathetically. 'Typical children.'

'They show me no respect,' says Mme Aubert.

Cristabel looks along the street: a row of vanilla-coloured apartment blocks in the chic 8th arrondissement, an area she usually avoids due to its popularity with the Germans. The Gestapo have their headquarters not far away, in leafy Avenue Foch. Madame Aubert has done well for herself, and there are only a few who do well in wartime. She thinks of the threat made by the old woman in the Rue des Rosiers, her mention of 'new friends', and decides to take a chance. 'I don't suppose you are Madame Aubert?'

'Who wants to know?'

'My name is Claudine Beauchamp. I was given your name by my friend, Herr Schulte.'

At this, Mme Aubert guides Claudine towards the *loge*, saying, 'Herr Schulte? I'm not sure I recall a Herr Schulte.'

'He speaks very highly of you.'

'Won't you come in, Mademoiselle Beauchamp? You can leave your bicycle by the stairs.' Mme Aubert ushers her into her rooms, which are shielded from the street by net curtains. Along one wall is a set of cubbyholes for sorting post and a cork board on which to hang room keys. There is a desk covered with papers and a visitors' book. Through an alcove, there is a dining table covered with an old-fashioned tablecloth, and a large dresser holding a mass of crockery, in different shapes and styles. 'My family china,' says Mme Aubert, seeing Cristabel looking at it.

'Beautiful.'

They exchange further pleasantries, then Mme Aubert disappears into an adjoining kitchenette to make coffee. Cristabel quickly flicks through the visitors' book, wondering what name Digby might have used, and what he might have said, if he had been standing in this room. After a moment, she says, 'I was told you might be able to help find me accommodation, Madame Aubert.'

'I might,' replies Mme Aubert, from the kitchenette.

'I hear you're very discreet,' says Cristabel, scanning the pictures on the walls: family photographs, images of saints, and a framed portrait of Marshal

Pétain.

Mme Aubert returns with rose-patterned china cups on a silver tray. Cristabel gestures at one of the photographs on the wall, which she is sure shows a surly Mlle Aubert. 'Who is this charming girl? She looks rather like you.'

'My Ernestine. She's a governess. Employed by many fine families. I only wish she was closer.'

'She doesn't live in Paris?'

Mme Aubert shakes her head. 'She's in Switzerland. Before that, England.'

'You must be very proud.' Cristabel sips her drink. 'My, this tastes like real coffee. That's hard to find these days.'

Mme Aubert smiles a little shyly.

Cristabel smiles back. 'We all need our indulgences. Whereabouts in England did your daughter work? I visited England before the war. I wouldn't go there now. They say it's unrecognizable.'

'I am unsure where, but it was with a distinguished family, like my own. This —' she gestures at the surrounding rooms — 'is a temporary measure, you understand.'

'These are difficult times,' says Cristabel sympathetically. 'They say the English are being overrun in their own country. Swamped by the most undesirable elements.'

Mme Aubert shakes her head. 'Terrible.'

'If it carries on, there won't be anything left of decent society.' With a glance at Pétain, Cristabel adds, 'Thank heavens there are still those who take a stand.'

'Without him, we would be lost, and goodness knows, France has suffered enough,' says Mme Aubert, then looks at the clock on the wall. 'With regard to your accommodation, Mademoiselle Beauchamp, I look after another property on this road. Number twenty. There is an apartment on the third floor that has recently become vacant. Perhaps you would like to have a look?'

'Please, if I may.'

'I'll give you the key as I have to get to the butcher before he closes, but we could meet back here once you've looked round.' Mme Aubert stands to hook a key off the board, then hands it to Cristabel.

'Perfect,' says Cristabel, getting to her feet. 'How fortunate you have somewhere available.'

'The family who were there. They should never have been allowed in. It's their kind that have caused all this.'

'Perhaps it's for the best that they went.'

'If they hadn't done anything wrong, they wouldn't have been hiding,' says Mme Aubert, picking up a shopping basket. 'I used to see them. Coming and going at all hours.'

‘How suspicious.’

‘You couldn’t trust them.’ Mme Aubert pauses on her way to the door and adds, ‘It’s curious we should talk about the English. One of the family my daughter worked with also stayed in number twenty, up on the fourth floor. He had lovely manners. You could tell he was well bred.’

‘Did he?’ says Cristabel, her throat suddenly dry.

‘He said I kept it so beautifully, it reminded him of home, which he told me was one of the most historic houses in England.’

Cristabel smiles, despite herself. Digby had lied to this woman just as much as she has. He didn’t care at all about his home or its history. How funny it should only occur to her now.

‘Is that apartment still available?’ she says.

‘I’m afraid not,’ says Mme Aubert, heading out into the street.

‘What was an Englishman doing in Paris at this time?’ says Cristabel, as casually as she can.

Mme Aubert looks at her. ‘I wouldn’t know.’

Cristabel leans towards her in a conspiratorial manner. ‘You know, I’ve heard a lot of the English can’t stand Churchill. It wouldn’t surprise me if some decided they might be better off on the other side.’

Mme Aubert smiles. She leads Cristabel down the road to number 20, then continues on her way.

Cristabel makes her way into the building, which is a typical Parisian apartment block, with a dark wooden staircase winding up to each landing. She climbs the stairs, with the key to the third-floor apartment in her hand, but doesn’t stop on the third floor. Instead, she tiptoes to the fourth, and stands outside the door of the apartment for a few moments, for no reason she can explain. She touches her fingertips lightly on the door, and is almost tempted to try the key in the lock, but shakes her head, and makes her way back down to the third-floor landing, where she is met by a uniformed SS officer coming up the staircase who says, ‘Claudine Beauchamp?’

She pauses, just for a second, then says, ‘Yes.’

The officer is out of breath, but he smiles and says in French, ‘Good. Madame Aubert told me you were here with the key. I have also come to see the apartment.’

She holds out the key towards him, but he shakes his head, saying, ‘No, please. You first. You are the prospective tenant. I am only here to look at some of the items inside.’ He gestures towards the door, which she unlocks, and he follows her in.

The apartment is full of light. It has windows stretching floor to ceiling that overlook the street, and sunshine streams in on to the polished herringbone floor.

The furniture is upholstered in pale yellow, and the high ceilings are white, with gilded decorative corners. On the walls are modern paintings and mirrors that send sunlight dancing around the room.

‘Ah, Madame Aubert has cleaned it up well,’ says the officer. He has taken off his hat and is fanning himself with it. He is a heavy-set man in his forties, with a wide leather belt stretching around his grey tunic, and a ruddy face. ‘You will be lucky to live here.’

‘I’m only looking,’ Cristabel says, walking away from him as if to examine the view from the windows.

‘It has always been my dream to have an apartment in Paris,’ he says, putting his hat on a chair, then crossing the room to examine a painting on the wall. ‘A foolish dream perhaps.’ He moves to a second painting, looks at it closely, then takes it off the wall to set it on a coffee table.

‘Yes,’ says Cristabel, walking rapidly into the adjoining dining room, feeling the rapping of her wooden-soled shoes on the floor as small shocks running up her legs.

‘I had even started looking around. To see if there was something I could buy.’ She hears him laughing to himself.

Cristabel circles the dining table, then returns to the main living room, where the SS officer is examining a marble paperweight. He has gathered a selection of items on the coffee table. A few paintings, some porcelain figurines. He looks up as she comes in. ‘I do envy you. With the way things are going, you will be in Paris far longer than I.’

She nods and heads to the other end of the apartment, where she quickly circuits the bathroom and the main bedroom, then goes into a smaller bedroom, which has two twin beds. It must have been a room for children, she thinks, as there is a series of pencil lines on the door frame, marking how they have grown.

She heads past the officer again, who is looking at another painting, and goes into the kitchen, which is at the back of the building. She is mechanically opening cupboards, when something catches her eye: a set of plates with the same rose pattern that had adorned Mme Aubert’s coffee cups.

She returns to the living room and says, ‘I must be leaving. Not long till curfew.’

He looks up from the painting. ‘Somebody here had very good taste.’

The sunlight coming through the windows picks out something glinting on the floor under the coffee table, and Cristabel reaches down to pick it up. She finds a child’s pair of glasses, one lens smashed. The officer watches as she puts the glasses on the coffee table by the paintings, the figurines, the paperweight.

‘What do you think of the apartment?’ he says, putting the painting with the others. He has a pistol, she notices, in a holster at his side.

‘It’s not quite what I’m looking for,’ she says.

‘Where do you live now?’

‘On the Left Bank.’

‘With family?’

‘On my own.’

‘What do you do?’

‘I’m a student.’

‘A student in new clothes who can afford an apartment like this,’ he says, and she feels she has taken a wrong turn.

‘My family have some money, inherited money,’ she says, and begins to move towards the door.

He holds up a hand. ‘When I arrived, you were coming down from the fourth floor. Why was that?’

‘I’d gone to the wrong floor.’

‘But the key to this apartment is carefully labelled.’

‘I was muddled. I didn’t sleep well last night.’

‘May I see your papers?’ he says.

She finds them in her satchel and hands them to him. He examines them carefully.

‘May I see what else is in your bag?’ he says, and she has the sense of a dead end.

‘Just a book and a few things,’ she says, knowing that in her bag is the notebook where she has written the details of the vehicles at the Clignancourt Barracks. It also contains the address of the restaurant where she can leave messages for Lieselotte.

‘Could you take out those things for me and put them on the table so I can see them.’ His voice is subdued, almost weary, as if he has said this many times.

Cristabel’s brain is whirring like a coding machine, frantically trying out possibilities: he could look at the notebook, realize what the notes are and arrest her; he could look at the notebook, not understand what the notes are and release her – but what SS officer would see notes he didn’t understand and assume they are innocent? Plus: the restaurant address could lead him to Lieselotte. Plus: he knows her cover name. Every way she spins it, there is no way past this moment. Even the way she is pausing now, delaying carrying out his request, is whittling down the possibility of her leaving the apartment safely. Every second of inaction is incriminating.

‘Empty the bag,’ he says.

‘Of course,’ she says. The coding machine clicks into place. There is no way past this. Even if she knocked him out, he would still wake up and know what she looks like.

She tries to take herself back to Scotland, to the training room with the straw dummy and the lessons about the target's body. But the room she is in seems full of her breathing, full of his. She can remember every step of the exercise about how to surprise a sentry from behind and cut his throat, but he is not a sentry facing away from her, and her knife is in her waistband not in her hand. It is obscene to think of combat in this sun-filled room, to consider attacking someone standing in front of her, so close she can hear the neat tick of his wristwatch, but she is thinking too much and a voice in her head says: *This is your job.*

She fumbles with her bag, drops it to the floor and bends to pick it up. He does too, and she comes up sharply beneath him, sending a hand palm first into his jaw, knocking him off balance. She grabs the marble paperweight from the coffee table, and, grimacing at the thought of the impact even as she does it, sends it crunching into his nose, his mouth. He spins, spitting blood, but shouts, lashes out, catching her with a thudding blow to the head.

She staggers back and sees him swearing at her through his blood-filled mouth. She cannot have him look at her. She pushes the coffee table at him, and he falls on to his back, pulling his gun from its holster. She scrabbles over the table towards him, stamps on his hand with her wooden heel, kicks the gun spinning away across the polished floor beneath an armchair.

He scrambles after it on all fours and she goes after him. He swipes out furiously with a fist, hitting her hard across the chest, knocking her sideways into a bookcase, sending a landslide of books thudding on to the floor. He reaches the armchair before she does, and is groping underneath it, but she has pulled her knife from her waistband, and is clambering on to his back. Her hands are sweating, and she muffs her first attempt, the blade catching uselessly in the thick fabric of his uniform.

He rears up, trying to shake her off, shouting a coarse stream of spittle-thick invective, and this fires within her a sudden fury and she thrusts the long knife as high and hard as she can into his upper ribs, locking her left arm around his throat to pull him back on to it, as she has been taught. He makes a high, horrible noise like an animal, then collapses on to his stomach, writhing beneath her, his arm still reaching beneath the armchair, fingernails scraping towards the gun. She is wrapped around him, the knife held between their bodies, so they are pinioned together.

She hears him say, in choking, gargled German: *Please.* She hears her own muffled English: *Don't.* She yanks her arm tighter around his neck, drives the knife deeper. He bucks and rolls until they topple over, stuck together, interlocked like dogs, and she lies beneath him, holding him fast against her, her eyes open to the gilded ceiling, hearing the breath rattling in his throat, the wordless, tongueless sounds he makes that are like *mummmumumumu*, aware of the warm

urine seeping through his uniform, the sharp stink of her own sweat, for all the long minutes that it takes for his mouth to stop moving, his body to stop convulsing, his weight to become deadweight, and his head to loll against hers like a baby.

Now there is only her own ragged breath in the quiet apartment, and the sound of it is unbearable. She desperately heaves him off her. Shifts herself away. Gets quickly to her feet and goes to the kitchen, shaking and unsteady. The sour taste of bile rises in her throat, and she swallows it back down, spits into the sink. She is emptied out. The violent rage that inhabited her has slunk away, leaving only shuddering disgust.

She wants, more than anything, to leave the apartment, but she must do something with the body. The machine in her brain is still working, slowly. She looks out of the kitchen window into the courtyard below: a steep-sided crevasse made of the back walls of different buildings, an undecorated space, with a collection of bins and piles of rubbish at its base.

She returns to the officer, who is slumped on his side, the brass handle of the knife protruding from his back, as if he were a wind-up toy. She feels a shudder of horror. She thinks of the ex-policeman in Scotland, who spoke of using the knife in such practical terms, as if it were like hunting: something necessary a man did then put behind him. How can she put this behind her? It lies in front of her: drooling and lifeless. Evidence of her ability to kill.

But Mme Aubert will soon be returning. Cristabel must be as methodical as a hunter. She goes into the bathroom, finds a towel and takes it to the German to put underneath him. Moving his body, feeling his soft weight, makes her retch. She coughs, shakes her head.

Once the towel is in place, she pulls out her knife, which exits the body with a slow suction, followed by a trailing string of blood. The wound seeps a little, staining the man's gabardine tunic, but does not bleed as much as she feared. She takes a deep breath, then yanks his boots off, one by one, using her foot against his leg as leverage, to stop him sliding across the floor. She unbuttons his sodden breeches and pulls them off. His pale flesh is still warm. He has hairy calves, a scar on his knee, a hole in one sock.

She works fast now, unbuckling his leather belt, pulling off his tunic, shirt, socks. Wristwatch. Wedding ring. She manoeuvres him about like a floppy dressmaker's dummy – a clammy, damp dummy – until he is left in only his underwear. She pauses for a moment, then pulls them off as briskly as a nanny pulling swimming trunks from a wet child on a cold beach, looking away at the windows.

Then she drags him into the kitchen, her hands under his armpits, his bare heels squeaking against the floor. It is an arduous task, he is almost too heavy to

move, and she kicks at the furniture in frustration, wiping the sweat from her eyes.

Once into the kitchen, she opens the window as wide as she can, and heaves him towards it. The only way she can think of to get him over the window ledge, is to position herself beneath him and topple him over, so she wedges him against the wall, then crawls under his body, to raise him up on her shoulders in a cumbersome fireman's lift, groaning with effort, her hands pushing deep into his fleshy stomach, forcing his body through the gap, his wobbly head knocking against the frame, until he finally tips and goes, plummeting into the pile of rubbish with a clattering bang. She watches him fall. A naked corpse found by some bins might buy her a little more time than an SS officer discovered stabbed in a luxury apartment.

It is then that she notices a young girl standing in the window of a building opposite, her hands pressed to the glass, staring. They look at each other. Cristabel puts an unsteady finger to her lips.

She pushes herself on. Makes herself go back into the living room, where she repositions the furniture, rehanges the paintings. The German's wet uniform is still lying on the floor. After a quick search, she finds a neatly packed suitcase under the main bed. She empties its contents into a bedside drawer, then fills it with the officer's clothes and boots. She adds his gun and the bloodstained paperweight. Then she returns to the living room and uses the towel to mop the floor, before squashing that too into the suitcase. Before she leaves, she goes back into the kitchen and glances at the window opposite, but the girl has gone.

In the street outside, the evening light is radiant, and screaming swifts are darting between the buildings. She walks back to Mme Aubert's, lugging the heavy suitcase with her, and posts the key to the apartment through the letter box. She retrieves her bike and pedals away, wobbling slightly, the suitcase balanced precariously on her handlebars, wearing a jacket she found in a wardrobe buttoned tightly over her bloodstained dress.

Antigone

July, 1944

The following morning, she meets Lieselotte in a quiet café near the Jardin du Luxembourg to tell her she needs a new name, new papers, new clothes and a new address. Claudine Beauchamp is done. She has been compromised.

‘Anything else?’ asks Lieselotte, taking a bite of croissant, then grimacing. ‘I’m not sure what they have made this with, but it is not flour.’

‘I have a suitcase I need to get rid of,’ says Cristabel, ordering a brandy. They are seated outside at a round marble-topped table, side by side on rattan chairs, looking out at the street. Cristabel is wearing sunglasses. There is a large bruise on her temple she has attempted to cover with make-up.

‘A new identity, a suitcase you need to get rid of and a breakfast brandy. You have been busy,’ says Lieselotte.

‘I have been foolish. I took unnecessary risks.’

‘I am sure your information about the barracks will be useful,’ says Lieselotte. ‘I will pass it on as quickly as I can.’

‘Worth a life, do you think?’

Lieselotte breaks a piece from her croissant and gives it to her dog under the table. She is in green and white today, with elaborate earrings made from twisted silver, and a pillbox hat with green netting. She says, ‘I can find you clothes and a place to stay, but papers will take longer. My contacts are all printing leaflets for the Resistance.’ She looks at Cristabel, who is stony-faced, and adds, ‘Last Bastille Day, the Resistance released leaflets in every theatre in Paris, all at the same time. It was beautiful. An act of theatre in itself.’

Cristabel says nothing. They sit in silence for a while, watching people go by. A group of children running into the gardens. A man carrying a laughing woman on the crossbar of his bike. A horse-drawn milk cart.

Lieselotte says, ‘Claudine Beauchamp will have one more outing. She has a ticket for *Antigone* tonight. As do I. Arranged by Herr Schulte. To be left at the theatre door in our names.’

Cristabel shakes her head. ‘I don’t want to go to the theatre.’

Lieselotte signals the waiter for the bill. ‘Well, I don’t want to go alone. Be ready at six. I’ll have some clothes sent round.’ She picks up her handbag, turns to Cristabel. ‘Did you expect this to be fair?’

There are no taxis left in Paris so Claudine Beauchamp and Lieselotte de Brienne travel to the theatre in one of the ‘vélo-taxis’ that have taken their place: wheeled carriages like rickshaws, just big enough for two, pulled along by a man or woman on a bicycle. Some have roofs to protect passengers from the weather,

and some are powered by two people pedalling a tandem, but theirs is open to the summer sky and pulled by one man in a beret and shirtsleeves, baggy trousers tucked into his socks, who takes them rattling along the streets at a lively pace, thin wheels bouncing on the cobbles.

It is peculiar to travel so fast while being so low to the ground they could reach out and touch the knees of pedestrians. It is equally curious to travel in a contraption pulled by a human not an animal, but their cyclist is whistling, the breeze is refreshing, and Paris is lovely even from a low angle. They trundle along at kerbstone height, looking out at the table legs and chair legs of the café terraces, the crossed legs of customers, the suited legs, the fishnet legs, the intertwined legs, and the stray cats that wind among them.

The streets may be empty of traffic, the restaurants not as busy as usual, and the cinemas shut, but many Parisians who would normally depart for the coast in the summer remain in the city. Even if there is no food, there is usually some company and an ersatz beer to be found, and it is Saturday, the Allies are in Normandy, the Russians are taking the fight on to German soil, and the theatres are still open.

‘Tell me about your theatre,’ says Lieselotte, as they head northwards. ‘Do you have a resident company?’ Lieselotte is in a burgundy taffeta evening gown with matching cape, an avalanche of pearls around her neck, and holding a gold clutch bag too small to contain her dog, which has been left with the maître d’ at Lucas Carton.

Cristabel, a pillar of black satin, shakes her head. ‘Nothing like that. We had volunteers. People borrowed from the local amateur dramatic society. We’re based out in the countryside, so somewhat limited.’

‘Do you not have signs?’ says Lieselotte, as their carriage rattles across the stately Boulevard Haussmann, where mannequins pose in the windows of grand department stores.

‘Signs?’

‘Signs, like a circus. To tell people you are there,’ says Lieselotte, gesturing at one of the large swastikas hanging from a nearby building.

‘No.’

‘Do you have visiting companies?’

Cristabel shakes her head again, rummaging in her borrowed evening bag for cigarettes. ‘It was only me, and some friends, and anyone I could force to do my bidding.’

Lieselotte frowns. ‘Force? Why did you force them? Did they not want to do it?’

‘Not like I did.’

‘Then why use them? You must find those who care about it as much as you do.’

‘Easier said than done.’

‘Most things are. Do you care about it?’

‘Of course.’

‘You don’t have to care about it,’ says Lieselotte, ‘but if you don’t care about it, you should find what you do care about. This is the rule I have for my salons also. I do not care what your interests are – tennis or architecture or playing the bassoon – as long as you have one.’

‘I do care about it,’ says Cristabel.

‘Forgive me, but from what I have heard, you are a theatre director who prefers to be called a student, who uses half-hearted amateurs as actors, who is disenchanted by her own productions, but does not invite other companies to visit, and will not put up a sign.’

‘That’s a little unfair,’ says Cristabel.

‘It is not. Do you want to create? To make something?’

‘Of course.’

‘Of course is not yes.’ Lieselotte looks at Cristabel: her pale face, her bruised forehead. Cristabel looks away, lights a cigarette.

Their cyclist is working hard now, pulling them up the slope of the city through Pigalle, neighbourhood of artists’ studios and after-dark entertainment, where German soldiers are lining up outside the cabarets.

After a while, Lieselotte says, ‘In this city, it is impossible to make theatre. No power. No lights. No money. Every script must be approved by the Germans, the *Propagandastaffel*, so the writers must squeeze themselves into ridiculous shapes to have their work accepted. If they get their plays on to the stage, they will be berated by those who say it is treason to put on plays and they will be reviewed by those who want only to score political points. It is impossible. Yet look where we are.’

They have arrived in Montmartre, the closely packed hill village at the top of Paris, where the Théâtre de l’Atelier sits by itself in a cobblestone square, overlooked by spindly linden trees, and flanked on either side by apartment buildings and restaurants. It is a small theatre, painted white, with three arched double doors on the ground floor and three arched windows on the first floor, where there is a balcony and a bar, and it is surrounded by people waiting to go in.

Their cyclist helps them out of the vélo-taxi, and nods at the crowd. ‘Busy tonight.’

Lieselotte replies, ‘They say it is busy every night. Have you been?’

‘In February,’ he says. ‘Nearly froze to death.’

‘It was cold in February,’ she says, pressing a large tip into his hands. ‘Thank you, monsieur.’

Lieselotte and Cristabel join the people heading into the theatre and collect their tickets at the box office. There is a sign in the foyer with directions to the nearest air raid shelter, and instructions that theatregoers should stay out of the circle in case of bombs, so they make their way through to the stalls.

Inside, the theatre is dark, curved, intimate. The red seats of the stalls are close to the stage, so there is little distance between performers and audience. There are no lights in the building, so theatre staff stand by with torches to guide people to their places. Lieselotte waves at several people she knows.

Cristabel spots Herr Schulte, and her stomach lurches queasily, remembering she gave his name to Mme Aubert, who may soon be passing on that information to those investigating the murder of an SS officer, along with a description of a tall woman who goes by the name Claudine. Herr Schulte waves cheerfully. He is at the front of the audience, in evening wear, with a few other men who look German. Lieselotte tells her that the theatre must set aside a certain number of seats for the Germans in every production.

The evening begins with a short piece called *À Quoi Rêvent les Jeunes Filles* by a nineteenth-century playwright, which is immediately interrupted by the wail of an air raid siren. The audience, unperturbed, pick up their things and walk back out into the square, continuing their conversations. The sky over the city is peach now, streaked with the long clouds of sunset, and sparrows are gathering in the trees. Cristabel notices that the audience is mixed: older people in formal outfits, alongside young people in shirts and skirts, a group of whom stand near her, sharing one cigarette between five.

When the all-clear is sounded, they file back in to watch the rest of the first play. The lack of stage lighting somehow has the effect of bringing the actors closer, as if the audience were watching a rehearsal rather than a performance. Then they wait for the curtain to rise on *Antigone*.

‘Do you know the story? It is a Greek tragedy,’ says Lieselotte, who has put on her pince-nez to squint at the programme.

‘I do,’ says Cristabel.

‘What is most intriguing about Anouilh’s version,’ says Lieselotte, ‘is that nobody can agree on it. All the critics adore it, but for different reasons. Some praise it for being a Vichy play or a fascist play, others for being a Resistance play, even an anarchist play.’

‘Anarchist?’

‘Yes. On the opening night, when the curtain fell, there was total silence. Nobody could believe that such a play would be passed by the censors. But that’s

the strangest thing, the Germans want to see it as much as the French. Everybody is convinced that it speaks to them.'

As Lieselotte says this, the curtain rises on a bare shadowy stage, which is lit only by a column of natural light falling through a skylight. The back wall of the set looks like draped curtains, and the actors sit on a row of steps beneath it. The women in black gowns, the men in white tie and tails, with a few in raincoats and homburg hats. They are playing cards, chatting, as if they had just stepped out of a party.

One of them, a man in glasses and a bow tie, strolls towards the edge of the stage. He smiles at the audience familiarly and says, '*Voilà*. The people gathered here are about to act the story of Antigone. The one who's playing the lead is that skinny girl sitting there. Staring in front of her. Thinking. She's thinking that soon she's going to be Antigone. That she'll suddenly stop being the thin dark girl whose family didn't take her seriously, and rise up alone against everyone. Against Creon, the king. She's thinking she's going to die ...' he pauses here and looks at the audience members closest to him '... although she's still young and, like everyone else, would have preferred to live.'

Cristabel leans forward.

The play moves swiftly. It begins with Antigone secretly trying to bury the body of her brother who has been killed in battle but denounced as a traitor. She is arrested by guards and taken to Creon. Creon tells her that nobody is above the law. He tells her that someone has to steer the ship. He says, 'The only things that have got a name now are the ship and the storm. Do you understand?'

Antigone says, 'I'm not here to understand. I'm here to say no to you, and to die.'

There is a ripple through the audience at this, a collective intake of breath, scattered claps.

Creon does not give up. He wants to save Antigone. He tells her it is easy to say no, that saying yes is the harder task, one that requires rolling up your sleeves and getting stuck in. There are nods in the audience at this, murmurs of agreement.

But the light falling through the skylight is fading, the darkness in the theatre is spreading on to the stage, and Antigone refuses to be saved. From there, the clockwork tragedy unfolds all by itself and death follows death follows death until the curtain falls.

There is a moment of silence, then the audience stands and applauds furiously, shouting *bravo, bravo*. Cristabel remains in her seat. Staring in front of her. Thinking.

She had followed Antigone closely throughout the play, sticking right on her heels – Antigone who gets up early to be the first one alive, Antigone who feels

the whole world is waiting and is annoyed that it does not seem to be waiting for her. Cristabel had followed her like someone who has spotted someone they think they know. But Anouilh's play led her first one way, then the other, and left her somewhere in the middle, believing that although Antigone was right, she was also foolish, and that although Creon was at fault, he was not altogether wrong.

She can see how Antigone's martyrdom must appeal to the young Parisians in the audience, but what freedom does Antigone have? Her sole self-directed act ends in her death, offstage. She defends her brother, then handily tidies herself away, hanging herself in her own dress. Just as in Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, the defiant sister who defends her brother is tidied away into an unlikely marriage at the end of the play. What if, wonders Cristabel, there was a version in which they stayed? Stayed alive. Stayed themselves.

Cristabel looks across at Lieselotte who, with the rest of the audience, is clapping the bowing actors they can now hardly see. She sees Lieselotte's proud profile in the half-light, the exuberant mass of pearls around her neck.

The cast leave the stage and the theatre staff with torches reappear. The audience moves towards the exits, hurrying to catch the last Métro before curfew. As Cristabel follows Lieselotte along the row of seats, she sees two stagehands darting on to the stage, to pick up the few props left behind: a wine bottle, some playing cards. The smaller of the two catches her eye, and then the curtain comes down.

Outside the theatre, one of the street lamps that stands in the square has flickered into life. It is covered with blue paper, giving off an eerie, maritime glow. None of the other lamps are working; there are only a few low candles in nearby restaurant windows, where waiters are sweeping up.

Lieselotte's vélo-taxi has returned to take her home. Cristabel says she will make her own way, and watches as Lieselotte disappears into the night in her human-powered chariot. Cristabel then circles the theatre, looking for the stage door. Once she finds it, she waits in the shadowy doorway of a building opposite, watching as the cast come out, exchanging kisses, waving goodbye, until she sees the smaller stagehand, in pulled-down hat and turned-up collar, come through the door and make his way along the cobbled street.

She follows at a careful distance as he walks swiftly up the steep paths of Montmartre, stopping only to tie his shoelace. He turns a corner, and she increases her pace, but when she gets there, he has vanished. She moves forward cautiously, looking around. She is up high now, the wind is blowing, and she can see the dark city spread out beneath her, the thin scaffold of the Eiffel Tower in the distance. Then she hears a footstep, and a voice behind her says, 'Did you think they taught me nothing, Crista?'

We

July, 1944

She is so furious with him she cannot let him go. She holds him tight against her and swears copiously in a ferocious mix of French and English. He hugs her back, laughing, and saying, 'I know, I know.'

She pushes him away from her. 'Where have you been? Digby, where have you been?'

'I'm Denis here,' he says in French, 'and we should get off the streets before we're arrested. This way – I have a place nearby.'

He leads her to a small bistro. There is a door at the side of the building, which Digby unlocks, looking both ways down the street before guiding her inside. She follows him up a staircase to a tiny apartment that sits above the restaurant. It is dark inside, all the curtains are drawn, but she sees the flickering light of a candle coming from one room, and a male voice says, 'Denis?'

'I have someone with me,' replies Digby. He glances at Cristabel, then leads her into the room, saying, 'Jean-Marc, this is Cristabel, my sister. Cristabel, this is Jean-Marc.'

She sees a young Frenchman in glasses, with brown curly hair, sitting in a shabby armchair, reading a newspaper by candlelight. He is in vest and trousers, with bare feet crossed in front of him. He stands as she enters, looks at Digby. 'Your sister?'

'I should have known she would track me down,' says Digby, smiling.

Jean-Marc hastily puts down the newspaper and holds out his hand. 'It is such an honour to meet you, Cristabel. I've heard so much about you.'

'I'm Claudine here,' she says, returning the handshake firmly. 'What have you heard?'

'Only good things,' he says. 'Can I get you a drink? I would offer coffee but there is so little gas, it takes an hour to boil the water.'

'I'll get the wine,' says Digby, heading to the kitchen. 'Crista, take a seat. My God, we have so much to talk about. I can't believe you're here.'

Jean-Marc gestures to the armchair next to him, and Cristabel sits down for a moment, only to discover that she is too keyed up to make polite conversation, so follows Digby into the kitchen, where she finds him pulling the cork from a wine bottle.

'It's just a vin de pays –' he begins.

'Where have you been?' she whispers. 'I've been worried sick.'

'Did someone send you to find me?' says Digby.

‘No, I spotted you because I happened to be in the audience while you were wandering about onstage.’

‘It’s my cover, I work there,’ he says.

Cristabel looks at him, trying to take in what she is seeing. He is Digby but he isn’t Digby. He looks entirely French. His dark hair is longer, worn slicked back like the young Parisians. He is wearing baggy trousers held up by a narrow leather belt, and a striped shirt open at the neck, with the sleeves rolled up. He hasn’t shaved for a few days, and is thin and tanned, but his brown eyes are very bright. She has the strangest urge to run her hands over his face, to check he is real.

‘You work for the Org,’ she says, ‘who are very keen to know where you are. I work for them too. I was in France last year, carrying out my own mission, and they called me back to question me about your whereabouts.’

‘Did they?’

‘I did not enjoy it.’

‘No, that can’t have been fun. Tell me everything you’ve been up to, Crista.’ Digby puts a hand on her arm, adding, ‘I’ve missed you so much. I like your dress.’

‘Never mind about my bloody dress. Why haven’t you contacted London?’

‘Are you cross with me?’

‘Nobody knows what the hell you’ve been doing, Digs. I thought you’d been captured by the Nazis. I nearly went out of my mind.’ Her voice seems very loud in the small kitchen.

He looks suddenly concerned. ‘I’m sorry. I didn’t think you would know anything about it. Does Father know? Or Floss?’

‘Just me.’

‘What did they tell you?’

‘That your circuit was blown but you were still at large. They suspected you were compromised.’

He shakes his head. ‘There’s far more to it than that. They used us shamefully.’

‘Who?’

‘London,’ he says. ‘Last year, they kept telling us the invasion was coming. We took huge risks to get everything ready. But it was a deception.’

‘A deception?’

‘A trick they were playing on the Germans, to distract them. To make them think it would happen in September. We’re convinced that’s what they were doing. Jean-Marc says they used us like bait.’ He turns to get wine glasses from a cupboard.

‘I’m sure they had their reasons,’ says Cristabel.

‘I’m sure they did too, and they would be the same reasons they have for all they do: their own interests.’

‘Agents in the field don’t get told everything.’

He turns to her fervently. ‘They lied to me, and I believed those lies, and I persuaded my friends to believe those lies, and they risked their lives on my behalf and most of them are now in prison or dead. Because they trusted me.’

She says nothing.

‘What would you do in that situation, Crista? Should I go back to London, to those liars behind desks who thought the lives of our allies were disposable, or should I stay here and fight the war I signed up for?’

When she still says nothing, he pours wine into the glasses, hands her one. He says, ‘If I could have contacted you, I would have. Let’s go into the other room.’

Jean-Marc half stands as they reappear. Cristabel returns to the spare armchair. Jean-Marc sits back down. Digby sits on the rug. There is a silence in the candlelit room, and in the city outside. Cristabel stares at the floor, considering what Digby has told her.

Jean-Marc turns to her. ‘How did you find Denis?’

‘I was at the theatre,’ she replies.

‘Did you come on your own?’ asks Digby.

‘I’m not going to go into the details,’ Cristabel says, shifting in her chair. There are bruises on her body, and she cannot find a comfortable position.

‘You can talk in front of Jean,’ says Digby. ‘There are no secrets here.’

‘There probably should be,’ she says, rubbing her eyes. She wishes she could talk to her brother without someone else there, and she wishes he would consider she might want to do that. She is immensely grateful to find he is still alive, almost dizzy with relief, but shaken by their sudden meeting, and confused by the situation she finds herself in. She feels the safest option is to stick to operational matters. She says, ‘Denis, did you stay at an apartment managed by Madame Aubert? Near the Arc de Triomphe.’

He laughs. ‘Oh, you found her too, did you? I tracked her down after our circuit collapsed. I was there till Jean-Marc found this place. Isn’t she dreadful? She’s on Jean-Marc’s list.’

‘List?’

‘We are compiling a list of known collaborators,’ says Jean-Marc, ‘for after the war.’

‘Something happened in that apartment block,’ says Cristabel, without looking at them. ‘An SS officer was killed. It would be prudent to assume that, even though the Germans are a little preoccupied, they will be seeking any

possible suspects. Particularly those who told Madame Aubert they were from an English family.'

'I knew that was a risk,' says Digby, pulling a face, 'but it persuaded her to let me stay.'

'It would be wise for you to keep moving, Denis,' says Jean-Marc.

'I have a contact who is finding me a place,' says Cristabel, 'you could stay with me. If you want.'

Digby nods. 'All right. I'll need to get some things from the theatre.'

'We can go early tomorrow,' says Jean-Marc. 'You should take some of the new leaflets.'

'We've been creating a manifesto for revolution, to be distributed throughout Paris,' says Digby. 'Jean, you must read what you wrote yesterday to Crista. Go from the bit that starts: "Betrayed by our elders". I'll find us something to eat.'

Cristabel watches Digby as he heads to the kitchen. There is an energy to his movements. The jitteriness she saw when they were last together in Dorset seems to have gone, or rather, seems to have been focused and is now carrying him forward, buoyant as a sailboat.

Jean-Marc picks up a notebook from the floor, coughs politely, and reads, "'Betrayed by our elders, the bourgeois pseudo-elite, we have found ourselves as outlaws in our own country. We have said no to the lies and we are brothers because we have said no.'"

'Very stirring,' says Cristabel.

'That last line was inspired by *Antigone*,' says Jean-Marc. 'Did you see in the programme she is described as "the sister of all those who say no"? We have seen it so many times. Every time, it inspires us.'

Digby reappears empty-handed. 'I don't know why I went to the kitchen. I know we have no food. Tell me, how's darling Floss?'

'She's fine. In the Land Army.'

'Wonderful!' exclaims Digby.

Jean-Marc puts a finger to his lips. 'It is late.'

'Crista, you must be tired, I'm sorry – I'm being a terrible host,' says Digby. 'Jean, could we make up the camp bed for her?'

'Certainly,' says Jean-Marc, putting his notebook down, then heading into an adjoining room.

'We don't often have visitors,' says Digby brightly.

Cristabel feels suddenly overwhelmed by it all. She is tired and sore, resentful of being made to listen to revolutionary speeches, disgruntled by Digby's inability to notice her resentment, and now she is being put to bed like a child, and it makes her angry and frustrated and horribly close to tears.

'Did you really miss me?' she says.

‘Yes. Why do you say that?’

She shakes her head, unable to speak.

He kneels on the floor next to her, his wide eyes concerned. She shakes her head again, looks away, her eyes filling. He leans forward, puts his arms around her. ‘What is it? Tell me.’

‘You don’t know,’ she manages, ‘what it’s like.’

‘What do you mean?’

‘Every morning, you wake up, and there’s a moment when it’s all right. A split second. But then you remember. You don’t know where they are, you don’t know if they’re alive or dead, and that’s all you can think about, for every hour of every day. It’s bloody agony.’

He tightens his hold on her, kisses the top of her head. ‘You’re here now. And I’m here. You always did worry about me too much.’

‘I have to,’ she says, leaning against him. ‘Nobody else does.’

‘That’s better,’ he says. ‘You sound quite aggrieved, like your old self.’

She laughs, wipes her nose with her sleeve. ‘Who’s Jean-Marc?’

Digby sits back and smiles. ‘A Resistance leader and a fine one. We intend —’

‘No, I mean, who is he to you? Is he why you’re here?’

He looks at her again. ‘We’re here because it’s the right thing to do. Why do you ask?’

‘I simply wondered. A lot of your sentences seem to start with the word “we”.’

‘Isn’t that a good way to begin?’ says Digby. ‘I like to think of being part of a we. I don’t only mean those of us here, I mean all those who feel the same as we do.’

‘You always did want everyone to join in,’ says Cristabel, noting he has not fully answered her question. ‘Always rounding up people to be in your games. Do you remember when you persuaded the postman to read the part of Lady Macbeth?’

Digby smiles and looks at Jean-Marc’s notebook, lying on the floor. ‘Crista, aren’t you sick of always having to do it their way? It’s so formulaic, so hidebound. The thought of us winning this war only to go back to the way we were before, it’s unbearable.’

Jean-Marc calls from the other room, ‘Can you help me with these blankets, Denis?’

Cristabel watches Digby go, finishes her wine. She can hear rain starting to fall outside. She thinks then of the two of them up on the roof of Chilcombe, when they were a big I and a little i who were a we, which seems no longer to be the we in which he wants to be.

Cristabel undresses in the box room she is to sleep in, climbing carefully into a fold-out canvas bed. The walls of the apartment are paper thin, and she can hear the opening of cupboards in the room next door, and Digby's murmured conversation with Jean-Marc, then the sounds of them getting into bed. There is something in their fond tone, and the sound of Digby laughing quietly, that tells her they are very close together. There is something childish and petulant in her that wants to creep out of bed and press a glass to the wall, to hear what they are saying, but they are whispering now, so she couldn't hear them even if she tried. She pulls a blanket over her head, then lies stiffly in her bed until she falls asleep.

They leave early next morning. Digby is carrying a bag of clothes while Jean-Marc has an empty suitcase holding an empty briefcase, both of which are to be filled at the theatre. Stepping out into Montmartre from the cramped apartment, stretching and yawning, feels like climbing out of a tent pitched high on a mountain. Below them, the sun is just appearing over the grey rooftops of Paris. As they make their way down the steep cobbled streets, the first beams of sunlight come jinking up the narrow gullies of the city to meet them, picking out apartment windows and painting them gold.

'It's so quiet,' says Cristabel, as they arrive at the square that holds the theatre. She is still in last night's evening gown and heels, and internally cursing, not for the first time, the impracticality of women's clothing, its limited uses.

'A city populated only by birds,' says Digby, gazing up into the trees where sparrows are chirruping. 'Imagine living in a city like that.'

She looks at him and her heart suddenly aches with knowing him. He has always had this hopeful way about him, a quality of elsewhere, a boy of treetops and light.

'Normally, the bakers would be up and about, but they have nothing to bake,' says Jean-Marc, unlocking the stage door.

'When the Allies get here, we will have bread again,' says Digby.

'With thick butter,' says Jean-Marc.

'Stop it, you're making my stomach rumble,' says Cristabel, following the two men inside. She finds herself next to an office containing pigeonholes for the actors' post and a few wilting bouquets of flowers. Jean-Marc locks the door behind them, and they make their way down a corridor, where the unplastered walls are covered with posters from previous productions. The corridor winds about the back of the building, passing cramped dressing rooms full of rails of costumes and cluttered dressing tables.

Digby takes the empty cases and heads off down a narrow set of stairs, saying, 'I'll be as fast as I can.'

'We'll meet you at the stage,' says Jean-Marc, leading Cristabel along a labyrinthine passage that brings them out at the side of the stage. It is the first

time she has ever been backstage at a theatre. From where they stand, she can see the hanging layers of different backdrops, swaying gently, painted scenes of different places, multiple dimensions. Beside her is a complicated row of ropes, heading upwards into the roof of the theatre, like the rigging on a ship. She has the sense of being on the edge of something ceremonial, something larger than herself, as if waiting behind a curtain before an audience with an emperor.

Jean-Marc turns to Cristabel. 'It is wonderful to watch the production from here.' His voice is respectfully hushed, even though the theatre is empty. 'Denis tells me that, in England, this space is called the wings, like on a bird.'

'It is.'

'I like that. Here is the effort, you know, the beating of the wings, lifting the performers.'

There is a noise from somewhere underneath them. Then, a moment later, a wooden trapdoor in the middle of the stage is pushed open and Digby appears like a jack-in-the-box, proclaiming, "If we shadows have offended, think but this and all is mended: that you have but slumbered here, while these visions did appear!"

As his voice echoes about the theatre, Cristabel hears his father in him – Willoughby's warm story-telling baritone – as if Digby briefly embodied an older version of himself. Having not seen him for so long, she now seems to be seeing different versions of him, some familiar, some strange. Past and present and future Digby.

'I'll pass the stuff up,' he says, then disappears below stage.

Jean-Marc walks to centre stage, and Cristabel follows, looking out at the rows of red seats. How exposing it feels to be there, even with nobody in the audience. The theatre doesn't feel entirely empty.

Digby appears from the trapdoor again. Looking down into it, Cristabel sees he is standing on an adjustable wooden platform. He hands up the leather briefcase, which is heavy now.

'What are you bringing?'

'Ink and paper mainly,' says Digby. 'You wouldn't believe how precious they are.'

'They're the best weapons we have,' adds Jean-Marc, 'especially as London won't send us any guns.'

'Jean-Marc keeps asking, but they ignore him,' says Digby. 'It's like writing to my father. Do you know what Perry said to me once, he said they were reluctant to give the French too many weapons as they might use them for mischief after the war. As if we were naughty children.'

Cristabel thinks of Perry, pouring tea in the café at Fortnum & Mason, telling her that wars are fought to determine what happens afterwards. Any

pleading request from someone like Jean-Marc that landed on his desk would be neatly disposed of.

‘Do you hear from him?’ says Digby. ‘Father, I mean.’

She shakes her head.

‘Denis, we must hurry,’ says Jean-Marc. ‘The cleaners will be here soon.’

‘I just need to pack the other case.’ Digby vanishes beneath the stage.

Cristabel and Jean-Marc wait together. After a while, she says politely, ‘Have you managed to keep the theatre open all through the war?’

‘We closed when the Nazis first arrived,’ he says. ‘When we opened again, we were limited in what we could perform. Nothing too patriotic. We could only do myths, legends, nostalgic stuff. All the old theatrical ghosts. But the audiences came back.’

Cristabel wonders if it is ghosts she can sense when she stands on the stage. Roles waiting to be stepped into, reinhabited – like Antigone at the start of Anouilh’s play, waiting to become Antigone.

Jean-Marc continues, ‘Last winter, it was the hardest we have had, people were so cold, so hungry, but the theatre was the busiest it has been for years.’

‘Why was that?’

‘Well, for one, it’s warmer when you are around other people,’ he smiles. ‘But when you are struggling, you feel alone, then you come here, and you see others have struggled – like Antigone.’

‘You see her courage.’

‘Antigone dies alone. But we tell her story at Théâtre de l’Atelier. In here, we still have voices.’

‘Even if you don’t speak directly.’

‘There are many ways to speak,’ he says. ‘Do you remember that line in *Antigone* – “Nothing is true except that which we don’t say.” We all know what that means.’

Cristabel looks out at the theatre space, curled in on itself like a seashell containing the echo of the sea. She imagines the audience, shivering in an unheated theatre, leaning against strangers for warmth. She thinks of the playwrights trying to find a way to reach them through the gagging layers of officialdom. Then she thinks of her own pre-war performances, which seem now to be a kind of pointless mumming, an empty masquerade.

‘I imagine Denis found it hard to stay offstage,’ she says.

Jean-Marc laughs. ‘He did. He is a good man, your brother. We are lucky to have had him.’ He pauses for a moment, then adds, ‘The bruise on your head. It is recent, no?’

‘Is it obvious?’

‘No, I only noticed when we were outside, but we have stage make-up that will cover it better. I will find some.’

Digby reappears then, lifting a canvas suitcase up through the trapdoor, which Jean-Marc takes from his hands. ‘What are you two talking about?’

‘The theatre,’ says Cristabel. She hopes Digby has not noticed the bruise. She does not want to talk about that apartment, with him or anyone.

From outside, they hear the sound of aeroplanes approaching. ‘The Allies can only be days away now,’ says Digby.

‘My lazy old man will be getting out of his armchair for the first time since the war began, pinning on his rusty medals,’ says Jean-Marc.

‘We won’t let the old men claim this one,’ says Digby, smiling at both of them.

They listen as the planes roar overhead, then Cristabel says, ‘Do you have any contacts in Fresnes, Jean-Marc?’

He nods. ‘There is a man who works here who is a carpenter in the prison. If you come back tonight, you could speak to him during the show.’

‘I need to go to my hotel to change,’ she says. ‘Is there somewhere Denis could stay? Just for today.’

Jean-Marc smiles. ‘There is a woman not far from here who is happy to accommodate young men. She has the perfect cover. Nervous men come and go from her house at all hours. She tells the Germans she keeps the best girls for them, but she lies. She is a true patriot. The best girls are only for the French.’

‘She’s really such a lovely woman as well,’ says Digby.

‘Sounds ideal,’ says Cristabel briskly, picking up the suitcase.

That evening, Cristabel returns to Théâtre de l’Atelier as the crowds gather outside, but this time, she enters through the stage door. Backstage is busy. As she passes the dressing rooms, she sees half-costumed actors, at the midpoint of make-up, their faces blank with thick foundation, no longer themselves, yet not quite their characters. They are chatting, smoking, singing. She even catches a glimpse of Antigone in her black dress, leaning towards a mirror to brush blusher beneath her high cheekbones. Jean-Marc, who is leading her through the building, turns and says, ‘Did you see her?’

Cristabel nods, excited despite herself.

As they get closer to the stage, she hears a noise growing louder, a murmuring din, and realizes it is the audience arriving. She didn’t know what a noise they made. Jean-Marc guides her along a passage that runs across the back of the stage, allowing the cast to cross from one side to the other during a production. It is a thrill to pass through here unseen, knowing the audience are taking their seats on the other side of the gauze backdrop. Cristabel is used to

hiding in corridors and landings, all the furtive places of a house, but here, in the house of the theatre, life runs through its secret compartments.

Jean-Marc guides her to a space in the wings, tucked beside the props table, where she can watch, if she keeps out of the way.

‘Don’t step over that line or the audience will see you,’ he says, pointing to a white line painted on the floor. ‘The actors wait there until it’s their turn to go on. I find Denis standing there sometimes. Habit is second nature, *non?* I will see you in the interval.’

Cristabel watches proceedings with intense interest. There are stagehands moving scenery, and two of the actors from the first play are having a whispered conversation about ration tickets while holding their wigs in their hands. The final call goes out backstage, a shout echoing down the maze of corridors. Out front, the chattering audience quietens. The actors finish their conversation, put their wigs on. A stagehand heaves on a thick hemp rope, pulling it hand over hand, and as the curtain sweeps open, Cristabel can hear its long sigh rushing across the stage. One of the actors steps up to the white line. He lifts his face, his mouth moving slightly, then he steps over the line, into the light.

In the interval between the first and second plays, Jean-Marc reappears and points to a ladder bolted to a wall at the back of the theatre. It leads to a gantry, a platform suspended high over the stage to allow technicians access to the stage lighting. ‘Up there,’ he says, ‘if anyone asks, we’re checking the wiring.’ They climb the narrow ladder into the darkness, hearing the sound of a pigeon trapped somewhere in the distant roof space above them, murmuring coos, the whisking of wings. Glancing down, Cristabel can see stagehands making the stage ready for the start of *Antigone*.

The gantry is small and wooden, precariously attached to pipes that run along the wall. It sways and creaks as Jean-Marc and Cristabel leave the safety of the ladder and climb on to it. The carpenter is sitting there already, an older man with a cigarette in his mouth, twisting a screwdriver in his hand. He nods at Cristabel, shakes Jean-Marc’s hand.

‘Fresnes,’ says Jean-Marc in a whisper. ‘She has questions.’

‘I’m looking for two people,’ says Cristabel. ‘The Germans probably believe they are British agents.’ She gives Sophie and Antoine’s cover names and a brief description of what they look like.

‘The woman has dark hair?’ says the carpenter.

‘Yes,’ says Cristabel, ‘she’s petite. Smiles a lot. She’s probably popular, even in prison.’

He nods. ‘I have seen her. Not him, but her.’

‘She’s alive?’

‘I think so.’ He pulls a stray filament of tobacco from his lip. ‘It is not always good to be popular in prison.’ He looks from Cristabel to Jean-Marc.

‘Can you get a message to her?’ says Jean-Marc.

The carpenter looks down at the stage, where the cast are taking their places. ‘Perhaps, but I cannot promise. They keep her separate.’

Cristabel looks at Jean-Marc. ‘Is it worth sending a message?’

The carpenter hesitates for a moment, then says, ‘If you have anything you want to say to your friend, you should say it now.’

There is something solemn in his voice that gives Cristabel a sense of unease. She holds on to one of the ropes at the side of the gantry.

Jean-Marc puts a hand on her back. ‘What do you want to say?’

‘I don’t know what I can say,’ she says.

‘We must hurry,’ the carpenter says. ‘They are going to start soon.’

‘Tell her you are with her,’ whispers Jean-Marc.

‘But I’m not,’ she replies.

‘She might want to hear that, even if you aren’t,’ Jean-Marc says. ‘What would she want to hear?’

Cristabel can hear the noise in the theatre quietening. She whispers, ‘Tell her that I’m close.’

The carpenter nods, tucks his screwdriver into his pocket, gestures to the ladder. ‘Anything else?’

‘Tell her we will have that night out in London,’ says Cristabel.

Cristabel leaves the theatre before *Antigone* begins and walks back down the city through the summer twilight. The air is warm, uncomfortably so, and the streets smell of sewage and uncollected rubbish. There is only one day left in July and Paris is heading into the desert of August, with no food and not much water. Everything is running out. On the tin wall of a stinking pissoir Cristabel reads, in scrawled graffiti: *Vive les Soviets!*

As she crosses the Rue de Rivoli, she sees a German military staff car outside one of the hotels being hurriedly packed by several female staff members, in their grey Nazi uniforms. They are filling it with a peculiar mix of items: a box of files, a case of Moët et Chandon, a sewing machine. One of them is handing out packs of butter to puzzled passers-by, some of whom have stopped to watch. Walking past, Cristabel smells smoke, and looks up to see burning ashes, pieces of charred paper, falling from the sky like snow.

The Island

August, 1944

When Cristabel arrives at the restaurant to meet Lieselotte, she is already leaving.

‘If you want to charge nearly a thousand francs for a Camembert, you should ensure your staff look after your customers properly,’ she says loudly, handing Cristabel the handbag containing her dog. ‘Hold him for me, while I adjust myself.’ She pauses for a moment to put on her gloves and tilt her hat – a bright red geometric structure – to one side. ‘There. Off we go.’

As they walk along the Boulevard Saint-Germain, Lieselotte takes back her handbag, saying, ‘One must never stay in disappointing restaurants, Claudine. Life is short.’

She rummages beneath the dog and pulls out a set of keys and an envelope, which she gives to Cristabel. ‘The keys to your new home. The address is in the envelope, along with some money and new papers. The apartment will be empty this evening, when my mother-in-law will have been removed from it. I have the pleasure of escorting her to Avignon, where we will be joining my husband.’

‘You’re leaving?’

‘I am. My mother-in-law is infuriated by the inconvenience caused by the Allies, I miss my husband and, well, those of us who sound German will not be popular soon.’

‘But you work for the Americans.’

‘There will be many people claiming they work for the Americans. I would rather not be part of that jostling. Do you know if the Métro is working today?’

‘I don’t think so.’

‘I will walk. So now we say goodbye.’ Lieselotte stops in the middle of the pavement and kisses Cristabel on each cheek, then unexpectedly reaches out a bejewelled hand, which she places on the side of Cristabel’s face. She puts her thumb under Cristabel’s chin to push it higher. ‘Like that,’ she says. ‘Keep it like that.’ Then she turns and walks smartly down the tree-lined street, her heels rapping on the pavement.

Cristabel watches Lieselotte go, then enters a nearby church, a dark gothic building with a vaulted ceiling. She sits on one of the wooden chairs provided for the congregation, tucked behind a marble column, and carefully opens the envelope.

There is a roll of cash, which she tucks inside her blouse; a new set of identity documents, in which her occupation is listed as theatre director; and the horse-shaped brooch Lieselotte often wore, wrapped in a note. A few lines in an

elegant hand – *If you do not want it, sell it, but make sure you get a good price for it. When you reopen your theatre, invite me* – and an address on the Île Saint-Louis.

An elderly priest appears beside her and politely asks if he can help her.

‘I don’t think so,’ she says, ‘but thank you all the same.’

In the middle of the Seine are two islands shaped like a whale and its calf. Both islands are reached by bridges, and Cristabel crosses one now to reach the smaller island, the Île Saint-Louis, where she finds Lieselotte’s mother-in-law’s apartment building in a narrow side street.

The entrance is a huge domed double door surrounded by stonework, a *porte cochère* big enough to let a horse and carriage through. One of the keys allows her to open a small door cut in the larger door, which takes her into a hall leading past the concierge’s rooms, and then another key opens a door into the main building, where a wooden staircase with iron bannisters coils upwards. The air inside is cold, mournful, amplifying the noise of her footsteps.

Two more keys in two different heavy locks open the door to the fourth-floor apartment, which has the beeswax and velvet smell of old money. Antique wooden dressers. Bow-legged chairs covered with embroidered fabric. A bedroom sunk in ruffles. Tall French windows – *portes-fenêtres* – that wobble slightly as she opens them. The apartment is near the top of the building, looking out on to the island’s sloping rooftops and the cream-coloured apartments across the street. Leaning out and peering right, Cristabel can see the poplar trees on the banks of the Seine.

The rear of the apartment looks down into a courtyard cluttered with the backs of other apartments. Many homes in Paris seem to be like this: formal at the front, gossipy at the back, where kitchen windows overlook kitchen windows, sinks and saucepans, air vents and arguments. There is no electricity, no working lights, and when she turns on the kitchen tap it does nothing for an age then dribbles rusty water. If the building is a body, it is an elderly one, full of coughs and gargles.

Still, she likes it. She’s never had a place of her own. Her previous stays in Europe have been in dull French guest houses with Mlle Aubert, or in the Austrian lodgings where she stayed while skiing. In her Swiss finishing school, she had to share a dormitory with girls who only talked about marriage, and her few stays in hotels have been spent reading in her room, avoiding communal areas. Even in Chilcombe, she has never felt entirely welcome. More like someone holding out, against increasing odds. She takes her bag to the bedroom. Puts *Madame Bovary* on the bedside table.

When she goes to meet Digby, crossing the bridge from the island back to the mainland, she has the feeling of striding across the swaying walkway that

leads from a ship to a harbour wall, with all the swagger and secrecy of the intrepid voyager.

Together, they hide Digby's cases beneath the floor in the apartment by prising up the wooden floorboards, then Cristabel spends some of Lieselotte's money on a selection of the meagre things left in the nearest grocery: prunes, macaroni, a hard corner of cheese. In the kitchen cupboards, they find a few miscellaneous tins, along with three withered onions, a dusty bottle of brandy and some candle ends. On their first evening, they sit themselves at the polished dining table, with the tall windows open to the sky.

'To our new home,' Digby says, lifting his glass.

'I don't think this macaroni has cooked at all,' Cristabel says. 'I didn't know how long to do it for.'

'Jean-Marc is always laughing at me because I have no idea how to cook anything. I didn't even know how to light the oven.'

She pokes at her food. 'Probably should try to eat it anyway.'

'About Montmartre,' says Digby, after a moment, 'I was thinking, it might have been strange for you.'

She shakes her head. 'Let's not.'

'He's not the reason I stayed, but he is a good man, Crista.'

'He says the same about you.'

'Does he?' Digby laughs. 'Well, we're agreed then.'

She looks at him. 'I'm glad. It was just a shock to see you.'

'And you were cross.'

'Bloody furious.'

He turns his glass on the table. 'I know it must look like I'm doing everything wrong, but I'm not. It's the opposite. I'm finally getting things right.'

There is a distant explosion that makes them both jump. 'Artillery,' he says. 'They're getting closer. Is there a radio here? There's meant to be an hour of electricity tonight.'

They hunt about the apartment for a radio and find one in the bedroom. They take it to the dining room and try to tune it in, twisting the dial backwards and forwards.

'You must have enjoyed working at the theatre,' she says, as the radio crackles.

'Adored it,' he says. 'Being part of the company is like being part of a family.'

Cristabel feels the slight pain of that statement as something like the distant artillery fire: muffled, dull.

He catches her expression. 'Crista. Not like that. I've imagined you and Floss here so many times. Coming to watch me onstage.'

She feels she is dragging something behind her: a cannon, cumbersome and slow. She says, even though she doesn't want to, 'So we'd have to come all the way here to see you.'

'Yes,' he says gently. 'You would.'

A burst of rapid jazz comes from the radio, then the stately French of BBC Radio Londres. The news announcer speaks in the diplomatic language of someone instructed not to give too much away, but the situation sounds promising. Allies gaining ground, Germans retreating. There is a brief mention of the British public waiting at home, and Cristabel thinks of Flossie, and Betty and Joyce, and all the women holding the fort in Chilcombe Mell. They will be listening to their radios too, pausing in their kitchens.

'We used to talk to Taras about theatres in Paris,' Digby says, topping up their glasses. 'Never thought I'd end up a stagehand in one of them.'

'We used to talk to Taras about doing our soul's work,' Cristabel says. 'How ridiculous we were. All our imaginings.'

'You mustn't say that.' He leans forward in his chair. 'Do you know what I love most about being at the theatre? It's a whole building filled with people and equipment and complicated bits of kit that big burly men operate, and its entire purpose is imaginary. Isn't that wonderful?'

'I suppose,' she says.

'When I'm there, I can talk to people about characters, about what acting means, whatever I like, and nobody laughs or scoffs or tells me I need to do something more sensible with my life. I can talk to them like I talk to you.'

He takes a packet of cigarettes from his pocket, finds a half-smoked one, lights it. 'Do you know, at school, we were discouraged from reading fiction. They confiscated my *Wind in the Willows*. I asked for a new one and Father gave me a cricket bat. Told me not to bother with stories. Told me to give up the stage. Everything I've liked has been taken away from me, and nobody could give me a good reason why.'

He exhales and continues, 'I suppose Mother was sympathetic, sometimes. She would come creeping into my room at night, when she was tipsy, with a prawn vol au vent wrapped in a napkin, saying, "I'll be in the front row every night, darling. You'll be the new Olivier. Is that his name? His wife is very pretty." But she'd forget all about it the next day.'

Cristabel smiles at his perfect impression of his mother, the way he makes Rosalind both very herself and somehow more likeable.

He continues, 'Without you and Floss, I would have been lost. You helped me hang on to it, you know, until I got here. But it's not a silly thing. It's not a dream. It's possible.'

'How can you be certain?'

‘Because you made me certain,’ he says, reaching across the table to hold her hand. ‘I say this to Jean all the time. My parentage may have been rather lacking, but I had a splendid role model. The bravest, most determined sister.’

‘Hardly,’ she says. ‘I’ve done things I’m not proud of.’

‘Don’t be like that. You can make anything happen. You’re our dauntless leader.’

‘I’m not, Digs. I wasn’t even a leader when I was part of a circuit. I was a courier.’

‘You could have been. You’re more than good enough to lead a circuit, I’m sure.’

‘I might well be,’ she says, ‘but we will never know, because the Org doesn’t allow women to be circuit leaders.’

‘Come over to the French. Bugger London. Bugger their silly rules.’

‘How many Frenchmen do you know who would be keen to take orders from an Englishwoman?’

‘I don’t think they’d care. If you were good, and I know you would be, they wouldn’t even notice you were a woman.’

‘But that’s the crux of it, isn’t it? Either they notice I’m a woman, and they don’t want me because of that, or I have to hope they somehow don’t notice, which leaves me rather eradicated either way.’

‘I think you’re making it more complicated than it needs to be,’ he says.

‘I’m not making it anything. That’s what it is. The only reason you think it’s complicated is because you’ve never thought about it.’

‘Hold on,’ he says, letting go of her hand. ‘I do know what it’s like to not fit in. The boy who prefers sonnets to rugby doesn’t always have an easy time at school.’

‘At least you got to go to school,’ Cristabel says, then sighs. ‘Perhaps I am being unfair.’

‘No, I’m sorry. Didn’t mean to be touchy. Go on.’

‘Ironically, I find it difficult to talk about, even to you.’

‘Why?’

‘I feel I’m moaning,’ she says. ‘One oughtn’t to complain about one’s lot. One should be grateful to be included at all. But that’s how it works, isn’t it? We had an instructor who said women were ideal wireless operators because they enjoyed stopping at home all day. Did I challenge him? No, because I didn’t want to seem difficult.’

‘That’s understandable. Nobody wants to stick out too much.’

‘Same applies to me running off to join the Resistance. They would use me as an example of why women are unsuited to this kind of work.’

Digby shakes his head, stubs out his cigarette. 'I don't believe that. I'm sure I'm not being held up as an example of why men shouldn't be used in the field.'

'Probably not, which rather proves my point. Although they might, if they knew about you and Jean-Marc.'

'That has nothing to do with it. My feelings about London and my feelings about Jean are completely separate things.'

'I know that, Digs. What you do after hours, so to speak, is your choice.'

He pauses for a moment. 'It's not a choice, Crista. It's who I am.'

She looks at him, and he continues, 'I've never wanted any of it, not really. I don't believe Father wanted it either, do you? Being lord of the manor.'

'I suspect he loathed it,' says Cristabel. 'Not sure he will ever come back to Chilcombe.'

'Why should he? Why do we keep forcing ourselves to do these things? To what end?' Digby laughs. 'I thought I was failing, because I didn't match up. What an enormous waste of time. There's no life for me back there, Crista. Not one I care for.'

'Well, I'm pleased you're decided.'

'You don't sound pleased.'

'I sound spiky, don't I?'

'You do.'

She holds her hand out and he puts the cigarette packet into it. She takes out a crumbling cigarette end and lights it, holding it carefully in her long fingers as she inhales. When she next speaks, her voice is hesitant. 'I suppose it just leaves me in a fix. I mean, I always knew you would head off to university, but I presumed you'd come back too. I thought the rest of it wouldn't matter so much, because we'd have our theatre. But now you've somewhere else to go, and I don't know what I have left. I never imagined it without you.'

'But you've always been so indomitable, Crista. You'll always find a way.'

'A way where? I don't fit anywhere. That's probably why I made the theatre, don't you think?'

'That's precisely what I'm saying,' says Digby. 'We don't fit their moulds.'

She passes the last of the cigarette to him. 'When you inherit Chilcombe, you should give it to Floss.'

'They made me write a will before I flew out to France,' he says. 'You and she get equal shares.'

'They made me write one too, but I didn't have anything to leave anyone.'

They both laugh. Outside, there is the boom of more artillery fire, then the wail of an air raid siren.

Digby says, 'I simply want to choose my own life. Don't you?'

'I have no idea what it would be,' she replies.

‘Not knowing is by far the better option,’ he says.

They talk late into the night, and the following night too. Of family, of theatre, of war. In the daytime, Digby goes to meet his Resistance colleagues. In the absence of Lieselotte, Cristabel is without a line of contact to the Americans, but Jean-Marc has sent some men cycling out of the city to meet up with the approaching Allied troops, so she decides to wait for them to report back.

The city is bright with August sunshine, but there is an exodus of Germans that is gathering pace: administrative staff leaving in requisitioned civilian cars, military lorries laden with furniture. Cristabel goes to cafés and sits close to the public telephones, where she can catch snatches of conversation. Place names are mentioned in excited whispers. *The Allies have reached Nogent-le-Rotrou! They’re nearly at Chartres!* She notices a pair of Wehrmacht troopers sitting impassively at a nearby table and tries to imagine what they are feeling. The waitresses serve them in contemptuous silence.

In the evenings, she and Digby go back to their island quarters, to cook hopeless meals and make cigarettes from the remains of other cigarettes. She likes to pull an armchair close to the window, to look out at the opposite apartments as the evening draws in, their individual windows lit with candles, glowing like honeycomb cells. Then the curtains are closed, the blackout descends on the city, and the Île Saint-Louis must sail through the darkness like a ship on the river.

‘Baudelaire lived on this island,’ says Digby, who has found a history of Paris on a bookshelf and is leafing through it while lying on the sofa, ‘and Chopin.’

‘Flossie likes Chopin,’ says Cristabel, thinking of her sister at the piano, playing the composer’s circular patterns, like pebbles dropped in water. It feels like a scene from another world.

‘Digs, I’ve been thinking,’ she says, after a while, ‘if I reopen my theatre, I want to do things differently. Watching *Antigone* made me think about whether I could take a play that’s been done before and tell it a new way.’

‘Go on,’ Digby says, putting down his book.

‘*The Tempest*, say.’

‘How would you do it?’

‘I would make it Caliban’s story. Start with his birth. With his mother, the witch. Children like witches.’

‘You’d do it as a play for children?’

‘I might. I can picture it done with shadow puppets.’

‘Is Caliban’s mother a witch?’ he asks. ‘I never played him.’

‘Perhaps that’s just what they say she is. Maybe she isn’t at all,’ she says. ‘You could tell the children they’re going to hear a secret story, one that’s never

been told before.’

‘Oh yes, I like that,’ says Digby. ‘I would do Ariel’s story. When I think of him, I see him as a flame, a moving energy.’

‘A dancer could play Ariel. A dancer with fire.’

‘The whalebones like a cage around him.’

‘Yes. Perfect. Is this the last of the brandy?’

‘Let me investigate.’

Sometimes, they are visited by Jean-Marc. Cristabel is warming to him. There is an air of readiness about him, a focused commitment. His bouncy curly hair, his earnest face behind his glasses. Digby tells her that Jean-Marc likes to hike in the Pyrenees, and she can picture him there, in rucksack and boots, keenly assessing the wind direction. She notices too his concern for Digby, his insistence that Digby eat, sleep. He is the mountain guide, she thinks; Digby the high clouds that pass over.

There are moments too – when they think she isn’t watching – that she sees them look at each other, sometimes with an intensity that feels almost intrusive to witness, sometimes with expressions that are quietly euphoric; prayers and answered prayers.

Occasionally, Jean-Marc has other *résistants* with him, young men and women, and she notices their fierce comradeship, how they rarely talk without a hand on another’s shoulder. It reminds her of her team in Scotland, and how much she misses them.

‘Most of the *résistants* are sure they will die,’ says Digby, lying on the sofa one evening. They are drinking a syrupy peach liqueur found at the back of a cabinet. ‘It is strange to hear them talk about it, but they are not unhappy.’

‘No,’ she says, thinking of Antigone. ‘They have belief.’ Although, she also remembers that Antigone lost her belief, right at the end, when the martyr’s death she had longed for became a gruelling, physical task to be carried out, like forcing yourself to walk out to sea.

Some evenings, Digby will fall asleep on the sofa. Cristabel can tell without looking when Digby is falling asleep because of the change in his breathing. She will sit and listen to his breathing, while in the streets along the Seine, German tanks line up beneath the trees.

One night, she wakes with a shriek, fighting for air, the darkness somehow wrapped around her face, tight as a cloth, and Digby comes running into her bedroom, saying, ‘What’s the matter?’

She is only able to say she had a nightmare, the kind where you can’t breathe. She doesn’t mention the body in the dream, how it lay on her chest, an immense damp deadweight crushing the oxygen from her lungs, his eyes still open and pleading with her.

Digby brings her a glass of water. He tells her that in North Africa, the desert night would sometimes echo with the screams of soldiers having nightmares. He sits with her for a while, quietly, then puts a cigarette and a lighter on the bedside table and leaves her to go back to sleep.

One evening, in the middle of August, a boy comes running with a message from Jean-Marc to say that he may have news of Sophie and Antoine. Over a thousand prisoners have been taken from Fresnes and loaded into buses. It is rumoured that there are British agents among them, and they are being driven through Paris to a railway station.

Cristabel flies down the stairs, only pausing to walk slowly past the elderly concierge, then runs again to her bike. She pedals furiously through the city, passing chaotic streams of German cars and lorries, which seem to have multiplied like ants overnight. Some vehicles are packed with blank-eyed soldiers returning from the Normandy front, covered with battle dirt, still holding their weapons.

She notices crowds gathering in cafés, and screeches to a halt outside one, to find out what's going on. She can see people inside clustered around a radio. The news comes fast: the Allies have landed in the South of France, the Resistance have come out in support, the Germans are in retreat all across the country. Here in Paris, the police have gone on strike and are marching through the streets in their shirtsleeves. 'Freedom is on its way,' shouts a man, to the sound of cheers.

As Cristabel cycles onwards, she hears sporadic gunfire from the city suburbs. She heads to the Gare de l'Est, thinking she will try that first as trains go to Germany from there. Reaching the station, she throws her bike to the ground and sprints inside only to find it empty. A woman rushing past sees Cristabel's desperate expression, catches hold of her arm and says, 'The prisoners? I've heard they're at Pantin.' The woman jumps on to the back of a waiting motorcycle, which roars off. Pantin is another station, north-east of the city. Cristabel gets back on her bike and forces herself to stand up on the pedals, pushing them round again and again.

When she finally reaches Pantin, panting and weary, she finds an uneasy stand-off. A train is waiting at the platform, sitting unmoving in the evening sun. It is made up of a long series of old-fashioned cattle wagons, each one guarded by an SS soldier with a machine gun.

On the platform nearby there is a huddle of Nazi officers, one of whom is holding a clipboard, and a large crowd of agitated women, who are pressing forward into a line of guards who keep pushing them back. There are a few representatives from the Red Cross, wearing armbands to identify themselves, who also move forward, only to be shoved back.

Cristabel makes her way into the crowd. Some of the women have notes in their hands, some food parcels and bottles of water. They are pleading with the guards to allow them through, to reach those in the wagons. The guards ignore them. The heat of the bodies packed together on the platform is stifling. Cristabel looks down to see a small boy beside her, holding his mother's hand.

'How long have you been here?' she says to the mother.

'Since lunchtime,' says the woman, her mouth set very tightly. Her hair at her temples is wet with sweat. Cristabel moves her body, so she stands behind the boy, to protect him from the jostling crowd.

Sometimes, a woman is let through to run along the length of the platform, banging on the doors of the cattle wagons, calling out the name of a son or daughter, husband or father. An answering shout from inside means the guards briefly unlock the wagon's wooden doors and slide them open, so a parcel can be pushed into someone's hands. When the doors open, those waiting on the platform catch a glimpse of the prisoners standing inside, packed tightly together. At this, there is a rise in shouts from the crowd – a cacophony of called-out names – and an answering rise in violence from the guards, who push the women back, fire their guns into the sky.

Just beside the nearest cattle wagon, Cristabel notices a girl aged about ten, standing next to the padlocked doors. She is dressed smartly, in a neat dress and cardigan, with polished shoes, and holding herself upright, like the impassive SS sentry who stands near her. The girl occasionally glances over to where her mother, a young woman holding a baby, is pleading with one of the Red Cross representatives, but for the most part, she looks upwards, to the tiny opening at the very top of the wagon, which is covered by a metal grille. There, Cristabel can see a man's face, his hands gripping the metal bars. He must be being held up by those inside, in order to reach the grille. He and the girl are looking at each other, steadily, though his hands on the bars are white-knuckled with effort.

Cristabel stands on tiptoe to peer at the Nazi officers, trying to figure out who is in charge, who to approach. There seems to be no logic in why they allow some women through, merely the whims of certain officers at random times. She asks the woman next to her, 'Are they letting anyone off the train?'

'I've heard they will let them out if you can prove they are ill. I have a letter from our doctor,' the woman replies, a crumpled piece of paper gripped in her hand.

Cristabel tries to edge her way towards the front of the crowd, but other women turn on her angrily when she tries to squeeze past them. Her mind is running through the maze of all possible solutions and repeatedly meeting dead ends. She considers trying to get a message to Jean-Marc, to suggest some kind of Resistance interception, a blockage further up the line, but she doesn't know

where he is or what route the train will take. She also suspects that there would not be enough people available to attempt an attack on a well-guarded train. She has nothing she can give Sophie or Antoine. No food or water. Her best idea – trying to get close enough to the officers to bribe them with a discreet roll of cash – is ruled out when a woman in front of her tries it and is marched off by a guard.

All Cristabel's shouted entreaties to the officers prove useless. She tries claiming that Sophie is pregnant, that Antoine has an infectious disease, but gets no response. She cannot even think of a reason why she should remain there, but she cannot leave. As the hours pass, the women's shouts become less coherent; they are no longer calling out in the hope they will be answered, they are calling because there is nothing else to do.

The sky is growing dark, and the women are swaying against each other with tiredness, when there is a sudden clanking and hissing, as, with a sickening lurch, the engine starts up and the train begins to slowly move away. There are screams from the women on the platform, muffled shouts from inside the wagons. The crowd heaves forward in panic, several women split away from the group, to run alongside the slowly moving train, the guards shouting after them.

Cristabel waits for a second, expecting gunfire, and when none comes, takes a breath, roughly shoulders her way through the crowd, and also begins to run, glancing at the SS men as she passes. The front of the train has already left the station, the first cattle wagon too, but she lengthens her long stride and reaches the end of the platform in time to bang on the side of the second one. 'Sophie,' she shouts, 'Antoine, Sophie.'

She can see hands at the grilles, pushing out small notes. She can hear some of those inside the wagons singing the Marseillaise. Some take up her shout and call out for Sophie, Antoine. One wagon passes, then another. She bangs on their wooden sides, shouts and bellows, frantic now, furious with the other women on the platform who are shouting over the top of her. As the penultimate wagon goes past her, she hears a clamour inside it, then sees two thin hands on the grille, and a pale, haggard face. Sophie.

'Where are they taking us?' she says, her voice weak.

'I don't know, we'll find out,' says Cristabel. The train is moving faster, and Sophie falls from the grille as her wagon judders over the rails, then she reappears.

'Make sure my boy's all right,' she says. 'Only tell him the good stuff.'

'I will, I will, don't say that,' calls Cristabel. She is right at the end of the platform now and forced to come to a halt, as the train moves away without her. 'Don't say that,' she shouts after it. She sees a small hand waving through the grille, multiple voices shouting messages she can't make out, then the train blows its whistle, and leaves the station, lumbering slowly round a bend.

She can hear an SS guard barking orders at her as she watches the train head out of sight. She decides she will watch it until the last possible second, even if they shoot her for it. They will not move her from this spot. She straightens her spine, so that when they shoot her, she will be standing tall. The guard is shouting again, and he is closer now.

Then she remembers the notes thrown from the wagons, lying on the platform at her feet, and whatever it is that is so rigid and unmoving in her tears apart. She swears, swears and swears again, vehemently spitting her words down the empty railway line towards the vanished train, then she turns and raises her hands, so the guard knows she is obeying him.

Behind him, she can see the crowd of women splintering into pieces, distraught now, some running for the exit, some sinking to the floor. She picks up as many of the dropped notes as she can, then heads quickly back towards the station, passing the little girl in her smart dress, still standing upright at the platform edge.

Back on the island, she sprints up the stairs to her apartment, where she finds a scene of industry, despite the fact it is growing late. Jean-Marc and Digby are sorting posters into piles to be plastered across the walls of the city by willing runners – a group of teenagers are waiting by the door, each holding a satchel.

‘There’s a train,’ she says, breathing heavily, ‘just left Pantin. It’s carrying the prisoners from Fresnes. Can we stop it?’

Jean-Marc glances at her. ‘We can try to get a message to the Americans, but it is hard to contact anyone at the moment.’ Then he turns and issues rapid instructions to the runners, while handing each a stack of posters.

‘What about the Red Cross?’ she says. ‘Can we go through them?’

‘You can try,’ he says. He pulls on a satchel of his own and puts a hand on her shoulder. ‘The faster we end this war, the better their chances.’ He quickly kisses Digby on both cheeks, then follows the runners out into the night. Digby watches him go from the window.

‘Where would they be taking them?’ Cristabel says. ‘The prisoners. I don’t understand what they’re doing with them. Most Germans want to leave as fast as possible, not bother with prisoners.’

‘We might think they’re losing, but they won’t think that,’ says Digby. ‘Not all of them. They’ll be following orders. Transporting enemies of Germany to the camps.’

‘Camps? POW camps?’

‘We’ve had some reports that suggest they’re not POW camps,’ he says. ‘Not as we would understand them. Let’s hope the Allies get there first. Sit down. I’ll get you a drink.’

She slumps into an armchair in her sweat-stained clothes, feeling for the first time her aching legs, her sore feet. She kicks off her shoes. Accepts a drink from Digby. He blows out the candles so they can open the curtains, letting in the night air.

They sit together in silence for a while.

‘You can always talk to me, you know,’ he says, a voice in the darkness. ‘About anything.’

‘We have a telephone in the house now,’ she replies, ‘so I just might.’

‘Whatever is the world coming to,’ he says, and she can hear him smile.

In the last hour before curfew, they walk around the island, hoping to meet someone who might sell them a few cigarettes. There are steps leading down to cobbled walkways along the water’s edge, where they find those who want to be close to the dark river. Anglers. Drunks. Runaways. Those who might talk themselves into a room for the night, and those who will slip beneath the waves before the dawn, the island sailing on without them, long lines of fishing rods trailing from its sides like harpoons.

August

August, 1944

August, Paris, 1944. Magnificent weather. Allies approaching from the east and the south. Afternoon gunshot in the streets, crackling through the heat like a grouse shoot. Cristabel cycles through the city, its avenues simmering in the sunlight, carrying messages for Jean-Marc.

She takes with her the notes thrown from the train at Pantin, passing them on to their intended recipients if she can. She has to open them to find names and addresses but tries not to look at the contents. From the few words she glimpses – *goodbye, my love! kiss my girls!* – it would appear those on the train do not expect to come back from wherever they are going. It makes her heartsick every time she thinks about it, imagining fierce Antoine and irrepressible Sophie, trapped and taken away.

Every few blocks, she passes groups of Parisians building barricades. Residents have begun piling up everything they can find: food trolleys, road signs, old beds, public benches. There is a festive, communal air, as if they were building bonfires. They are even pulling up the paving stones of their own streets.

Much of this activity is overseen by young men like Jean-Marc and his friends, with slicked-back hair and shirtsleeves rolled high like movie gangsters, swinging grenades from their suntanned fingers. Irregular forces, stared at by children, already fêted and immortal. A civilian guerrilla army which has materialized from the shadows, putting on armbands that read FFI: *Forces françaises de l'Intérieur*. The FFI posters promise that, in the battle to liberate Paris, everyone will get a Hun. The Hun tanks trundle into position, ready to prove them wrong.

Some roads are empty but for whistling bullets, as the two sides take casual potshots at each other, neither yet fully committed. Some are clogged with Germans, who continue to desert the city in a motley mix of vehicles: some cheerfully drunk; others shooting at passers-by. The Parisians wave toilet brushes at the departing convoys, hang home-made French flags from their balconies. In the formal gardens, stubble-dark soldiers sleep beneath statues. In the offices of diplomats and officials, terse telephone conversations at all hours.

It is like a carnival, with all its gaiety and danger. Nothing was happening and now anything might happen. All things are ending and beginning at once. Everything they have hoped for.

Early morning. Before sunrise. Digby shakes her awake, beckons her to the window. Cristabel looks out over the city: its zinc roofs, dotted with clusters of terracotta chimney pots and burbling pigeons; the soft new sky.

Peering down into the narrow street, she sees, huddled in entranceways, groups of men wearing armbands, holding weapons. One is staring at his watch. Others keep leaning out, glancing at him. Finally, the man with the watch nods and sets off running, his footsteps echoing down the shuttered street. The others follow him. More and more, appearing from doorways like children leaving their homes to follow the Pied Piper.

When she turns around, Digby is pulling a FFI armband on over his own shirt. He has retrieved his pistol from under the floorboards and is tucking it into his waistband. He pushes his hair from his eyes and looks at her.

‘I’ve never seen you with a gun,’ she says.

‘I used one a fair bit in the army so I shouldn’t make too much of a fool of myself,’ he says. ‘We’re going to Île de la Cité, to occupy the police headquarters. The liberation starts today.’

‘Have you got one for me?’

‘A gun?’

‘Yes, Digs. They trained me too, you know. I was the best shot in my class.’

‘Are you sure?’

She puts her hands on her hips. ‘Do you think I joined the Org to sit in an apartment?’

‘No,’ he says, sheepish. ‘I just don’t want you to get hurt. But look, once I know what’s going on, I’ll be in touch. I’ll send someone back for you. With a gun.’

‘Make sure you do,’ she says.

He hugs her tightly and smiles. ‘I will. I promise. We can fight side by side on the barricades.’ Then he leaves the apartment. She hears him loudly taking the stairs, two at a time.

‘Try not to draw attention to yourself,’ she says to the empty room.

She waits in the apartment, trying to pass the time by finishing *Madame Bovary*, but the main character seems even more constrained than she is, and this merely adds to her impatience. Throughout the day, there is distant gunfire like the sound of fireworks. Sometimes she goes to the window, only to see the people in the opposite apartments also standing at their windows, arms folded. The streets below are empty, though occasionally an individual will hurtle through, as if pursued. Gazing out across the city, she can see puffs of smoke rising from distant parts of Paris but has no idea what they mean. Sporadic, unreadable gestures.

By late afternoon, the waiting has become almost unbearable. Then she hears the secret pattern of knocks at the door that means Jean-Marc. She quickly lets him in. He is wet with sweat, lugging a large bag, but beaming, exultant.

‘We have taken control of the Police Préfecture,’ he says, panting, ‘but we need reinforcements. Ammunition, water.’

‘Has Denis found me a weapon?’ she says.

He pulls from his waistband a pistol. ‘From Denis, for you. A Luger, taken from the body of a German officer, less than an hour ago.’

When she holds it, the handle is still warm from being against Jean-Marc’s stomach. For a second, she imagines it is the heat of the dead German and feels faintly nauseous. She takes a deep breath and concentrates on the weapon lying across her open palm, feeling its weight. It has been months since she held a gun, but during training, she always took her time to get used to it, rather as she would offer a strange dog her hand to sniff, to give it a chance to take her measure.

Jean-Marc opens his bag to reveal several boxes containing rounds of ammunition, and a pile of empty wine bottles. ‘Can you help fill these?’

She tucks the gun in her waistband and heads to the kitchen, where she and Digby have stored water in saucepans. She empties this into the bottles, filling each, putting the corks back in, then passing them to Jean-Marc to put into the bag. They stuff blankets into the bag to protect the bottles before he picks it up, staggering under its clanking weight.

‘You can’t carry that on your own,’ she says. ‘Let me get another bag.’

She finds her own rucksack and they split the ammunition and water between them.

‘Ready?’ he says, as she pulls the rucksack on to her shoulders.

‘Ready,’ she says.

Together, they make their way outside into the sunshine and head from Île Saint-Louis to the bridge that leads to the larger Île de la Cité, where the grand Police Préfecture sits in an open square, facing Notre-Dame cathedral. Cristabel has tucked her arm through Jean-Marc’s, as if they were a couple. ‘If we are stopped, we say our home has been damaged in the fighting and we are going to stay with my parents,’ she whispers, as they stride along.

When they reach Île de la Cité, they pause for a moment beneath the shady awning of an empty café. The streets are deserted but there are several *résistants* cycling furiously towards the scene of the uprising, weapons slung round their necks, followed by a running photographer with a camera in his hand. From the direction of the Préfecture, she can hear loud singing of the Marseillaise. Why are they singing, she wonders, when the battle is not yet won? But Tricolour flags are already sprouting from windows, high flutterings of red, white and blue.

Jean-Marc cautiously leads her around the edge of the island to a place where they can see, in the distance, one of the other bridges that leads on to it. It is filling with Germans: marching soldiers and armoured cars, all heading towards the Préfecture. Her heart clamps up for a moment, fearing the singing *résistants*

will be ambushed, then she sees flashes of defensive gunfire coming from behind the parapets that line the river, the deafening clatter of Sten guns wielded by FFI fighters, and the Germans throwing themselves to the ground.

She and Jean-Marc move quickly along a side street that leads towards Notre-Dame. They slow down as they reach the end of the street, then cautiously peer out around the last building, looking into the square. On their left is the cathedral, standing behind huge stacks of sandbags protecting its main front portals, and on their right is the Police Préfecture.

Cristabel can make out figures at the windows, the long shapes of rifles aiming downwards at a German tank that is sitting in the middle of the square, squat and unmoving as a toad. She can hear the sound of bullets hitting the metal body of the tank, a succession of ineffective pings, then the tank fires back, a deafening boom, and a huge cloud of smoke and dust billows from the Préfecture. She can hear crumbling stonework, a fire alarm going off, shouting voices. Flames appear, flickering in windows.

Jean-Marc starts to move into the square, just as a German motorcyclist comes speeding past. 'Get back,' he hisses, and they scuttle back to safety. They try again, keeping low and staying to one side, where they are sheltered by a line of trees. They proceed in fits and starts, huddling in a narrow doorway when there is a volley of gunfire from the Préfecture, bullets whining past in pursuit of a German armoured car which briefly appears at the far end of the square, before heading out of sight.

From one end of the square to the other is a distance of less than a hundred yards, but it takes Jean-Marc and Cristabel twenty minutes to cover it. Finally, they are facing the Préfecture, where smoke is gusting from the windows. Now they only have to cross a road to dash through the grand arch that leads into its courtyard. Jean-Marc stops Cristabel and says, 'One at a time, from here. I'll go first, then I'll cover you.' He adjusts his bag, pulls his pistol from his waistband, then sets off running, his gun held up in front of him.

At that moment, a German lorry comes roaring round a corner, with a soldier hanging over its front mudguard, firing wildly. Jean-Marc cries out and falls to the floor, dropping his pistol, his bag hitting the ground with a crash. There are shouts from those in the Préfecture, the lorry's brakes screeching as it swerves into the square, gunfire ricocheting off the buildings. Jean-Marc is lying in the middle of the road, clutching his side, Cristabel still crouched by the building where he left her.

Two stretcher-bearers appear from the Préfecture, waving a small white flag. They begin to make their way towards Jean-Marc but run back to cover when the lorry reverses towards them at speed. The German soldier is still sprawled across its mudguard, spraying bullets. There is thick smoke drifting across the road.

Jean-Marc is trying to push himself up. He is only five yards away. Ten at most. She can reach him. Pull him to safety.

As she sprints towards him, she hears bullets hitting iron street lamps. She drops to her knees next to him, covering his body with hers, and turns her gun on the moving lorry, firing once, twice, at the soldier on the mudguard, who slides off the vehicle, then once straight through the side window at the driver, sending the lorry veering into a tree.

There is the whistle of bullets passing very close by, striking sparks from the paving stones right next to her. She half stands, and turns about, peering through the smoke to see where they are coming from. Someone is running towards her, looking high above her, and as he reaches her, he spins her round so she is shielded as he fires upwards, and she realizes, too late, that there are snipers on the roof of the cathedral. She sees a dark shape outlined against the sky, hears the crack of a rifle, then another, then a silence, a flock of pigeons suddenly taking to the air.

She must be injured, she thinks, for Digby is holding her very tightly. ‘Am I hurt?’ she says. He is leaning heavily against her, pulling her down to the ground. He coughs, and it is a choking wet sound, and when she puts her hands to his back, his shirt is sodden. She sees one of the stretcher-bearers, a man wearing a metal helmet painted with a white cross, come running towards them. The man grabs Cristabel’s hands and presses them against Digby’s back. Then he turns and beckons to a woman who runs towards them holding the stretcher. They take Jean-Marc first, then return for Digby. There is no more gunfire from the cathedral, she notices. Digby must have got him. ‘You got him,’ she tells him, as they carry him on the jolting stretcher. He looks at her and smiles.

One of the large buildings on the edge of the square is a hospital. They have moved all the patients and staff down to the basement, to protect them from the fighting outside. There are no lights, so some of the nurses carry torches. There are about a dozen wounded people – civilians and FFI fighters – lying on wheeled gurneys in dark corridors, or on makeshift beds on the floor, and more are being brought in, the stretcher-bearers struggling up and down the steep stairs.

Jean-Marc is laid on the floor, where a nurse kneels next to him. He is still conscious, groaning with pain. Cristabel is moved to one side, pushed into a corner, as people in medical uniforms crowd around the body of her brother, who has been placed on a metal gurney. She can see his legs writhing. Then a doctor gives him an injection and his legs fall still. From outside, she can hear the clanging of a fire engine’s bell.

She sees a doctor place a hand on Digby’s arm. Then he says something to a nurse, before starting to move away down the corridor. She walks quickly after him, saying, ‘Doctor, is he going to be all right?’

The doctor turns to her; he is a man in his sixties with grey hair and an agitated expression. 'We've given him morphine, to make him more comfortable.'

'That's good,' she says.

'But that is all I can do.'

'What do you mean?'

'They have left me with nothing,' he says. 'I am sorry. We will get you a chair.' He puts his hand on her shoulder, moves on to the next bed.

She follows him. 'There must be something you can do.'

'He has been shot through the lungs. His only chance would be an operation, but I have no equipment, no anaesthetic, nothing. The Germans took it all with them.' There is the loud crump of a powerful explosion outside, the sound of shattering glass in the building above. The medical staff all drop to the floor.

'What does he need?' says Cristabel, crawling closer to the doctor. 'I'll find it.'

'I would stay with him, if I were you,' he says, getting gingerly to his feet. 'He might not have long. Please. I must work.'

She gets up and stands for a moment, then walks back to Digby. His eyes are still open, his breath coming in ragged gasps and coughs. She feels guilty, somehow, almost panicky, that she knows what the doctor has told her, and he does not. She has never liked to keep anything from him. She goes to him and brushes the hair from his face. He is pale. His forehead damp with sweat. She sees him recognize her. He tries to speak, but only manages her name, then Jean's name.

'Jean's all right,' she says, 'they're looking after him.'

She sits on the wooden chair a nurse has brought to the bedside. She knows that, in films, those waiting by the bed usually tell the ones in the bed not to try to speak, but she feels strongly that he should speak, must speak.

She says, 'I didn't spot the sniper. I'm sorry.'

He shakes his head, then coughs and the cough is full of thick blood. He swallows awkwardly, gulps for air, and when he looks at her again, he is further away. His eyelids droop.

'Don't go anywhere, Digs,' she says, 'I'm here. I'm going to stay with you.'

His eyes flicker open. There: his familiar gaze. 'Never doubted,' he manages, then more racking coughs, blood-flecked spittle. His eyes shut and his head nods towards his chest.

She sits in the dark basement, where the nurses run back and forth as the guns rattle outside, and watches him. She feels as if he is going somewhere inside himself, to engage in a struggle that does not include her. From where she sits, the struggle appears strangely ordinary. Merely a man on a bed fighting to breathe,

his chest rising and falling in jerks, little jolts of effort. She looks around for something to break apart the ordinary, some kind of prop. She doesn't even have a handkerchief. She cannot go and find one. This is all she has now.

His eyes flutter open once more, and look at her, then they close and stay closed. His breath is coming more slowly now. She is pinioned, caught in a double agony: both wanting this time to end and wanting it never to end. It is unreal, she thinks, what is actually happening. It is just behind her, huge and unreal and unbearable. She cannot look at it.

(But if she did, what would it be? If she could look her loss in the face, what shape would it be? What colour? Bright blue. Sky blue. Hope blue. A love as big as the sky. How bright and fierce it is. How impossible to extinguish. To think of it gone feels like screaming. He is her brother. He is someone she willed into being. He is inside her and outside her. And she would take all that she has ever had and throw it away in an instant, to be there on the gurney, to fight in his place. She would give away having ever known him to keep him from –)

She will not think of the words. There will be no words that imply an ending. She will not look behind her and she will not look at his shirt, so soaked in blood, or think of the sound of it, the steady dripping on the concrete floor. She will stay calm. She will stay with him.

She picks up his hand, knots their fingers together and says his name. She asks if he remembers when they used to go up on the roof, and his mouth twitches. She says that when he was little, she used to tell him stories until he went to sleep, and she feels the faintest answering squeeze of his hand. She tells him a story about a girl who wished for a brother and the brother who came to her, who was so loved by everyone, and the theatre they made, and the adventures they had, and she keeps telling him this story even when the story takes her right up to the point where she is now, with the brother in front of her, the deeply dreaming brother, his beautiful face so peaceful she could almost believe he was asleep, if she didn't know that he was going so far away, he would never be coming back, and if she hadn't seen that his chest had stopped moving, and so he is –

And so he has –

But perhaps it doesn't end if you keep telling it. Perhaps if she continues to hold his hand and carry on with the story then there won't be an end. She lays her head on the gurney by his head. She moves her mouth to tell the story, even though she seems unable to make any sounds. She stays there. Even when there is a kerfuffle because a nurse comes over and tries to cover him with a sheet, she stays there.

A porter appears with a pencil and a label in his hands and says, 'What's his name?'

‘Denis,’ she says, unmoving. ‘He’s with the Resistance. If you try to put a label on him, I’ll kill you.’

The porter moves on. A nurse who has been mopping the floor nearby comes to the bed and says, ‘Denis. A hero of France.’

Cristabel nods.

‘Do you have somewhere you can go, my dear?’ says the nurse. ‘Do you have family nearby?’ She is a middle-aged North African woman, with black hair tucked under her white nurse’s hat and dark eyes. She looks tired but her voice is steady, courteous. She speaks French with a slight accent.

‘No,’ Cristabel replies. ‘He is my family. This is my place.’

The nurse looks thoughtful. ‘I heard you did not want to have him covered.’

Cristabel shakes her head. ‘No.’

‘I understand,’ says the nurse. She stands looking at Digby, then she walks away. A little while later, she returns carrying a jug and a bowl, and several torn-up strips of fabric. She busies herself with these things in a calm, methodical way, pouring water into the bowl. She says, ‘In my family, we bathe our dead, before we cover them. We make them ready together.’ She dampens a piece of fabric in the water and passes it to Cristabel. ‘Perhaps you could help me to do that.’

Cristabel holds the fabric, watching as the nurse gently begins to wipe away the blood from Digby’s hand, turning it over carefully to wash clean the palm, the creases in his palm, his fingers, the spaces between his fingers. ‘He has beautiful hands,’ says the nurse.

Cristabel releases the hand she is holding and lifts it towards the nurse, so she can clean it too. Then she takes her own piece of fabric and slowly begins to wipe away the dirt on her brother’s face. The salt sweat stains on his forehead. The grime smudged across his cheek.

She watches as the nurse takes a pair of scissors from her pinafore apron and cuts open Digby’s bloodstained shirt, carefully lifting him a little, in order to remove it from his body. Cristabel stands up to help her, as the nurse covers the wounds in his back with a dressing. Then, together, they wipe clean his chest and stomach, his neck and arms. It is soothing, somehow, this task.

When it is done, the nurse says, ‘Now, we must give him his privacy. Can you do that for him?’ She has a white sheet in her hand, which she offers to Cristabel.

Cristabel nods. ‘I can,’ she says, taking the sheet.

When Jean-Marc finds them, late that night, Cristabel is sitting on the concrete floor of the basement beside a gurney that holds Digby’s shrouded body, reaching up so she can still hold her brother’s hand.

What Remains

September, 1944

When Flossie sees the telegraph boy in his smart little cap coming slowly up the drive on his bicycle, she knows instantly what has happened. She just has to wait to find out which of them it is. She feels sorry for the boy, who the villagers have nicknamed 'the Angel of Death', so when he hands her the telegram, she makes sure to thank him politely. He looks abashed.

She takes the piece of paper down to the kitchen without looking at it and puts it face down on the table. She is still sitting there with it when Mr Brewer comes in an hour later. She feels it is a bomb, sitting in her house. A very flat bomb. Mr Brewer sees it and he too knows at once what it is.

'Would you like me to get Betty?' he says.

'No,' Flossie says. 'I will look at it soon.'

He nods. 'Shall I leave you to it?'

'No, stay. Please.' She is worried that when she reads it, she might fly apart in a way that is irreversible. She taps her fingers on the tabletop. She wishes they were here with her, to help her with this bit. Either of them, both of them. 'I must be brave,' she says and pulls the telegram towards her. It is such a fragile thing. Then she turns it over and the words jump out in a muddle, so she has to blink and read them again.

Deeply regret.

Killed in action.

Digby.

When Mr Brewer asks what it says, somebody answers but it is not Flossie, as she is no longer there.

Grief takes Flossie away. It takes her for days and days. Takes her tightly, wraps her so entirely in herself, that she cannot be sure anything exists beyond the arms she has around herself, the ball she is curled in. Sometimes she is shaken by dry juddering sobs, but she has no tears. She is small and hard as a periwinkle. Just an empty shell taking her pain from place to place, hunched over it like a miser.

Like this, she moves through her days, or her days move past her. She doesn't often move. She observes the weeds multiplying in her garden but seems unable to do anything about them. She sits on the beach, watching as the waves come smacking in then draw back, leaving sea foam popping on pebbles, vanishing through the gaps, tiny lights going out.

She stays in this vacant state for over a fortnight, trailed by Toto the cat, who lies next to her whenever he finds her curled on her bed. Betty leaves corned beef

sandwiches on the bedside table. Flossie ignores them until they go away. Mr Brewer appears with a piece of paper, asking her to check the wording of the death announcement for the newspapers, and she closes her eyes and nods blindly.

One day, Flossie opens her eyes to find Maudie sitting on the bed, holding a pile of post. 'All these have come,' says Maudie. 'You should read them.' Maudie is wearing her Fire Watch uniform: a dark boiler suit with solid rubber boots.

Flossie shakes her head. 'No thank you, Maudie.'

Maudie opens the first one and begins to read it out loud. A letter from Digby's old English teacher, talking of his enthusiasm, his imagination. The next one is from a classmate of his at Sherborne, remembering his kindness, his silliness, how he made them all dress up one night in pillowcases.

'Pillowcases?' says Flossie.

'That's what it says,' Maudie confirms, opening the next.

One from a soldier who had served with him in France, remembering how he entertained them with Shakespearean speeches. One from a tank driver who had been with him in North Africa, who wrote of his courage. Each letter is like being shown a different part of Digby.

'This one's from Miss Myrtle,' says Maudie.

'Oh, let me see it,' says Flossie, sitting up to take it from her hand.

Maudie puts the rest of the letters on the bed and stands up.

Flossie looks at her. 'Why are you here, Maudie? Aren't you needed in Weymouth?'

'Betty rang me. Said you needed someone to get you out of bed.'

'I've never been very good at getting up.'

'Like your father,' says Maudie. 'I'll give you the rest of today. Then tomorrow, we get you up and out. No use mouldering in here. All those letters need replying to, for one thing.'

Replying to the letters is not as onerous a task as Flossie first feared, because it is like having a conversation about her brother, and sharing lovely stories, which is something she always liked to do. She takes her replies down to the village to post them, and this means she gets some proper clothes on, and people come and talk to her, and say how sorry they are, and this is all right too, somehow; she pats on her arm, the sympathetic expressions. She supposes many of them have lost someone, and know what it is like to be so entirely hollowed out by sadness, you hardly exist at all, and have to be reminded to brush your hair because you have forgotten it's there.

She goes back down to her garden too, her space between the bones, and finds there is a great deal that needs doing, once she clears away the weeds. Carrots, runner beans and early potatoes, all ready to harvest. The last of the

raspberries too, and then the canes need to be cut down. It is a comfort to have small things that require her attention.

As she works, she considers what she might do with her crops. Betty has a recipe for raspberry shortbread she could try, if she saves up her margarine rations. This imaginative pondering feels as if she is, if not exactly returning to herself, then arranging to meet herself, a little further on.

One day, in late September, she is sitting on the step outside the cottage with a dog-eared novel and a cup of tea, when Cristabel sits down next to her, puts an arm around her shoulders and they lean their heads together. They stay there until it starts to rain, then they go into the cottage, where Flossie puts the kettle on to boil, washes a few mugs. Cristabel walks round the house as if reminding herself of it. Neither speaks. They are quiet in the way people are after great upheaval, moving through what remains. Their actions are the tender brushes of archaeologists, carefully wiping away the dust.

Cristabel picks up the book Flossie is reading and looks at it. 'Have you read *Madame Bovary*? I think you would like it.'

'I haven't,' says Flossie. 'That one's very good though. I always go back to Jane Austen when I want to feel better about the world. She tidies things up for me.'

They take their tea to a small table in the cottage and sit down. After a while, Cristabel says, 'I was with him. When it happened.'

'You poor darling,' says Flossie. 'Was he – was he in a great deal of pain?'

Cristabel shakes her head. 'They gave him morphine.'

Flossie takes a deep breath. 'I might ask more about it another time, but I don't think I can now, if that's all right.'

Cristabel nods and they sit for a moment, listening to the rain outside growing heavier, more insistent. The sound of it hitting the sea is a crackly hiss, like spitting oil in a frying pan.

'What were you doing in France?' says Flossie. 'Were you doing the same kind of thing as Digby? The secret work?'

'Don't tell anyone, but yes. That sort of thing.'

Flossie nods, then says, 'It's ever so silly, but I keep thinking about the fact he just missed his birthday. It was only a few days later. He would have been twenty-three.'

'He would have liked a birthday in Paris,' says Cristabel.

'Oh, he would have adored that,' exclaims Flossie and sighs. After a while, she says, 'What did you do, Crista? Afterwards?'

'I picked up a gun,' Cristabel says, and her eyes are heavy and numb.

Cristabel tells Flossie how she fought with the Resistance until the Allies arrived. Crouching behind a line of sandbags, aiming a rifle down a long

boulevard, existing nowhere but in the midpoint of her crosshairs. How it was pure and righteous to fire a gun then; every recoil of the weapon against her shoulder was an impact she needed. How she and Jean-Marc had been among the crowds that thronged the pavements when de Gaulle marched into Paris, the tall General walking the streets with his arms spread wide like a mighty albatross. How people hung from balconies, climbed up statues, to catch a glimpse of him. How she felt like a pillar of silence, a pillar of salt, in an ecstatic city of noise.

How she had not wanted to leave Jean-Marc, who was so racked by his pain, she wasn't sure he wouldn't turn his gun on himself. How she sat up with him, through his sleepless agonies. How theirs was a curious companionship forged in hard, silent drinking, while the streets outside clamoured with celebration. How one night the power had suddenly come back on all over Paris, turning on every light at once, radios suddenly blaring from apartments across the city, and how this had been a terrible glare, a spotlight that showed them each other, wincing, huddled in chairs, like furtive things uncovered.

How one morning she woke up, hung-over and liverish, and went for a swim in the Seine, let herself sink until her lungs were bursting, and when she surfaced, knew it was time to go home.

She made contact with the American Army, who got her to a working telephone, which got her through to London, where a pleasant WAAF with a soft Devon accent promised to find her a place on the next plane home and a few nights in a hotel for a bit of a rest, as if she were booking a holiday, rather than returning from a battle. She flew home in a Lysander with two British commandos, one carrying a huge bottle of Chanel perfume. Debriefed in a hotel in Bayswater. Slept for twenty-four hours solid.

It was then that she saw Leon and used his body as something to fall into, over and over, until there was nothing left of her but the marks she left on him and he on her, but she does not tell Flossie this. There had been a dark oblivion at the edge of those nights, which Leon could allow, but she does not wish to bring it with her.

Cristabel instead tells Flossie how she had been given back her old civilian clothes – kept neat and folded by a secretary in the Org, her saggy stockings treated reverently as relics – then caught a train home to Dorset, thinking that somewhere, in a back office in Baker Street, there must be Digby's old clothes, still neat and folded and waiting.

'I haven't been into his room yet,' says Flossie.

'I don't believe I can go into the attic ever again,' says Cristabel. 'We might have to burn the whole place down. Would probably save us money in the long run.'

‘Actually, Bill and I have some ideas on that front. We’re making investments, in property, and we plan to advertise for paying guests. I’m sure you never thought I would be a career woman.’

‘I met a man once who told me that war allows us to rise in ways that would otherwise be impossible. Although, I think you would have always risen, Floss.’

‘Like dough,’ says Flossie brightly.

They laugh together and Cristabel feels the weight inside her shift a little.

‘Crista, I was thinking I would go back to the Land Army,’ says Flossie. ‘It would give me something to do.’

‘That’s a good idea. I might go to London. Stay with Myrtle. Or Leon, if he’s about.’

‘You’d stay with Leon? Are you and he ...?’

‘No. No, no.’

Flossie raises her eyebrows. ‘That sounds like one of *those* no’s.’

‘What no’s?’

‘The kind that don’t feel confident on their own, that need a few friends around them.’

‘No.’

‘Another little friend.’

‘Stop it.’

Flossie smiles and says, ‘It’s none of my business what you do, Crista. I do know these things aren’t always straightforward.’

They look at one another for a moment, with fondness and interest, then Flossie says, ‘If we go away, Betty and Bill could have some time off. Their son’s in hospital in Plymouth. I know they’d like to visit him.’

‘Yes,’ says Cristabel. ‘Let’s shut the place up for a while.’

Cristabel travels back to London. She takes with her a book, planning to relish a train journey that can be enjoyed without anxiety, but doesn’t read a word, simply sits looking out of the window as England rolls past: muddy farmland and stone cottages; woods where the leaves are starting to change colour.

At Winchester, two middle-aged women in expensive coats and hats board the train. They do not acknowledge her as they enter the compartment. Instead, they take their seats and continue a conversation that Cristabel senses has been going on for some time.

‘I said as much to Hugh, they cannot expect us to go another winter without proper hot baths,’ says the first, snapping her handbag clasp firmly shut.

‘I worry we’ve quite forgotten ourselves,’ replies the other. ‘We’ve all made sacrifices, and gladly so, but at some point, life must return to normal.’

‘You have it exactly,’ says the first. ‘Must we wait for every hamlet in Europe to be liberated before we fill the car with petrol?’

They laugh, then one turns to Cristabel and says, ‘I’m sure you feel the same. Must be frightful to be young in such dull, penny-pinching times.’

Cristabel can see from how they examine her that they find her hard to place. Battered walking shoes, yes, but good quality. A decent skirt and jacket, but a foreign-looking blouse. A strong profile, but tanned as a workman, and a curious indifference in the way her long body is arranged across the seat. No handbag whatsoever.

As they regard her, they adjust their own clothes – a draped cashmere scarf, a fur stole – as if adjusting robes. With their upright posture and tight twists of silver hair, there is something of the judiciary about them. They consider it their right to inspect her, and she knows what they see. She is, after all, of their kind. Or was.

Ever since Paris, she has felt that whatever was once Cristabel is no longer there. Every part of her, her heart and her bones, from the tips of her ears to the tips of her toes, has crumbled. She has fallen away, a chalk cliff slumping into the sea. She is not what she was. She is a space where something once stood, a pile of stones and dust, waiting to be rebuilt.

Cristabel says, ‘I do not feel the same.’

‘Why ever not?’ says the first woman, looking down her nose as if looking down a staircase.

Cristabel can hear the furious muffled shouting of her former self, desperate to inform these women that they know nothing of sacrifice. But that self is buried now, and she is tired. There are only so many battles one can fight.

These women belong to her dead life and are as ghosts to her. She will let them pass through her as the train is passing through England, flashing by in her peripheral vision: small houses, small fields, small houses, small fields. She stares at the women until they look away, then turns back to the window.

Cristabel returns to Baker Street. The building is as poorly lit and draughty as it ever was. Not as busy now, many of the offices are deserted: there is only the occasional clatter of the teleprinter from the signals room, and the odd messenger pushing a squeaking trolley down an empty corridor. She eventually finds Joan, her former conducting officer, packing things into a cardboard box.

Joan gives her a firm hug. ‘Good to see you. How was it?’

Cristabel pauses. ‘I don’t know how to sum it up.’

‘No, I imagine it must be a lot to contend with.’

Cristabel gestures to the box. ‘Off somewhere?’

‘Transferred to the Foreign Office. Not much for me to do here any more.’

‘Good luck,’ says Cristabel, then, ‘Joan, I wondered if anything had been heard from Sophie Leray. I know she was captured, and then taken away in a train.’

‘We hoped we would find our people in the prisons when we got to Paris, but it appears they were all cleared out. We’re assuming the Germans are keeping valuable prisoners to use as hostages.’

‘Will you let me know, if you hear anything?’

‘I will,’ says Joan. ‘Good luck to you too, Gilberte.’

‘Cristabel,’ says Cristabel, holding out her hand.

Cristabel heads back down the corridor, towards the stairs that will take her out of the building, when she sees, through an office doorway, a familiar figure. Colonel Peregrine Drake, reclining in a chair, his hat on a desk, laughing at something someone on the other side of the desk has said. He senses he is being watched and turns his gaze on her. ‘Cristabel.’

‘Hello,’ she says. ‘How are you? I didn’t know you would be here.’

‘I pop in,’ he says, then stands and approaches her, puts a hand on her arm. ‘I was so sorry to hear about Digby. I hoped he would make it through.’

‘So did I,’ she says.

‘But you came back,’ he says, ‘and I’m sure your family are enormously thankful.’

‘I haven’t seen Uncle Willoughby for years,’ she says. ‘I don’t think he has any idea of what’s gone on.’

Perry politely allows this to pass, then turns to the person on the other side of the desk and says, ‘Cristabel Seagrave. One of the Org’s girls. Went into France.’

Cristabel doesn’t have to enter the room to know the type of man sitting there. A brigadier or general. Stiff moustache. Carpeted with medals. A sense of him being hunched over something, defending it, and angry to be interrupted in the act of defending it. She steps in anyway and salutes, a gesture that feels awkward in her civilian clothes. ‘Sir.’

He is a brigadier. ‘Good to have you back,’ he says.

Perry says, ‘But why are you here, Cristabel? Surely you should be at home. You must have missed it terribly.’

‘I’m trying to find out if anything’s been heard from a girl I trained with. She was captured.’

Perry nods. ‘We’re all keen to know more about those who are missing. The difficulty we face is that, if we circulate the details of women agents in an effort to find them, it means admitting they were there.’

‘They were there,’ she says.

‘Not officially,’ he replies.

‘We’re doing all we can,’ says the brigadier.

Empty Houses

September, 1944

The telephone rings, its shrill summons echoing through Chilcombe, but there is nobody to answer it. The house is empty. There is just the *click* and *tunk* of water pipes. The uncoordinated chiming of unwound clocks.

Unread post piles up behind the door. Circulars and condolence cards. Letters from a military chaplain travelling across France.

A box of records waits by a dusty gramophone. Parched potted palms press themselves to unwashed windows. Heavy books in the study talk only among themselves, if they talk at all. Dust motes take flight on perilous journeys across vacant spaces.

In other valleys and villages, other houses, much the same. Unaffordable manors left bare, heirless; hollow mausoleums.

The dust motes alight on the grand fireplaces, where the cobweb-covered marble surrounds have a pattern within them: the tightly packed fossils of freshwater snails, who were making their way along the pebbly bottoms of streams, before time and weight and money brought them here, crushed and immobile, calcified structures so finely polished that it is easy to forget they were ever anything else.

Uniforms

October, 1944

The kitchen door is so swollen and stiff with autumn rain, Cristabel has to put her shoulder to it to force it open. Inside is gloomy and dark. There is a tap dripping into an empty sink. Flossie follows her in, exclaiming, 'Goodness, it's freezing in here.'

'There's an untoward smell,' says Cristabel.

'I fear Toto's been hiding dead things again,' says Flossie.

Betty bustles past them, heading determinedly towards the kettle. 'Cup of tea'll help.'

Bill is next, followed by Maudie and Toto the cat, his tail quivering with delight at the return of human company.

'I've found a couple of girls in the village who'll come in and clean the place next week,' says Bill.

'Then we'll be all ready for our first paying guests,' says Flossie, swiping away a cobweb.

'I'll go up and check the main house now,' he says.

Cristabel watches Bill disappear along the dark corridor, hears his footsteps heading upwards. She feels that she is as far into the house as she is able to go, that this underground bunker is reasonably safe, but above her, the waiting rooms are full of pain, strung about with danger like hidden mines waiting to be triggered.

'How many people are coming to stay, Floss?' she asks, opening a kitchen drawer, looking for candles and matches but finding only croquet balls and old dog collars.

'We've had five responses to our advertisement so far,' says Flossie.

Betty clucks and shakes her head. 'There are preservation societies,' she says, filling the kettle, 'that look after historic houses, so you don't need to have any old Tom, Dick or Harry staying in them.'

'I'm not giving Chilcombe to a preservation society,' says Cristabel, 'not my half, anyway. Floss might give them hers.'

'There are so many people who need somewhere to live, Betty,' says Flossie. 'There's a girl I know from the Land Army who just got married, but she and her husband can't find anywhere they can afford.'

'When I think of what it used to be like, with Mrs Rosalind and her lovely parties,' sighs Betty, taking the kettle to the stove. 'She always wanted everything just so. Hasn't been the same since.'

Flossie retrieves dusty teaspoons from a cupboard while Betty continues to reminisce about Chilcombe before the war. She feels disengaged from the older woman's nostalgia. As a child, whenever she crept down from the attic, eager to glimpse one of her mother's parties, it had never been the romantic scene she envisaged. It had been loud and careless. People falling over, arguing, spilling drinks.

Once, peering over the gallery, she had seen Rosalind, wearing a revealing harlequin costume, sprawled across the lap of a masked man, while Willoughby in a toga banged on the piano. Rosalind had tried to attract her husband's attention but succeeded only in falling out of her costume and slipping to the floor, while Willoughby glanced at her and glanced away again, as if it were something commonplace, a matter of no concern.

Flossie ran back to bed and pulled the covers over her head to shut out the sight of her mother so scandalously exposed. But in the morning, she had seen them both at the breakfast table, sipping tea, reading newspapers, as if everything had always been normal. It made her feel the night was an earthquake that opened a crack in the floor, sending everything sliding, plummeting, and then closed up again, so neatly you would never know. That she was, somehow, the one mistaken.

To preserve Chilcombe as it was then, feels dishonest to her somehow. It would continue that slippery feeling of nothing being as it seemed.

'Where's Miss Cristabel going to stay if there's strangers in her bedroom?' says Betty, now rounding up teacups as if they were disobedient children.

'I'll be at the cottage,' says Cristabel. 'I have work to do at the theatre.'

There is a silence in the musty room, then Flossie says, 'Are you sure?'

'Quite sure,' says Cristabel.

Flossie says cautiously, 'Might it not be time to try something else?'

'No, I don't think so.'

'Sometimes we stick at things because we feel we ought to,' says Flossie, carefully putting her clinking handful of teaspoons on the table, 'but you know, people say a change is as good as a rest.'

'I'm not interested in what people say,' says Cristabel, putting her hands in her pockets. 'You think I'm being stubborn, Floss, and you're right. But stubbornness has got me this far. Where I've been mistaken is in its application. I thought I should do the same old plays in the same old way. That's where I was wrong.'

'Once Miss Cristabel gets an idea in her head, she won't be dissuaded,' says Betty.

'Well,' says Flossie. 'I'm sure you'll find plenty to be getting on with.'

There is the sound of Bill's steady tread coming along the corridor, then he reappears with a pile of post. 'Letters for you,' he says, handing them to Flossie.

Flossie peers at them curiously, then opens the first, reading it quickly, before holding a hand to her mouth. 'Oh, poor George.'

'Who's George?' says Cristabel.

'A friend. He's in hospital in Brussels,' says Flossie, rapidly opening another letter. 'He had shrapnel in him, and they had to operate to take it out.'

'Imagine shooting shrapnel at a man of the cloth,' says Betty.

Flossie sits down, still reading. 'He says he's been thinking of our musical evenings.'

'What's this?' says Cristabel, pulling towards her a cardboard box that is sitting on the kitchen table.

Flossie looks up. 'Oh, Crista, that's Digby's clothes and books. From his room. I asked Betty to pack it up. I thought you might want to –'

Cristabel hastily pushes the box away from her. 'Seal it up, Betty. Put it away.'

Betty puts the teapot on the table with a sudden thump that surprises them all, and says in a tearful voice, 'I keep telling myself it's a blessing in disguise that Mrs Rosalind doesn't ever have to know she's lost her darling boy.'

The others are silent for a moment, while Betty hunts in her apron for a handkerchief, then Bill moves next to his wife and says, 'Miss Flossie, Miss Cristabel, Betty and I were wondering, has anyone spoken to Mr Willoughby? To let him know about Master Digby.'

Flossie and Cristabel look at each other. Flossie says, 'I put a notice in *The Times*.'

'There's no telling if he saw it,' sniffs Betty.

'We haven't heard from him for a long time,' says Bill.

'Not a peep,' says Betty, blowing her nose.

'He wasn't the most traditional of fathers,' says Bill, 'but to lose a son.'

'No, you're quite right,' says Flossie, 'we should find him. Does anybody know where he is?'

'Last I heard, he was trying to buy a seaplane somewhere near Limerick,' says Bill, 'but that was over a year ago now.'

'I don't even know if you can travel to Ireland,' says Flossie. 'Is it allowed? Who would go?'

'I'd go,' says Maudie. They all turn to look at her. She is leaning by the back door, half in and half out of the building, wearing rubber boots and her dark-coloured boiler suit, with a whistle hanging round her neck and an armband that reads *Fire Guard*. Her wild hair is tied back, and she has propped her tin helmet by the sink. 'It is allowed, but you need a passport and a permit.'

‘How do you know that, Maudie?’ says Cristabel.

‘I had a lover from Ireland,’ says Maudie.

Cristabel is surprised to hear such a sentence come from the maid, but Maudie doesn’t look like a maid any more, this rangy woman in her thirties, dropping her cigarette end on the floor outside and grinding it beneath her boot. Cristabel wonders why Maudie is in uniform, given that she’s not on duty, but knows a uniform can be hard to relinquish. Her own civvy clothes – functional shirts and twill trousers – are as close to military dress as she can get, while Flossie still looks like a lady gardener, in floral headscarves and hand-knitted cardigans. Cristabel imagines a wartime uniform, with its anonymity and status, might be even more appealing if your original outfit belonged to a subservient role.

‘I don’t want your loose talk in my kitchen, Maudie Kitcat,’ says Betty, ‘you can keep that for those dirty sailors’ pubs.’

‘Betty, it’s all right,’ says Flossie. ‘Maudie has boyfriends. Lots of people have boyfriends.’

‘Wouldn’t call them boyfriends,’ says Maudie.

‘I might be able to help you with the paperwork,’ says Cristabel, thinking of the secretaries at the Org, who seemed able to summon official papers out of thin air. She moves towards Maudie at the back door. The October sky outside is grey and a fine rain is falling, but the fresh air is a relief compared to the stale house.

‘I could give you a hand clearing out the cottage,’ says Maudie.

‘We could pop down now, see what needs doing, if you don’t mind the rain,’ says Cristabel.

‘Tea’ll be ready soon,’ says Betty.

‘Bit of mizzle never hurt,’ says Maudie.

One month later. Late afternoon. Maudie. Stepping from Holyhead Harbour on to the gangway leading to a ferry that goes to Ireland. The first time she has ever left land. The first time she has ever left anywhere. She sees the choppy water slapping sullenly against the harbour wall beneath her, and it thrills her.

The ferry is crowded. Standing room only. Baggage piled up in the corridors, with children perched on top. Suitcases, trunks, cages full of chickens. Maudie is crammed on to the front deck, beside a family that tell her the journey is bad, but the customs officials in Ireland are worse. They’ll confiscate everything, and you’ll only get it back weeks later, if you get it at all. But it’s a rare treat, they say, to leave the blackout behind and to sail to Dublin, where all the lights in the harbour will be shining on the water.

She is hardly listening. She is leaning on the swaying guardrail, feeling the boat come juddering to life beneath her, its thunderous propellers starting to turn. The ferry gives an ear-splitting blast on its horn as it chugs out of the harbour,

escorted by gulls flying low over the water, leaving behind hilltops covered with cloud.

Maudie looks down at the churning ocean, the tumult of white peeling away from the bows, as the ferry makes its way out to the wild winter sea. There is a following swell, which lifts the boat and carries it forward, in long surges, as if it were being scooped up by a giant's hand.

She is no longer on dry land. She is no longer in any place at all. She is held up only by water, which is capricious and powerful and cares for nothing. She thinks of her grandfather, the smuggler, who even when he'd been bedridden for years, still felt the rocking of the ocean. She understands it now: once you know a life outside obedience, you keep it with you.

The wind is picking up and the sky darkening as the ferry ploughs its way into the Irish Sea, freezing spray from the waves blowing on to the decks. The passengers huddle together and watch with curiosity as Maudie opens the small suitcase she has with her, pulls out her maid's white apron, carefully ironed and packed by Betty, and drops it over the edge of the boat, a writhing pale spirit flying over the water. Betty had pressed the apron into her hands, saying it might come in handy, you never know, then unexpectedly clasped Maudie to her wide bosom like a mother with a child. How peculiar to be embraced by a woman. Warm and soft and peculiar. Maudie watches as the apron is swallowed by a wave. When this pitching ferry crosses to the other side, she will step off into the future as someone new.

Victory Pageant

May, 1945

‘Can we try that again?’ says the cameraman.

‘Very well,’ says the producer. ‘Take four. Mrs Seagrave –’

‘Miss.’

‘Miss Seagrave, if you could stand on the lawn there and provide us with a brief explanation of what this wheelbarrow is for.’

‘I told you. I used it to build up a raised section of my theatre, to create better seating.’

‘I know that,’ the producer replies, a slight edge to his voice, ‘however, as I have said, we need to film you explaining how you did it for our viewers.’

‘You’ve filmed me explaining at least three times already,’ says Cristabel. ‘How many do you need? I have things to do.’

‘What we’re trying to achieve here,’ says the producer, pinching the bridge of his nose, ‘is to give our audience a real sense of your theatre. How unusual it is. Such a unique venue for a celebration. One moment, let me write that down. “A unique venue – some may say rather eccentric –” No, hold on. “A rather eccentric but very British production, celebrating the end of hostilities in Europe, in rural Dorsetshire.” Yes, that’s it.’

‘How long will this take?’

‘We’ll finish this scene, then we’ll get footage of excited local people arriving. After that, we’ll need shots of the performance itself, but we’ll endeavour not to be intrusive. Can you remind me again what the show is?’

‘It opens with a victory pageant performed by children from the village, dressed as those who helped us win the war. Soldiers, firemen, nurses and so on. They sing songs, led by my sister Flossie. After that, I put on a show for the children, featuring creatures that eat people.’

‘I remember you saying something about puppets?’

‘Giant puppets. I created them using papier mâché and fabric on wire frames, and also through the adaptation of some stuffed animals we had in the house.’

‘Yes, I did note that. You said you had a local lad we could film?’

‘Norman. He’s waiting there, dressed as a Frenchman.’

‘Perfect. Over here, Norman. Those are splendid onions. How are you feeling on this special day?’

‘Happy because Hitler is dead. Can you film my dog? He’s got a ribbon on.’

‘The telephone’s ringing,’ says Cristabel and leaves the camera crew, to go back inside.

It had taken a while to pluck up the courage, but Cristabel can go into the main house now, as long as she sticks to the ground floor. Once Flossie's paying guests were installed, Chilcombe felt different, more accessible. There is a brass letter tray, holding a pile of post for other people. A coat stand with many different coats. A variety of outdoor footwear marking the comings and goings of other people who have their own keys, who know it only as their new lodgings, who have questions about hot water and use of the gardens. The house has developed the stoic functionality of shared accommodation, with fraying rugs and chipped paintwork, although Flossie makes sure there are always fresh flowers on the piano.

Cristabel never ventures upstairs, but she knows Bill has cleaned out the attic for a young widow with four small children. She hears the children sometimes, galloping down the stairs, or plonking away on the piano, encouraged enthusiastically by Flossie if she finds them there. ('That's it, Martin! Hands together!')

The study is now an office, used by Flossie and Mr Brewer as a place to keep their rent books and meet with tenants. Flossie has installed a filing cabinet; the desk is covered with a mixture of utility bills and seed catalogues, and there are tomato plants on the window sill. When Cristabel goes in to pick up the telephone receiver, the first thing she hears is a torrent of static, then a familiar voice says, 'Cristabel?'

'Leon?'

'Oh, now you answer.'

'I answered straight away.'

'I try many times.'

'I only just heard it ringing. Where are you?'

'On my way to Berlin with Colonel Drake.'

'You're in Germany?'

'I don't know if you could give it a name any more. There is nothing left but rubble.'

'What's that noise in the background?'

'Americans. They are happy because everyone is pleased to see them. But you haven't asked.'

'Haven't asked what?'

'Why I have telephoned.'

'Why have you?'

'I saw your photograph in the newspaper, with Flossie smiling and waving a big flag. I liked to see the whalebones. Someone very strong must have put those up.'

‘Gosh, you saw it too? Everyone seems to have seen it. There’s some people here today from Pathé News, come to film us.’

‘Was it your idea, to have victory shows at the whale?’

‘Yes, although Floss helped out with the music, and we roped in some villagers to make costumes and props.’

‘You should be glad, no? Is good publicity.’

‘I am glad. Rather a surprise actually. The telephone’s been ringing constantly, with people wanting to come along.’

There is a crackly silence on the other end that she recognizes as one of Leon’s natural silences. One of the qualities she most likes about him is that he never feels obliged to fill pauses with politeness. She listens to his silence as it passes through the thin wires between them, covering hundreds of miles, existing both there, in the ruins of Germany, and here, with her, in this room. It is reassuring to listen to. She leans her head against the receiver.

‘How is it, with you, now?’ he says, after a while.

‘All right if I don’t look up.’

‘You don’t need to look up. Not yet. One boot after the other.’

‘You’ll come and see me for a vodka when you get back?’

‘I will. And I will come to one of your performances, once we are finished dividing up Germany. But I am running out of money so –’

He is gone and the silence on the other end is empty. She puts the receiver down but stands in the study for a moment, thinking of the newspaper reports she had seen, describing the horrors the Allies were finding as they advanced into Germany, the camps full of starving prisoners. There were photographs she could hardly bear to look at, although she forced herself to, studying the skeletal faces, in case there was one she recognized. She wonders what Leon has seen, what he will see, whether he will be the same when he comes back, one boot after the other.

The drawing room at Chilcombe has remained a communal room, where tenants can congregate for conversation and board games. They were hesitant at first, preferring the informality of the kitchen, but since the weather has become warmer, they have gathered there more frequently, and several of them are there now, making polite conversation with some of the intriguing guests who have arrived to see the newest production at the theatre: a week-long run of performances celebrating victory in Europe.

‘Oh, Crista, there you are,’ says Flossie, already in costume and carrying a tray with some glasses and a jug of lemonade. ‘Some children have run off with the bunting and I fear Betty will go berserk if we can’t get it back. She spent all week sewing it. George has pursued them into the stables, but that only seems to have encouraged them.’

‘To run from the priest in my village was always a great sport when I was a girl in Germany,’ says Lieselotte, in heavily accented English. ‘We would torment him until he was demented.’

‘Are you being sufficiently looked after, Lieselotte?’ says Cristabel. ‘Have you had something to eat?’

Lieselotte nods. She is in a black-and-white checked dress, like a chessboard, with a black ostrich feather hat and a handbag that appears to be made from molten cutlery. The Chilcombe tenant who has been cornered by her – a nervous young dentist from Tavistock – has an expression somewhere between terror and awe.

‘I believe I have had a Scots egg,’ Lieselotte says, ‘I don’t believe I want any more. This young man has been kind enough to provide me with champagne. He has an interest in molars, he tells me, and gum health.’

‘There’s masses of champagne,’ says Cristabel. ‘We found bottles that had been stashed away at the start of the war. It’s probably obscenely expensive.’

‘This is as it should be,’ says Lieselotte, smiling at the dentist. ‘We are celebrating the defeat of an evil that would have ended us all.’

‘Here’s George with the bunting!’ cries Flossie. ‘Do you require lemonade, George?’

‘No, thank you, Flossie, you’re very kind, but I think I’ll survive,’ says George, a little flushed in his dark chaplain’s outfit. ‘I rather enjoyed the chance to have a look around while I was running after the children. I found this in the stables –’

‘Oh, Crista, look,’ exclaims Flossie. ‘It’s your wooden sword.’

‘Then I must return it to its rightful owner,’ says George, passing it to Cristabel with a smile, before turning to help Flossie put down the tray on a side table. Then he and Flossie turn simultaneously to welcome another tenant who is lingering by the doorway, to shepherd her into the room and provide her with refreshments.

Cristabel can see how well matched they are, already operating as a partnership, even though Flossie keeps blushingly insisting they are ‘still getting to know one another’. Both possess a natural outward quality. It is not a quality Cristabel has. Or rather, it is something she has to remind herself of. Other people. Their feelings. She is always so focused on what she is doing, whereas Flossie will stop, and look around.

She tries it now, nodding at the newly arrived tenant, the harassed mother of the children in the attic, who is wearing a plain dress and old stockings and nervously holding a glass of home-made lemonade while staring at the oil painting on the wall beside her.

‘Painted by a Russian artist who used to stay with us,’ says Cristabel. ‘He had an unusual way of seeing things.’

‘Those funny animals with big heads,’ says the woman, ‘they look like your puppets.’

Cristabel laughs. ‘I suppose they do.’

‘My lot love being in your show,’ says the woman. ‘It’s kept them out of my hair for weeks.’

‘I’m glad,’ says Cristabel.

‘They’re mad for those puppets too,’ says the woman. ‘They keep acting out the story when they’re meant to be in bed. About the sprite and the monster living on an island. Did you come up with it all by yourself?’

‘It’s based on a play I already knew, with additional material provided by my friend Norman,’ says Cristabel. She looks at the wooden sword in her hands, then says, ‘I don’t suppose your lot would like this, would they?’

‘They’d like it very much,’ says the woman, ‘but they’d most likely break something with it.’

‘That’s what it’s for,’ says Cristabel, handing it to her. ‘My Uncle Willoughby gave it to me a long time ago, and he would be keen that it continue to break things.’

She thinks of Willoughby then, as she often does, wondering how he is. There had been a telegram from Maudie at Christmas, reporting that she had found Willoughby and requesting that a photograph of Digby be sent to an address in Dingle, County Kerry. After that, only a card on Cristabel’s birthday in March with a picture of a seaplane on the front and a message in Willoughby’s looping handwriting saying he was raising a glass of Guinness to her, with a postscript adding that Maudie might one day make an admirable co-pilot, followed by a huge exclamation mark.

She can’t quite believe he would take Maudie up in a seaplane. She suspects this is boastful bar talk. But she likes to imagine he might. She likes to imagine their seaplane soaring above the rugged coast of Ireland, heading out over the ocean. Both in flying jackets and goggles, maybe even flying down to Egypt; a pair of runaways. That is the story she conjures for him, while knowing that his reality may be rather more soaked in grief and alcohol, the slow dissolve of the grandiloquent drunk in the pub corner. Perry once said of Willoughby that there was a strain of Englishmen who could not bear to be in England. She knows he is happier elsewhere, not being heard from, held in her imagination. Her glamorous travelling uncle.

Flossie appears and says, ‘It’s nearly six o’clock. The audience will be arriving.’

The sisters step out on to the lawn and look up at the sky. It is one of those changeable, breezy spring days that could go either way. It had rained heavily early that morning, a sudden downpour as the bells in the village church rang out across the valley, and large clouds are still moving over the Ridgeway, but it might hold.

The camera crew, tired of waiting for Cristabel, have moved up the drive to film audience members arriving, a crowd of chattering people, dressed smartly for the occasion, men in suits or uniforms and women with bright lipstick on tired faces, holding babies with red, white and blue ribbons in their wisps of hair. They are heading towards the stone pillars, between which hangs Cristabel's new sign welcoming them to: THE WHALEBONE THEATRE.

She is pleased she managed to get it up in time for Lieselotte to see it when she arrived, the paint practically still wet, and she is delighted by the gaudy lettering in red and gold, with an image of a spouting whale, painted by a signwriter who works for travelling circuses. It has exactly the right amount of exuberance and ridiculousness: designed to excite children and to remind adults of the children they were.

Much of the same spirit has gone into decorating the route across the lawn, which is lined with stuffed animals painted cheerful colours, and where youngsters from the village dressed in an array of costumes – airmen, nurses, cowboys – are now handing out hand-drawn programmes. Nearby plants and bushes are decorated with old Christmas baubles and colourful strands of wool, like knitted spider webs.

Cristabel marches across the lawn in order to hurry through the woods before the audience. The path through the trees has been festooned with paper streamers and some old Chinese lanterns she found in the barn, which will light up like fireflies when it gets dark.

At the theatre, in the space where the seats once stood, there is now a raised section, like a wide set of stairs, made from sand and stones from the beach, with wooden planks to sit on. Early arrivals are already making their way up. They have brought Thermos flasks and picnics, treats put by for this long-awaited victory. Bacon and egg pie. Tinned grapefruit segments. Bottles of beer. Blankets and raincoats too, because you can never trust the English weather. In front of the raised seating stand the whalebones, draped with the flags of many nations, and illuminated by powerful searchlights borrowed from the naval base at Portland for one week only.

In the barn, Cristabel's giant puppets wait, lolling against the walls, along with those who will operate them: a trio of budding actors found by placing an advertisement in the local paper; a couple of acrobats discovered at the circus when she went to meet her signwriter; and a young woman who was part of the

Chilcombe Mell Sewing Circle until she heard Betty complaining about her sewing machine being used to create monsters, and came to join them.

Cristabel has made her home in the cottage by the sea, but she cannot enter it today, as Betty has been in there since dawn making trifles from packet jelly and old cake crusts, along with endless rounds of sandwiches, and is now loudly pointing out to anyone who approaches that, down in the village, it's street parties and singalongs, but she's slaving in a kitchen and you can hardly call that a celebration, while also refusing to leave her post, stubborn as a gunner, because she can't trust anyone else to do it properly. Cristabel recognizes these grievances as Betty's own song, to be sung proudly as an anthem at times of importance, and she dare not interrupt.

Cristabel stands by the whalebones for a moment, looking out over the sea. Huge clouds move across it, their shadows darkening the water beneath them. Along the curve of the coast, there are bonfires on beaches and clifftops, and groups of people splashing into the cold waves, while the battleships in Portland Harbour give occasional blasts on their mighty horns.

The Prime Minister had said on the radio that their task was not yet complete, but they should allow themselves a 'brief period of rejoicing' to mark the end of the war with Germany. Cristabel tries to summon some feeling of celebration, but it seems muted, as if happening somewhere in the distance. But she is glad it is happening and there are things she can do, useful things, so she turns her attention to the bones, to arrange the flags, and prepare the stage.

Flossie and George are ushering the last of the guests towards the path through the trees, when a military Jeep crunches up the gravel drive and out comes the imposing figure of Myrtle in a trailing red velvet dress, carrying her high heels and holding on to a red, white and blue paper hat, which threatens to take off in the wind.

Her voice resounds across the lawn. 'Flossie, darling!'

'So glad you made it, Myrtle,' calls Flossie. 'What a lovely dress.'

'My curtains, darling, sacrificed for fashion. Who needs curtains when the blackout's over?' says Myrtle, blowing a kiss at the departing Jeep. 'But look at you – is that gold lamé? You're proud and dazzling, like the Statue of Liberty.'

'I am the Statue of Liberty,' replies Flossie. 'I'm representing America in our pageant, although I've lost my burning torch.'

George is waiting politely nearby and Myrtle heads towards him, stepping gingerly across the gravel in bare feet, saying, 'I may need to lean on this man. It's bedlam on the trains, my sweet. Riotous scenes. I joined a party of Polish airmen so I'm slightly too well refreshed.'

'Myrtle, this is George,' says Flossie. 'Don't lean on him too hard. He was injured. He was with the troops on D-Day.'

‘I’ll let you know if I’m about to collapse,’ says George.

‘Beautiful and brave, darling. What a catch,’ says Myrtle, stroking George’s hair. ‘Are you faring well, Flossie?’

‘Sometimes,’ says Flossie. ‘Some days are better than others.’

‘Digby would never want you to be woeful, my sweet,’ says Myrtle.

‘It’s strange,’ says Flossie, ‘because this is such a happy time, but I weep whenever I see the children in their costumes. I keep forcing cake on them, and it’s not even nice cake.’

‘We must celebrate when we can, darling. It doesn’t come around often,’ says Myrtle and embraces Flossie. She smells of French cigarettes and heady perfume, and her make-up is smudged into the lines around her eyes. She looks older now, a little timeworn, but still extravagantly Myrtle, and when Flossie looks at her, she sees a refusal to be anything less. She wonders what George must make of Myrtle, although he seems unperturbed. Nor has he minded spending the day with a woman dressed as the Statue of Liberty. Perhaps a chaplain is more familiar with the peculiarities of human behaviour than most, which makes him surprisingly well suited to being part of her family, and although Flossie is aware that her romantic thoughts have, once again, got ahead of themselves, this time, she doesn’t feel too far behind them.

Flossie looks at her watch and says, ‘George, do you mind taking Myrtle to the theatre? I’ll round up any stragglers, then follow you down.’

‘Not at all,’ says George, and as they make their way into the trees, she can hear Myrtle exclaiming over his divinely Celtic accent.

Flossie peers down the drive and looks round the garden, which is rather shaggy and overgrown, in need of some tidying, but also as green and blossomy as only a garden in May can be. She sticks her head into the house and calls out to check there is nobody left, but Chilcombe is dark and empty. There is just the solemn ticking of the grandfather clock. Then she pulls the door shut, and heads through the trees towards the sea, because the performance is about to begin.

..... / / / / /
..... / / / / / /
..... / / / / /

ENCORE

C to D

I thought of the day you died today. I think of it most days. I thought of how I loved you before you even existed, and how I love you now, when you no longer exist. Which of course makes a nonsense of the whole idea of existence and leaves only love. This, dear brother, is the kind of sentimental flannel I am prone to now. Although, it also happens to be true.

People make many assumptions about women, most of them fatuous, and one is that we somehow lack clarity. That we are vague and silly. Personally, I consider certainty to be a kind of arrogance.

I knew EVERYTHING when I was twelve years old, and with each year of my life, I know a little less, and there is a freedom in that. You have space for a good deal more. I always find it instructive to talk to school parties who visit the theatre, to hear their ideas about how it might be used. There is always more to be done, you see.

I'm hopeful by the end of the year we will be able to offer week-long stays at Chilcombe, for students keen on the dramatic arts. Won't that be something? I have an idea that one day we could turn the house into some kind of permanent educational facility, to sit alongside the theatre, although I'm told making alterations to an ancient building is a Sisyphean task. I also have an idea for a version of Romeo and Juliet where the characters are insects, but I'll save that for my next letter as it requires drawings.

Had to have builders come and look at the tiered seating as it's crumbling at the edges. Still, it's lasted a good few years. Not bad for something I constructed myself. I always think of those seats as ones that I built with grief. It was after I came back from France, and it was something physical I could do that tired me out so I could sleep.

Flossie, George and the boys are coming for my birthday lunch tomorrow, so I will be attempting to operate the cooker. Édouard and Wanda can't make it this year, as their beloved boy just became a father. Édouard rang to tell me, bursting with pride. Their son still suffers from his injuries, but they are so devoted to him, I know they will help raise the baby as if it were their own. No Leon either, but he's promised we will go adventuring in the summer, on his new boat, which he claims is even faster than the last.

Which reminds me, I had the dream again. I am flying in an aeroplane, a Halifax. I recognize the noise of the engines, that deep rumble. I am wearing a parachute suit and I have a scarf tied around my neck, a silk one printed with a map, but I don't know what the map is of, or where I'm going.

The hatch is open, and the night is rushing in. I think I am on my own in the plane, but I am not at all nervous. I know that, somewhere below me, in the dark, is the country where you are.

You know how it goes from there, don't you? Oh, I do miss it sometimes. Red light. Green light. Go! Then jumping through the hatch into nothing, and the wind and the parachute opening, lifting me up, up, up.

C

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I am grateful to all the books and publications that have informed this novel, and the libraries that enabled me to read them, particularly The Women's Library, where I browsed Rosalind's favourite magazines, and Dorchester Library, where their local history section (and their dedication to providing books during lockdown) was invaluable, as was the Imperial War Museum in London and its online resources.

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Finally, an enormous thank you to my irreplaceable corner crew, Peggy Riley and Sarah Leipziger, who helped me carry this whale from beginning to

end.



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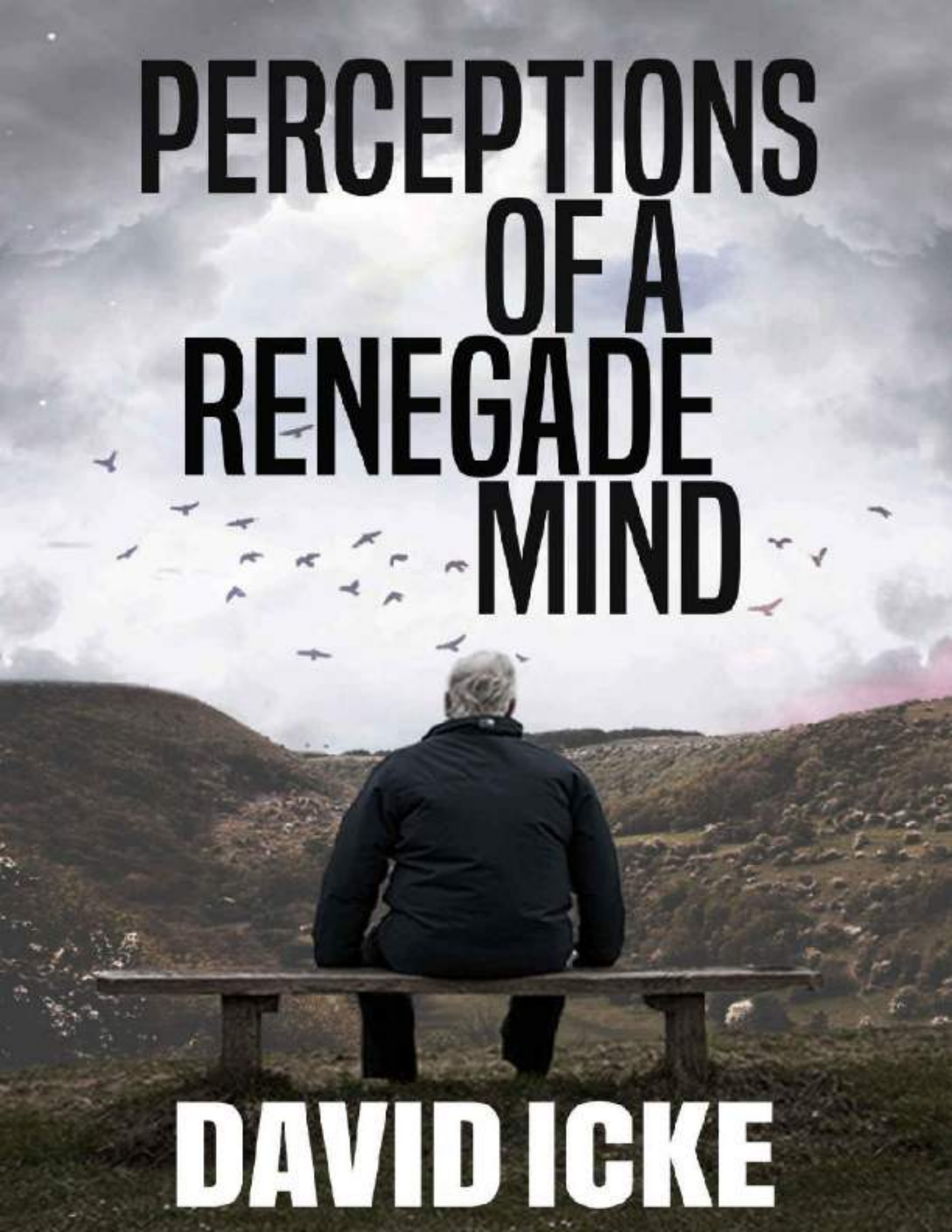
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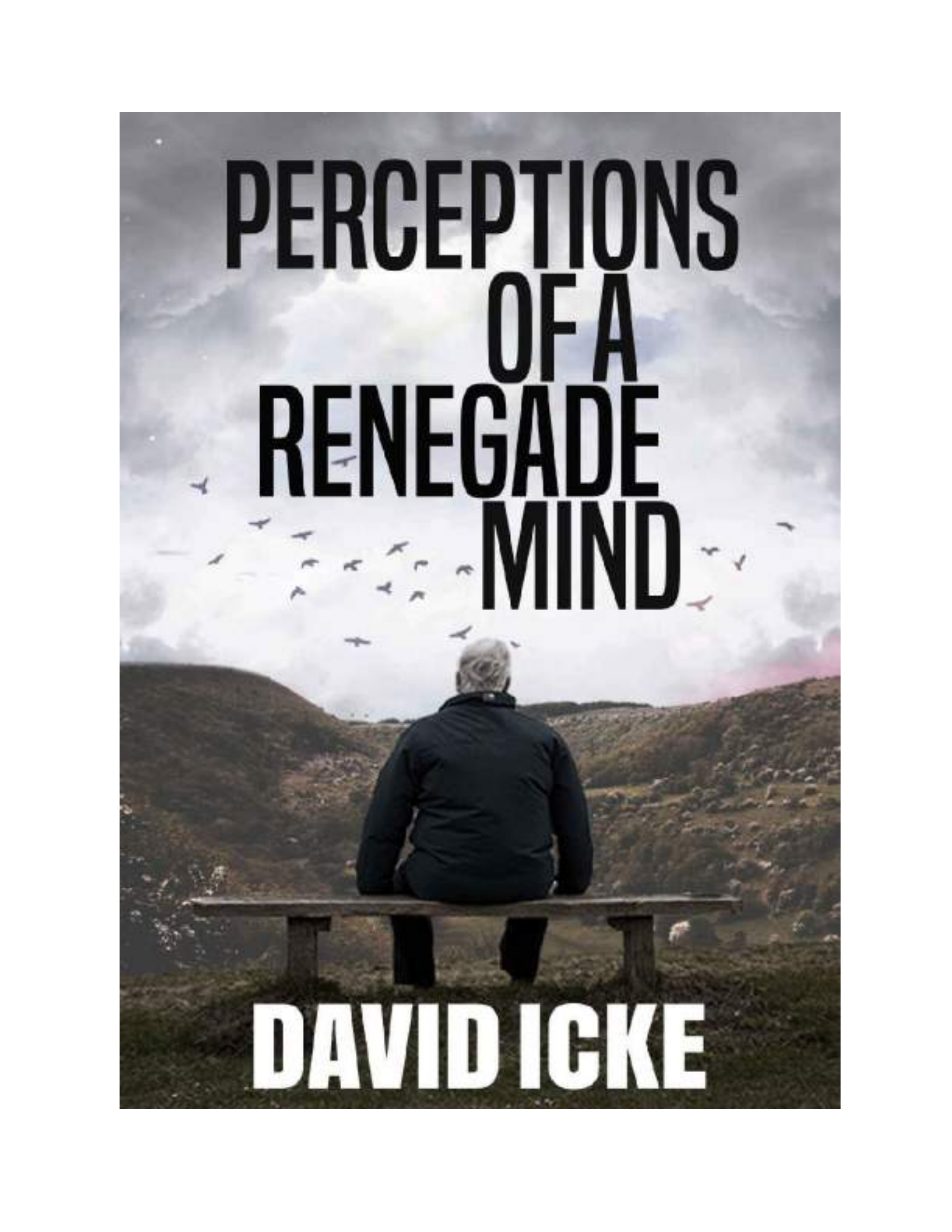
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A person with grey hair, wearing a dark jacket, is seen from behind, sitting on a wooden bench. They are looking out over a vast, hilly landscape under a cloudy sky. Numerous birds are flying in the air, scattered across the scene. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

PERCEPTIONS OF A RENEGADE MIND

DAVID ICKE

A person with grey hair, wearing a dark jacket, is seen from behind, sitting on a wooden bench. They are looking out over a vast, hilly landscape under a cloudy sky. Numerous birds are flying in the air, scattered across the upper half of the image. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

PERCEPTIONS OF A RENEGADE MIND

DAVID ICKE

**PERCEPTIONS
OF A
RENEGADE
MIND**



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**PERCEPTIONS
OF A
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MIND**

A flock of small, dark birds is scattered around the bottom half of the title text, appearing to fly in various directions.

DAVID ICKE

Dedication:

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Renegade:

Adjective

'Having rejected tradition: Unconventional.'

Merriam-Webster Dictionary

Acquiescence to tyranny is the death of the spirit

You may be 38 years old, as I happen to be. And one day, some great opportunity stands before you and calls you to stand up for some great principle, some great issue, some great cause. And you refuse to do it because you are afraid ... You refuse to do it because you want to live longer ... You're afraid that you will lose your job, or you are afraid that you will be criticised or that you will lose your popularity, or you're afraid that somebody will stab you, or shoot at you or bomb your house; so you refuse to take the stand.

Well, you may go on and live until you are 90, but you're just as dead at 38 as you would be at 90. And the cessation of breathing in your life is but the belated announcement of an earlier death of the spirit.

Martin Luther King

**How the few control the many and always have – the many do
whatever they're told**

'Forward, the Light Brigade!'
Was there a man dismayed?
Not though the soldier knew
Someone had blundered.
Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die.
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon in front of them
Volleyed and thundered;
Stormed at with shot and shell,
Boldly they rode and well,
Into the jaws of Death,
Into the mouth of hell
Rode the six hundred

Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809-1892)

The mist is lifting slowly
I can see the way ahead
And I've left behind the empty streets
That once inspired my life
And the strength of the emotion
Is like thunder in the air
'Cos the promise that we made each other
Haunts me to the end

The secret of your beauty
And the mystery of your soul
I've been searching for in everyone I meet
And the times I've been mistaken
It's impossible to say
And the grass is growing
Underneath our feet

The words that I remember
From my childhood still are true
That there's none so blind
As those who will not see
And to those who lack the courage
And say it's dangerous to try
Well they just don't know
That love eternal will not be denied

I know you're out there somewhere
Somewhere, somewhere
I know you're out there somewhere

Somewhere you can hear my voice
I know I'll find you somehow
Somehow, somehow
I know I'll find you somehow
And somehow I'll return again to you

The Moody Blues

Are you a gutless wonder - or a Renegade Mind?

Monuments put from pen to paper,
Turns me into a gutless wonder,
And if you tolerate this,
Then your children will be next.
Gravity keeps my head down,
Or is it maybe shame ...

Manic Street Preachers

Rise like lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number.
Shake your chains to earth like dew
Which in sleep have fallen on you.
Ye are many – they are few.

Percy Shelley

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CHAPTER ONE

I'm thinking' – Oh, but *are* you?

Think for yourself and let others enjoy the privilege of doing so too
Voltaire

French-born philosopher, mathematician and scientist René Descartes became famous for his statement in Latin in the 17th century which translates into English as: 'I think, therefore I am.'

On the face of it that is true. Thought reflects perception and perception leads to both behaviour and self-identity. In that sense 'we' are what we think. But who or what is doing the thinking and is thinking the only route to perception? Clearly, as we shall see, 'we' are not always the source of 'our' perception, indeed with regard to humanity as a whole this is rarely the case; and thinking is far from the only means of perception. Thought is the village idiot compared with other expressions of consciousness that we all have the potential to access and tap into. This has to be true when we *are* those other expressions of consciousness which are infinite in nature. We have forgotten this, or, more to the point, been manipulated to forget.

These are not just the esoteric musings of the navel. The whole foundation of human control and oppression is control of perception. Once perception is hijacked then so is behaviour which is dictated by perception. Collective perception becomes collective behaviour and collective behaviour is what we call human society. Perception is all and those behind human control know that which is

why perception is the target 24/7 of the psychopathic manipulators that I call the Global Cult. They know that if they dictate perception they will dictate behaviour and collectively dictate the nature of human society. They are further aware that perception is formed from information received and if they control the circulation of information they will to a vast extent direct human behaviour. Censorship of information and opinion has become globally Nazi-like in recent years and never more blatantly than since the illusory 'virus pandemic' was triggered out of China in 2019 and across the world in 2020. Why have billions submitted to house arrest and accepted fascistic societies in a way they would have never believed possible? Those controlling the information spewing from government, mainstream media and Silicon Valley (all controlled by the same Global Cult networks) told them they were in danger from a 'deadly virus' and only by submitting to house arrest and conceding their most basic of freedoms could they and their families be protected. This monumental and provable lie became the *perception* of the billions and therefore the *behaviour* of the billions. In those few words you have the whole structure and modus operandi of human control. Fear is a perception – False Emotion Appearing Real – and fear is the currency of control. In short ... get them by the balls (or give them the impression that you have) and their hearts and minds will follow. Nothing grips the dangly bits and freezes the rear-end more comprehensively than fear.

World number 1

There are two 'worlds' in what appears to be one 'world' and the prime difference between them is knowledge. First we have the mass of human society in which the population is maintained in coldly-calculated ignorance through control of information and the 'education' (indoctrination) system. That's all you really need to control to enslave billions in a perceptual delusion in which what are perceived to be *their* thoughts and opinions are ever-repeated mantras that the system has been downloading all their lives through 'education', media, science, medicine, politics and academia

in which the personnel and advocates are themselves overwhelmingly the perceptual products of the same repetition. Teachers and academics in general are processed by the same programming machine as everyone else, but unlike the great majority they never leave the 'education' program. It gripped them as students and continues to grip them as programmers of subsequent generations of students. The programmed become the programmers – the programmed programmers. The same can largely be said for scientists, doctors and politicians and not least because as the American writer Upton Sinclair said: 'It is difficult to get a man to understand something when his salary depends upon his not understanding it.' If your career and income depend on thinking the way the system demands then you will – bar a few free-minded exceptions – concede your mind to the Perceptual Mainframe that I call the Postage Stamp Consensus. This is a tiny band of perceived knowledge and possibility 'taught' (downloaded) in the schools and universities, pounded out by the mainstream media and on which all government policy is founded. Try thinking, and especially speaking and acting, outside of the 'box' of consensus and see what that does for your career in the Mainstream Everything which bullies, harasses, intimidates and ridicules the population into compliance. Here we have the simple structure which enslaves most of humanity in a perceptual prison cell for an entire lifetime and I'll go deeper into this process shortly. Most of what humanity is taught as fact is nothing more than programmed belief. American science fiction author Frank Herbert was right when he said: 'Belief can be manipulated. Only knowledge is dangerous.' In the 'Covid' age belief is promoted and knowledge is censored. It was always so, but never to the extreme of today.

World number 2

A 'number 2' is slang for 'doing a poo' and how appropriate that is when this other 'world' is doing just that on humanity every minute of every day. World number 2 is a global network of secret societies and semi-secret groups dictating the direction of society via

governments, corporations and authorities of every kind. I have spent more than 30 years uncovering and exposing this network that I call the Global Cult and knowing its agenda is what has made my books so accurate in predicting current and past events. Secret societies are secret for a reason. They want to keep their hoarded knowledge to themselves and their chosen initiates and to hide it from the population which they seek through ignorance to control and subdue. The whole foundation of the division between World 1 and World 2 is *knowledge*. What number 1 knows number 2 must not. Knowledge they have worked so hard to keep secret includes (a) the agenda to enslave humanity in a centrally-controlled global dictatorship, and (b) the nature of reality and life itself. The latter (b) must be suppressed to allow the former (a) to prevail as I shall be explaining. The way the Cult manipulates and interacts with the population can be likened to a spider's web. The 'spider' sits at the centre in the shadows and imposes its will through the web with each strand represented in World number 2 by a secret society, satanic or semi-secret group, and in World number 1 – the world of the seen – by governments, agencies of government, law enforcement, corporations, the banking system, media conglomerates and Silicon Valley (Fig 1 overleaf). The spider and the web connect and coordinate all these organisations to pursue the same global outcome while the population sees them as individual entities working randomly and independently. At the level of the web governments *are* the banking system *are* the corporations *are* the media *are* Silicon Valley *are* the World Health Organization working from their inner cores as one unit. Apparently unconnected countries, corporations, institutions, organisations and people are on the *same team* pursuing the same global outcome. Strands in the web immediately around the spider are the most secretive and exclusive secret societies and their membership is emphatically restricted to the Cult inner-circle emerging through the generations from particular bloodlines for reasons I will come to. At the core of the core you would get them in a single room. That's how many people are dictating the direction of human society and its transformation

through the 'Covid' hoax and other means. As the web expands out from the spider we meet the secret societies that many people will be aware of – the Freemasons, Knights Templar, Knights of Malta, Opus Dei, the inner sanctum of the Jesuit Order, and such like. Note how many are connected to the Church of Rome and there is a reason for that. The Roman Church was established as a revamp, a rebranding, of the relocated 'Church' of Babylon and the Cult imposing global tyranny today can be tracked back to Babylon and Sumer in what is now Iraq.



Figure 1: The global web through which the few control the many. (Image Neil Hague.)

Inner levels of the web operate in the unseen away from the public eye and then we have what I call the cusp organisations located at the point where the hidden meets the seen. They include a series of satellite organisations answering to a secret society founded in London in the late 19th century called the Round Table and among them are the Royal Institute of International Affairs (UK, founded in 1920); Council on Foreign Relations (US, 1921); Bilderberg Group (worldwide, 1954); Trilateral Commission (US/worldwide, 1972); and the Club of Rome (worldwide, 1968) which was created to exploit environmental concerns to justify the centralisation of global power to 'save the planet'. The Club of Rome instigated with others the human-caused climate change hoax which has led to all the 'green

new deals' demanding that very centralisation of control. Cusp organisations, which include endless 'think tanks' all over the world, are designed to coordinate a single global policy between political and business leaders, intelligence personnel, media organisations and anyone who can influence the direction of policy in their own sphere of operation. Major players and regular attenders will know what is happening – or some of it – while others come and go and are kept overwhelmingly in the dark about the big picture. I refer to these cusp groupings as semi-secret in that they can be publicly identified, but what goes on at the inner-core is kept very much 'in house' even from most of their members and participants through a fiercely-imposed system of compartmentalisation. Only let them know what they need to know to serve your interests and no more. The structure of secret societies serves as a perfect example of this principle. Most Freemasons never get higher than the bottom three levels of 'degree' (degree of knowledge) when there are 33 official degrees of the Scottish Rite. Initiates only qualify for the next higher 'compartment' or degree if those at that level choose to allow them. Knowledge can be carefully assigned only to those considered 'safe'. I went to my local Freemason's lodge a few years ago when they were having an 'open day' to show how cuddly they were and when I chatted to some of them I was astonished at how little the rank and file knew even about the most ubiquitous symbols they use. The mushroom technique – keep them in the dark and feed them bullshit – applies to most people in the web as well as the population as a whole. Sub-divisions of the web mirror in theme and structure transnational corporations which have a headquarters somewhere in the world dictating to all their subsidiaries in different countries. Subsidiaries operate in their methodology and branding to the same centrally-dictated plan and policy in pursuit of particular ends. The Cult web functions in the same way. Each country has its own web as a subsidiary of the global one. They consist of networks of secret societies, semi-secret groups and bloodline families and their job is to impose the will of the spider and the global web in their particular country. Subsidiary networks control and manipulate the national political system, finance, corporations, media, medicine, etc. to

ensure that they follow the globally-dictated Cult agenda. These networks were the means through which the 'Covid' hoax could be played out with almost every country responding in the same way.

The 'Yessir' pyramid

Compartmentalisation is the key to understanding how a tiny few can dictate the lives of billions when combined with a top-down sequence of imposition and acquiescence. The inner core of the Cult sits at the peak of the pyramidal hierarchy of human society (Fig 2 overleaf). It imposes its will – its agenda for the world – on the level immediately below which acquiesces to that imposition. This level then imposes the Cult will on the level below them which acquiesces and imposes on the next level. Very quickly we meet levels in the hierarchy that have no idea there even is a Cult, but the sequence of imposition and acquiescence continues down the pyramid in just the same way. 'I don't know why we are doing this but the order came from "on-high" and so we better just do it.' Alfred Lord Tennyson said of the cannon fodder levels in his poem *The Charge of the Light Brigade*: 'Theirs not to reason why; theirs but to do and die.' The next line says that 'into the valley of death rode the six hundred' and they died because they obeyed without question what their perceived 'superiors' told them to do. In the same way the population capitulated to 'Covid'. The whole hierarchical pyramid functions like this to allow the very few to direct the enormous many.

Eventually imposition-acquiescence-imposition-acquiescence comes down to the mass of the population at the foot of the pyramid. If they acquiesce to those levels of the hierarchy imposing on them (governments/law enforcement/doctors/media) a circuit is completed between the population and the handful of super-psychopaths in the Cult inner core at the top of the pyramid. Without a circuit-breaking refusal to obey, the sequence of imposition and acquiescence allows a staggeringly few people to impose their will upon the entirety of humankind. We are looking at the very sequence that has subjugated billions since the start of 2020. Our freedom has not been taken from us. Humanity has given it

away. Fascists do not impose fascism because there are not enough of them. Fascism is imposed by the population acquiescing to fascism. Put another way allowing their perceptions to be programmed to the extent that leads to the population giving their freedom away by giving their perceptions – their mind – away. If this circuit is not broken by humanity ceasing to cooperate with their own enslavement then nothing can change. For that to happen people have to critically think and see through the lies and window dressing and then summon the backbone to act upon what they see. The Cult spends its days working to stop either happening and its methodology is systematic and highly detailed, but it can be overcome and that is what this book is all about.

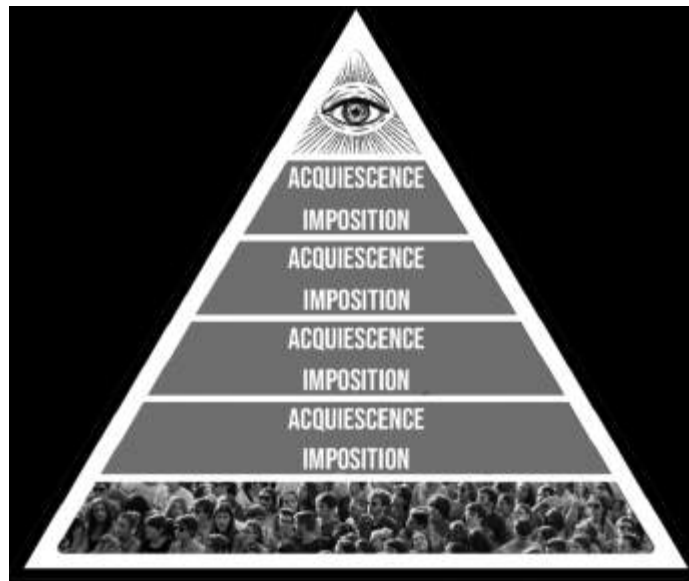


Figure 2: The simple sequence of imposition and compliance that allows a handful of people at the peak of the pyramid to dictate the lives of billions.

The Life Program

Okay, back to world number 1 or the world of the ‘masses’. Observe the process of what we call ‘life’ and it is a perceptual download from cradle to grave. The Cult has created a global structure in which perception can be programmed and the program continually topped-up with what appears to be constant confirmation that the program is indeed true reality. The important word here is ‘appears’.

This is the structure, the fly-trap, the Postage Stamp Consensus or Perceptual Mainframe, which represents that incredibly narrow band of perceived possibility delivered by the 'education' system, mainstream media, science and medicine. From the earliest age the download begins with parents who have themselves succumbed to the very programming their children are about to go through. Most parents don't do this out of malevolence and mostly it is quite the opposite. They do what they believe is best for their children and that is what the program has told them is best. Within three or four years comes the major transition from parental programming to full-blown state (Cult) programming in school, college and university where perceptually-programmed teachers and academics pass on their programming to the next generations. Teachers who resist are soon marginalised and their careers ended while children who resist are called a problem child for whom Ritalin may need to be prescribed. A few years after entering the 'world' children are under the control of authority figures representing the state telling them when they have to be there, when they can leave and when they can speak, eat, even go to the toilet. This is calculated preparation for a lifetime of obeying authority in all its forms. Reflex-action fear of authority is instilled by authority from the start. Children soon learn the carrot and stick consequences of obeying or defying authority which is underpinned daily for the rest of their life. Fortunately I daydreamed through this crap and never obeyed authority simply because it told me to. This approach to my alleged 'betters' continues to this day. There can be consequences of pursuing open-minded freedom in a world of closed-minded conformity. I spent a lot of time in school corridors after being ejected from the classroom for not taking some of it seriously and now I spend a lot of time being ejected from Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. But I can tell you that being true to yourself and not compromising your self-respect is far more exhilarating than bowing to authority for authority's sake. You don't have to be a sheep to the shepherd (authority) and the sheep dog (fear of not obeying authority).

The perceptual download continues throughout the formative years in school, college and university while script-reading 'teachers', 'academics' 'scientists', 'doctors' and 'journalists' insist that ongoing generations must be as programmed as they are. Accept the program or you will not pass your 'exams' which confirm your 'degree' of programming. It is tragic to think that many parents pressure their offspring to work hard at school to download the program and qualify for the next stage at college and university. The late, great, American comedian George Carlin said: 'Here's a bumper sticker I'd like to see: We are proud parents of a child who has resisted his teachers' attempts to break his spirit and bend him to the will of his corporate masters.' Well, the best of luck finding many of those, George. Then comes the moment to leave the formal programming years in academia and enter the 'adult' world of work. There you meet others in your chosen or prescribed arena who went through the same Postage Stamp Consensus program before you did. There is therefore overwhelming agreement between almost everyone on the basic foundations of Postage Stamp reality and the rejection, even contempt, of the few who have a mind of their own and are prepared to use it. This has two major effects. Firstly, the consensus confirms to the programmed that their download is really how things are. I mean, everyone knows that, right? Secondly, the arrogance and ignorance of Postage Stamp adherents ensure that anyone questioning the program will have unpleasant consequences for seeking their own truth and not picking their perceptions from the shelf marked: 'Things you must believe without question and if you don't you're a dangerous lunatic conspiracy theorist and a harebrained nutter'.

Every government, agency and corporation is founded on the same Postage Stamp prison cell and you can see why so many people believe the same thing while calling it their own 'opinion'. Fusion of governments and corporations in pursuit of the same agenda was the definition of fascism described by Italian dictator Benito Mussolini. The pressure to conform to perceptual norms downloaded for a lifetime is incessant and infiltrates society right

down to family groups that become censors and condemners of their own 'black sheep' for not, ironically, being sheep. We have seen an explosion of that in the 'Covid' era. Cult-owned global media unleashes its propaganda all day every day in support of the Postage Stamp and targets with abuse and ridicule anyone in the public eye who won't bend their mind to the will of the tyranny. Any response to this is denied (certainly in my case). They don't want to give a platform to expose official lies. Cult-owned-and-created Internet giants like Facebook, Google, YouTube and Twitter delete you for having an unapproved opinion. Facebook boasts that its AI censors delete 97-percent of 'hate speech' before anyone even reports it. Much of that 'hate speech' will simply be an opinion that Facebook and its masters don't want people to see. Such perceptual oppression is widely known as fascism. Even Facebook executive Benny Thomas, a 'CEO Global Planning Lead', said in comments secretly recorded by investigative journalism operation Project Veritas that Facebook is 'too powerful' and should be broken up:

I mean, no king in history has been the ruler of two billion people, but Mark Zuckerberg is ... And he's 36. That's too much for a 36-year-old ... You should not have power over two billion people. I just think that's wrong.

Thomas said Facebook-owned platforms like Instagram, Oculus, and WhatsApp needed to be separate companies. 'It's too much power when they're all one together'. That's the way the Cult likes it, however. We have an executive of a Cult organisation in Benny Thomas that doesn't know there is a Cult such is the compartmentalisation. Thomas said that Facebook and Google 'are no longer companies, they're countries'. Actually they are more powerful than countries on the basis that if you control information you control perception and control human society.

I love my oppressor

Another expression of this psychological trickery is for those who realise they are being pressured into compliance to eventually

convince themselves to believe the official narratives to protect their self-respect from accepting the truth that they have succumbed to meek and subservient compliance. Such people become some of the most vehement defenders of the system. You can see them everywhere screaming abuse at those who prefer to think for themselves and by doing so reminding the compliers of their own capitulation to conformity. 'You are talking dangerous nonsense you Covidiot!!' Are you trying to convince me or yourself? It is a potent form of Stockholm syndrome which is defined as: 'A psychological condition that occurs when a victim of abuse identifies and attaches, or bonds, positively with their abuser.' An example is hostages bonding and even 'falling in love' with their kidnappers. The syndrome has been observed in domestic violence, abused children, concentration camp inmates, prisoners of war and many and various Satanic cults. These are some traits of Stockholm syndrome listed at goodtherapy.org:

- Positive regard towards perpetrators of abuse or captor [see 'Covid'].
- Failure to cooperate with police and other government authorities when it comes to holding perpetrators of abuse or kidnapping accountable [or in the case of 'Covid' cooperating with the police to enforce and defend their captors' demands].
- Little or no effort to escape [see 'Covid'].
- Belief in the goodness of the perpetrators or kidnappers [see 'Covid'].
- Appeasement of captors. This is a manipulative strategy for maintaining one's safety. As victims get rewarded – perhaps with less abuse or even with life itself – their appeasing behaviours are reinforced [see 'Covid'].
- Learned helplessness. This can be akin to 'if you can't beat 'em, join 'em'. As the victims fail to escape the abuse or captivity, they may start giving up and soon realize it's just easier for everyone if they acquiesce all their power to their captors [see 'Covid'].

- Feelings of pity toward the abusers, believing they are actually victims themselves. Because of this, victims may go on a crusade or mission to 'save' [protect] their abuser [see the venom unleashed on those challenging the official 'Covid' narrative].
- Unwillingness to learn to detach from their perpetrators and heal. In essence, victims may tend to be less loyal to themselves than to their abuser [*definitely* see 'Covid'].

Ponder on those traits and compare them with the behaviour of great swathes of the global population who have defended governments and authorities which have spent every minute destroying their lives and livelihoods and those of their children and grandchildren since early 2020 with fascistic lockdowns, house arrest and employment deletion to 'protect' them from a 'deadly virus' that their abusers' perceptually created to bring about this very outcome. We are looking at mass Stockholm syndrome. All those that agree to concede their freedom will believe those perceptions are originating in their own independent 'mind' when in fact by conceding their reality to Stockholm syndrome they have by definition conceded any independence of mind. Listen to the 'opinions' of the acquiescing masses in this 'Covid' era and what gushes forth is the repetition of the official version of everything delivered unprocessed, unfiltered and unquestioned. The whole programming dynamic works this way. I must be free because I'm told that I am and so I think that I am.

You can see what I mean with the chapter theme of 'I'm thinking – Oh, but *are* you?' The great majority are not thinking, let alone for themselves. They are repeating what authority has told them to believe which allows them to be controlled. Weaving through this mentality is the fear that the 'conspiracy theorists' are right and this again explains the often hysterical abuse that ensues when you dare to contest the official narrative of anything. Denial is the mechanism of hiding from yourself what you don't want to be true. Telling people what they want to hear is easy, but it's an infinitely greater challenge to tell them what they would rather not be happening.

One is akin to pushing against an open door while the other is met with vehement resistance no matter what the scale of evidence. I don't want it to be true so I'll convince myself that it's not. Examples are everywhere from the denial that a partner is cheating despite all the signs to the reflex-action rejection of any idea that world events in which country after country act in exactly the same way are centrally coordinated. To accept the latter is to accept that a force of unspeakable evil is working to destroy your life and the lives of your children with nothing too horrific to achieve that end. Who the heck wants that to be true? But if we don't face reality the end is duly achieved and the consequences are far worse and ongoing than breaking through the walls of denial today with the courage to make a stand against tyranny.

Connect the dots – but how?

A crucial aspect of perceptual programming is to portray a world in which everything is random and almost nothing is connected to anything else. Randomness cannot be coordinated by its very nature and once you perceive events as random the idea they could be connected is waved away as the rantings of the tinfoil-hat brigade. You can't plan and coordinate random you idiot! No, you can't, but you can hide the coldly-calculated and long-planned behind the *illusion* of randomness. A foundation manifestation of the Renegade Mind is to scan reality for patterns that connect the apparently random and turn pixels and dots into pictures. This is the way I work and have done so for more than 30 years. You look for similarities in people, modus operandi and desired outcomes and slowly, then ever quicker, the picture forms. For instance: There would seem to be no connection between the 'Covid pandemic' hoax and the human-caused global-warming hoax and yet they are masks (appropriately) on the same face seeking the same outcome. Those pushing the global warming myth through the Club of Rome and other Cult agencies are driving the lies about 'Covid' – Bill Gates is an obvious one, but they are endless. Why would the same people be involved in both when they are clearly not connected? Oh, but they

are. Common themes with personnel are matched by common goals. The 'solutions' to both 'problems' are centralisation of global power to impose the will of the few on the many to 'save' humanity from 'Covid' and save the planet from an 'existential threat' (we need 'zero Covid' and 'zero carbon emissions'). These, in turn, connect with the 'dot' of globalisation which was coined to describe the centralisation of global power in every area of life through incessant political and corporate expansion, trading blocks and superstates like the European Union. If you are the few and you want to control the many you have to centralise power and decision-making. The more you centralise power the more power the few at the centre will have over the many; and the more that power is centralised the more power those at the centre have to centralise even quicker. The momentum of centralisation gets faster and faster which is exactly the process we have witnessed. In this way the hoaxed 'pandemic' and the fakery of human-caused global warming serve the interests of globalisation and the seizure of global power in the hands of the Cult inner-circle which is behind 'Covid', 'climate change' and globalisation. At this point random 'dots' become a clear and obvious picture or pattern.

Klaus Schwab, the classic Bond villain who founded the Cult's Gates-funded World Economic Forum, published a book in 2020, *The Great Reset*, in which he used the 'problem' of 'Covid' to justify a total transformation of human society to 'save' humanity from 'climate change'. Schwab said: 'The pandemic represents a rare but narrow window of opportunity to reflect, reimagine, and reset our world.' What he didn't mention is that the Cult he serves is behind both hoaxes as I show in my book *The Answer*. He and the Cult don't have to reimagine the world. They know precisely what they want and that's why they destroyed human society with 'Covid' to 'build back better' in their grand design. Their job is not to imagine, but to get humanity to imagine and agree with their plans while believing it's all random. It must be pure coincidence that 'The Great Reset' has long been the Cult's code name for the global imposition of fascism and replaced previous code-names of the 'New World

Order' used by Cult frontmen like Father George Bush and the 'New Order of the Ages' which emerged from Freemasonry and much older secret societies. New Order of the Ages appears on the reverse of the Great Seal of the United States as 'Novus ordo seclorum' underneath the Cult symbol used since way back of the pyramid and all seeing-eye (Fig 3). The pyramid is the hierarchy of human control headed by the illuminated eye that symbolises the force behind the Cult which I will expose in later chapters. The term 'Annuit Coeptis' translates as 'He favours our undertaking'. We are told the 'He' is the Christian god, but 'He' is not as I will be explaining.



Figure 3: The all-seeing eye of the Cult 'god' on the Freemason-designed Great Seal of the United States and also on the dollar bill.

Having you on

Two major Cult techniques of perceptual manipulation that relate to all this are what I have called since the 1990s Problem-Reaction-Solution (PRS) and the Totalitarian Tiptoe (TT). They can be uncovered by the inquiring mind with a simple question: Who benefits? The answer usually identifies the perpetrators of a given action or happening through the concept of 'he who most benefits from a crime is the one most likely to have committed it'. The Latin 'Cue bono?' – Who benefits? – is widely attributed to the Roman orator and statesman Marcus Tullius Cicero. No wonder it goes back so far when the concept has been relevant to human behaviour since

history was recorded. Problem-Reaction-Solution is the technique used to manipulate us every day by covertly creating a problem (or the illusion of one) and offering the solution to the problem (or the illusion of one). In the first phase you create the problem and blame someone or something else for why it has happened. This may relate to a financial collapse, terrorist attack, war, global warming or pandemic, anything in fact that will allow you to impose the 'solution' to change society in the way you desire at that time. The 'problem' doesn't have to be real. PRS is manipulation of perception and all you need is the population to believe the problem is real. Human-caused global warming and the 'Covid pandemic' only have to be *perceived* to be real for the population to accept the 'solutions' of authority. I refer to this technique as NO-Problem-Reaction-Solution. Billions did not meekly accept house arrest from early 2020 because there was a real deadly 'Covid pandemic' but because they perceived – believed – that to be the case. The antidote to Problem-Reaction-Solution is to ask who benefits from the proposed solution. Invariably it will be anyone who wants to justify more control through deletion of freedom and centralisation of power and decision-making.

The two world wars were Problem-Reaction-Solutions that transformed and realigned global society. Both were manipulated into being by the Cult as I have detailed in books since the mid-1990s. They dramatically centralised global power, especially World War Two, which led to the United Nations and other global bodies thanks to the overt and covert manipulations of the Rockefeller family and other Cult bloodlines like the Rothschilds. The UN is a stalking horse for full-blown world government that I will come to shortly. The land on which the UN building stands in New York was donated by the Rockefellers and the same Cult family was behind Big Pharma scalpel and drug 'medicine' and the creation of the World Health Organization as part of the UN. They have been stalwarts of the eugenics movement and funded Hitler's race-purity expert' Ernst Rudin. The human-caused global warming hoax has been orchestrated by the Club of Rome through the UN which is

manufacturing both the 'problem' through its Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and imposing the 'solution' through its Agenda 21 and Agenda 2030 which demand the total centralisation of global power to 'save the world' from a climate hoax the United Nations is itself perpetrating. What a small world the Cult can be seen to be particularly among the inner circles. The bedfellow of Problem-Reaction-Solution is the Totalitarian Tiptoe which became the Totalitarian Sprint in 2020. The technique is fashioned to hide the carefully-coordinated behind the cover of apparently random events. You start the sequence at 'A' and you know you are heading for 'Z'. You don't want people to know that and each step on the journey is presented as a random happening while all the steps strung together lead in the same direction. The speed may have quickened dramatically in recent times, but you can still see the incremental approach of the Tiptoe in the case of 'Covid' as each new imposition takes us deeper into fascism. Tell people they have to do this or that to get back to 'normal', then this and this and this. With each new demand adding to the ones that went before the population's freedom is deleted until it disappears. The spider wraps its web around the flies more comprehensively with each new diktat. I'll highlight this in more detail when I get to the 'Covid' hoax and how it has been pulled off. Another prime example of the Totalitarian Tiptoe is how the Cult-created European Union went from a 'free-trade zone' to a centralised bureaucratic dictatorship through the Tiptoe of incremental centralisation of power until nations became mere administrative units for Cult-owned dark suits in Brussels.

The antidote to ignorance is knowledge which the Cult seeks vehemently to deny us, but despite the systematic censorship to that end the Renegade Mind can overcome this by vociferously seeking out the facts no matter the impediments put in the way. There is also a method of thinking and perceiving – *knowing* – that doesn't even need names, dates, place-type facts to identify the patterns that reveal the story. I'll get to that in the final chapter. All you need to know about the manipulation of human society and to what end is still out there – *at the time of writing* – in the form of books, videos

and websites for those that really want to breach the walls of programmed perception. To access this knowledge requires the abandonment of the mainstream media as a source of information in the awareness that this is owned and controlled by the Cult and therefore promotes mass perceptions that suit the Cult. Mainstream media lies all day, every day. That is its function and very reason for being. Where it does tell the truth, here and there, is only because the truth and the Cult agenda very occasionally coincide. If you look for fact and insight to the BBC, CNN and virtually all the rest of them you are asking to be conned and perceptually programmed.

Know the outcome and you'll see the journey

Events seem random when you have no idea where the world is being taken. Once you do the random becomes the carefully planned. Know the outcome and you'll see the journey is a phrase I have been using for a long time to give context to daily happenings that appear unconnected. Does a problem, or illusion of a problem, trigger a proposed 'solution' that further drives society in the direction of the outcome? Invariably the answer will be yes and the random – *abracadabra* – becomes the clearly coordinated. So what is this outcome that unlocks the door to a massively expanded understanding of daily events? I will summarise its major aspects – the fine detail is in my other books – and those new to this information will see that the world they thought they were living in is a very different place. The foundation of the Cult agenda is the incessant centralisation of power and all such centralisation is ultimately in pursuit of Cult control on a global level. I have described for a long time the planned world structure of top-down dictatorship as the Hunger Games Society. The term obviously comes from the movie series which portrayed a world in which a few living in military-protected hi-tech luxury were the overlords of a population condemned to abject poverty in isolated 'sectors' that were not allowed to interact. 'Covid' lockdowns and travel bans anyone? The 'Hunger Games' pyramid of structural control has the inner circle of the Cult at the top with pretty much the entire

population at the bottom under their control through dependency for survival on the Cult. The whole structure is planned to be protected and enforced by a military-police state (Fig 4).

Here you have the reason for the global lockdowns of the fake pandemic to coldly destroy independent incomes and livelihoods and make everyone dependent on the 'state' (the Cult that controls the 'states'). I have warned in my books for many years about the plan to introduce a 'guaranteed income' – a barely survivable pittance – designed to impose dependency when employment was destroyed by AI technology and now even more comprehensively at great speed by the 'Covid' scam. Once the pandemic was played and lockdown consequences began to delete independent income the authorities began to talk right on cue about the need for a guaranteed income and a 'Great Reset'. Guaranteed income will be presented as benevolent governments seeking to help a desperate people – desperate as a direct result of actions of the same governments. The truth is that such payments are a trap. You will only get them if you do exactly what the authorities demand including mass vaccination (genetic manipulation). We have seen this theme already in Australia where those dependent on government benefits have them reduced if parents don't agree to have their children vaccinated according to an insane health-destroying government-dictated schedule. Calculated economic collapse applies to governments as well as people. The Cult wants rid of countries through the creation of a world state with countries broken up into regions ruled by a world government and super states like the European Union. Countries must be bankrupted, too, to this end and it's being achieved by the trillions in 'rescue packages' and furlough payments, trillions in lost taxation, and money-no-object spending on 'Covid' including constant all-medium advertising (programming) which has made the media dependent on government for much of its income. The day of reckoning is coming – as planned – for government spending and given that it has been made possible by printing money and not by production/taxation there is inflation on the way that has the

potential to wipe out monetary value. In that case there will be no need for the Cult to steal your money. It just won't be worth anything (see the German Weimar Republic before the Nazis took over). Many have been okay with lockdowns while getting a percentage of their income from so-called furlough payments without having to work. Those payments are dependent, however, on people having at least a theoretical job with a business considered non-essential and ordered to close. As these business go under because they are closed by lockdown after lockdown the furlough stops and it will for everyone eventually. Then what? The 'then what?' is precisely the idea.



Figure 4: The Hunger Games Society structure I have long warned was planned and now the 'Covid' hoax has made it possible. This is the real reason for lockdowns.

Hired hands

Between the Hunger Games Cult elite and the dependent population is planned to be a vicious military-police state (a fusion of the two into one force). This has been in the making for a long time with police looking ever more like the military and carrying weapons to match. The pandemic scam has seen this process accelerate so fast as

lockdown house arrest is brutally enforced by carefully recruited fascist minds and gormless system-servers. The police and military are planned to merge into a centrally-directed world army in a global structure headed by a world government which wouldn't be elected even by the election fixes now in place. The world army is not planned even to be human and instead wars would be fought, primarily against the population, using robot technology controlled by artificial intelligence. I have been warning about this for decades and now militaries around the world are being transformed by this very AI technology. The global regime that I describe is a particular form of fascism known as a technocracy in which decisions are not made by clueless and co-opted politicians but by unelected technocrats – scientists, engineers, technologists and bureaucrats. Cult-owned-and-controlled Silicon Valley giants are examples of technocracy and they already have far more power to direct world events than governments. They are with their censorship *selecting* governments. I know that some are calling the 'Great Reset' a Marxist communist takeover, but fascism and Marxism are different labels for the same tyranny. Tell those who lived in fascist Germany and Stalinist Russia that there was a difference in the way their freedom was deleted and their lives controlled. I could call it a fascist technocracy or a Marxist technocracy and they would be equally accurate. The Hunger Games society with its world government structure would oversee a world army, world central bank and single world cashless currency imposing its will on a microchipped population (Fig 5). Scan its different elements and see how the illusory pandemic is forcing society in this very direction at great speed. Leaders of 23 countries and the World Health Organization (WHO) backed the idea in March, 2021, of a global treaty for 'international cooperation' in 'health emergencies' and nations should 'come together as a global community for peaceful cooperation that extends beyond this crisis'. Cut the Orwellian bullshit and this means another step towards global government. The plan includes a cashless digital money system that I first warned about in 1993. Right at the start of 'Covid' the deeply corrupt Tedros

Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the crooked and merely gofer 'head' of the World Health Organization, said it was possible to catch the 'virus' by touching cash and it was better to use cashless means. The claim was ridiculous nonsense and like the whole 'Covid' mind-trick it was nothing to do with 'health' and everything to do with pushing every aspect of the Cult agenda. As a result of the Tedros lie the use of cash has plummeted. The Cult script involves a single world digital currency that would eventually be technologically embedded in the body. China is a massive global centre for the Cult and if you watch what is happening there you will know what is planned for everywhere. The Chinese government is developing a digital currency which would allow fines to be deducted immediately via AI for anyone caught on camera breaking its fantastic list of laws and the money is going to be programmable with an expiry date to ensure that no one can accrue wealth except the Cult and its operatives.



Figure 5: The structure of global control the Cult has been working towards for so long and this has been enormously advanced by the 'Covid' illusion.

Serfdom is so smart

The Cult plan is far wider, extreme, and more comprehensive than even most conspiracy researchers appreciate and I will come to the true depths of deceit and control in the chapters 'Who controls the

Cult?’ and ‘Escaping Wetiko’. Even the world that we know is crazy enough. We are being deluged with ever more sophisticated and controlling technology under the heading of ‘smart’. We have smart televisions, smart meters, smart cards, smart cars, smart driving, smart roads, smart pills, smart patches, smart watches, smart skin, smart borders, smart pavements, smart streets, smart cities, smart communities, smart environments, smart growth, smart planet ... smart *everything* around us. Smart technologies and methods of operation are designed to interlock to create a global Smart Grid connecting the entirety of human society including human minds to create a centrally-dictated ‘hive’ mind. ‘Smart cities’ is code for densely-occupied megacities of total surveillance and control through AI. Ever more destructive frequency communication systems like 5G have been rolled out without any official testing for health and psychological effects (colossal). 5G/6G/7G systems are needed to run the Smart Grid and each one becomes more destructive of body and mind. Deleting independent income is crucial to forcing people into these AI-policed prisons by ending private property ownership (except for the Cult elite). The Cult’s Great Reset now openly foresees a global society in which no one will own any possessions and everything will be rented while the Cult would own literally everything under the guise of government and corporations. The aim has been to use the lockdowns to destroy sources of income on a mass scale and when the people are destitute and in unrepayable amounts of debt (problem) Cult assets come forward with the pledge to write-off debt in return for handing over all property and possessions (solution). Everything – literally everything including people – would be connected to the Internet via AI. I was warning years ago about the coming Internet of Things (IoT) in which all devices and technology from your car to your fridge would be plugged into the Internet and controlled by AI. Now we are already there with much more to come. The next stage is the Internet of Everything (IoE) which is planned to include the connection of AI to the human brain and body to replace the human mind with a centrally-controlled AI mind. Instead of perceptions

being manipulated through control of information and censorship those perceptions would come direct from the Cult through AI. What do you think? You think whatever AI decides that you think. In human terms there would be no individual 'think' any longer. Too incredible? The ravings of a lunatic? Not at all. Cult-owned crazies in Silicon Valley have been telling us the plan for years without explaining the real motivation and calculated implications. These include Google executive and 'futurist' Ray Kurzweil who highlights the year 2030 for when this would be underway. He said:

Our thinking ... will be a hybrid of biological and non-biological thinking ... humans will be able to extend their limitations and 'think in the cloud' ... We're going to put gateways to the cloud in our brains ... We're going to gradually merge and enhance ourselves ... In my view, that's the nature of being human – we transcend our limitations.

As the technology becomes vastly superior to what we are then the small proportion that is still human gets smaller and smaller and smaller until it's just utterly negligible.

The sales-pitch of Kurzweil and Cult-owned Silicon Valley is that this would make us 'super-human' when the real aim is to make us post-human and no longer 'human' in the sense that we have come to know. The entire global population would be connected to AI and become the centrally-controlled 'hive-mind' of externally-delivered perceptions. The Smart Grid being installed to impose the Cult's will on the world is being constructed to allow particular locations – even one location – to control the whole global system. From these prime control centres, which absolutely include China and Israel, anything connected to the Internet would be switched on or off and manipulated at will. Energy systems could be cut, communication via the Internet taken down, computer-controlled driverless autonomous vehicles driven off the road, medical devices switched off, the potential is limitless given how much AI and Internet connections now run human society. We have seen nothing yet if we allow this to continue. Autonomous vehicle makers are working with law enforcement to produce cars designed to automatically pull over if they detect a police or emergency vehicle flashing from up to 100 feet away. At a police stop the car would be unlocked and the

window rolled down automatically. Vehicles would only take you where the computer (the state) allowed. The end of petrol vehicles and speed limiters on all new cars in the UK and EU from 2022 are steps leading to electric computerised transport over which ultimately you have no control. The picture is far bigger even than the Cult global network or web and that will become clear when I get to the nature of the 'spider'. There is a connection between all these happenings and the instigation of DNA-manipulating 'vaccines' (which aren't 'vaccines') justified by the 'Covid' hoax. That connection is the unfolding plan to transform the human body from a biological to a synthetic biological state and this is why synthetic biology is such a fast-emerging discipline of mainstream science. 'Covid vaccines' are infusing self-replicating synthetic genetic material into the cells to cumulatively take us on the Totalitarian Tiptoe from Human 1.0 to the synthetic biological Human 2.0 which will be physically and perceptually attached to the Smart Grid to one hundred percent control every thought, perception and deed. Humanity needs to wake up and *fast*.

This is the barest explanation of where the 'outcome' is planned to go but it's enough to see the journey happening all around us. Those new to this information will already see 'Covid' in a whole new context. I will add much more detail as we go along, but for the minutiae evidence see my mega-works, *The Answer*, *The Trigger* and *Everything You Need to Know But Have Never Been Told*.

Now – how does a Renegade Mind see the 'world'?

CHAPTER TWO

Renegade Perception

It is one thing to be clever and another to be wise

George R.R. Martin

A simple definition of the difference between a programmed mind and a Renegade Mind would be that one sees only dots while the other connects them to see the picture. Reading reality with accuracy requires the observer to (a) know the planned outcome and (b) realise that everything, but *everything*, is connected.

The entirety of infinite reality is connected – that’s its very nature – and with human society an expression of infinite reality the same must apply. Simple cause and effect is a connection. The effect is triggered by the cause and the effect then becomes the cause of another effect. Nothing happens in isolation because it *can’t*. Life in whatever reality is simple choice and consequence. We make choices and these lead to consequences. If we don’t like the consequences we can make different choices and get different consequences which lead to other choices and consequences. The choice and the consequence are not only connected they are indivisible. You can’t have one without the other as an old song goes. A few cannot control the world unless those being controlled allow that to happen – cause and effect, choice and consequence. Control – who has it and who doesn’t – is a two-way process, a symbiotic relationship, involving the controller and controlled. ‘They took my freedom away!!’ Well, yes, but you also gave it to them. Humanity is

subjected to mass control because humanity has acquiesced to that control. This is all cause and effect and literally a case of give and take. In the same way world events of every kind are connected and the Cult works incessantly to sell the illusion of the random and coincidental to maintain the essential (to them) perception of dots that hide the picture. Renegade Minds know this and constantly scan the world for patterns of connection. This is absolutely pivotal in understanding the happenings in the world and without that perspective clarity is impossible. First you know the planned outcome and then you identify the steps on the journey – the day-by-day apparently random which, when connected in relation to the outcome, no longer appear as individual events, but as the proverbial *chain* of events leading in the same direction. I'll give you some examples:

Political puppet show

We are told to believe that politics is 'adversarial' in that different parties with different beliefs engage in an endless tussle for power. There may have been some truth in that up to a point – and only a point – but today divisions between 'different' parties are rhetorical not ideological. Even the rhetorical is fusing into one-speak as the parties eject any remaining free thinkers while others succumb to the ever-gathering intimidation of anyone with the 'wrong' opinion. The Cult is not a new phenomenon and can be traced back thousands of years as my books have documented. Its intergenerational initiates have been manipulating events with increasing effect the more that global power has been centralised. In ancient times the Cult secured control through the system of monarchy in which 'special' bloodlines (of which more later) demanded the right to rule as kings and queens simply by birthright and by vanquishing others who claimed the same birthright. There came a time, however, when people had matured enough to see the unfairness of such tyranny and demanded a say in who governed them. Note the word – *governed* them. Not served them – *governed* them, hence government defined as 'the political direction and control exercised over the

actions of the members, citizens, or inhabitants of communities, societies, and states; direction of the affairs of a state, community, etc.' Governments exercise control over rather than serve just like the monarchies before them. Bizarrely there are still countries like the United Kingdom which are ruled by a monarch *and* a government that officially answers to the monarch. The UK head of state and that of Commonwealth countries such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand is 'selected' by who in a *single family* had unprotected sex with whom and in what order. Pinch me it can't be true. Ouch! Shit, it is. The demise of monarchies in most countries offered a potential vacuum in which some form of free and fair society could arise and the Cult had that base covered. Monarchies had served its interests but they couldn't continue in the face of such widespread opposition and, anyway, replacing a 'royal' dictatorship that people could see with a dictatorship 'of the people' hiding behind the concept of 'democracy' presented far greater manipulative possibilities and ways of hiding coordinated tyranny behind the illusion of 'freedom'.

Democracy is quite wrongly defined as government selected by the population. This is not the case at all. It is government selected by *some* of the population (and then only in theory). This 'some' doesn't even have to be the majority as we have seen so often in first-past-the-post elections in which the so-called majority party wins fewer votes than the 'losing' parties combined. Democracy can give total power to a party in government from a minority of the votes cast. It's a sleight of hand to sell tyranny as freedom. Seventy-four million Trump-supporting Americans didn't vote for the 'Democratic' Party of Joe Biden in the distinctly dodgy election in 2020 and yet far from acknowledging the wishes and feelings of that great percentage of American society the Cult-owned Biden government set out from day one to destroy them and their right to a voice and opinion. Empty shell Biden and his Cult handlers said they were doing this to 'protect democracy'. Such is the level of lunacy and sickness to which politics has descended. Connect the dots and relate them to the desired outcome – a world government run by self-appointed technocrats and no longer even elected

politicians. While operating through its political agents in government the Cult is at the same time encouraging public disdain for politicians by putting idiots and incompetents in theoretical power on the road to deleting them. The idea is to instil a public reaction that says of the technocrats: 'Well, they couldn't do any worse than the pathetic politicians.' It's all about controlling perception and Renegade Minds can see through that while programmed minds cannot when they are ignorant of both the planned outcome and the manipulation techniques employed to secure that end. This knowledge can be learned, however, and fast if people choose to get informed.

Politics may at first sight appear very difficult to control from a central point. I mean look at the 'different' parties and how would you be able to oversee them all and their constituent parts? In truth, it's very straightforward because of their structure. We are back to the pyramid of imposition and acquiescence. Organisations are structured in the same way as the system as a whole. Political parties are not open forums of free expression. They are hierarchies. I was a national spokesman for the British Green Party which claimed to be a different kind of politics in which influence and power was devolved; but I can tell you from direct experience – and it's far worse now – that Green parties are run as hierarchies like all the others however much they may try to hide that fact or kid themselves that it's not true. A very few at the top of all political parties are directing policy and personnel. They decide if you are elevated in the party or serve as a government minister and to do that you have to be a yes man or woman. Look at all the maverick political thinkers who never ascended the greasy pole. If you want to progress within the party or reach 'high-office' you need to fall into line and conform. Exceptions to this are rare indeed. Should you want to run for parliament or Congress you have to persuade the local or state level of the party to select you and for that you need to play the game as dictated by the hierarchy. If you secure election and wish to progress within the greater structure you need to go on conforming to what is acceptable to those running the hierarchy

from the peak of the pyramid. Political parties are perceptual gulags and the very fact that there are party 'Whips' appointed to 'whip' politicians into voting the way the hierarchy demands exposes the ridiculous idea that politicians are elected to serve the people they are supposed to represent. Cult operatives and manipulation has long seized control of major parties that have any chance of forming a government and at least most of those that haven't. A new party forms and the Cult goes to work to infiltrate and direct. This has reached such a level today that you see video compilations of 'leaders' of all parties whether Democrats, Republicans, Conservative, Labour and Green parroting the same Cult mantra of 'Build Back Better' and the 'Great Reset' which are straight off the Cult song-sheet to describe the transformation of global society in response to the Cult-instigated hoaxes of the 'Covid pandemic' and human-caused 'climate change'. To see Caroline Lucas, the Green Party MP that I knew when I was in the party in the 1980s, speaking in support of plans proposed by Cult operative Klaus Schwab representing the billionaire global elite is a real head-shaker.

Many parties – one master

The party system is another mind-trick and was instigated to change the nature of the dictatorship by swapping 'royalty' for dark suits that people believed – though now ever less so – represented their interests. Understanding this trick is to realise that a single force (the Cult) controls all parties either directly in terms of the major ones or through manipulation of perception and ideology with others. You don't need to manipulate Green parties to demand your transformation of society in the name of 'climate change' when they are obsessed with the lie that this is essential to 'save the planet'. You just give them a platform and away they go serving your interests while believing they are being environmentally virtuous. America's political structure is a perfect blueprint for how the two or multi-party system is really a one-party state. The Republican Party is controlled from one step back in the shadows by a group made up of billionaires and their gofers known as neoconservatives or Neocons.

I have exposed them in fine detail in my books and they were the driving force behind the policies of the imbecilic presidency of Boy George Bush which included 9/11 (see *The Trigger* for a comprehensive demolition of the official story), the subsequent 'war on terror' (war of terror) and the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. The latter was a No-Problem-Reaction-Solution based on claims by Cult operatives, including Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair, about Saddam Hussein's 'weapons of mass destruction' which did not exist as war criminals Bush and Blair well knew.

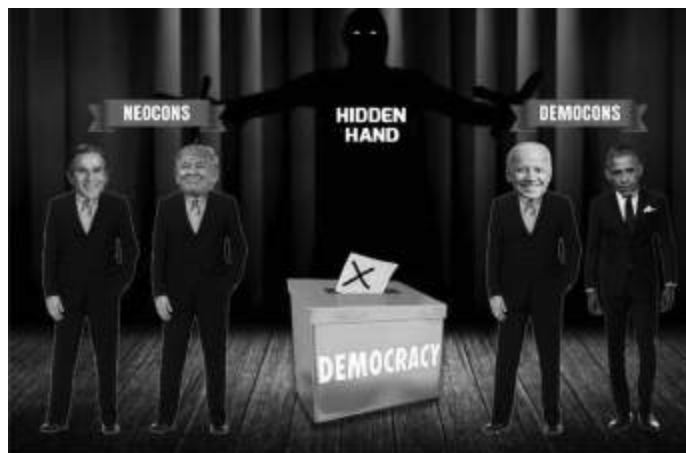


Figure 6: Different front people, different parties – same control system.

The Democratic Party has its own 'Neocon' group controlling from the background which I call the 'Democons' and here's the penny-drop – the Neocons and Democons answer to the same masters one step further back into the shadows (Fig 6). At that level of the Cult the Republican and Democrat parties are controlled by the same people and no matter which is in power the Cult is in power. This is how it works in almost every country and certainly in Britain with Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat and Green parties now all on the same page whatever the rhetoric may be in their feeble attempts to appear different. Neocons operated at the time of Bush through a think tank called The Project for the New American Century which in September, 2000, published a document entitled *Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategies, Forces, and Resources*

For a New Century demanding that America fight ‘multiple, simultaneous major theatre wars’ as a ‘core mission’ to force regime-change in countries including Iraq, Libya and Syria. Neocons arranged for Bush (‘Republican’) and Blair (‘Labour Party’) to front-up the invasion of Iraq and when they departed the Democons orchestrated the targeting of Libya and Syria through Barack Obama (‘Democrat’) and British Prime Minister David Cameron (‘Conservative Party’). We have ‘different’ parties and ‘different’ people, but the same unfolding script. The more the Cult has seized the reigns of parties and personnel the more their policies have transparently pursued the same agenda to the point where the fascist ‘Covid’ impositions of the Conservative junta of Jackboot Johnson in Britain were opposed by the Labour Party because they were not fascist enough. The Labour Party is likened to the US Democrats while the Conservative Party is akin to a British version of the Republicans and on both sides of the Atlantic they all speak the same language and support the direction demanded by the Cult although some more enthusiastically than others. It’s a similar story in country after country because it’s all centrally controlled. Oh, but what about Trump? I’ll come to him shortly. Political ‘choice’ in the ‘party’ system goes like this: You vote for Party A and they get into government. You don’t like what they do so next time you vote for Party B and they get into government. You don’t like what they do when it’s pretty much the same as Party A and why wouldn’t that be with both controlled by the same force? Given that only two, sometimes three, parties have any chance of forming a government to get rid of Party B that you don’t like you have to vote again for Party A which ... you don’t like. This, ladies and gentlemen, is what they call ‘democracy’ which we are told – wrongly – is a term interchangeable with ‘freedom’.

The cult of cults

At this point I need to introduce a major expression of the Global Cult known as Sabbatian-Frankism. Sabbatian is also spelt as Sabbatean. I will summarise here. I have published major exposés

and detailed background in other works. Sabbatian-Frankism combines the names of two frauds posing as 'Jewish' men, Sabbatai Zevi (1626-1676), a rabbi, black magician and occultist who proclaimed he was the Jewish messiah; and Jacob Frank (1726-1791), the Polish 'Jew', black magician and occultist who said he was the reincarnation of 'messiah' Zevi and biblical patriarch Jacob. They worked across two centuries to establish the Sabbatian-Frankist cult that plays a major, indeed central, role in the manipulation of human society by the Global Cult which has its origins much further back in history than Sabbatai Zevi. I should emphasise two points here in response to the shrill voices that will scream 'anti-Semitism': (1) Sabbatian-Frankists are NOT Jewish and only pose as such to hide their cult behind a Jewish façade; and (2) my information about this cult has come from Jewish sources who have long realised that their society and community has been infiltrated and taken over by interloper Sabbatian-Frankists. Infiltration has been the foundation technique of Sabbatian-Frankism from its official origin in the 17th century. Zevi's Sabbatian sect attracted a massive following described as the biggest messianic movement in Jewish history, spreading as far as Africa and Asia, and he promised a return for the Jews to the 'Promised Land' of Israel. Sabbatianism was not Judaism but an inversion of everything that mainstream Judaism stood for. So much so that this sinister cult would have a feast day when Judaism had a fast day and whatever was forbidden in Judaism the Sabbatians were encouraged and even commanded to do. This included incest and what would be today called Satanism. Members were forbidden to marry outside the sect and there was a system of keeping their children ignorant of what they were part of until they were old enough to be trusted not to unknowingly reveal anything to outsiders. The same system is employed to this day by the Global Cult in general which Sabbatian-Frankism has enormously influenced and now largely controls.

Zevi and his Sabbatians suffered a setback with the intervention by the Sultan of the Islamic Ottoman Empire in the Middle East and what is now the Republic of Turkey where Zevi was located. The

Sultan gave him the choice of proving his 'divinity', converting to Islam or facing torture and death. Funnily enough Zevi chose to convert or at least appear to. Some of his supporters were disillusioned and drifted away, but many did not with 300 families also converting – only in theory – to Islam. They continued behind this Islamic smokescreen to follow the goals, rules and rituals of Sabbatianism and became known as 'crypto-Jews' or the 'Dönme' which means 'to turn'. This is rather ironic because they didn't 'turn' and instead hid behind a fake Islamic persona. The process of appearing to be one thing while being very much another would become the calling card of Sabbatianism especially after Zevi's death and the arrival of the Satanist Jacob Frank in the 18th century when the cult became Sabbatian-Frankism and plumbed still new depths of depravity and infiltration which included – still includes – human sacrifice and sex with children. Wherever Sabbatians go paedophilia and Satanism follow and is it really a surprise that Hollywood is so infested with child abuse and Satanism when it was established by Sabbatian-Frankists and is still controlled by them? Hollywood has been one of the prime vehicles for global perceptual programming and manipulation. How many believe the version of 'history' portrayed in movies when it is a travesty and inversion (again) of the truth? Rabbi Marvin Antelman describes Frankism in his book, *To Eliminate the Opiate*, as 'a movement of complete evil' while Jewish professor Gershom Scholem said of Frank in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*: 'In all his actions [he was] a truly corrupt and degenerate individual ... one of the most frightening phenomena in the whole of Jewish history.' Frank was excommunicated by traditional rabbis, as was Zevi, but Frank was undeterred and enjoyed vital support from the House of Rothschild, the infamous banking dynasty whose inner-core are Sabbatian-Frankists and not Jews. Infiltration of the Roman Church and Vatican was instigated by Frank with many Dönme 'turning' again to convert to Roman Catholicism with a view to hijacking the reins of power. This was the ever-repeating modus operandi and continues to be so. Pose as an advocate of the religion, culture or country that you want to control and then

manipulate your people into the positions of authority and influence largely as advisers, administrators and Svengalis for those that appear to be in power. They did this with Judaism, Christianity (Christian Zionism is part of this), Islam and other religions and nations until Sabbatian-Frankism spanned the world as it does today.

Sabbatian Saudis and the terror network

One expression of the Sabbatian-Frankist Dönme within Islam is the ruling family of Saudi Arabia, the House of Saud, through which came the vile distortion of Islam known as Wahhabism. This is the violent creed followed by terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda and ISIS or Islamic State. Wahhabism is the hand-chopping, head-chopping 'religion' of Saudi Arabia which is used to keep the people in a constant state of fear so the interloper House of Saud can continue to rule. Al-Qaeda and Islamic State were lavishly funded by the House of Saud while being created and directed by the Sabbatian-Frankist network in the United States that operates through the Pentagon, CIA and the government in general of whichever 'party'. The front man for the establishment of Wahhabism in the middle of the 18th century was a Sabbatian-Frankist 'crypto-Jew' posing as Islamic called Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab. His daughter would marry the son of Muhammad bin Saud who established the first Saudi state before his death in 1765 with support from the British Empire. Bin Saud's successors would establish modern Saudi Arabia in league with the British and Americans in 1932 which allowed them to seize control of Islam's major shrines in Mecca and Medina. They have dictated the direction of Sunni Islam ever since while Iran is the major centre of the Shiite version and here we have the source of at least the public conflict between them. The Sabbatian network has used its Wahhabi extremists to carry out Problem-Reaction-Solution terrorist attacks in the name of 'Al-Qaeda' and 'Islamic State' to justify a devastating 'war on terror', ever-increasing surveillance of the population and to terrify people into compliance. Another insight of the Renegade Mind is the streetwise understanding that

just because a country, location or people are attacked doesn't mean that those apparently representing that country, location or people are not behind the attackers. Often they are *orchestrating* the attacks because of the societal changes that can be then justified in the name of 'saving the population from terrorists'.

I show in great detail in *The Trigger* how Sabbatian-Frankists were the real perpetrators of 9/11 and not '19 Arab hijackers' who were blamed for what happened. Observe what was justified in the name of 9/11 alone in terms of Middle East invasions, mass surveillance and control that fulfilled the demands of the Project for the New American Century document published by the Sabbatian Neocons. What appear to be enemies are on the deep inside players on the same Sabbatian team. Israel and Arab 'royal' dictatorships are all ruled by Sabbatians and the recent peace agreements between Israel and Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and others are only making formal what has always been the case behind the scenes. Palestinians who have been subjected to grotesque tyranny since Israel was bombed and terrorised into existence in 1948 have never stood a chance. Sabbatian-Frankists have controlled Israel (so the constant theme of violence and war which Sabbatians love) and they have controlled the Arab countries that Palestinians have looked to for real support that never comes. 'Royal families' of the Arab world in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, UAE, etc., are all Sabbatians with allegiance to the aims of the cult and not what is best for their Arabic populations. They have stolen the oil and financial resources from their people by false claims to be 'royal dynasties' with a genetic right to rule and by employing vicious militaries to impose their will.

Satanic 'illumination'

The Satanist Jacob Frank formed an alliance in 1773 with two other Sabbatians, Mayer Amschel Rothschild (1744-1812), founder of the Rothschild banking dynasty, and Jesuit-educated fraudulent Jew, Adam Weishaupt, and this led to the formation of the Bavarian Illuminati, firstly under another name, in 1776. The Illuminati would

be the manipulating force behind the French Revolution (1789-1799) and was also involved in the American Revolution (1775-1783) before and after the Illuminati's official creation. Weishaupt would later become (in public) a Protestant Christian in archetypal Sabbatian style. I read that his name can be decoded as Adam-Weishaupt or 'the first man to lead those who know'. He wasn't a leader in the sense that he was a subordinate, but he did lead those below him in a crusade of transforming human society that still continues today. The theme was confirmed as early as 1785 when a horseman courier called Lanz was reported to be struck by lightning and extensive Illuminati documents were found in his saddlebags. They made the link to Weishaupt and detailed the plan for world takeover. Current events with 'Covid' fascism have been in the making for a very long time. Jacob Frank was jailed for 13 years by the Catholic Inquisition after his arrest in 1760 and on his release he headed for Frankfurt, Germany, home city and headquarters of the House of Rothschild where the alliance was struck with Mayer Amschel Rothschild and Weishaupt. Rothschild arranged for Frank to be given the title of Baron and he became a wealthy nobleman with a big following of Jews in Germany, the Austro-Hungarian Empire and other European countries. Most of them would have believed he was on their side.

The name 'Illuminati' came from the Zohar which is a body of works in the Jewish mystical 'bible' called the Kabbalah. 'Zohar' is the foundation of Sabbatian-Frankist belief and in Hebrew 'Zohar' means 'splendour', 'radiance', 'illuminated', and so we have 'Illuminati'. They claim to be the 'Illuminated Ones' from their knowledge systematically hidden from the human population and passed on through generations of carefully-chosen initiates in the global secret society network or Cult. Hidden knowledge includes an awareness of the Cult agenda for the world and the nature of our collective reality that I will explore later. Cult 'illumination' is symbolised by the torch held by the Statue of Liberty which was gifted to New York by French Freemasons in Paris who knew exactly what it represents. 'Liberty' symbolises the goddess worshipped in

Babylon as Queen Semiramis or Ishtar. The significance of this will become clear. Notice again the ubiquitous theme of inversion with the Statue of 'Liberty' really symbolising mass control (Fig 7). A mirror-image statute stands on an island in the River Seine in Paris from where New York Liberty originated (Fig 8). A large replica of the Liberty flame stands on top of the Pont de l'Alma tunnel in Paris where Princess Diana died in a Cult ritual described in *The Biggest Secret*. Lucifer 'the light bringer' is related to all this (and much more as we'll see) and 'Lucifer' is a central figure in Sabbatian-Frankism and its associated Satanism. Sabbatians reject the Jewish Torah, or Pentateuch, the 'five books of Moses' in the Old Testament known as Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy which are claimed by Judaism and Christianity to have been dictated by 'God' to Moses on Mount Sinai. Sabbatians say these do not apply to them and they seek to replace them with the Zohar to absorb Judaism and its followers into their inversion which is an expression of a much greater global inversion. They want to delete all religions and force humanity to worship a one-world religion – Sabbatian Satanism that also includes worship of the Earth goddess. Satanic themes are being more and more introduced into mainstream society and while Christianity is currently the foremost target for destruction the others are planned to follow.



Figure 7: The Cult goddess of Babylon disguised as the Statue of Liberty holding the flame of Lucifer the 'light bringer'.



Figure 8: Liberty's mirror image in Paris where the New York version originated.

Marx brothers

Rabbi Marvin Antelman connects the Illuminati to the Jacobins in *To Eliminate the Opiate* and Jacobins were the force behind the French Revolution. He links both to the Bund der Gerechten, or League of the Just, which was the network that inflicted communism/Marxism on the world. Antelman wrote:

The original inner circle of the Bund der Gerechten consisted of born Catholics, Protestants and Jews [Sabbatian-Frankist infiltrators], and those representatives of respective subdivisions formulated schemes for the ultimate destruction of their faiths. The heretical Catholics laid plans which they felt would take a century or more for the ultimate destruction of the church; the apostate Jews for the ultimate destruction of the Jewish religion.

Sabbatian-created communism connects into this anti-religion agenda in that communism does not allow for the free practice of religion. The Sabbatian 'Bund' became the International Communist Party and Communist League and in 1848 'Marxism' was born with the Communist Manifesto of Sabbatian assets Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. It is absolutely no coincidence that Marxism, just a different name for fascist and other centrally-controlled tyrannies, is being imposed worldwide as a result of the 'Covid' hoax and nor that Marxist/fascist China was the place where the hoax originated. The reason for this will become very clear in the chapter 'Covid: The calculated catastrophe'. The so-called 'Woke' mentality has hijacked

traditional beliefs of the political left and replaced them with far-right make-believe 'social justice' better known as Marxism. Woke will, however, be swallowed by its own perceived 'revolution' which is really the work of billionaires and billionaire corporations feigning being 'Woke'. Marxism is being touted by Wokers as a replacement for 'capitalism' when we don't have 'capitalism'. We have cartelism in which the market is stitched up by the very Cult billionaires and corporations bankrolling Woke. Billionaires love Marxism which keeps the people in servitude while they control from the top. Terminally naïve Wokers think they are 'changing the world' when it's the Cult that is doing the changing and when they have played their vital part and become surplus to requirements they, too, will be targeted. The Illuminati-Jacobins were behind the period known as 'The Terror' in the French Revolution in 1793 and 1794 when Jacobin Maximillian de Robespierre and his Orwellian 'Committee of Public Safety' killed 17,000 'enemies of the Revolution' who had once been 'friends of the Revolution'. Karl Marx (1818-1883), whose Sabbatian creed of Marxism has cost the lives of at least 100 million people, is a hero once again to Wokers who have been systematically kept ignorant of real history by their 'education' programming. As a result they now promote a Sabbatian 'Marxist' abomination destined at some point to consume them. Rabbi Antelman, who spent decades researching the Sabbatian plot, said of the League of the Just and Karl Marx:

Contrary to popular opinion Karl Marx did not originate the Communist Manifesto. He was paid for his services by the League of the Just, which was known in its country of origin, Germany, as the Bund der Geächteten.

Antelman said the text attributed to Marx was the work of other people and Marx 'was only repeating what others already said'. Marx was 'a hired hack – lackey of the wealthy Illuminists'. Marx famously said that religion was the 'opium of the people' (part of the Sabbatian plan to demonise religion) and Antelman called his books, *To Eliminate the Opiate*. Marx was born Jewish, but his family converted to Christianity (Sabbatian modus operandi) and he

attacked Jews, not least in his book, *A World Without Jews*. In doing so he supported the Sabbatian plan to destroy traditional Jewishness and Judaism which we are clearly seeing today with the vindictive targeting of orthodox Jews by the Sabbatian government of Israel over 'Covid' laws. I don't follow any religion and it has done much damage to the world over centuries and acted as a perceptual straightjacket. Renegade Minds, however, are always asking *why* something is being done. It doesn't matter if they agree or disagree with what is happening – *why* is it happening is the question. The 'why?' can be answered with regard to religion in that religions create interacting communities of believers when the Cult wants to dismantle all discourse, unity and interaction (see 'Covid' lockdowns) and the ultimate goal is to delete all religions for a one-world religion of Cult Satanism worshipping their 'god' of which more later. We see the same 'why?' with gun control in America. I don't have guns and don't want them, but why is the Cult seeking to disarm the population at the same time that law enforcement agencies are armed to their molars and why has every tyrant in history sought to disarm people before launching the final takeover? They include Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot and Mao who followed confiscation with violent seizing of power. You know it's a Cult agenda by the people who immediately race to the microphones to exploit dead people in multiple shootings. Ultra-Zionist Cult lackey Senator Chuck Schumer was straight on the case after ten people were killed in Boulder, Colorado in March, 2121. Simple rule ... if Schumer wants it the Cult wants it and the same with his ultra-Zionist mate the wild-eyed Senator Adam Schiff. At the same time they were calling for the disarmament of Americans, many of whom live a long way from a police response, Schumer, Schiff and the rest of these pampered clowns were sitting on Capitol Hill behind a razor-wired security fence protected by thousands of armed troops in addition to their own armed bodyguards. Mom and pop in an isolated home? They're just potential mass shooters.

Zion Mainframe

Sabbatian-Frankists and most importantly the Rothschilds were behind the creation of 'Zionism', a political movement that demanded a Jewish homeland in Israel as promised by Sabbatai Zevi. The very symbol of Israel comes from the German meaning of the name Rothschild. Dynasty founder Mayer Amschel Rothschild changed the family name from Bauer to Rothschild, or 'Red-Shield' in German, in deference to the six-pointed 'Star of David' hexagram displayed on the family's home in Frankfurt. The symbol later appeared on the flag of Israel after the Rothschilds were centrally involved in its creation. Hexagrams are not a uniquely Jewish symbol and are widely used in occult ('hidden') networks often as a symbol for Saturn (see my other books for why). Neither are Zionism and Jewishness interchangeable. Zionism is a political movement and philosophy and not a 'race' or a people. Many Jews oppose Zionism and many non-Jews, including US President Joe Biden, call themselves Zionists as does Israel-centric Donald Trump. America's support for the Israel government is pretty much a gimme with ultra-Zionist billionaires and corporations providing fantastic and dominant funding for both political parties. Former Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney has told how she was approached immediately she ran for office to 'sign the pledge' to Israel and confirm that she would always vote in that country's best interests. All American politicians are approached in this way. Anyone who refuses will get no support or funding from the enormous and all-powerful Zionist lobby that includes organisations like mega-lobby group AIPAC, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee. Trump's biggest funder was ultra-Zionist casino and media billionaire Sheldon Adelson while major funders of the Democratic Party include ultra-Zionist George Soros and ultra-Zionist financial and media mogul, Haim Saban. Some may reel back at the suggestion that Soros is an Israel-firster (Sabbatian-controlled Israel-firster), but Renegade Minds watch the actions not the words and everywhere Soros donates his billions the Sabbatian agenda benefits. In the spirit of Sabbatian inversion Soros pledged \$1 billion for a new university network to promote 'liberal values and tackle intolerance'. He made the announcement during his annual speech

at the Cult-owned World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, in January, 2020, after his 'harsh criticism' of 'authoritarian rulers' around the world. You can only laugh at such brazen mendacity. How *he* doesn't laugh is the mystery. Translated from the Orwellian 'liberal values and tackle intolerance' means teaching non-white people to hate white people and for white people to loathe themselves for being born white. The reason for that will become clear.

The 'Anti-Semitism' fraud

Zionists support the Jewish homeland in the land of Palestine which has been the Sabbatian-Rothschild goal for so long, but not for the benefit of Jews. Sabbatians and their global Anti-Semitism Industry have skewed public and political opinion to equate opposing the violent extremes of Zionism to be a blanket attack and condemnation of all Jewish people. Sabbatians and their global Anti-Semitism Industry have skewed public and political opinion to equate opposing the violent extremes of Zionism to be a blanket attack and condemnation of all Jewish people. This is nothing more than a Sabbatian protection racket to stop legitimate investigation and exposure of their agendas and activities. The official definition of 'anti-Semitism' has more recently been expanded to include criticism of Zionism – a *political movement* – and this was done to further stop exposure of Sabbatian infiltrators who created Zionism as we know it today in the 19th century. Renegade Minds will talk about these subjects when they know the shit that will come their way. People must decide if they want to know the truth or just cower in the corner in fear of what others will say. Sabbatians have been trying to label me as 'anti-Semitic' since the 1990s as I have uncovered more and more about their background and agendas. Useless, gutless, fraudulent 'journalists' then just repeat the smears without question and on the day I was writing this section a pair of unquestioning repeaters called Ben Quinn and Archie Bland (how appropriate) outright called me an 'anti-Semite' in the establishment propaganda sheet, the London *Guardian*, with no supporting evidence. The

Sabbatian Anti-Semitism Industry said so and who are they to question that? They wouldn't dare. Ironically 'Semitic' refers to a group of languages in the Middle East that are almost entirely Arabic. 'Anti-Semitism' becomes 'anti-Arab' which if the consequences of this misunderstanding were not so grave would be hilarious. Don't bother telling Quinn and Bland. I don't want to confuse them, bless 'em. One reason I am dubbed 'anti-Semitic' is that I wrote in the 1990s that Jewish operatives (Sabbatians) were heavily involved in the Russian Revolution when Sabbatians overthrew the Romanov dynasty. This apparently made me 'anti-Semitic'. Oh, really? Here is a section from *The Trigger*:

British journalist Robert Wilton confirmed these themes in his 1920 book *The Last Days of the Romanovs* when he studied official documents from the Russian government to identify the members of the Bolshevik ruling elite between 1917 and 1919. The Central Committee included 41 Jews among 62 members; the Council of the People's Commissars had 17 Jews out of 22 members; and 458 of the 556 most important Bolshevik positions between 1918 and 1919 were occupied by Jewish people. Only 17 were Russian. Then there were the 23 Jews among the 36 members of the vicious Cheka Soviet secret police established in 1917 who would soon appear all across the country.

Professor Robert Service of Oxford University, an expert on 20th century Russian history, found evidence that ['Jewish'] Leon Trotsky had sought to make sure that Jews were enrolled in the Red Army and were disproportionately represented in the Soviet civil bureaucracy that included the Cheka which performed mass arrests, imprisonment and executions of 'enemies of the people'. A US State Department Decimal File (861.00/5339) dated November 13th, 1918, names [Rothschild banking agent in America] Jacob Schiff and a list of ultra-Zionists as funders of the Russian Revolution leading to claims of a 'Jewish plot', but the key point missed by all is they were not 'Jews' – they were Sabbatian-Frankists.

Britain's Winston Churchill made the same error by mistake or otherwise. He wrote in a 1920 edition of the *Illustrated Sunday Herald* that those behind the Russian revolution were part of a 'worldwide conspiracy for the overthrow of civilisation and for the reconstitution of society on the basis of arrested development, of envious malevolence, and impossible equality' (see 'Woke' today because that has been created by the same network). Churchill said there was no need to exaggerate the part played in the creation of Bolshevism and in the actual bringing about of the Russian

Revolution 'by these international and for the most part atheistical Jews' ['atheistical Jews' = Sabbatians]. Churchill said it is certainly a very great one and probably outweighs all others: 'With the notable exception of Lenin, the majority of the leading figures are Jews.' He went on to describe, knowingly or not, the Sabbatian modus operandi of placing puppet leaders nominally in power while they control from the background:

Moreover, the principal inspiration and driving power comes from the Jewish leaders. Thus Tchitcherin, a pure Russian, is eclipsed by his nominal subordinate, Litvinoff, and the influence of Russians like Bukharin or Lunacharski cannot be compared with the power of Trotsky, or of Zinovieff, the Dictator of the Red Citadel (Petrograd), or of Krassin or Radek – all Jews. In the Soviet institutions the predominance of Jews is even more astonishing. And the prominent, if not indeed the principal, part in the system of terrorism applied by the Extraordinary Commissions for Combatting Counter-Revolution has been taken by Jews, and in some notable cases by Jewesses.

What I said about seriously disproportionate involvement in the Russian Revolution by Jewish 'revolutionaries' (Sabbatians) is provable fact, but truth is no defence against the Sabbatian Anti-Semitism Industry, its repeater parrots like Quinn and Bland, and the now breathtaking network of so-called 'Woke' 'anti-hate' groups with interlocking leaderships and funding which have the role of discrediting and silencing anyone who gets too close to exposing the Sabbatians. We have seen 'truth is no defence' confirmed in legal judgements with the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission in Canada decreeing this: 'Truthful statements can be presented in a manner that would meet the definition of hate speech, and not all truthful statements must be free from restriction.' Most 'anti-hate' activists, who are themselves consumed by hatred, are too stupid and ignorant of the world to know how they are being used. They are far too far up their own virtue-signalling arses and it's far too dark for them to see anything.

The 'revolution' game

The background and methods of the 'Russian' Revolution are straight from the Sabbatian playbook seen in the French Revolution

and endless others around the world that appear to start as a revolution of the people against tyrannical rule and end up with a regime change to more tyrannical rule overtly or covertly. Wars, terror attacks and regime overthrows follow the Sabbatian cult through history with its agents creating them as Problem-Reaction-Solutions to remove opposition on the road to world domination. Sabbatian dots connect the Rothschilds with the Illuminati, Jacobins of the French Revolution, the 'Bund' or League of the Just, the International Communist Party, Communist League and the Communist Manifesto of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels that would lead to the Rothschild-funded Russian Revolution. The sequence comes under the heading of 'creative destruction' when you advance to your global goal by continually destroying the status quo to install a new status quo which you then also destroy. The two world wars come to mind. With each new status quo you move closer to your planned outcome. Wars and mass murder are to Sabbatians a collective blood sacrifice ritual. They are obsessed with death for many reasons and one is that death is an inversion of life. Satanists and Sabbatians are obsessed with death and often target churches and churchyards for their rituals. Inversion-obsessed Sabbatians explain the use of inverted symbolism including the *inverted* pentagram and *inverted* cross. The inversion of the cross has been related to targeting Christianity, but the cross was a religious symbol long before Christianity and its inversion is a statement about the Sabbatian mentality and goals more than any single religion.

Sabbatians operating in Germany were behind the rise of the occult-obsessed Nazis and the subsequent Jewish exodus from Germany and Europe to Palestine and the United States after World War Two. The Rothschild dynasty was at the forefront of this both as political manipulators and by funding the operation. Why would Sabbatians help to orchestrate the horrors inflicted on Jews by the Nazis and by Stalin after they organised the Russian Revolution? Sabbatians hate Jews and their religion, that's why. They pose as Jews and secure positions of control within Jewish society and play the 'anti-Semitism' card to protect themselves from exposure

through a global network of organisations answering to the Sabbatian-created-and-controlled globe-spanning intelligence network that involves a stunning web of military-intelligence operatives and operations for a tiny country of just nine million. Among them are Jewish assets who are not Sabbatians but have been convinced by them that what they are doing is for the good of Israel and the Jewish community to protect them from what they have been programmed since childhood to believe is a Jew-hating hostile world. The Jewish community is just a highly convenient cover to hide the true nature of Sabbatians. Anyone getting close to exposing their game is accused by Sabbatian place-people and gofers of 'anti-Semitism' and claiming that all Jews are part of a plot to take over the world. I am not saying that. I am saying that Sabbatians – the *real* Jew-haters – have infiltrated the Jewish community to use them both as a cover and an 'anti-Semitic' defence against exposure. Thus we have the Anti-Semitism Industry targeted researchers in this way and most Jewish people think this is justified and genuine. They don't know that their 'Jewish' leaders and institutions of state, intelligence and military are not controlled by Jews at all, but cultists and stooges of Sabbatian-Frankism. I once added my name to a pro-Jewish freedom petition online and the next time I looked my name was gone and text had been added to the petition blurb to attack me as an 'anti-Semite' such is the scale of perceptual programming.

Moving on America

I tell the story in *The Trigger* and a chapter called 'Atlantic Crossing' how particularly after Israel was established the Sabbatians moved in on the United States and eventually grasped control of government administration, the political system via both Democrats and Republicans, the intelligence community like the CIA and National Security Agency (NSA), the Pentagon and mass media. Through this seriously compartmentalised network Sabbatians and their operatives in Mossad, Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) and US agencies pulled off 9/11 and blamed it on 19 'Al-Qaeda hijackers' dominated by men from, or connected to, Sabbatian-ruled Saudi

Arabia. The '19' were not even on the planes let alone flew those big passenger jets into buildings while being largely incompetent at piloting one-engine light aircraft. 'Hijacker' Hani Hanjour who is said to have flown American Airlines Flight 77 into the Pentagon with a turn and manoeuvre most professional pilots said they would have struggled to do was banned from renting a small plane by instructors at the Freeway Airport in Bowie, Maryland, just *six weeks* earlier on the grounds that he was an incompetent pilot. The Jewish population of the world is just 0.2 percent with even that almost entirely concentrated in Israel (75 percent Jewish) and the United States (around two percent). This two percent and globally 0.2 percent refers to *Jewish* people and not Sabbatian interlopers who are a fraction of that fraction. What a sobering thought when you think of the fantastic influence on world affairs of tiny Israel and that the Project for the New America Century (PNAC) which laid out the blueprint in September, 2000, for America's war on terror and regime change wars in Iraq, Libya and Syria was founded and dominated by Sabbatians known as 'Neocons'. The document conceded that this plan would not be supported politically or publicly without a major attack on American soil and a Problem-Reaction-Solution excuse to send troops to war across the Middle East. Sabbatian Neocons said:

... [The] process of transformation ... [war and regime change] ... is likely to be a long one, absent some catastrophic and catalysing event – like a new Pearl Harbor.

Four months later many of those who produced that document came to power with their inane puppet George Bush from the long-time Sabbatian Bush family. They included Sabbatian Dick Cheney who was officially vice-president, but really de-facto president for the entirety of the 'Bush' government. Nine months after the 'Bush' inauguration came what Bush called at the time 'the Pearl Harbor of the 21st century' and with typical Sabbatian timing and symbolism 2001 was the 60th anniversary of the attack in 1941 by the Japanese Air Force on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, which allowed President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to take the United States into a Sabbatian-

instigated Second World War that he said in his election campaign that he never would. The evidence is overwhelming that Roosevelt and his military and intelligence networks knew the attack was coming and did nothing to stop it, but they did make sure that America's most essential naval ships were not in Hawaii at the time. Three thousand Americans died in the Pearl Harbor attacks as they did on September 11th. By the 9/11 year of 2001 Sabbatians had widely infiltrated the US government, military and intelligence operations and used their compartmentalised assets to pull off the 'Al-Qaeda' attacks. If you read *The Trigger* it will blow your mind to see the utterly staggering concentration of 'Jewish' operatives (Sabbatian infiltrators) in essential positions of political, security, legal, law enforcement, financial and business power before, during, and after the attacks to make them happen, carry them out, and then cover their tracks – and I do mean *staggering* when you think of that 0.2 percent of the world population and two percent of Americans which are Jewish while Sabbatian infiltrators are a fraction of that. A central foundation of the 9/11 conspiracy was the hijacking of government, military, Air Force and intelligence computer systems in real time through 'back-door' access made possible by Israeli (Sabbatian) 'cyber security' software. Sabbatian-controlled Israel is on the way to rivalling Silicon Valley for domination of cyberspace and is becoming the dominant force in cyber-security which gives them access to entire computer systems and their passcodes across the world. Then add to this that Zionists head (officially) Silicon Valley giants like Google (Larry Page and Sergey Brin), Google-owned YouTube (Susan Wojcicki), Facebook (Mark Zuckerberg and Sheryl Sandberg), and Apple (Chairman Arthur D. Levinson), and that ultra-Zionist hedge fund billionaire Paul Singer has a \$1 billion stake in Twitter which is only nominally headed by 'CEO' pothead Jack Dorsey. As cable news host Tucker Carlson said of Dorsey: 'There used to be debate in the medical community whether dropping a ton of acid had permanent effects and I think that debate has now ended.' Carlson made the comment after Dorsey told a hearing on Capitol Hill (if you cut through his bullshit) that he

believed in free speech so long as he got to decide what you can hear and see. These 'big names' of Silicon Valley are only front men and women for the Global Cult, not least the Sabbatians, who are the true controllers of these corporations. Does anyone still wonder why these same people and companies have been ferociously censoring and banning people (like me) for exposing any aspect of the Cult agenda and especially the truth about the 'Covid' hoax which Sabbatians have orchestrated?

The Jeffrey Epstein paedophile ring was a Sabbatian operation. He was officially 'Jewish' but he was a Sabbatian and women abused by the ring have told me about the high number of 'Jewish' people involved. The Epstein horror has Sabbatian written all over it and matches perfectly their modus operandi and obsession with sex and ritual. Epstein was running a Sabbatian blackmail ring in which famous people with political and other influence were provided with young girls for sex while everything was being filmed and recorded on hidden cameras and microphones at his New York house, Caribbean island and other properties. Epstein survivors have described this surveillance system to me and some have gone public. Once the famous politician or other figure knew he or she was on video they tended to do whatever they were told. Here we go again ...when you've got them by the balls their hearts and minds will follow. Sabbatians use this blackmail technique on a wide scale across the world to entrap politicians and others they need to act as demanded. Epstein's private plane, the infamous 'Lolita Express', had many well-known passengers including Bill Clinton while Bill Gates has flown on an Epstein plane and met with him four years after Epstein had been jailed for paedophilia. They subsequently met many times at Epstein's home in New York according to a witness who was there. Epstein's infamous side-kick was Ghislaine Maxwell, daughter of Mossad agent and ultra-Zionist mega-crooked British businessman, Bob Maxwell, who at one time owned the *Daily Mirror* newspaper. Maxwell was murdered at sea on his boat in 1991 by Sabbatian-controlled Mossad when he became a liability with his

business empire collapsing as a former Mossad operative has confirmed (see *The Trigger*).

Money, money, money, funny money ...

Before I come to the Sabbatian connection with the last three US presidents I will lay out the crucial importance to Sabbatians of controlling banking and finance. Sabbatian Mayer Amschel Rothschild set out to dominate this arena in his family's quest for total global control. What is freedom? It is, in effect, choice. The more choices you have the freer you are and the fewer your choices the more you are enslaved. In the global structure created over centuries by Sabbatians the biggest decider and restrictor of choice is ... money. Across the world if you ask people what they would like to do with their lives and why they are not doing that they will reply 'I don't have the money'. This is the idea. A global elite of multi-billionaires are described as 'greedy' and that is true on one level; but control of money – who has it and who doesn't – is not primarily about greed. It's about control. Sabbatians have seized ever more control of finance and sucked the wealth of the world out of the hands of the population. We talk now, after all, about the 'One-percent' and even then the wealthiest are a lot fewer even than that. This has been made possible by a money scam so outrageous and so vast it could rightly be called the scam of scams founded on creating 'money' out of nothing and 'loaning' that with interest to the population. Money out of nothing is called 'credit'. Sabbatians have asserted control over governments and banking ever more completely through the centuries and secured financial laws that allow banks to lend hugely more than they have on deposit in a confidence trick known as fractional reserve lending. Imagine if you could lend money that doesn't exist and charge the recipient interest for doing so. You would end up in jail. Bankers by contrast end up in mansions, private jets, Malibu and Monaco.

Banks are only required to keep a fraction of their deposits and wealth in their vaults and they are allowed to lend 'money' they don't have called 'credit'. Go into a bank for a loan and if you succeed

the banker will not move any real wealth into your account. They will type into your account the amount of the agreed 'loan' – say £100,000. This is not wealth that really exists; it is non-existent, fresh-air, created-out-of-nothing 'credit' which has never, does not, and will never exist except in theory. Credit is backed by nothing except wind and only has buying power because people think that it has buying power and accept it in return for property, goods and services. I have described this situation as like those cartoon characters you see chasing each other and when they run over the edge of a cliff they keep running forward on fresh air until one of them looks down, realises what's happened, and they all crash into the ravine. The whole foundation of the Sabbatian financial system is to stop people looking down except for periodic moments when they want to crash the system (as in 2008 and 2020 ongoing) and reap the rewards from all the property, businesses and wealth their borrowers had signed over as 'collateral' in return for a 'loan' of fresh air. Most people think that money is somehow created by governments when it comes into existence from the start as a debt through banks 'lending' illusory money called credit. Yes, the very currency of exchange is a *debt* from day one issued as an interest-bearing loan. Why don't governments create money interest-free and lend it to their people interest-free? Governments are controlled by Sabbatians and the financial system is controlled by Sabbatians for whom interest-free money would be a nightmare come true. Sabbatians underpin their financial domination through their global network of central banks, including the privately-owned US Federal Reserve and Britain's Bank of England, and this is orchestrated by a privately-owned central bank coordination body called the Bank for International Settlements in Basle, Switzerland, created by the usual suspects including the Rockefellers and Rothschilds. Central bank chiefs don't answer to governments or the people. They answer to the Bank for International Settlements or, in other words, the Global Cult which is dominated today by Sabbatians.

Built-in disaster

There are so many constituent scams within the overall banking scam. When you take out a loan of thin-air credit only the amount of that loan is theoretically brought into circulation to add to the amount in circulation; but you are paying back the principle plus interest. The additional interest is not created and this means that with every 'loan' there is a shortfall in the money in circulation between what is borrowed and what has to be paid back. There is never even close to enough money in circulation to repay all outstanding public and private debt including interest. Coldly weaved in the very fabric of the system is the certainty that some will lose their homes, businesses and possessions to the banking 'lender'. This is less obvious in times of 'boom' when the amount of money in circulation (and the debt) is expanding through more people wanting and getting loans. When a downturn comes and the money supply contracts it becomes painfully obvious that there is not enough money to service all debt and interest. This is less obvious in times of 'boom' when the amount of money in circulation (and the debt) is expanding through more people wanting and getting loans. When a downturn comes and the money supply contracts and it becomes painfully obvious – as in 2008 and currently – that there is not enough money to service all debt and interest. Sabbatian banksters have been leading the human population through a calculated series of booms (more debt incurred) and busts (when the debt can't be repaid and the banks get the debtor's tangible wealth in exchange for non-existent 'credit'). With each 'bust' Sabbatian bankers have absorbed more of the world's tangible wealth and we end up with the One-percent. Governments are in bankruptcy levels of debt to the same system and are therefore owned by a system they do not control. The Federal Reserve, 'America's central bank', is privately-owned and American presidents only nominally appoint its chairman or woman to maintain the illusion that it's an arm of government. It's not. The 'Fed' is a cartel of private banks which handed billions to its associates and friends after the crash of 2008 and has been Sabbatian-controlled since it was manipulated into being in 1913 through the covert trickery of Rothschild banking agents Jacob Schiff and Paul

Warburg, and the Sabbatian Rockefeller family. Somehow from a Jewish population of two-percent and globally 0.2 percent (Sabbatian interlopers remember are far smaller) ultra-Zionists headed the Federal Reserve for 31 years between 1987 and 2018 in the form of Alan Greenspan, Bernard Bernanke and Janet Yellen (now Biden's Treasury Secretary) with Yellen's deputy chairman a Israeli-American dual citizen and ultra-Zionist Stanley Fischer, a former governor of the Bank of Israel. Ultra-Zionist Fed chiefs spanned the presidencies of Ronald Reagan ('Republican'), Father George Bush ('Republican'), Bill Clinton ('Democrat'), Boy George Bush ('Republican') and Barack Obama ('Democrat'). We should really add the pre-Greenspan chairman, Paul Adolph Volcker, 'appointed' by Jimmy Carter ('Democrat') who ran the Fed between 1979 and 1987 during the Carter and Reagan administrations before Greenspan took over. Volcker was a long-time associate and business partner of the Rothschilds. No matter what the 'party' officially in power the United States economy was directed by the same force. Here are members of the Obama, Trump and Biden administrations and see if you can make out a common theme.

Barack Obama ('Democrat')

Ultra-Zionists Robert Rubin, Larry Summers, and Timothy Geithner ran the US Treasury in the Clinton administration and two of them reappeared with Obama. Ultra-Zionist Fed chairman Alan Greenspan had manipulated the crash of 2008 through deregulation and jumped ship just before the disaster to make way for ultra-Zionist Bernard Bernanke to hand out trillions to Sabbatian 'too big to fail' banks and businesses, including the ubiquitous ultra-Zionist Goldman Sachs which has an ongoing revolving door operation between itself and major financial positions in government worldwide. Obama inherited the fallout of the crash when he took office in January, 2009, and fortunately he had the support of his ultra-Zionist White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emmanuel, son of a terrorist who helped to bomb Israel into being in 1948, and his ultra-Zionist senior adviser David Axelrod, chief strategist in Obama's two

successful presidential campaigns. Emmanuel, later mayor of Chicago and former senior fundraiser and strategist for Bill Clinton, is an example of the Sabbatian policy after Israel was established of migrating insider families to America so their children would be born American citizens. 'Obama' chose this financial team throughout his administration to respond to the Sabbatian-instigated crisis:

Timothy Geithner (ultra-Zionist) Treasury Secretary; Jacob J. Lew, Treasury Secretary; Larry Summers (ultra-Zionist), director of the White House National Economic Council; Paul Adolph Volcker (Rothschild business partner), chairman of the Economic Recovery Advisory Board; Peter Orszag (ultra-Zionist), director of the Office of Management and Budget overseeing all government spending; Penny Pritzker (ultra-Zionist), Commerce Secretary; Jared Bernstein (ultra-Zionist), chief economist and economic policy adviser to Vice President Joe Biden; Mary Schapiro (ultra-Zionist), chair of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC); Gary Gensler (ultra-Zionist), chairman of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC); Sheila Bair (ultra-Zionist), chair of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC); Karen Mills (ultra-Zionist), head of the Small Business Administration (SBA); Kenneth Feinberg (ultra-Zionist), Special Master for Executive [bail-out] Compensation. Feinberg would be appointed to oversee compensation (with strings) to 9/11 victims and families in a campaign to stop them having their day in court to question the official story. At the same time ultra-Zionist Bernard Bernanke was chairman of the Federal Reserve and these are only some of the ultra-Zionists with allegiance to Sabbatian-controlled Israel in the Obama government. Obama's biggest corporate donor was ultra-Zionist Goldman Sachs which had employed many in his administration.

Donald Trump ('Republican')

Trump claimed to be an outsider (he wasn't) who had come to 'drain the swamp'. He embarked on this goal by immediately appointing ultra-Zionist Steve Mnuchin, a Goldman Sachs employee for 17

years, as his Treasury Secretary. Others included Gary Cohn (ultra-Zionist), chief operating officer of Goldman Sachs, his first Director of the National Economic Council and chief economic adviser, who was later replaced by Larry Kudlow (ultra-Zionist). Trump's senior adviser throughout his four years in the White House was his sinister son-in-law Jared Kushner, a life-long friend of Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Kushner is the son of a convicted crook who was pardoned by Trump in his last days in office. Other ultra-Zionists in the Trump administration included: Stephen Miller, Senior Policy Adviser; Avrahm Berkowitz, Deputy Adviser to Trump and his Senior Adviser Jared Kushner; Ivanka Trump, Adviser to the President, who converted to Judaism when she married Jared Kushner; David Friedman, Trump lawyer and Ambassador to Israel; Jason Greenblatt, Trump Organization executive vice president and chief legal officer, who was made Special Representative for International Negotiations and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict; Rod Rosenstein, Deputy Attorney General; Elliot Abrams, Special Representative for Venezuela, then Iran; John Eisenberg, National Security Council Legal Adviser and Deputy Council to the President for National Security Affairs; Anne Neuberger, Deputy National Manager, National Security Agency; Ezra Cohen-Watnick, Acting Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence; Elan Carr, Special Envoy to monitor and combat anti-Semitism; Len Khodorkovsky, Deputy Special Envoy to monitor and combat anti-Semitism; Reed Cordish, Assistant to the President, Intragovernmental and Technology Initiatives. Trump Vice President Mike Pence and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, both Christian Zionists, were also vehement supporters of Israel and its goals and ambitions.

Donald 'free-speech believer' Trump pardoned a number of financial and violent criminals while ignoring calls to pardon Julian Assange and Edward Snowden whose crimes are revealing highly relevant information about government manipulation and corruption and the widespread illegal surveillance of the American people by US 'security' agencies. It's so good to know that Trump is on the side of freedom and justice and not mega-criminals with

allegiance to Sabbatian-controlled Israel. These included a pardon for Israeli spy Jonathan Pollard who was jailed for life in 1987 under the Espionage Act. Aviem Sella, the Mossad agent who recruited Pollard, was also pardoned by Trump while Assange sat in jail and Snowden remained in exile in Russia. Sella had 'fled' (was helped to escape) to Israel in 1987 and was never extradited despite being charged under the Espionage Act. A Trump White House statement said that Sella's clemency had been 'supported by Benjamin Netanyahu, Ron Dermer, Israel's US Ambassador, David Friedman, US Ambassador to Israel and Miriam Adelson, wife of leading Trump donor Sheldon Adelson who died shortly before. Other friends of Jared Kushner were pardoned along with Sholom Weiss who was believed to be serving the longest-ever white-collar prison sentence of more than 800 years in 2000. The sentence was commuted of Ponzi-schemer Eliyahu Weinstein who defrauded Jews and others out of \$200 million. I did mention that Assange and Snowden were ignored, right? Trump gave Sabbatians almost everything they asked for in military and political support, moving the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem with its critical symbolic and literal implications for Palestinian statehood, and the 'deal of the Century' designed by Jared Kushner and David Friedman which gave the Sabbatian Israeli government the green light to substantially expand its already widespread program of building illegal Jewish-only settlements in the occupied land of the West Bank. This made a two-state 'solution' impossible by seizing all the land of a potential Palestinian homeland and that had been the plan since 1948 and then 1967 when the Arab-controlled Gaza Strip, West Bank, Sinai Peninsula and Syrian Golan Heights were occupied by Israel. All the talks about talks and road maps and delays have been buying time until the West Bank was physically occupied by Israeli real estate. Trump would have to be a monumentally ill-informed idiot not to see that this was the plan he was helping to complete. The Trump administration was in so many ways the Kushner administration which means the Netanyahu administration which means the Sabbatian administration. I understand why many opposing Cult fascism in all its forms gravitated to Trump, but he

was a crucial part of the Sabbatian plan and I will deal with this in the next chapter.

Joe Biden ('Democrat')

A barely cognitive Joe Biden took over the presidency in January, 2021, along with his fellow empty shell, Vice-President Kamala Harris, as the latest Sabbatian gofers to enter the White House. Names on the door may have changed and the 'party' – the force behind them remained the same as Zionists were appointed to a stream of pivotal areas relating to Sabbatian plans and policy. They included: Janet Yellen, Treasury Secretary, former head of the Federal Reserve, and still another ultra-Zionist running the US Treasury after Mnuchin (Trump), Lew and Geithner (Obama), and Summers and Rubin (Clinton); Anthony Blinken, Secretary of State; Wendy Sherman, Deputy Secretary of State (so that's 'Biden's' Sabbatian foreign policy sorted); Jeff Zients, White House coronavirus coordinator; Rochelle Walensky, head of the Centers for Disease Control; Rachel Levine, transgender deputy health secretary (that's 'Covid' hoax policy under control); Merrick Garland, Attorney General; Alejandro Mayorkas, Secretary of Homeland Security; Cass Sunstein, Homeland Security with responsibility for new immigration laws; Avril Haines, Director of National Intelligence; Anne Neuberger, National Security Agency cybersecurity director (note, cybersecurity); David Cohen, CIA Deputy Director; Ronald Klain, Biden's Chief of Staff (see Rahm Emanuel); Eric Lander, a 'leading geneticist', Office of Science and Technology Policy director (see Smart Grid, synthetic biology agenda); Jessica Rosenworcel, acting head of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) which controls Smart Grid technology policy and electromagnetic communication systems including 5G. How can it be that so many pivotal positions are held by two-percent of the American population and 0.2 percent of the world population administration after administration no matter who is the president and what is the party? It's a coincidence? Of course it's not and this is why Sabbatians have built their colossal global web of interlocking 'anti-

hate' hate groups to condemn anyone who asks these glaring questions as an 'anti-Semite'. The way that Jewish people horrifically abused in Sabbatian-backed Nazi Germany are exploited to this end is stomach-turning and disgusting beyond words.

Political fusion

Sabbatian manipulation has reversed the roles of Republicans and Democrats and the same has happened in Britain with the Conservative and Labour Parties. Republicans and Conservatives were always labelled the 'right' and Democrats and Labour the 'left', but look at the policy positions now and the Democrat-Labour 'left' has moved further to the 'right' than Republicans and Conservatives under the banner of 'Woke', the Cult-created far-right tyranny. Where once the Democrat-Labour 'left' defended free speech and human rights they now seek to delete them and as I said earlier despite the 'Covid' fascism of the Jackboot Johnson Conservative government in the UK the Labour Party of leader Keir Starmer demanded even more extreme measures. The Labour Party has been very publicly absorbed by Sabbatians after a political and media onslaught against the previous leader, the weak and inept Jeremy Corbyn, over made-up allegations of 'anti-Semitism' both by him and his party. The plan was clear with this 'anti-Semite' propaganda and what was required in response was a swift and decisive 'fuck off' from Corbyn and a statement to expose the Anti-Semitism Industry (Sabbatian) attempt to silence Labour criticism of the Israeli government (Sabbatians) and purge the party of all dissent against the extremes of ultra-Zionism (Sabbatians). Instead Corbyn and his party fell to their knees and appeased the abusers which, by definition, is impossible. Appeasing one demand leads only to a new demand to be appeased until takeover is complete. Like I say – 'fuck off' would have been a much more effective policy and I have used it myself with great effect over the years when Sabbatians are on my case which is most of the time. I consider that fact a great compliment, by the way. The outcome of the Labour Party capitulation is that we now have a Sabbatian-controlled

Conservative Party 'opposed' by a Sabbatian-controlled Labour Party in a one-party Sabbatian state that hurtles towards the extremes of tyranny (the Sabbatian cult agenda). In America the situation is the same. Labour's Keir Starmer spends his days on his knees with his tongue out pointing to Tel Aviv, or I guess now Jerusalem, while Boris Johnson has an 'anti-Semitism czar' in the form of former Labour MP John Mann who keeps Starmer company on his prayer mat.

Sabbatian influence can be seen in Jewish members of the Labour Party who have been ejected for criticism of Israel including those from families that suffered in Nazi Germany. Sabbatians despise real Jewish people and target them even more harshly because it is so much more difficult to dub them 'anti-Semitic' although in their desperation they do try.

CHAPTER THREE

The Pushbacker sting

Until you realize how easy it is for your mind to be manipulated, you remain the puppet of someone else's game

Evita Ochel

I will use the presidencies of Trump and Biden to show how the manipulation of the one-party state plays out behind the illusion of political choice across the world. No two presidencies could – on the face of it – be more different and apparently at odds in terms of direction and policy.

A Renegade Mind sees beyond the obvious and focuses on outcomes and consequences and not image, words and waffle. The Cult embarked on a campaign to divide America between those who blindly support its agenda (the mentality known as 'Woke') and those who are pushing back on where the Cult and its Sabbatians want to go. This presents infinite possibilities for dividing and ruling the population by setting them at war with each other and allows a perceptual ring fence of demonisation to encircle the Pushbackers in a modern version of the Little Big Horn in 1876 when American cavalry led by Lieutenant Colonel George Custer were drawn into a trap, surrounded and killed by Native American tribes defending their land of thousands of years from being seized by the government. In this modern version the roles are reversed and it's those defending themselves from the Sabbatian government who are surrounded and the government that's seeking to destroy them. This trap was set years ago and to explain how we must return to 2016

and the emergence of Donald Trump as a candidate to be President of the United States. He set out to overcome the best part of 20 other candidates in the Republican Party before and during the primaries and was not considered by many in those early stages to have a prayer of living in the White House. The Republican Party was said to have great reservations about Trump and yet somehow he won the nomination. When you know how American politics works – politics in general – there is no way that Trump could have become the party's candidate unless the Sabbatian-controlled 'Neocons' that run the Republican Party wanted that to happen. We saw the proof in emails and documents made public by WikiLeaks that the Democratic Party hierarchy, or Democons, systematically undermined the campaign of Bernie Sanders to make sure that Sabbatian gofer Hillary Clinton won the nomination to be their presidential candidate. If the Democons could do that then the Neocons in the Republican Party could have derailed Trump in the same way. But they didn't and at that stage I began to conclude that Trump could well be the one chosen to be president. If that was the case the 'why' was pretty clear to see – the goal of dividing America between Cult agenda-supporting Wokers and Pushbackers who gravitated to Trump because he was telling them what they wanted to hear. His constituency of support had been increasingly ignored and voiceless for decades and profoundly through the eight years of Sabbatian puppet Barack Obama. Now here was someone speaking their language of pulling back from the incessant globalisation of political and economic power, the exporting of American jobs to China and elsewhere by 'American' (Sabbatian) corporations, the deletion of free speech, and the mass immigration policies that had further devastated job opportunities for the urban working class of all races and the once American heartlands of the Midwest.

Beware the forked tongue

Those people collectively sighed with relief that at last a political leader was apparently on their side, but another trait of the Renegade Mind is that you look even harder at people telling you

what you want to hear than those who are telling you otherwise. Obviously as I said earlier people wish what they want to hear to be true and genuine and they are much more likely to believe that than someone saying what they don't want to here and don't want to be true. Sales people are taught to be skilled in eliciting by calculated questioning what their customers want to hear and repeating that back to them as their own opinion to get their targets to like and trust them. Assets of the Cult are also sales people in the sense of selling perception. To read Cult manipulation you have to play the long and expanded game and not fall for the Vaudeville show of party politics. Both American parties are vehicles for the Cult and they exploit them in different ways depending on what the agenda requires at that moment. Trump and the Republicans were used to be the focus of dividing America and isolating Pushbackers to open the way for a Biden presidency to become the most extreme in American history by advancing the full-blown Woke (Cult) agenda with the aim of destroying and silencing Pushbackers now labelled Nazi Trump supporters and white supremacists.

Sabbatians wanted Trump in office for the reasons described by ultra-Zionist Saul Alinsky (1909-1972) who was promoting the Woke philosophy through 'community organising' long before anyone had heard of it. In those days it still went by its traditional name of Marxism. The reason for the manipulated Trump phenomenon was laid out in Alinsky's 1971 book, *Rules for Radicals*, which was his blueprint for overthrowing democratic and other regimes and replacing them with Sabbatian Marxism. Not surprisingly his to-do list was evident in the Sabbatian French and Russian 'Revolutions' and that in China which will become very relevant in the next chapter about the 'Covid' hoax. Among Alinsky's followers have been the deeply corrupt Barack Obama, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Hillary Clinton who described him as a 'hero'. All three are Sabbatian stooges with Pelosi personifying the arrogant corrupt idiocy that so widely fronts up for the Cult inner core. Predictably as a Sabbatian advocate of the 'light-bringer' Alinsky features Lucifer on the dedication page of his book as the original radical who gained

his own kingdom ('Earth' as we shall see). One of Alinsky's golden radical rules was to pick an individual and focus all attention, hatred and blame on them and not to target faceless bureaucracies and corporations. *Rules for Radicals* is really a Sabbatian handbook with its contents repeatedly employed all over the world for centuries and why wouldn't Sabbatians bring to power their designer-villain to be used as the individual on which all attention, hatred and blame was bestowed? This is what they did and the only question for me is how much Trump knew that and how much he was manipulated. A bit of both, I suspect. This was Alinsky's Trump technique from a man who died in 1972. The technique has spanned history:

Pick the target, freeze it, personalize it, polarize it. Don't try to attack abstract corporations or bureaucracies. Identify a responsible individual. Ignore attempts to shift or spread the blame.

From the moment Trump came to illusory power everything was about him. It wasn't about Republican policy or opinion, but all about Trump. Everything he did was presented in negative, derogatory and abusive terms by the Sabbatian-dominated media led by Cult operations such as CNN, MSNBC, *The New York Times* and the Jeff Bezos-owned *Washington Post* – 'Pick the target, freeze it, personalize it, polarize it.' Trump was turned into a demon to be vilified by those who hated him and a demi-god loved by those who worshipped him. This, in turn, had his supporters, too, presented as equally demonic in preparation for the punchline later down the line when Biden was about to take office. It was here's a Trump, there's a Trump, everywhere a Trump, Trump. Virtually every news story or happening was filtered through the lens of 'The Donald'. You loved him or hated him and which one you chose was said to define you as Satan's spawn or a paragon of virtue. Even supporting some Trump policies or statements and not others was enough for an assault on your character. No shades of grey were or are allowed. Everything is black and white (literally and figuratively). A Californian I knew had her head utterly scrambled by her hatred for Trump while telling people they should love each other. She was so totally consumed by

Trump Derangement Syndrome as it became to be known that this glaring contradiction would never have occurred to her. By definition anyone who criticised Trump or praised his opponents was a hero and this lady described Joe Biden as 'a kind, honest gentleman' when he's a provable liar, mega-crook and vicious piece of work to boot. Sabbatians had indeed divided America using Trump as the fall-guy and all along the clock was ticking on the consequences for his supporters.

In hock to his masters

Trump gave Sabbatians via Israel almost everything they wanted in his four years. Ask and you shall receive was the dynamic between himself and Benjamin Netanyahu orchestrated by Trump's ultra-Zionist son-in-law Jared Kushner, his ultra-Zionist Ambassador to Israel, David Friedman, and ultra-Zionist 'Israel adviser', Jason Greenblatt. The last two were central to the running and protecting from collapse of his business empire, the Trump Organisation, and colossal business failures made him forever beholding to Sabbatian networks that bailed him out. By the start of the 1990s Trump owed \$4 billion to banks that he couldn't pay and almost \$1 billion of that was down to him personally and not his companies. This mega-disaster was the result of building two new casinos in Atlantic City and buying the enormous Taj Mahal operation which led to crippling debt payments. He had borrowed fantastic sums from 72 banks with major Sabbatian connections and although the scale of debt should have had him living in a tent alongside the highway they never foreclosed. A plan was devised to lift Trump from the mire by BT Securities Corporation and Rothschild Inc. and the case was handled by Wilber Ross who had worked for the Rothschilds for 27 years. Ross would be named US Commerce Secretary after Trump's election. Another crucial figure in saving Trump was ultra-Zionist 'investor' Carl Icahn who bought the Taj Mahal casino. Icahn was made special economic adviser on financial regulation in the Trump administration. He didn't stay long but still managed to find time to make a tidy sum of a reported \$31.3 million when he sold his

holdings affected by the price of steel three days before Trump imposed a 235 percent tariff on steel imports. What amazing bits of luck these people have. Trump and Sabbatian operatives have long had a close association and his mentor and legal adviser from the early 1970s until 1986 was the dark and genetically corrupt ultra-Zionist Roy Cohn who was chief counsel to Senator Joseph McCarthy's 'communist' witch-hunt in the 1950s. *Esquire* magazine published an article about Cohn with the headline 'Don't mess with Roy Cohn'. He was described as the most feared lawyer in New York and 'a ruthless master of dirty tricks ... [with] ... more than one Mafia Don on speed dial'. Cohn's influence, contacts, support and protection made Trump a front man for Sabbatians in New York with their connections to one of Cohn's many criminal employers, the 'Russian' Sabbatian Mafia. Israel-centric media mogul Rupert Murdoch was introduced to Trump by Cohn and they started a long friendship. Cohn died in 1986 weeks after being disbarred for unethical conduct by the Appellate Division of the New York State Supreme Court. The wheels of justice do indeed run slow given the length of Cohn's crooked career.

QAnon-sense

We are asked to believe that Donald Trump with his fundamental connections to Sabbatian networks and operatives has been leading the fight to stop the Sabbatian agenda for the fascistic control of America and the world. Sure he has. A man entrapped during his years in the White House by Sabbatian operatives and whose biggest financial donor was casino billionaire Sheldon Adelson who was Sabbatian to his DNA?? Oh, do come on. Trump has been used to divide America and isolate Pushbackers on the Cult agenda under the heading of 'Trump supporters', 'insurrectionists' and 'white supremacists'. The US Intelligence/Mossad Psyop or psychological operation known as QAnon emerged during the Trump years as a central pillar in the Sabbatian campaign to lead Pushbackers into the trap set by those that wished to destroy them. I knew from the start that QAnon was a scam because I had seen the same scenario many

times before over 30 years under different names and I had written about one in particular in the books. 'Not again' was my reaction when QAnon came to the fore. The same script is pulled out every few years and a new name added to the letterhead. The story always takes the same form: 'Insiders' or 'the good guys' in the government-intelligence-military 'Deep State' apparatus were going to instigate mass arrests of the 'bad guys' which would include the Rockefellers, Rothschilds, Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, George Soros, etc., etc. Dates are given for when the 'good guys' are going to move in, but the dates pass without incident and new dates are given which pass without incident. The central message to Pushbackers in each case is that they don't have to do anything because there is 'a plan' and it is all going to be sorted by the 'good guys' on the inside. 'Trust the plan' was a QAnon mantra when the only plan was to misdirect Pushbackers into putting their trust in a Psyop they believed to be real. Beware, beware, those who tell you what you want to hear and always check it out. Right up to Biden's inauguration QAnon was still claiming that 'the Storm' was coming and Trump would stay on as president when Biden and his cronies were arrested and jailed. It was never going to happen and of course it didn't, but what did happen as a result provided that punchline to the Sabbatian Trump/QAnon Psyop.

On January 6th, 2021, a very big crowd of Trump supporters gathered in the National Mall in Washington DC down from the Capitol Building to protest at what they believed to be widespread corruption and vote fraud that stopped Trump being re-elected for a second term as president in November, 2020. I say as someone that does not support Trump or Biden that the evidence is clear that major vote-fixing went on to favour Biden, a man with cognitive problems so advanced he can often hardly string a sentence together without reading the words written for him on the Teleprompter. Glaring ballot discrepancies included serious questions about electronic voting machines that make vote rigging a comparative cinch and hundreds of thousands of paper votes that suddenly appeared during already advanced vote counts and virtually all of

them for Biden. Early Trump leads in crucial swing states suddenly began to close and disappear. The pandemic hoax was used as the excuse to issue almost limitless numbers of mail-in ballots with no checks to establish that the recipients were still alive or lived at that address. They were sent to streams of people who had not even asked for them. Private organisations were employed to gather these ballots and who knows what they did with them before they turned up at the counts. The American election system has been manipulated over decades to become a sick joke with more holes than a Swiss cheese for the express purpose of dictating the results. Then there was the criminal manipulation of information by Sabbatian tech giants like Facebook, Twitter and Google-owned YouTube which deleted pro-Trump, anti-Biden accounts and posts while everything in support of Biden was left alone. Sabbatians wanted Biden to win because after the dividing of America it was time for full-on Woke and every aspect of the Cult agenda to be unleashed.

Hunter gatherer

Extreme Silicon Valley bias included blocking information by the *New York Post* exposing a Biden scandal that should have ended his bid for president in the final weeks of the campaign. Hunter Biden, his monumentally corrupt son, is reported to have sent a laptop to be repaired at a local store and failed to return for it. Time passed until the laptop became the property of the store for non-payment of the bill. When the owner saw what was on the hard drive he gave a copy to the FBI who did nothing even though it confirmed widespread corruption in which the Joe Biden family were using his political position, especially when he was vice president to Obama, to make multiple millions in countries around the world and most notably Ukraine and China. Hunter Biden's one-time business partner Tony Bobulinski went public when the story broke in the *New York Post* to confirm the corruption he saw and that Joe Biden not only knew what was going on he also profited from the spoils. Millions were handed over by a Chinese company with close

connections – like all major businesses in China – to the Chinese communist party of President Xi Jinping. Joe Biden even boasted at a meeting of the Cult's World Economic Forum that as vice president he had ordered the government of Ukraine to fire a prosecutor. What he didn't mention was that the same man just happened to be investigating an energy company which was part of Hunter Biden's corrupt portfolio. The company was paying him big bucks for no other reason than the influence his father had. Overnight Biden's presidential campaign should have been over given that he had lied publicly about not knowing what his son was doing. Instead almost the entire Sabbatian-owned mainstream media and Sabbatian-owned Silicon Valley suppressed circulation of the story. This alone went a mighty way to rigging the election of 2020. Cult assets like Mark Zuckerberg at Facebook also spent hundreds of millions to be used in support of Biden and vote 'administration'.

The Cult had used Trump as the focus to divide America and was now desperate to bring in moronic, pliable, corrupt Biden to complete the double-whammy. No way were they going to let little things like the will of the people thwart their plan. Silicon Valley widely censored claims that the election was rigged because it *was* rigged. For the same reason anyone claiming it was rigged was denounced as a 'white supremacist' including the pathetically few Republican politicians willing to say so. Right across the media where the claim was mentioned it was described as a 'false claim' even though these excuses for 'journalists' would have done no research into the subject whatsoever. Trump won seven million more votes than any sitting president had ever achieved while somehow a cognitively-challenged soon to be 78-year-old who was hidden away from the public for most of the campaign managed to win more votes than any presidential candidate in history. It makes no sense. You only had to see election rallies for both candidates to witness the enthusiasm for Trump and the apathy for Biden. Tens of thousands would attend Trump events while Biden was speaking in empty car parks with often only television crews attending and framing their shots to hide the fact that no one was there. It was pathetic to see

footage come to light of Biden standing at a podium making speeches only to TV crews and party fixers while reading the words written for him on massive Teleprompter screens. So, yes, those protestors on January 6th had a point about election rigging, but some were about to walk into a trap laid for them in Washington by the Cult Deep State and its QAnon Psyop. This was the Capitol Hill riot ludicrously dubbed an 'insurrection'.

The spider and the fly

Renegade Minds know there are not two 'sides' in politics, only one side, the Cult, working through all 'sides'. It's a stage show, a puppet show, to direct the perceptions of the population into focusing on diversions like parties and candidates while missing the puppeteers with their hands holding all the strings. The Capitol Hill 'insurrection' brings us back to the Little Big Horn. Having created two distinct opposing groupings – Woke and Pushbackers – the trap was about to be sprung. Pushbackers were to be encircled and isolated by associating them all in the public mind with Trump and then labelling Trump as some sort of Confederate leader. I knew immediately that the Capitol riot was a set-up because of two things. One was how easy the rioters got into the building with virtually no credible resistance and secondly I could see – as with the 'Covid' hoax in the West at the start of 2020 – how the Cult could exploit the situation to move its agenda forward with great speed. My experience of Cult techniques and activities over more than 30 years has showed me that while they do exploit situations they haven't themselves created this never happens with events of fundamental agenda significance. Every time major events giving cultists the excuse to rapidly advance their plan you find they are manipulated into being for the specific reason of providing that excuse – Problem-Reaction-Solution. Only a tiny minority of the huge crowd of Washington protestors sought to gain entry to the Capitol by smashing windows and breaching doors. That didn't matter. The whole crowd and all Pushbackers, even if they did not support Trump, were going to be lumped together as dangerous

insurrectionists and conspiracy theorists. The latter term came into widespread use through a CIA memo in the 1960s aimed at discrediting those questioning the nonsensical official story of the Kennedy assassination and it subsequently became widely employed by the media. It's still being used by inept 'journalists' with no idea of its origin to discredit anyone questioning anything that authority claims to be true. When you are perpetrating a conspiracy you need to discredit the very word itself even though the dictionary definition of conspiracy is merely 'the activity of secretly planning with other people to do something bad or illegal' and 'a general agreement to keep silent about a subject for the purpose of keeping it secret'. On that basis there are conspiracies almost wherever you look. For obvious reasons the Cult and its lapdog media have to claim there are no conspiracies even though the word appears in state laws as with conspiracy to defraud, to murder, and to corrupt public morals.

Agent provocateurs are widely used by the Cult Deep State to manipulate genuine people into acting in ways that suit the desired outcome. By genuine in this case I mean protestors genuinely supporting Trump and claims that the election was stolen. In among them, however, were agents of the state wearing the garb of Trump supporters and QAnon to pump-prime the Capital riot which some genuine Trump supporters naively fell for. I described the situation as 'Come into my parlour said the spider to the fly'. Leaflets appeared through the Woke paramilitary arm Antifa, the anti-fascist fascists, calling on supporters to turn up in Washington looking like Trump supporters even though they hated him. Some of those arrested for breaching the Capitol Building were sourced to Antifa and its stable mate Black Lives Matter. Both organisations are funded by Cult billionaires and corporations. One man charged for the riot was according to his lawyer a former FBI agent who had held top secret security clearance for 40 years. Attorney Thomas Plofchan said of his client, 66-year-old Thomas Edward Caldwell:

He has held a Top Secret Security Clearance since 1979 and has undergone multiple Special Background Investigations in support of his clearances. After retiring from the Navy, he

worked as a section chief for the Federal Bureau of Investigation from 2009-2010 as a GS-12 [mid-level employee].

He also formed and operated a consulting firm performing work, often classified, for U.S government customers including the US Drug Enforcement Agency, Department of Housing and Urban Development, the US Coast Guard, and the US Army Personnel Command.

A judge later released Caldwell pending trial in the absence of evidence about a conspiracy or that he tried to force his way into the building. *The New York Post* reported a 'law enforcement source' as saying that 'at least two known Antifa members were spotted' on camera among Trump supporters during the riot while one of the rioters arrested was John Earle Sullivan, a seriously extreme Black Lives Matter Trump-hater from Utah who was previously arrested and charged in July, 2020, over a BLM-Antifa riot in which drivers were threatened and one was shot. Sullivan is the founder of Utah-based Insurgence USA which is an affiliate of the Cult-created-and-funded Black Lives Matter movement. Footage appeared and was then deleted by Twitter of Trump supporters calling out Antifa infiltrators and a group was filmed changing into pro-Trump clothing before the riot. Security at the building was *pathetic* – as planned. Colonel Leroy Fletcher Prouty, a man with long experience in covert operations working with the US security apparatus, once described the tell-tale sign to identify who is involved in an assassination. He said:

No one has to direct an assassination – it happens. The active role is played secretly by permitting it to happen. This is the greatest single clue. Who has the power to call off or reduce the usual security precautions?

This principle applies to many other situations and certainly to the Capitol riot of January 6th, 2021.

The sting

With such a big and potentially angry crowd known to be gathering near the Capitol the security apparatus would have had a major police detail to defend the building with National Guard troops on

standby given the strength of feeling among people arriving from all over America encouraged by the QAnon Psyop and statements by Donald Trump. Instead Capitol Police 'security' was flimsy, weak, and easily breached. The same number of officers was deployed as on a regular day and that is a blatant red flag. They were not staffed or equipped for a possible riot that had been an obvious possibility in the circumstances. No protective and effective fencing worth the name was put in place and there were no contingency plans. The whole thing was basically a case of standing aside and waving people in. Once inside police mostly backed off apart from one Capitol police officer who ridiculously shot dead unarmed Air Force veteran protestor Ashli Babbitt without a warning as she climbed through a broken window. The 'investigation' refused to name or charge the officer after what must surely be considered a murder in the circumstances. They just lifted a carpet and swept. The story was endlessly repeated about five people dying in the 'armed insurrection' when there was no report of rioters using weapons. Apart from Babbitt the other four died from a heart attack, strokes and apparently a drug overdose. Capitol police officer Brian Sicknick was reported to have died after being bludgeoned with a fire extinguisher when he was alive after the riot was over and died later of what the Washington Medical Examiner's Office said was a stroke. Sicknick had no external injuries. The lies were delivered like rapid fire. There was a narrative to build with incessant repetition of the lie until the lie became the accepted 'everybody knows that' truth. The 'Big Lie' technique of Nazi Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels is constantly used by the Cult which was behind the Nazis and is today behind the 'Covid' and 'climate change' hoaxes. Goebbels said:

If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it. The lie can be maintained only for such time as the State can shield the people from the political, economic and/or military consequences of the lie. It thus becomes vitally important for the State to use all of its powers to repress dissent, for the truth is the mortal enemy of the lie, and thus by extension, the truth is the greatest enemy of the State.

Most protestors had a free run of the Capitol Building. This allowed pictures to be taken of rioters in iconic parts of the building including the Senate chamber which could be used as propaganda images against all Pushbackers. One Congresswoman described the scene as 'the worst kind of non-security anybody could ever imagine'. Well, the first part was true, but someone obviously did imagine it and made sure it happened. Some photographs most widely circulated featured people wearing QAnon symbols and now the Psyop would be used to dub all QAnon followers with the ubiquitous fit-all label of 'white supremacist' and 'insurrectionists'. When a Muslim extremist called Noah Green drove his car at two police officers at the Capitol Building killing one in April, 2021, there was no such political and media hysteria. They were just disappointed he wasn't white.

The witch-hunt

Government prosecutor Michael Sherwin, an aggressive, dark-eyed, professional Rottweiler led the 'investigation' and to call it over the top would be to understate reality a thousand fold. Hundreds were tracked down and arrested for the crime of having the wrong political views and people were jailed who had done nothing more than walk in the building, committed no violence or damage to property, took a few pictures and left. They were labelled a 'threat to the Republic' while Biden sat in the White House signing executive orders written for him that were dismantling 'the Republic'. Even when judges ruled that a mother and son should not be in jail the government kept them there. Some of those arrested have been badly beaten by prison guards in Washington and lawyers for one man said he suffered a fractured skull and was made blind in one eye. Meanwhile a woman is shot dead for no reason by a Capitol Police officer and we are not allowed to know who he is never mind what has happened to him although that will be *nothing*. The Cult's QAnon/Trump sting to identify and isolate Pushbackers and then target them on the road to crushing and deleting them was a resounding success. You would have thought the Russians had

invaded the building at gunpoint and lined up senators for a firing squad to see the political and media reaction. Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez is a child in a woman's body, a terrible-tvos, me, me, me, Woker narcissist of such proportions that words have no meaning. She said she thought she was going to die when 'insurrectionists' banged on her office door. It turned out she wasn't even in the Capitol Building when the riot was happening and the 'banging' was a Capitol Police officer. She referred to herself as a 'survivor' which is an insult to all those true survivors of violent and sexual abuse while she lives her pampered and privileged life talking drivel for a living. Her Woke colleague and fellow mega-narcissist Rashida Tlaib broke down describing the devastating effect on her, too, of *not being* in the building when the rioters were there. Ocasio-Cortez and Tlaib are members of a fully-Woke group of Congresswomen known as 'The Squad' along with Ilhan Omar and Ayanna Pressley. The Squad from what I can see can be identified by its vehement anti-white racism, anti-white men agenda, and, as always in these cases, the absence of brain cells on active duty.

The usual suspects were on the riot case immediately in the form of Democrat ultra-Zionist senators and operatives Chuck Schumer and Adam Schiff demanding that Trump be impeached for 'his part in the insurrection'. The same pair of prats had led the failed impeachment of Trump over the invented 'Russia collusion' nonsense which claimed Russia had helped Trump win the 2016 election. I didn't realise that Tel Aviv had been relocated just outside Moscow. I must find an up-to-date map. The Russia hoax was a Sabbatian operation to keep Trump occupied and impotent and to stop any rapport with Russia which the Cult wants to retain as a perceptual enemy to be pulled out at will. Puppet Biden began attacking Russia when he came to office as the Cult seeks more upheaval, division and war across the world. A two-year stage show 'Russia collusion inquiry' headed by the not-very-bright former 9/11 FBI chief Robert Mueller, with support from 19 lawyers, 40 FBI agents plus intelligence analysts, forensic accountants and other

staff, devoured tens of millions of dollars and found no evidence of Russia collusion which a ten-year-old could have told them on day one. Now the same moronic Schumer and Schiff wanted a second impeachment of Trump over the Capitol 'insurrection' (riot) which the arrested development of Schumer called another 'Pearl Harbor' while others compared it with 9/11 in which 3,000 died and, in the case of CNN, with the Rwandan genocide in the 1990s in which an estimated 500,000 to 600,000 were murdered, between 250,000 and 500,000 women were raped, and populations of whole towns were hacked to death with machetes. To make those comparisons purely for Cult political reasons is beyond insulting to those that suffered and lost their lives and confirms yet again the callous inhumanity that we are dealing with. Schumer is a monumental idiot and so is Schiff, but they serve the Cult agenda and do whatever they're told so they get looked after. Talking of idiots – another inane man who spanned the Russia and Capitol impeachment attempts was Senator Eric Swalwell who had the nerve to accuse Trump of collusion with the Russians while sleeping with a Chinese spy called Christine Fang or 'Fang Fang' which is straight out of a Bond film no doubt starring Klaus Schwab as the bloke living on a secret island and controlling laser weapons positioned in space and pointing at world capitals. Fang Fang plays the part of Bond's infiltrator girlfriend which I'm sure she would enjoy rather more than sharing a bed with the brainless Swalwell, lying back and thinking of China. The FBI eventually warned Swalwell about Fang Fang which gave her time to escape back to the Chinese dictatorship. How very thoughtful of them. The second Trump impeachment also failed and hardly surprising when an impeachment is supposed to remove a sitting president and by the time it happened Trump was no longer president. These people are running your country America, well, officially anyway. Terrifying isn't it?

Outcomes tell the story - always

The outcome of all this – and it's the *outcome* on which Renegade Minds focus, not the words – was that a vicious, hysterical and

obviously pre-planned assault was launched on Pushbackers to censor, silence and discredit them and even targeted their right to earn a living. They have since been condemned as 'domestic terrorists' that need to be treated like Al-Qaeda and Islamic State. 'Domestic terrorists' is a label the Cult has been trying to make stick since the period of the Oklahoma bombing in 1995 which was blamed on 'far-right domestic terrorists'. If you read *The Trigger* you will see that the bombing was clearly a Problem-Reaction-Solution carried out by the Deep State during a Bill Clinton administration so corrupt that no dictionary definition of the term would even nearly suffice. Nearly 30, 000 troops were deployed from all over America to the empty streets of Washington for Biden's inauguration. Ten thousand of them stayed on with the pretext of protecting the capital from insurrectionists when it was more psychological programming to normalise the use of the military in domestic law enforcement in support of the Cult plan for a police-military state. Biden's fascist administration began a purge of 'wrong-thinkers' in the military which means anyone that is not on board with Woke. The Capitol Building was surrounded by a fence with razor wire and the Land of the Free was further symbolically and literally dismantled. The circle was completed with the installation of Biden and the exploitation of the QAnon Psyop.

America had never been so divided since the civil war of the 19th century, Pushbackers were isolated and dubbed terrorists and now, as was always going to happen, the Cult immediately set about deleting what little was left of freedom and transforming American society through a swish of the hand of the most controlled 'president' in American history leading (officially at least) the most extreme regime since the country was declared an independent state on July 4th, 1776. Biden issued undebated, dictatorial executive orders almost by the hour in his opening days in office across the whole spectrum of the Cult wish-list including diluting controls on the border with Mexico allowing thousands of migrants to illegally enter the United States to transform the demographics of America and import an election-changing number of perceived Democrat

voters. Then there were Biden deportation amnesties for the already illegally resident (estimated to be as high as 20 or even 30 million). A bill before Congress awarded American citizenship to anyone who could prove they had worked in agriculture for just 180 days in the previous two years as 'Big Ag' secured its slave labour long-term. There were the plans to add new states to the union such as Puerto Rico and making Washington DC a state. They are all parts of a plan to ensure that the Cult-owned Woke Democrats would be permanently in power.

Border – what border?

I have exposed in detail in other books how mass immigration into the United States and Europe is the work of Cult networks fuelled by the tens of billions spent to this and other ends by George Soros and his global Open Society (open borders) Foundations. The impact can be seen in America alone where the population has increased by *100 million* in little more than 30 years mostly through immigration. I wrote in *The Answer* that the plan was to have so many people crossing the southern border that the numbers become unstoppable and we are now there under Cult-owned Biden. El Salvador in Central America puts the scale of what is happening into context. A third of the population now lives in the United States, much of it illegally, and many more are on the way. The methodology is to crush Central and South American countries economically and spread violence through machete-wielding psychopathic gangs like MS-13 based in El Salvador and now operating in many American cities. Biden-imposed lax security at the southern border means that it is all but open. He said before his 'election' that he wanted to see a surge towards the border if he became president and that was the green light for people to do just that after election day to create the human disaster that followed for both America and the migrants. When that surge came the imbecilic Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez said it wasn't a 'surge' because they are 'children, not insurgents' and the term 'surge' (used by Biden) was a claim of 'white supremacists'.

This disingenuous lady may one day enter the realm of the most basic intelligence, but it won't be any time soon.

Sabbatians and the Cult are in the process of destroying America by importing violent people and gangs in among the genuine to terrorise American cities and by overwhelming services that cannot cope with the sheer volume of new arrivals. Something similar is happening in Europe as Western society in general is targeted for demographic and cultural transformation and upheaval. The plan demands violence and crime to create an environment of intimidation, fear and division and Soros has been funding the election of district attorneys across America who then stop prosecuting many crimes, reduce sentences for violent crimes and free as many violent criminals as they can. Sabbatians are creating the chaos from which order – their order – can respond in a classic Problem-Reaction-Solution. A Freemasonic motto says 'Ordo Ab Chao' (Order out of Chaos) and this is why the Cult is constantly creating chaos to impose a new 'order'. Here you have the reason the Cult is constantly creating chaos. The 'Covid' hoax can be seen with those entering the United States by plane being forced to take a 'Covid' test while migrants flooding through southern border processing facilities do not. Nothing is put in the way of mass migration and if that means ignoring the government's own 'Covid' rules then so be it. They know it's all bullshit anyway. Any pushback on this is denounced as 'racist' by Wokers and Sabbatian fronts like the ultra-Zionist Anti-Defamation League headed by the appalling Jonathan Greenblatt which at the same time argues that Israel should not give citizenship and voting rights to more Palestinian Arabs or the 'Jewish population' (in truth the Sabbatian network) will lose control of the country.

Society-changing numbers

Biden's masters have declared that countries like El Salvador are so dangerous that their people must be allowed into the United States for humanitarian reasons when there are fewer murders in large parts of many Central American countries than in US cities like

Baltimore. That is not to say Central America cannot be a dangerous place and Cult-controlled American governments have been making it so since way back, along with the dismantling of economies, in a long-term plan to drive people north into the United States. Parts of Central America are very dangerous, but in other areas the story is being greatly exaggerated to justify relaxing immigration criteria. Migrants are being offered free healthcare and education in the United States as another incentive to head for the border and there is no requirement to be financially independent before you can enter to prevent the resources of America being drained. You can't blame migrants for seeking what they believe will be a better life, but they are being played by the Cult for dark and nefarious ends. The numbers since Biden took office are huge. In February, 2021, more than 100,000 people were known to have tried to enter the US illegally through the southern border (it was 34,000 in the same month in 2020) and in March it was 170,000 – a 418 percent increase on March, 2020. These numbers are only known people, not the ones who get in unseen. The true figure for migrants illegally crossing the border in a single month was estimated by one congressman at 250,000 and that number will only rise under Biden's current policy. Gangs of murdering drug-running thugs that control the Mexican side of the border demand money – thousands of dollars – to let migrants cross the Rio Grande into America. At the same time gun battles are breaking out on the border several times a week between rival Mexican drug gangs (which now operate globally) who are equipped with sophisticated military-grade weapons, grenades and armoured vehicles. While the Capitol Building was being 'protected' from a non-existent 'threat' by thousands of troops, and others were still deployed at the time in the Cult Neocon war in Afghanistan, the southern border of America was left to its fate. This is not incompetence, it is cold calculation.

By March, 2021, there were 17,000 unaccompanied children held at border facilities and many of them are ensnared by people traffickers for paedophile rings and raped on their journey north to America. This is not conjecture – this is fact. Many of those designated

children are in reality teenage boys or older. Meanwhile Wokers posture their self-purity for encouraging poor and tragic people to come to America and face this nightmare both on the journey and at the border with the disgusting figure of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi giving disingenuous speeches about caring for migrants. The woman's evil. Wokers condemned Trump for having children in cages at the border (so did Obama, *Shhhh*), but now they are sleeping on the floor without access to a shower with one border facility 729 percent over capacity. The Biden insanity even proposed flying migrants from the southern border to the northern border with Canada for 'processing'. The whole shambles is being overseen by ultra-Zionist Secretary of Homeland Security, the moronic liar Alejandro Mayorkas, who banned news cameras at border facilities to stop Americans seeing what was happening. Mayorkas said there was not a ban on news crews; it was just that they were not allowed to film. Alongside him at Homeland Security is another ultra-Zionist Cass Sunstein appointed by Biden to oversee new immigration laws. Sunstein despises conspiracy researchers to the point where he suggests they should be banned or *taxed* for having such views. The man is not bonkers or anything. He's perfectly well-adjusted, but adjusted to what is the question. Criticise what is happening and you are a 'white supremacist' when earlier non-white immigrants also oppose the numbers which effect their lives and opportunities. Black people in poor areas are particularly damaged by uncontrolled immigration and the increased competition for work opportunities with those who will work for less. They are also losing voting power as Hispanics become more dominant in former black areas. It's a downward spiral for them while the billionaires behind the policy drone on about how much they care about black people and 'racism'. None of this is about compassion for migrants or black people – that's just wind and air. Migrants are instead being mercilessly exploited to transform America while the countries they leave are losing their future and the same is true in Europe. Mass immigration may now be the work of Woke Democrats, but it can be traced back to the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (it

wasn't) signed into law by Republican hero President Ronald Reagan which gave amnesty to millions living in the United States illegally and other incentives for people to head for the southern border. Here we have the one-party state at work again.

Save me syndrome

Almost every aspect of what I have been exposing as the Cult agenda was on display in even the first days of 'Biden' with silencing of Pushbackers at the forefront of everything. A Renegade Mind will view the Trump years and QAnon in a very different light to their supporters and advocates as the dots are connected. The QAnon/Trump Psyop has given the Cult all it was looking for. We may not know how much, or little, that Trump realised he was being used, but that's a side issue. This pincer movement produced the desired outcome of dividing America and having Pushbackers isolated. To turn this around we have to look at new routes to empowerment which do not include handing our power to other people and groups through what I will call the 'Save Me Syndrome' – 'I want someone else to do it so that I don't have to'. We have seen this at work throughout human history and the QAnon/Trump Psyop is only the latest incarnation alongside all the others. Religion is an obvious expression of this when people look to a 'god' or priest to save them or tell them how to be saved and then there are 'save me' politicians like Trump. Politics is a diversion and not a 'saviour'. It is a means to block positive change, not make it possible.

Save Me Syndrome always comes with the same repeating theme of handing your power to whom or what you believe will save you while your real 'saviour' stares back from the mirror every morning. Renegade Minds are constantly vigilant in this regard and always asking the question 'What can I do?' rather than 'What can someone else do for me?' Gandhi was right when he said: 'You must be the change you want to see in the world.' We are indeed the people we have been waiting for. We are presented with a constant raft of reasons to concede that power to others and forget where the real power is. Humanity has the numbers and the Cult does not. It has to

use diversion and division to target the unstoppable power that comes from unity. Religions, governments, politicians, corporations, media, QAnon, are all different manifestations of this power-diversion and dilution. Refusing to give your power to governments and instead handing it to Trump and QAnon is not to take a new direction, but merely to recycle the old one with new names on the posters. I will explore this phenomenon as we proceed and how to break the cycles and recycles that got us here through the mists of repeating perception and so repeating history.

For now we shall turn to the most potent example in the entire human story of the consequences that follow when you give your power away. I am talking, of course, of the 'Covid' hoax.

CHAPTER FOUR

'Covid': Calculated catastrophe

Facts are threatening to those invested in fraud
DaShanne Stokes

We can easily unravel the real reason for the 'Covid pandemic' hoax by employing the Renegade Mind methodology that I have outlined this far. We'll start by comparing the long-planned Cult outcome with the 'Covid pandemic' outcome. Know the outcome and you'll see the journey.

I have highlighted the plan for the Hunger Games Society which has been in my books for so many years with the very few controlling the very many through ongoing dependency. To create this dependency it is essential to destroy independent livelihoods, businesses and employment to make the population reliant on the state (the Cult) for even the basics of life through a guaranteed pittance income. While independence of income remained these Cult ambitions would be thwarted. With this knowledge it was easy to see where the 'pandemic' hoax was going once talk of 'lockdowns' began and the closing of all but perceived 'essential' businesses to 'save' us from an alleged 'deadly virus'. Cult corporations like Amazon and Walmart were naturally considered 'essential' while mom and pop shops and stores had their doors closed by fascist decree. As a result with every new lockdown and new regulation more small and medium, even large businesses not owned by the Cult, went to the wall while Cult giants and their frontmen and women grew financially fatter by the second. Mom and pop were

denied an income and the right to earn a living and the wealth of people like Jeff Bezos (Amazon), Mark Zuckerberg (Facebook) and Sergei Brin and Larry Page (Google/Alphabet) have reached record levels. The Cult was increasing its own power through further dramatic concentrations of wealth while the competition was being destroyed and brought into a state of dependency. Lockdowns have been instigated to secure that very end and were never anything to do with health. My brother Paul spent 45 years building up a bus repair business, but lockdowns meant buses were running at a fraction of normal levels for months on end. Similar stories can be told in their hundreds of millions worldwide. Efforts of a lifetime coldly destroyed by Cult multi-billionaires and their lackeys in government and law enforcement who continued to earn their living from the taxation of the people while denying the right of the same people to earn theirs. How different it would have been if those making and enforcing these decisions had to face the same financial hardships of those they affected, but they never do.

Gates of Hell

Behind it all in the full knowledge of what he is doing and why is the psychopathic figure of Cult operative Bill Gates. His puppet Tedros at the World Health Organization declared 'Covid' a pandemic in March, 2020. The WHO had changed the definition of a 'pandemic' in 2009 just a month before declaring the 'swine flu pandemic' which would not have been so under the previous definition. The same applies to 'Covid'. The definition had included... 'an infection by an infectious agent, occurring simultaneously in different countries, with a significant mortality rate relative to the proportion of the population infected'. The new definition removed the need for 'significant mortality'. The 'pandemic' has been fraudulent even down to the definition, but Gates demanded economy-destroying lockdowns, school closures, social distancing, mandatory masks, a 'vaccination' for every man, woman and child on the planet and severe consequences and restrictions for those that refused. Who gave him this power? The

Cult did which he serves like a little boy in short trousers doing what his daddy tells him. He and his psychopathic missus even smiled when they said that much worse was to come (what they knew was planned to come). Gates responded in the matter-of-fact way of all psychopaths to a question about the effect on the world economy of what he was doing:

Well, it won't go to zero but it will shrink. Global GDP is probably going to take the biggest hit ever [Gates was smiling as he said this] ... in my lifetime this will be the greatest economic hit. But you don't have a choice. People act as if you have a choice. People don't feel like going to the stadium when they might get infected ... People are deeply affected by seeing these stats, by knowing they could be part of the transmission chain, old people, their parents and grandparents, could be affected by this, and so you don't get to say ignore what is going on here.

There will be the ability to open up, particularly in rich countries, if things are done well over the next few months, but for the world at large normalcy only returns when we have largely vaccinated the entire population.

The man has no compassion or empathy. How could he when he's a psychopath like all Cult players? My own view is that even beyond that he is very seriously mentally ill. Look in his eyes and you can see this along with his crazy flailing arms. You don't do what he has done to the world population since the start of 2020 unless you are mentally ill and at the most extreme end of psychopathic. You especially don't do it when to you know, as we shall see, that cases and deaths from 'Covid' are fakery and a product of monumental figure massaging. 'These stats' that Gates referred to are based on a 'test' that's not testing for the 'virus' as he has known all along. He made his fortune with big Cult support as an infamously ruthless software salesman and now buys global control of 'health' (death) policy without the population he affects having any say. It's a breathtaking outrage. Gates talked about people being deeply affected by fear of 'Covid' when that was because of *him* and his global network lying to them minute-by-minute supported by a lying media that he seriously influences and funds to the tune of hundreds of millions. He's handed big sums to media operations including the BBC, NBC, Al Jazeera, Univision, *PBS NewsHour*,

ProPublica, National Journal, The Guardian, The Financial Times, The Atlantic, Texas Tribune, USA Today publisher Gannett, Washington Monthly, Le Monde, Center for Investigative Reporting, Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting, National Press Foundation, International Center for Journalists, Solutions Journalism Network, the Poynter Institute for Media Studies, and many more. Gates is everywhere in the 'Covid' hoax and the man must go to prison – or a mental facility – for the rest of his life and his money distributed to those he has taken such enormous psychopathic pleasure in crushing.

The Muscle

The Hunger Games global structure demands a police-military state – a fusion of the two into one force – which viciously imposes the will of the Cult on the population and protects the Cult from public rebellion. In that regard, too, the 'Covid' hoax just keeps on giving. Often unlawful, ridiculous and contradictory 'Covid' rules and regulations have been policed across the world by moronic automatons and psychopaths made faceless by face-nappy masks and acting like the Nazi SS and fascist blackshirts and brownshirts of Hitler and Mussolini. The smallest departure from the rules decreed by the psychos in government and their clueless gofers were jumped upon by the face-nappy fascists. Brutality against public protestors soon became commonplace even on girls, women and old people as the brave men with the batons – the Face-Nappies as I call them – broke up peaceful protests and handed out fines like confetti to people who couldn't earn a living let alone pay hundreds of pounds for what was once an accepted human right. Robot Face-Nappies of Nottingham police in the English East Midlands fined one group £11,000 for attending a child's birthday party. For decades I charted the transformation of law enforcement as genuine, decent officers were replaced with psychopaths and the brain dead who would happily and brutally do whatever their masters told them. Now they were let loose on the public and I would emphasise the point that none of this just happened. The step-by-step change in the dynamic between police and public was orchestrated from the shadows by

those who knew where this was all going and the same with the perceptual reframing of those in all levels of authority and official administration through 'training courses' by organisations such as Common Purpose which was created in the late 1980s and given a massive boost in Blair era Britain until it became a global phenomenon. Supposed public 'servants' began to view the population as the enemy and the same was true of the police. This was the start of the explosion of behaviour manipulation organisations and networks preparing for the all-war on the human psyche unleashed with the dawn of 2020. I will go into more detail about this later in the book because it is a core part of what is happening.

Police desecrated beauty spots to deter people gathering and arrested women for walking in the countryside alone 'too far' from their homes. We had arrogant, clueless sergeants in the Isle of Wight police where I live posting on Facebook what they insisted the population must do or else. A schoolmaster sergeant called Radford looked young enough for me to ask if his mother knew he was out, but he was posting what he *expected* people to do while a Sergeant Wilkinson boasted about fining lads for meeting in a McDonald's car park where they went to get a lockdown takeaway. Wilkinson added that he had even cancelled their order. What a pair of prats these people are and yet they have increasingly become the norm among Jackboot Johnson's Yellowshirts once known as the British police. This was the theme all over the world with police savagery common during lockdown protests in the United States, the Netherlands, and the fascist state of Victoria in Australia under its tyrannical and again moronic premier Daniel Andrews. Amazing how tyrannical and moronic tend to work as a team and the same combination could be seen across America as arrogant, narcissistic Woke governors and mayors such as Gavin Newsom (California), Andrew Cuomo (New York), Gretchen Whitmer (Michigan), Lori Lightfoot (Chicago) and Eric Garcetti (Los Angeles) did their Nazi and Stalin impressions with the full support of the compliant brutality of their enforcers in uniform as they arrested small business owners defying

fascist shutdown orders and took them to jail in ankle shackles and handcuffs. This happened to bistro owner Marlena Pavlos-Hackney in Gretchen Whitmer's fascist state of Michigan when police arrived to enforce an order by a state-owned judge for 'putting the community at risk' at a time when other states like Texas were dropping restrictions and migrants were pouring across the southern border without any 'Covid' questions at all. I'm sure there are many officers appalled by what they are ordered to do, but not nearly enough of them. If they were truly appalled they would not do it. As the months passed every opportunity was taken to have the military involved to make their presence on the streets ever more familiar and 'normal' for the longer-term goal of police-military fusion.

Another crucial element to the Hunger Games enforcement network has been encouraging the public to report neighbours and others for 'breaking the lockdown rules'. The group faced with £11,000 in fines at the child's birthday party would have been dobbed-in by a neighbour with a brain the size of a pea. The technique was most famously employed by the Stasi secret police in communist East Germany who had public informants placed throughout the population. A police chief in the UK says his force doesn't need to carry out 'Covid' patrols when they are flooded with so many calls from the public reporting other people for visiting the beach. Dorset police chief James Vaughan said people were so enthusiastic about snitching on their fellow humans they were now operating as an auxiliary arm of the police: 'We are still getting around 400 reports a week from the public, so we will respond to reports ... We won't need to be doing hotspot patrols because people are very quick to pick the phone up and tell us.' Vaughan didn't say that this is a pillar of all tyrannies of whatever complexion and the means to hugely extend the reach of enforcement while spreading distrust among the people and making them wary of doing anything that might get them reported. Those narcissistic Isle of Wight sergeants Radford and Wilkinson never fail to add a link to their Facebook posts where the public can inform on their fellow slaves.

Neither would be self-aware enough to realise they were imitating the Stasi which they might well never have heard of. Government psychologists that I will expose later laid out a policy to turn communities against each other in the same way.

A coincidence? Yep, and I can knit fog

I knew from the start of the alleged pandemic that this was a Cult operation. It presented limitless potential to rapidly advance the Cult agenda and exploit manipulated fear to demand that every man, woman and child on the planet was 'vaccinated' in a process never used on humans before which infuses self-replicating *synthetic* material into human cells. Remember the plan to transform the human body from a biological to a synthetic biological state. I'll deal with the 'vaccine' (that's not actually a vaccine) when I focus on the genetic agenda. Enough to say here that mass global 'vaccination' justified by this 'new virus' set alarms ringing after 30 years of tracking these people and their methods. The 'Covid' hoax officially beginning in China was also a big red flag for reasons I will be explaining. The agenda potential was so enormous that I could dismiss any idea that the 'virus' appeared naturally. Major happenings with major agenda implications never occur without Cult involvement in making them happen. My questions were twofold in early 2020 as the media began its campaign to induce global fear and hysteria: Was this alleged infectious agent released on purpose by the Cult or did it even exist at all? I then did what I always do in these situations. I sat, observed and waited to see where the evidence and information would take me. By March and early April synchronicity was strongly – and ever more so since then – pointing me in the direction of *there is no 'virus'*. I went public on that with derision even from swathes of the alternative media that voiced a scenario that the Chinese government released the 'virus' in league with Deep State elements in the United States from a top-level bio-lab in Wuhan where the 'virus' is said to have first appeared. I looked at that possibility, but I didn't buy it for several reasons. Deaths from the 'virus' did not in any way match what they

would have been with a 'deadly bioweapon' and it is much more effective if you sell the *illusion* of an infectious agent rather than having a real one unless you can control through injection who has it and who doesn't. Otherwise you lose control of events. A made-up 'virus' gives you a blank sheet of paper on which you can make it do whatever you like and have any symptoms or mutant 'variants' you choose to add while a real infectious agent would limit you to what it actually does. A phantom disease allows you to have endless ludicrous 'studies' on the 'Covid' dollar to widen the perceived impact by inventing ever more 'at risk' groups including one study which said those who walk slowly may be almost four times more likely to die from the 'virus'. People are in psychiatric wards for less.

A real 'deadly bioweapon' can take out people in the hierarchy that are not part of the Cult, but essential to its operation. Obviously they don't want that. Releasing a real disease means you immediately lose control of it. Releasing an illusory one means you don't. Again it's vital that people are extra careful when dealing with what they want to hear. A bioweapon unleashed from a Chinese laboratory in collusion with the American Deep State may fit a conspiracy narrative, but is it true? Would it not be far more effective to use the excuse of a 'virus' to justify the real bioweapon – the 'vaccine'? That way your disease agent does not have to be transmitted and arrives directly through a syringe. I saw a French virologist Luc Montagnier quoted in the alternative media as saying he had discovered that the alleged 'new' severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus, or SARS-CoV-2, was made artificially and included elements of the human immunodeficiency 'virus' (HIV) and a parasite that causes malaria. SARS-CoV-2 is alleged to trigger an alleged illness called Covid-19. I remembered Montagnier's name from my research years before into claims that an HIV 'retrovirus' causes AIDs – claims that were demolished by Berkeley virologist Peter Duesberg who showed that no one had ever proved that HIV causes acquired immunodeficiency syndrome or AIDS. Claims that become accepted as fact, publicly and medically, with no proof whatsoever are an ever-recurring story that profoundly applies to

'Covid'. Nevertheless, despite the lack of proof, Montagnier's team at the Pasteur Institute in Paris had a long dispute with American researcher Robert Gallo over which of them discovered and isolated the HIV 'virus' and with *no evidence* found it to cause AIDS. You will see later that there is also no evidence that any 'virus' causes any disease or that there is even such a thing as a 'virus' in the way it is said to exist. The claim to have 'isolated' the HIV 'virus' will be presented in its real context as we come to the shocking story – and it is a story – of SARS-CoV-2 and so will Montagnier's assertion that he identified the full SARS-CoV-2 genome.

Hoax in the making

We can pick up the 'Covid' story in 2010 and the publication by the Rockefeller Foundation of a document called 'Scenarios for the Future of Technology and International Development'. The inner circle of the Rockefeller family has been serving the Cult since John D. Rockefeller (1839-1937) made his fortune with Standard Oil. It is less well known that the same Rockefeller – the Bill Gates of his day – was responsible for establishing what is now referred to as 'Big Pharma', the global network of pharmaceutical companies that make outrageous profits dispensing scalpel and drug 'medicine' and are obsessed with pumping vaccines in ever-increasing number into as many human arms and backsides as possible. John D. Rockefeller was the driving force behind the creation of the 'education' system in the United States and elsewhere specifically designed to program the perceptions of generations thereafter. The Rockefeller family donated exceptionally valuable land in New York for the United Nations building and were central in establishing the World Health Organization in 1948 as an agency of the UN which was created from the start as a Trojan horse and stalking horse for world government. Now enter Bill Gates. His family and the Rockefellers have long been extremely close and I have seen genealogy which claims that if you go back far enough the two families fuse into the same bloodline. Gates has said that the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation was inspired by the Rockefeller Foundation and why not

when both are serving the same Cult? Major tax-exempt foundations are overwhelmingly criminal enterprises in which Cult assets fund the Cult agenda in the guise of 'philanthropy' while avoiding tax in the process. Cult operatives can become mega-rich in their role of front men and women for the psychopaths at the inner core and they, too, have to be psychopaths to knowingly serve such evil. Part of the deal is that a big percentage of the wealth gleaned from representing the Cult has to be spent advancing the ambitions of the Cult and hence you have the Rockefeller Foundation, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (and *so* many more) and people like George Soros with his global Open Society Foundations spending their billions in pursuit of global Cult control. Gates is a global public face of the Cult with his interventions in world affairs including Big Tech influence; a central role in the 'Covid' and 'vaccine' scam; promotion of the climate change shakedown; manipulation of education; geoengineering of the skies; and his food-control agenda as the biggest owner of farmland in America, his GMO promotion and through other means. As one writer said: 'Gates monopolizes or wields disproportionate influence over the tech industry, global health and vaccines, agriculture and food policy (including biopiracy and fake food), weather modification and other climate technologies, surveillance, education and media.' The almost limitless wealth secured through Microsoft and other not-allowed-to-fail ventures (including vaccines) has been ploughed into a long, long list of Cult projects designed to enslave the entire human race. Gates and the Rockefellers have been working as one unit with the Rockefeller-established World Health Organization leading global 'Covid' policy controlled by Gates through his mouth-piece Tedros. Gates became the WHO's biggest funder when Trump announced that the American government would cease its donations, but Biden immediately said he would restore the money when he took office in January, 2021. The Gates Foundation (the Cult) owns through limitless funding the world health system and the major players across the globe in the 'Covid' hoax.

Okay, with that background we return to that Rockefeller Foundation document of 2010 headed 'Scenarios for the Future of Technology and International Development' and its 'imaginary' epidemic of a virulent and deadly influenza strain which infected 20 percent of the global population and killed eight million in seven months. The Rockefeller scenario was that the epidemic destroyed economies, closed shops, offices and other businesses and led to governments imposing fierce rules and restrictions that included mandatory wearing of face masks and body-temperature checks to enter communal spaces like railway stations and supermarkets. The document predicted that even after the height of the Rockefeller-envisaged epidemic the authoritarian rule would continue to deal with further pandemics, transnational terrorism, environmental crises and rising poverty. Now you may think that the Rockefellers are our modern-day seers or alternatively, and rather more likely, that they well knew what was planned a few years further on. Fascism had to be imposed, you see, to 'protect citizens from risk and exposure'. The Rockefeller scenario document said:

During the pandemic, national leaders around the world flexed their authority and imposed airtight rules and restrictions, from the mandatory wearing of face masks to body-temperature checks at the entries to communal spaces like train stations and supermarkets. Even after the pandemic faded, this more authoritarian control and oversight of citizens and their activities stuck and even intensified. In order to protect themselves from the spread of increasingly global problems – from pandemics and transnational terrorism to environmental crises and rising poverty – leaders around the world took a firmer grip on power.

At first, the notion of a more controlled world gained wide acceptance and approval. Citizens willingly gave up some of their sovereignty – and their privacy – to more paternalistic states in exchange for greater safety and stability. Citizens were more tolerant, and even eager, for top-down direction and oversight, and national leaders had more latitude to impose order in the ways they saw fit.

In developed countries, this heightened oversight took many forms: biometric IDs for all citizens, for example, and tighter regulation of key industries whose stability was deemed vital to national interests. In many developed countries, enforced cooperation with a suite of new regulations and agreements slowly but steadily restored both order and, importantly, economic growth.

There we have the prophetic Rockefellers in 2010 and three years later came their paper for the Global Health Summit in Beijing, China, when government representatives, the private sector, international organisations and groups met to discuss the next 100 years of 'global health'. The Rockefeller Foundation-funded paper was called 'Dreaming the Future of Health for the Next 100 Years and more prophecy ensued as it described a dystopian future: 'The abundance of data, digitally tracking and linking people may mean the 'death of privacy' and may replace physical interaction with transient, virtual connection, generating isolation and raising questions of how values are shaped in virtual networks.' Next in the 'Covid' hoax preparation sequence came a 'table top' simulation in 2018 for another 'imaginary' pandemic of a disease called Clade X which was said to kill 900 million people. The exercise was organised by the Gates-funded Johns Hopkins University's Center for Health Security in the United States and this is the very same university that has been compiling the disgustingly and systematically erroneous global figures for 'Covid' cases and deaths. Similar Johns Hopkins health crisis scenarios have included the Dark Winter exercise in 2001 and Atlantic Storm in 2005.

Nostradamus 201

For sheer predictive genius look no further prophecy-watchers than the Bill Gates-funded Event 201 held only six weeks before the 'coronavirus pandemic' is supposed to have broken out in China and Event 201 was based on a scenario of a global 'coronavirus pandemic'. Melinda Gates, the great man's missus, told the BBC that he had 'prepared for years' for a coronavirus pandemic which told us what we already knew. Nostradamugates had predicted in a TED talk in 2015 that a pandemic was coming that would kill a lot of people and demolish the world economy. My god, the man is a machine – possibly even literally. Now here he was only weeks before the real thing funding just such a simulated scenario and involving his friends and associates at Johns Hopkins, the World Economic Forum Cult-front of Klaus Schwab, the United Nations,

Johnson & Johnson, major banks, and officials from China and the Centers for Disease Control in the United States. What synchronicity – Johns Hopkins would go on to compile the fraudulent ‘Covid’ figures, the World Economic Forum and Schwab would push the ‘Great Reset’ in response to ‘Covid’, the Centers for Disease Control would be at the forefront of ‘Covid’ policy in the United States, Johnson & Johnson would produce a ‘Covid vaccine’, and everything would officially start just weeks later in China. Spooky, eh? They were even accurate in creating a simulation of a ‘virus’ pandemic because the ‘real thing’ would also be a simulation. Event 201 was not an exercise preparing for something that might happen; it was a rehearsal for what those in control knew was *going* to happen and very shortly. Hours of this simulation were posted on the Internet and the various themes and responses mirrored what would soon be imposed to transform human society. News stories were inserted and what they said would be commonplace a few weeks later with still more prophecy perfection. Much discussion focused on the need to deal with misinformation and the ‘anti-vax movement’ which is exactly what happened when the ‘virus’ arrived – was said to have arrived – in the West.

Cult-owned social media banned criticism and exposure of the official ‘virus’ narrative and when I said there *was* no ‘virus’ in early April, 2020, I was banned by one platform after another including YouTube, Facebook and later Twitter. The mainstream broadcast media in Britain was in effect banned from interviewing me by the Tony-Blair-created government broadcasting censor Ofcom headed by career government bureaucrat Melanie Dawes who was appointed just as the ‘virus’ hoax was about to play out in January, 2020. At the same time the Ickonic media platform was using Vimeo, another ultra-Zionist-owned operation, while our own player was being created and they deleted in an instant hundreds of videos, documentaries, series and shows to confirm their unbelievable vindictiveness. We had copies, of course, and they had to be restored one by one when our player was ready. These people have no class. Sabbatian Facebook promised free advertisements for the Gates-

controlled World Health Organization narrative while deleting ‘false claims and conspiracy theories’ to stop ‘misinformation’ about the alleged coronavirus. All these responses could be seen just a short while earlier in the scenarios of Event 201. Extreme censorship was absolutely crucial for the Cult because the official story was so ridiculous and unsupportable by the evidence that it could never survive open debate and the free-flow of information and opinion. If you can’t win a debate then don’t have one is the Cult’s approach throughout history. Facebook’s little boy front man – front boy – Mark Zuckerberg equated ‘credible and accurate information’ with official sources and exposing their lies with ‘misinformation’.

Silencing those that can see

The censorship dynamic of Event 201 is now the norm with an army of narrative-supporting ‘fact-checker’ organisations whose entire reason for being is to tell the public that official narratives are true and those exposing them are lying. One of the most appalling of these ‘fact-checkers’ is called NewsGuard founded by ultra-Zionist Americans Gordon Crovitz and Steven Brill. Crovitz is a former publisher of *The Wall Street Journal*, former Executive Vice President of Dow Jones, a member of the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), and on the board of the American Association of Rhodes Scholars. The CFR and Rhodes Scholarships, named after Rothschild agent Cecil Rhodes who plundered the gold and diamonds of South Africa for his masters and the Cult, have featured widely in my books. NewsGuard don’t seem to like me for some reason – I really can’t think why – and they have done all they can to have me censored and discredited which is, to quote an old British politician, like being savaged by a dead sheep. They are, however, like all in the censorship network, very well connected and funded by organisations themselves funded by, or connected to, Bill Gates. As you would expect with anything associated with Gates NewsGuard has an offshoot called HealthGuard which ‘fights online health care hoaxes’. How very kind. Somehow the NewsGuard European Managing Director Anna-Sophie Harling, a remarkably young-

looking woman with no broadcasting experience and little hands-on work in journalism, has somehow secured a position on the 'Content Board' of UK government broadcast censor Ofcom. An executive of an organisation seeking to discredit dissidents of the official narratives is making decisions for the government broadcast 'regulator' about content?? Another appalling 'fact-checker' is Full Fact funded by George Soros and global censors Google and Facebook.

It's amazing how many activists in the 'fact-checking', 'anti-hate', arena turn up in government-related positions – people like UK Labour Party activist Imran Ahmed who heads the Center for Countering Digital Hate founded by people like Morgan McSweeney, now chief of staff to the Labour Party's hapless and useless 'leader' Keir Starmer. Digital Hate – which is what it really is – uses the American spelling of Center to betray its connection to a transatlantic network of similar organisations which in 2020 shapeshifted from attacking people for 'hate' to attacking them for questioning the 'Covid' hoax and the dangers of the 'Covid vaccine'. It's just a coincidence, you understand. This is one of Imran Ahmed's hysterical statements: 'I would go beyond calling anti-vaxxers conspiracy theorists to say they are an extremist group that pose a national security risk.' No one could ever accuse this prat of understatement and he's including in that those parents who are now against vaccines after their children were damaged for life or killed by them. He's such a nice man. Ahmed does the rounds of the Woke media getting soft-ball questions from spineless 'journalists' who never ask what right he has to campaign to destroy the freedom of speech of others while he demands it for himself. There also seems to be an overrepresentation in Ofcom of people connected to the narrative-worshipping BBC. This incredible global network of narrative-support was super-vital when the 'Covid' hoax was played in the light of the mega-whopper lies that have to be defended from the spotlight cast by the most basic intelligence.

Setting the scene

The Cult plays the long game and proceeds step-by-step ensuring that everything is in place before major cards are played and they don't come any bigger than the 'Covid' hoax. The psychopaths can't handle events where the outcome isn't certain and as little as possible – preferably nothing – is left to chance. Politicians, government and medical officials who would follow direction were brought to illusory power in advance by the Cult web whether on the national stage or others like state governors and mayors of America. For decades the dynamic between officialdom, law enforcement and the public was changed from one of service to one of control and dictatorship. Behaviour manipulation networks established within government were waiting to impose the coming 'Covid' rules and regulations specifically designed to subdue and rewire the psyche of the people in the guise of protecting health. These included in the UK the Behavioural Insights Team part-owned by the British government Cabinet Office; the Scientific Pandemic Insights Group on Behaviours (SPI-B); and a whole web of intelligence and military groups seeking to direct the conversation on social media and control the narrative. Among them are the cyberwarfare (on the people) 77th Brigade of the British military which is also coordinated through the Cabinet Office as civilian and military leadership continues to combine in what they call the Fusion Doctrine. The 77th Brigade is a British equivalent of the infamous Israeli (Sabbatian) military cyberwarfare and Internet manipulation operation Unit 8200 which I expose at length in *The Trigger*. Also carefully in place were the medical and science advisers to government – many on the payroll past or present of Bill Gates – and a whole alternative structure of unelected government stood by to take control when elected parliaments were effectively closed down once the 'Covid' card was slammed on the table. The structure I have described here and so much more was installed in every major country through the Cult networks. The top-down control hierarchy looks like this: The Cult – Cult-owned Gates – the World Health Organization and Tedros – Gates-funded or controlled chief medical officers and science 'advisers' (dictators) in each country –

political 'leaders' – law enforcement – The People. Through this simple global communication and enforcement structure the policy of the Cult could be imposed on virtually the entire human population so long as they acquiesced to the fascism. With everything in place it was time for the button to be pressed in late 2019/early 2020.

These were the prime goals the Cult had to secure for its will to prevail:

1) Locking down economies, closing all but designated 'essential' businesses (Cult-owned corporations were 'essential'), and putting the population under house arrest was an imperative to destroy independent income and employment and ensure dependency on the Cult-controlled state in the Hunger Games Society. Lockdowns had to be established as the global blueprint from the start to respond to the 'virus' and followed by pretty much the entire world.

2) The global population had to be terrified into believing in a deadly 'virus' that didn't actually exist so they would unquestioningly obey authority in the belief that authority must know how best to protect them and their families. Software salesman Gates would suddenly morph into the world's health expert and be promoted as such by the Cult-owned media.

3) A method of testing that wasn't testing for the 'virus', but was only claimed to be, had to be in place to provide the illusion of 'cases' and subsequent 'deaths' that had a very different cause to the 'Covid-19' that would be scribbled on the death certificate.

4) Because there was no 'virus' and the great majority testing positive with a test not testing for the 'virus' would have no symptoms of anything the lie had to be sold that people without symptoms (without the 'virus') could still pass it on to others. This was crucial to justify for the first time quarantining – house arresting – healthy people. Without this the economy-destroying lockdown of *everybody* could not have been credibly sold.

5) The 'saviour' had to be seen as a vaccine which beyond evil drug companies were working like angels of mercy to develop as quickly as possible, with all corners cut, to save the day. The public must absolutely not know that the 'vaccine' had nothing to do with a 'virus' or that the contents were ready and waiting with a very different motive long before the 'Covid' card was even lifted from the pack.

I said in March, 2020, that the 'vaccine' would have been created way ahead of the 'Covid' hoax which justified its use and the following December an article in the New York *Intelligencer* magazine said the Moderna 'vaccine' had been 'designed' by

January, 2020. This was 'before China had even acknowledged that the disease could be transmitted from human to human, more than a week before the first confirmed coronavirus case in the United States'. The article said that by the time the first American death was announced a month later 'the vaccine had already been manufactured and shipped to the National Institutes of Health for the beginning of its Phase I clinical trial'. The 'vaccine' was actually 'designed' long before that although even with this timescale you would expect the article to ask how on earth it could have been done that quickly. Instead it asked why the 'vaccine' had not been rolled out then and not months later. Journalism in the mainstream is truly dead. I am going to detail in the next chapter why the 'virus' has never existed and how a hoax on that scale was possible, but first the foundation on which the Big Lie of 'Covid' was built.

The test that doesn't test

Fraudulent 'testing' is the bottom line of the whole 'Covid' hoax and was the means by which a 'virus' that did not exist *appeared* to exist. They could only achieve this magic trick by using a test not testing for the 'virus'. To use a test that *was* testing for the 'virus' would mean that every test would come back negative given there was no 'virus'. They chose to exploit something called the RT-PCR test invented by American biochemist Kary Mullis in the 1980s who said publicly that his PCR test ... *cannot detect infectious disease*. Yes, the 'test' used worldwide to detect infectious 'Covid' to produce all the illusory 'cases' and 'deaths' compiled by Johns Hopkins and others *cannot detect infectious disease*. This fact came from the mouth of the man who invented PCR and was awarded the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1993 for doing so. Sadly, and incredibly conveniently for the Cult, Mullis died in August, 2019, at the age of 74 just before his test would be fraudulently used to unleash fascism on the world. He was said to have died from pneumonia which was an irony in itself. A few months later he would have had 'Covid-19' on his death certificate. I say the timing of his death was convenient because had he lived Mullis, a brilliant, honest and decent man, would have been

vociferously speaking out against the use of his test to detect 'Covid' when it was never designed, or able, to do that. I know that to be true given that Mullis made the same point when his test was used to 'detect' – not detect – HIV. He had been seriously critical of the Gallo/Montagnier claim to have isolated the HIV 'virus' and shown it to cause AIDS for which Mullis said there was no evidence. AIDS is actually not a disease but a series of diseases from which people die all the time. When they die from those *same diseases* after a positive 'test' for HIV then AIDS goes on their death certificate. I think I've heard that before somewhere. Countries instigated a policy with 'Covid' that anyone who tested positive with a test not testing for the 'virus' and died of any other cause within 28 days and even longer 'Covid-19' had to go on the death certificate. Cases have come from the test that can't test for infectious disease and the deaths are those who have died of *anything* after testing positive with a test not testing for the 'virus'. I'll have much more later about the death certificate scandal.

Mullis was deeply dismissive of the now US 'Covid' star Anthony Fauci who he said was a liar who didn't know anything about anything – 'and I would say that to his face – nothing.' He said of Fauci: 'The man thinks he can take a blood sample, put it in an electron microscope and if it's got a virus in there you'll know it – he doesn't understand electron microscopy and he doesn't understand medicine and shouldn't be in a position like he's in.' That position, terrifyingly, has made him the decider of 'Covid' fascism policy on behalf of the Cult in his role as director since 1984 of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) while his record of being wrong is laughable; but being wrong, so long as it's the *right kind* of wrong, is why the Cult loves him. He'll say anything the Cult tells him to say. Fauci was made Chief Medical Adviser to the President immediately Biden took office. Biden was installed in the White House by Cult manipulation and one of his first decisions was to elevate Fauci to a position of even more control. This is a coincidence? Yes, and I identify as a flamenco dancer called Lola. How does such an incompetent criminal like Fauci remain in that

pivotal position in American health since *the 1980s*? When you serve the Cult it looks after you until you are surplus to requirements. Kary Mullis said prophetically of Fauci and his like: 'Those guys have an agenda and it's not an agenda we would like them to have ... they make their own rules, they change them when they want to, and Tony Fauci does not mind going on television in front of the people who pay his salary and lie directly into the camera.' Fauci has done that almost daily since the 'Covid' hoax began. Lying is in Fauci's DNA. To make the situation crystal clear about the PCR test this is a direct quote from its inventor Kary Mullis:

It [the PCR test] doesn't tell you that you're sick and doesn't tell you that the thing you ended up with was really going to hurt you ...'

Ask yourself why governments and medical systems the world over have been using this very test to decide who is 'infected' with the SARS-CoV-2 'virus' and the alleged disease it allegedly causes, 'Covid-19'. The answer to that question will tell you what has been going on. By the way, here's a little show-stopper – the 'new' SARS-CoV-2 'virus' was 'identified' as such right from the start using ... *the PCR test not testing for the 'virus'*. If you are new to this and find that shocking then stick around. I have hardly started yet. Even worse, other 'tests', like the 'Lateral Flow Device' (LFD), are considered so useless that they have to be *confirmed* by the PCR test! Leaked emails written by Ben Dyson, adviser to UK 'Health' Secretary Matt Hancock, said they were 'dangerously unreliable'. Dyson, executive director of strategy at the Department of Health, wrote: 'As of today, someone who gets a positive LFD result in (say) London has at best a 25 per cent chance of it being a true positive, but if it is a self-reported test potentially as low as 10 per cent (on an optimistic assumption about specificity) or as low as 2 per cent (on a more pessimistic assumption).' These are the 'tests' that schoolchildren and the public are being urged to have twice a week or more and have to isolate if they get a positive. Each fake positive goes in the statistics as a 'case' no matter how ludicrously inaccurate and the

'cases' drive lockdown, masks and the pressure to 'vaccinate'. The government said in response to the email leak that the 'tests' were accurate which confirmed yet again what shocking bloody liars they are. The real false positive rate is *100 percent* as we'll see. In another 'you couldn't make it up' the UK government agreed to pay £2.8 billion to California's Innova Medical Group to supply the irrelevant lateral flow tests. The company's primary test-making centre is in China. Innova Medical Group, established in March, 2020, is owned by Pasaca Capital Inc, chaired by Chinese-American millionaire Charles Huang who was born in Wuhan.

How it works – and how it doesn't

The RT-PCR test, known by its full title of Polymerase chain reaction, is used across the world to make millions, even billions, of copies of a DNA/RNA genetic information sample. The process is called 'amplification' and means that a tiny sample of genetic material is amplified to bring out the detailed content. I stress that it is not testing for an infectious disease. It is simply amplifying a sample of genetic material. In the words of Kary Mullis: 'PCR is ... just a process that's used to make a whole lot of something out of something.' To emphasise the point companies that make the PCR tests circulated around the world to 'test' for 'Covid' warn on the box that it can't be used to detect 'Covid' or infectious disease and is for research purposes only. It's okay, rest for a minute and you'll be fine. This is the test that produces the 'cases' and 'deaths' that have been used to destroy human society. All those global and national medical and scientific 'experts' demanding this destruction to 'save us' *KNOW* that the test is not testing for the 'virus' and the cases and deaths they claim to be real are an almost unimaginable fraud. Every one of them and so many others including politicians and psychopaths like Gates and Tedros must be brought before Nuremburg-type trials and jailed for the rest of their lives. The more the genetic sample is amplified by PCR the more elements of that material become sensitive to the test and by that I don't mean sensitive for a 'virus' but for elements of the genetic material which

is *naturally* in the body or relates to remnants of old conditions of various kinds lying dormant and causing no disease. Once the amplification of the PCR reaches a certain level *everyone* will test positive. So much of the material has been made sensitive to the test that everyone will have some part of it in their body. Even lying criminals like Fauci have said that once PCR amplifications pass 35 cycles everything will be a false positive that cannot be trusted for the reasons I have described. I say, like many proper doctors and scientists, that 100 percent of the 'positives' are false, but let's just go with Fauci for a moment.

He says that any amplification over 35 cycles will produce false positives and yet the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) have recommended up to 40 *cycles* and the National Health Service (NHS) in Britain admitted in an internal document for staff that it was using 45 *cycles* of amplification. A long list of other countries has been doing the same and at least one 'testing' laboratory has been using 50 *cycles*. Have you ever heard a doctor, medical 'expert' or the media ask what level of amplification has been used to claim a 'positive'. The 'test' comes back 'positive' and so you have the 'virus', end of story. Now we can see how the government in Tanzania could send off samples from a goat and a pawpaw fruit under human names and both came back positive for 'Covid-19'. Tanzania president John Magufuli mocked the 'Covid' hysteria, the PCR test and masks and refused to import the DNA-manipulating 'vaccine'. The Cult hated him and an article sponsored by the Bill Gates Foundation appeared in the London *Guardian* in February, 2021, headed 'It's time for Africa to rein in Tanzania's anti-vaxxer president'. Well, 'reined in' he shortly was. Magufuli appeared in good health, but then, in March, 2021, he was dead at 61 from 'heart failure'. He was replaced by Samia Hassan Suhulu who is connected to Klaus Schwab's World Economic Forum and she immediately reversed Magufuli's 'Covid' policy. A sample of cola tested positive for 'Covid' with the PCR test in Germany while American actress and singer-songwriter Erykah Badu tested positive in one nostril and negative in the other. Footballer Ronaldo called

the PCR test 'bullshit' after testing positive three times and being forced to quarantine and miss matches when there was nothing wrong with him. The mantra from Tedros at the World Health Organization and national governments (same thing) has been test, test, test. They know that the more tests they can generate the more fake 'cases' they have which go on to become 'deaths' in ways I am coming to. The UK government has its Operation Moonshot planned to test multiple millions every day in workplaces and schools with free tests for everyone to use twice a week at home in line with the Cult plan from the start to make testing part of life. A government advertisement for an 'Interim Head of Asymptomatic Testing Communication' said the job included responsibility for delivering a 'communications strategy' (propaganda) 'to support the expansion of asymptomatic testing that *'normalises testing as part of everyday life'*'. More tests means more fake 'cases', 'deaths' and fascism. I have heard of, and from, many people who booked a test, couldn't turn up, and yet got a positive result through the post for a test they'd never even had. The whole thing is crazy, but for the Cult there's method in the madness. Controlling and manipulating the level of amplification of the test means the authorities can control whenever they want the number of apparent 'cases' and 'deaths'. If they want to justify more fascist lockdown and destruction of livelihoods they keep the amplification high. If they want to give the illusion that lockdowns and the 'vaccine' are working then they lower the amplification and 'cases' and 'deaths' will appear to fall. In January, 2021, the Cult-owned World Health Organization suddenly warned laboratories about over-amplification of the test and to lower the threshold. Suddenly headlines began appearing such as: 'Why ARE "Covid" cases plummeting?' This was just when the vaccine rollout was underway and I had predicted months before they would make cases appear to fall through amplification tampering when the 'vaccine' came. These people are so predictable.

Cow vaccines?

The question must be asked of what is on the test swabs being poked far up the nose of the population to the base of the brain? A nasal swab punctured one woman's brain and caused it to leak fluid. Most of these procedures are being done by people with little training or medical knowledge. Dr Lorraine Day, former orthopaedic trauma surgeon and Chief of Orthopaedic Surgery at San Francisco General Hospital, says the tests are really a 'vaccine'. Cows have long been vaccinated this way. She points out that masks have to cover the nose and the mouth where it is claimed the 'virus' exists in saliva. Why then don't they take saliva from the mouth as they do with a DNA test instead of pushing a long swab up the nose towards the brain? The ethmoid bone separates the nasal cavity from the brain and within that bone is the cribriform plate. Dr Day says that when the swab is pushed up against this plate and twisted the procedure is 'depositing things back there'. She claims that among these 'things' are nanoparticles that can enter the brain. Researchers have noted that a team at the Gates-funded Johns Hopkins have designed tiny, star-shaped micro-devices that can latch onto intestinal mucosa and release drugs into the body. Mucosa is the thin skin that covers the inside surface of parts of the body such as *the nose* and mouth and produces mucus to protect them. The Johns Hopkins micro-devices are called 'theragrippers' and were 'inspired' by a parasitic worm that digs its sharp teeth into a host's intestines. Nasal swabs are also coated in the sterilisation agent ethylene oxide. The US National Cancer Institute posts this explanation on its website:

At room temperature, ethylene oxide is a flammable colorless gas with a sweet odor. It is used primarily to produce other chemicals, including antifreeze. In smaller amounts, ethylene oxide is used as a pesticide and a sterilizing agent. The ability of ethylene oxide to damage DNA makes it an effective sterilizing agent but also accounts for its cancer-causing activity.

The Institute mentions lymphoma and leukaemia as cancers most frequently reported to be associated with occupational exposure to ethylene oxide along with stomach and breast cancers. How does anyone think this is going to work out with the constant testing

regime being inflicted on adults and children at home and at school that will accumulate in the body anything that's on the swab?

Doctors know best

It is vital for people to realise that 'hero' doctors 'know' only what the Big Pharma-dominated medical authorities tell them to 'know' and if they refuse to 'know' what they are told to 'know' they are out the door. They are mostly not physicians or healers, but repeaters of the official narrative – or else. I have seen alleged professional doctors on British television make shocking statements that we are supposed to take seriously. One called 'Dr' Amir Khan, who is actually telling patients how to respond to illness, said that men could take the birth pill to 'help slow down the effects of Covid-19'. In March, 2021, another ridiculous 'Covid study' by an American doctor proposed injecting men with the female sex hormone progesterone as a 'Covid' treatment. British doctor Nighat Arif told the BBC that face coverings were now going to be part of ongoing normal. Yes, the vaccine protects you, she said (evidence?) ... but the way to deal with viruses in the community was always going to come down to hand washing, face covering and keeping a physical distance. That's not what we were told before the 'vaccine' was circulating. Arif said she couldn't imagine ever again going on the underground or in a lift without a mask. I was just thanking my good luck that she was not my doctor when she said – in March, 2021 – that if 'we are *behaving* and we are doing all the right things' she thought we could 'have our nearest and dearest around us at home ... around *Christmas* and *New Year!* Her patronising delivery was the usual school teacher talking to six-year-olds as she repeated every government talking point and probably believed them all. If we have learned anything from the 'Covid' experience surely it must be that humanity's perception of doctors needs a fundamental rethink. NHS 'doctor' Sara Kayat told her television audience that the 'Covid vaccine' would '100 percent prevent hospitalisation and death'. Not even Big Pharma claimed that. We have to stop taking 'experts' at their word without question when so many of them are

clueless and only repeating the party line on which their careers depend. That is not to say there are not brilliant doctors – there are and I have spoken to many of them since all this began – but you won't see them in the mainstream media or quoted by the psychopaths and yes-people in government.

Remember the name – Christian Drosten

German virologist Christian Drosten, Director of Charité Institute of Virology in Berlin, became a national star after the pandemic hoax began. He was feted on television and advised the German government on 'Covid' policy. Most importantly to the wider world Drosten led a group that produced the 'Covid' testing protocol for the PCR test. What a remarkable feat given the PCR cannot test for infectious disease and even more so when you think that Drosten said that his method of testing for SARS-CoV-2 was developed 'without having virus material available'. *He developed a test for a 'virus' that he didn't have and had never seen.* Let that sink in as you survey the global devastation that came from what he did. The whole catastrophe of Drosten's 'test' was based on the alleged genetic sequence published by Chinese scientists on the Internet. We will see in the next chapter that this alleged 'genetic sequence' has never been produced by China or anyone and cannot be when there *is no* SARS-CoV-2. Drosten, however, doesn't seem to let little details like that get in the way. He was the lead author with Victor Corman from the same Charité Hospital of the paper 'Detection of 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) by real-time PCR' published in a magazine called *Eurosurveillance*. This became known as the Corman-Drosten paper. In November, 2020, with human society devastated by the effects of the Corman-Drosten test baloney, the protocol was publicly challenged by 22 international scientists and independent researchers from Europe, the United States, and Japan. Among them were senior molecular geneticists, biochemists, immunologists, and microbiologists. They produced a document headed 'External peer review of the RTPCR test to detect SARS-Cov-2 Reveals 10 Major Flaws At The Molecular and Methodological Level: Consequences

For False-Positive Results'. The flaws in the Corman-Drosten test included the following:

- The test is non-specific because of erroneous design
- Results are enormously variable
- The test is unable to discriminate between the whole 'virus' and viral fragments
- It doesn't have positive or negative controls
- The test lacks a standard operating procedure
- It is unsupported by proper peer view

The scientists said the PCR 'Covid' testing protocol was not founded on science and they demanded the Corman-Drosten paper be retracted by *Eurosurveillance*. They said all present and previous Covid deaths, cases, and 'infection rates' should be subject to a massive retroactive inquiry. Lockdowns and travel restrictions should be reviewed and relaxed and those diagnosed through PCR to have 'Covid-19' should not be forced to isolate. Dr Kevin Corbett, a health researcher and nurse educator with a long academic career producing a stream of peer-reviewed publications at many UK universities, made the same point about the PCR test debacle. He said of the scientists' conclusions: 'Every scientific rationale for the development of that test has been totally destroyed by this paper. It's like Hiroshima/Nagasaki to the Covid test.' He said that China hadn't given them an isolated 'virus' when Drosten developed the test. Instead they had developed the test from *a sequence in a gene bank*.' Put another way ... *they made it up!* The scientists were supported in this contention by a Portuguese appeals court which ruled in November, 2020, that PCR tests are unreliable and it is unlawful to quarantine people based solely on a PCR test. The point about China not providing an isolated virus must be true when the 'virus' has never been isolated to this day and the consequences of that will become clear. Drosten and company produced this useless 'protocol' right on cue in January, 2020, just as the 'virus' was said to

be moving westward and it somehow managed to successfully pass a peer-review in 24 hours. In other words there was no peer-review for a test that would be used to decide who had 'Covid' and who didn't across the world. The Cult-created, Gates-controlled World Health Organization immediately recommended all its nearly 200 member countries to use the Drosten PCR protocol to detect 'cases' and 'deaths'. The sting was underway and it continues to this day.

So who is this Christian Drosten that produced the means through which death, destruction and economic catastrophe would be justified? His education background, including his doctoral thesis, would appear to be somewhat shrouded in mystery and his track record is dire as with another essential player in the 'Covid' hoax, the Gates-funded Professor Neil Ferguson at the Gates-funded Imperial College in London of whom more shortly. Drosten predicted in 2003 that the alleged original SARS 'virus' (SARS-1) was an epidemic that could have serious effects on economies and an effective vaccine would take at least two years to produce. Drosten's answer to every alleged 'outbreak' is a vaccine which you won't be shocked to know. What followed were just 774 official deaths worldwide and none in Germany where there were only nine cases. That is even if you believe there ever was a SARS 'virus' when the evidence is zilch and I will expand on this in the next chapter. Drosten claims to be co-discoverer of 'SARS-1' and developed a test for it in 2003. He was screaming warnings about 'swine flu' in 2009 and how it was a widespread infection far more severe than any dangers from a vaccine could be and people should get vaccinated. It would be helpful for Drosten's vocal chords if he simply recorded the words 'the virus is deadly and you need to get vaccinated' and copies could be handed out whenever the latest made-up threat comes along. Drosten's swine flu epidemic never happened, but Big Pharma didn't mind with governments spending hundreds of millions on vaccines that hardly anyone bothered to use and many who did wished they hadn't. A study in 2010 revealed that the risk of dying from swine flu, or H1N1, was no higher than that of the annual seasonal flu which is what at least most of 'it' really was as in

the case of 'Covid-19'. A media investigation into Drosten asked how with such a record of inaccuracy he could be *the* government adviser on these issues. The answer to that question is the same with Drosten, Ferguson and Fauci – they keep on giving the authorities the 'conclusions' and 'advice' they want to hear. Drosten certainly produced the goods for them in January, 2020, with his PCR protocol garbage and provided the foundation of what German internal medicine specialist Dr Claus Köhnlein, co-author of *Virus Mania*, called the 'test pandemic'. The 22 scientists in the *Eurosurveillance* challenge called out conflicts of interest within the Drosten 'protocol' group and with good reason. Olfert Landt, a regular co-author of Drosten 'studies', owns the biotech company TIB Molbiol Syntheselabor GmbH in Berlin which manufactures and sells the tests that Drosten and his mates come up with. They have done this with SARS, Enterotoxigenic E. coli (ETEC), MERS, Zika 'virus', yellow fever, and now 'Covid'. Landt told the *Berliner Zeitung* newspaper:

The testing, design and development came from the Charité [Drosten and Corman]. We simply implemented it immediately in the form of a kit. And if we don't have the virus, which originally only existed in Wuhan, we can make a synthetic gene to simulate the genome of the virus. That's what we did very quickly.

This is more confirmation that the Drosten test was designed without access to the 'virus' and only a synthetic simulation which is what SARS-CoV-2 really is – a computer-generated synthetic fiction. It's quite an enterprise they have going here. A Drosten team decides what the test for something should be and Landt's biotech company flogs it to governments and medical systems across the world. His company must have made an absolute fortune since the 'Covid' hoax began. Dr Reiner Fuellmich, a prominent German consumer protection trial lawyer in Germany and California, is on Drosten's case and that of Tedros at the World Health Organization for crimes against humanity with a class-action lawsuit being prepared in the United States and other legal action in Germany.

Why China?

Scamming the world with a 'virus' that doesn't exist would seem impossible on the face of it, but not if you have control of the relatively few people that make policy decisions and the great majority of the global media. Remember it's not about changing 'real' reality it's about controlling *perception* of reality. You don't have to make something happen you only have to make people *believe* that it's happening. Renegade Minds understand this and are therefore much harder to swindle. 'Covid-19' is not a 'real' 'virus'. It's a mind virus, like a computer virus, which has infected the minds, not the bodies, of billions. It all started, publically at least, in China and that alone is of central significance. The Cult was behind the revolution led by its asset Mao Zedong, or Chairman Mao, which established the People's Republic of China on October 1st, 1949. It should have been called The Cult's Republic of China, but the name had to reflect the recurring illusion that vicious dictatorships are run by and for the people (see all the 'Democratic Republics' controlled by tyrants). In the same way we have the 'Biden' Democratic Republic of America officially ruled by a puppet tyrant (at least temporarily) on behalf of Cult tyrants. The creation of Mao's merciless communist/fascist dictatorship was part of a frenzy of activity by the Cult at the conclusion of World War Two which, like the First World War, it had instigated through its assets in Germany, Britain, France, the United States and elsewhere. Israel was formed in 1948; the Soviet Union expanded its 'Iron Curtain' control, influence and military power with the Warsaw Pact communist alliance in 1955; the United Nations was formed in 1945 as a Cult precursor to world government; and a long list of world bodies would be established including the World Health Organization (1948), World Trade Organization (1948 under another name until 1995), International Monetary Fund (1945) and World Bank (1944). Human society was redrawn and hugely centralised in the global Problem-Reaction-Solution that was World War Two. All these changes were significant. Israel would become the headquarters of the Sabbatians

and the revolution in China would prepare the ground and control system for the events of 2019/2020.

Renegade Minds know there are no borders except for public consumption. The Cult is a seamless, borderless global entity and to understand the game we need to put aside labels like borders, nations, countries, communism, fascism and democracy. These delude the population into believing that countries are ruled within their borders by a government of whatever shade when these are mere agencies of a global power. America's illusion of democracy and China's communism/fascism are subsidiaries – vehicles – for the same agenda. We may hear about conflict and competition between America and China and on the lower levels that will be true; but at the Cult level they are branches of the same company in the way of the McDonald's example I gave earlier. I have tracked in the books over the years support by US governments of both parties for Chinese Communist Party infiltration of American society through allowing the sale of land, even military facilities, and the acquisition of American business and university influence. All this is underpinned by the infamous stealing of intellectual property and technological know-how. Cult-owned Silicon Valley corporations waive their fraudulent 'morality' to do business with human-rights-free China; Cult-controlled Disney has become China's PR department; and China in effect owns 'American' sports such as basketball which depends for much of its income on Chinese audiences. As a result any sports player, coach or official speaking out against China's horrific human rights record is immediately condemned or fired by the China-worshipping National Basketball Association. One of the first acts of China-controlled Biden was to issue an executive order telling federal agencies to stop making references to the 'virus' by the 'geographic location of its origin'. Long-time Congressman Jerry Nadler warned that criticising China, America's biggest rival, leads to hate crimes against Asian people in the United States. So shut up you bigot. China is fast closing in on Israel as a country that must not be criticised which is apt, really, given that Sabbatians control them both. The two countries have

developed close economic, military, technological and strategic ties which include involvement in China's 'Silk Road' transport and economic initiative to connect China with Europe. Israel was the first country in the Middle East to recognise the establishment of Mao's tyranny in 1950 months after it was established.

Project Wuhan – the 'Covid' Psyop

I emphasise again that the Cult plays the long game and what is happening to the world today is the result of centuries of calculated manipulation following a script to take control step-by-step of every aspect of human society. I will discuss later the common force behind all this that has spanned those centuries and thousands of years if the truth be told. Instigating the Mao revolution in China in 1949 with a 2020 'pandemic' in mind is not only how they work – the 71 years between them is really quite short by the Cult's standards of manipulation preparation. The reason for the Cult's Chinese revolution was to create a fiercely-controlled environment within which an extreme structure for human control could be incubated to eventually be unleashed across the world. We have seen this happen since the 'pandemic' emerged from China with the Chinese control-structure founded on AI technology and tyrannical enforcement sweep across the West. Until the moment when the Cult went for broke in the West and put its fascism on public display Western governments had to pay some lip-service to freedom and democracy to not alert too many people to the tyranny-in-the-making. Freedoms were more subtly eroded and power centralised with covert government structures put in place waiting for the arrival of 2020 when that smokescreen of 'freedom' could be dispensed with. The West was not able to move towards tyranny before 2020 anything like as fast as China which was created as a tyranny and had no limits on how fast it could construct the Cult's blueprint for global control. When the time came to impose that structure on the world it was the same Cult-owned Chinese communist/fascist government that provided the excuse – the 'Covid pandemic'. It was absolutely crucial to the Cult plan for the Chinese response to the 'pandemic' –

draconian lockdowns of the entire population – to become the blueprint that Western countries would follow to destroy the livelihoods and freedom of their people. This is why the Cult-owned, Gates-owned, WHO Director-General Tedros said early on:

The Chinese government is to be congratulated for the extraordinary measures it has taken to contain the outbreak. China is actually setting a new standard for outbreak response and it is not an exaggeration.

Forbes magazine said of China: ‘... those measures protected untold millions from getting the disease’. The Rockefeller Foundation ‘epidemic scenario’ document in 2010 said ‘prophetically’:

However, a few countries did fare better – China in particular. The Chinese government’s quick imposition and enforcement of mandatory quarantine for all citizens, as well as its instant and near-hermetic sealing off of all borders, saved millions of lives, stopping the spread of the virus far earlier than in other countries and enabling a swifter post-pandemic recovery.

Once again – *spooky*.

The first official story was the ‘bat theory’ or rather the bat diversion. The source of the ‘virus outbreak’ we were told was a ‘wet market’ in Wuhan where bats and other animals are bought and eaten in horrifically unhygienic conditions. Then another story emerged through the alternative media that the ‘virus’ had been released on purpose or by accident from a BSL-4 (biosafety level 4) laboratory in Wuhan not far from the wet market. The lab was reported to create and work with lethal concoctions and bioweapons. Biosafety level 4 is the highest in the World Health Organization system of safety and containment. Renegade Minds are aware of what I call designer manipulation. The ideal for the Cult is for people to buy its prime narrative which in the opening salvos of the ‘pandemic’ was the wet market story. It knows, however, that there is now a considerable worldwide alternative media of researchers sceptical of anything governments say and they are often given a version of events in a form they can perceive as credible while misdirecting them from the real truth. In this case let them

think that the conspiracy involved is a 'bioweapon virus' released from the Wuhan lab to keep them from the real conspiracy – *there is no 'virus'*. The WHO's current position on the source of the outbreak at the time of writing appears to be: 'We haven't got a clue, mate.' This is a good position to maintain mystery and bewilderment. The inner circle will know where the 'virus' came from – *nowhere*. The bottom line was to ensure the public believed there *was* a 'virus' and it didn't much matter if they thought it was natural or had been released from a lab. The belief that there was a 'deadly virus' was all that was needed to trigger global panic and fear. The population was terrified into handing their power to authority and doing what they were told. They had to or they were 'all gonna die'.

In March, 2020, information began to come my way from real doctors and scientists and my own additional research which had my intuition screaming: 'Yes, that's it! *There is no virus.*' The 'bioweapon' was not the 'virus'; it was the '*vaccine*' already being talked about that would be the bioweapon. My conclusion was further enhanced by happenings in Wuhan. The 'virus' was said to be sweeping the city and news footage circulated of people collapsing in the street (which they've never done in the West with the same 'virus'). The Chinese government was building 'new hospitals' in a matter of ten days to 'cope with demand' such was the virulent nature of the 'virus'. Yet in what seemed like no time the 'new hospitals' closed – even if they even opened – and China declared itself 'virus-free'. It was back to business as usual. This was more propaganda to promote the Chinese draconian lockdowns in the West as the way to 'beat the virus'. Trouble was that we subsequently had lockdown after lockdown, but never business as usual. As the people of the West and most of the rest of the world were caught in an ever-worsening spiral of lockdown, social distancing, masks, isolated old people, families forced apart, and livelihood destruction, it was party-time in Wuhan. Pictures emerged of thousands of people enjoying pool parties and concerts. It made no sense until you realised there never was a 'virus' and the

whole thing was a Cult set-up to transform human society out of one of its major global strongholds – China.

How is it possible to deceive virtually the entire world population into believing there is a deadly virus when there is not even a 'virus' let alone a deadly one? It's nothing like as difficult as you would think and that's clearly true because it happened.

Postscript: See end of book Postscript for more on the 'Wuhan lab virus release' story which the authorities and media were pushing heavily in the summer of 2021 to divert attention from the truth that the 'Covid virus' is pure invention.

CHAPTER FIVE

There is no 'virus'

You can fool some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time
Abraham Lincoln

The greatest form of mind control is repetition. The more you repeat the same mantra of alleged 'facts' the more will accept them to be true. It becomes an 'everyone knows that, mate'. If you can also censor any other version or alternative to your alleged 'facts' you are pretty much home and cooking.

By the start of 2020 the Cult owned the global mainstream media almost in its entirety to spew out its 'Covid' propaganda and ignore or discredit any other information and view. Cult-owned social media platforms in Cult-owned Silicon Valley were poised and ready to unleash a campaign of ferocious censorship to obliterate all but the official narrative. To complete the circle many demands for censorship by Silicon Valley were led by the mainstream media as 'journalists' became full-out enforcers for the Cult both as propagandists and censors. Part of this has been the influx of young people straight out of university who have become 'journalists' in significant positions. They have no experience and a headful of programmed perceptions from their years at school and university at a time when today's young are the most perceptually-targeted generations in known human history given the insidious impact of technology. They enter the media perceptually prepared and ready to repeat the narratives of the system that programmed them to

repeat its narratives. The BBC has a truly pathetic 'specialist disinformation reporter' called Marianna Spring who fits this bill perfectly. She is clueless about the world, how it works and what is really going on. Her role is to discredit anyone doing the job that a proper journalist would do and system-serving hacks like Spring wouldn't dare to do or even see the need to do. They are too busy licking the arse of authority which can never be wrong and, in the case of the BBC propaganda programme, *Panorama*, contacting payments systems such as PayPal to have a donations page taken down for a film company making documentaries questioning vaccines. Even the BBC soap opera *EastEnders* included a disgracefully biased scene in which an inarticulate white working class woman was made to look foolish for questioning the 'vaccine' while a well-spoken black man and Asian woman promoted the government narrative. It ticked every BBC box and the fact that the black and minority community was resisting the 'vaccine' had nothing to do with the way the scene was written. The BBC has become a disgusting tyrannical propaganda and censorship operation that should be defunded and disbanded and a free media take its place with a brief to stop censorship instead of demanding it. A BBC 'interview' with Gates goes something like: 'Mr Gates, sir, if I can call you sir, would you like to tell our audience why you are such a great man, a wonderful humanitarian philanthropist, and why you should absolutely be allowed as a software salesman to decide health policy for approaching eight billion people? Thank you, sir, please sir.' Propaganda programming has been incessant and merciless and when all you hear is the same story from the media, repeated by those around you who have only heard the same story, is it any wonder that people on a grand scale believe absolute mendacious garbage to be true? You are about to see, too, why this level of information control is necessary when the official 'Covid' narrative is so nonsensical and unsupportable by the evidence.

Structure of Deceit

The pyramid structure through which the 'Covid' hoax has been manifested is very simple and has to be to work. As few people as possible have to be involved with full knowledge of what they are doing – and why – or the real story would get out. At the top of the pyramid are the inner core of the Cult which controls Bill Gates who, in turn, controls the World Health Organization through his pivotal funding and his puppet Director-General mouthpiece, Tedros. Before he was appointed Tedros was chair of the Gates-founded Global Fund to 'fight against AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria', a board member of the Gates-funded 'vaccine alliance' GAVI, and on the board of another Gates-funded organisation. Gates owns him and picked him for a specific reason – Tedros is a crook and worse. 'Dr' Tedros (he's not a medical doctor, the first WHO chief not to be) was a member of the tyrannical Marxist government of Ethiopia for decades with all its human rights abuses. He has faced allegations of corruption and misappropriation of funds and was exposed three times for covering up cholera epidemics while Ethiopia's health minister. Tedros appointed the mass-murdering genocidal Zimbabwe dictator Robert Mugabe as a WHO goodwill ambassador for public health which, as with Tedros, is like appointing a psychopath to run a peace and love campaign. The move was so ridiculous that he had to drop Mugabe in the face of widespread condemnation. American economist David Steinman, a Nobel peace prize nominee, lodged a complaint with the International Criminal Court in The Hague over alleged genocide by Tedros when he was Ethiopia's foreign minister. Steinman says Tedros was a 'crucial decision maker' who directed the actions of Ethiopia's security forces from 2013 to 2015 and one of three officials in charge when those security services embarked on the 'killing' and 'torturing' of Ethiopians. You can see where Tedros is coming from and it's sobering to think that he has been the vehicle for Gates and the Cult to direct the global response to 'Covid'. Think about that. A psychopathic Cult dictates to psychopath Gates who dictates to psychopath Tedros who dictates how countries of the world must respond to a 'Covid virus' never scientifically shown to exist. At the same time psychopathic Cult-owned Silicon Valley information

giants like Google, YouTube, Facebook and Twitter announced very early on that they would give the Cult/Gates/Tedros/WHO version of the narrative free advertising and censor those who challenged their intelligence-insulting, mendacious story.

The next layer in the global 'medical' structure below the Cult, Gates and Tedros are the chief medical officers and science 'advisers' in each of the WHO member countries which means virtually all of them. Medical officers and arbiters of science (they're not) then take the WHO policy and recommended responses and impose them on their country's population while the political 'leaders' say they are deciding policy (they're clearly not) by 'following the science' on the advice of the 'experts' – the same medical officers and science 'advisers' (dictators). In this way with the rarest of exceptions the entire world followed the same policy of lockdown, people distancing, masks and 'vaccines' dictated by the psychopathic Cult, psychopathic Gates and psychopathic Tedros who we are supposed to believe give a damn about the health of the world population they are seeking to enslave. That, amazingly, is all there is to it in terms of crucial decision-making. Medical staff in each country then follow like sheep the dictates of the shepherds at the top of the national medical hierarchies – chief medical officers and science 'advisers' who themselves follow like sheep the shepherds of the World Health Organization and the Cult. Shepherds at the national level often have major funding and other connections to Gates and his Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation which carefully hands out money like confetti at a wedding to control the entire global medical system from the WHO down.

Follow the money

Christopher Whitty, Chief Medical Adviser to the UK Government at the centre of 'virus' policy, a senior adviser to the government's Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE), and Executive Board member of the World Health Organization, was gifted a grant of \$40 million by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for malaria research in Africa. The BBC described the unelected Whitty as 'the

official who will probably have the greatest impact on our everyday lives of any individual policymaker in modern times' and so it turned out. What Gates and Tedros have said Whitty has done like his equivalents around the world. Patrick Vallance, co-chair of SAGE and the government's Chief Scientific Adviser, is a former executive of Big Pharma giant GlaxoSmithKline with its fundamental financial and business connections to Bill Gates. In September, 2020, it was revealed that Vallance owned a deferred bonus of shares in GlaxoSmithKline worth £600,000 while the company was 'developing' a 'Covid vaccine'. Move along now – nothing to see here – what could possibly be wrong with that? Imperial College in London, a major player in 'Covid' policy in Britain and elsewhere with its 'Covid-19' Response Team, is funded by Gates and has big connections to China while the now infamous Professor Neil Ferguson, the useless 'computer modeller' at Imperial College is also funded by Gates. Ferguson delivered the dramatically inaccurate excuse for the first lockdowns (much more in the next chapter). The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) in the United States, another source of outrageously false 'Covid' computer models to justify lockdowns, is bankrolled by Gates who is a vehement promotor of lockdowns. America's version of Whitty and Vallance, the again now infamous Anthony Fauci, has connections to 'Covid vaccine' maker Moderna as does Bill Gates through funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Fauci is director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), a major recipient of Gates money, and they are very close. Deborah Birx who was appointed White House Coronavirus Response Coordinator in February, 2020, is yet another with ties to Gates. Everywhere you look at the different elements around the world behind the coordination and decision making of the 'Covid' hoax there is Bill Gates and his money. They include the World Health Organization; Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in the United States; National Institutes of Health (NIH) of Anthony Fauci; Imperial College and Neil Ferguson; the London School of Hygiene where Chris Whitty worked; Regulatory agencies like the UK Medicines & Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA)

which gave emergency approval for 'Covid vaccines'; Wellcome Trust; GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance; the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI); Johns Hopkins University which has compiled the false 'Covid' figures; and the World Economic Forum. A Nationalfile.com article said:

Gates has a lot of pull in the medical world, he has a multi-million dollar relationship with Dr. Fauci, and Fauci originally took the Gates line supporting vaccines and casting doubt on [the drug hydroxychloroquine]. Coronavirus response team member Dr. Deborah Birx, appointed by former president Obama to serve as United States Global AIDS Coordinator, also sits on the board of a group that has received billions from Gates' foundation, and Birx reportedly used a disputed Bill Gates-funded model for the White House's Coronavirus effort. Gates is a big proponent for a population lockdown scenario for the Coronavirus outbreak.

Another funder of Moderna is the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), the technology-development arm of the Pentagon and one of the most sinister organisations on earth. DARPA had a major role with the CIA covert technology-funding operation In-Q-Tel in the development of Google and social media which is now at the centre of global censorship. Fauci and Gates are extremely close and openly admit to talking regularly about 'Covid' policy, but then why wouldn't Gates have a seat at every national 'Covid' table after his Foundation committed \$1.75 billion to the 'fight against Covid-19'. When passed through our Orwellian Translation Unit this means that he has bought and paid for the Cult-driven 'Covid' response worldwide. Research the major 'Covid' response personnel in your own country and you will find the same Gates funding and other connections again and again. Medical and science chiefs following World Health Organization 'policy' sit atop a medical hierarchy in their country of administrators, doctors and nursing staff. These 'subordinates' are told they must work and behave in accordance with the policy delivered from the 'top' of the national 'health' pyramid which is largely the policy delivered by the WHO which is the policy delivered by Gates and the Cult. The whole 'Covid' narrative has been imposed on medical staff by a climate of fear although great numbers don't even need that to comply. They do so through breathtaking levels of ignorance and

include doctors who go through life simply repeating what Big Pharma and their hierarchical masters tell them to say and believe. No wonder Big Pharma 'medicine' is one of the biggest killers on Planet Earth.

The same top-down system of intimidation operates with regard to the Cult Big Pharma cartel which also dictates policy through national and global medical systems in this way. The Cult and Big Pharma agendas are the same because the former controls and owns the latter. 'Health' administrators, doctors, and nursing staff are told to support and parrot the dictated policy or they will face consequences which can include being fired. How sad it's been to see medical staff meekly repeating and imposing Cult policy without question and most of those who can see through the deceit are only willing to speak anonymously off the record. They know what will happen if their identity is known. This has left the courageous few to expose the lies about the 'virus', face masks, overwhelmed hospitals that aren't, and the dangers of the 'vaccine' that isn't a vaccine. When these medical professionals and scientists, some renowned in their field, have taken to the Internet to expose the truth their articles, comments and videos have been deleted by Cult-owned Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. What a real head-shaker to see YouTube videos with leading world scientists and highly qualified medical specialists with an added link underneath to the notorious Cult propaganda website *Wikipedia* to find the 'facts' about the same subject.

HIV – the 'Covid' trial-run

I'll give you an example of the consequences for health and truth that come from censorship and unquestioning belief in official narratives. The story was told by PCR inventor Kary Mullis in his book *Dancing Naked in the Mind Field*. He said that in 1984 he accepted as just another scientific fact that Luc Montagnier of France's Pasteur Institute and Robert Gallo of America's National Institutes of Health had independently discovered that a 'retrovirus' dubbed HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) caused AIDS. They

were, after all, Mullis writes, specialists in retroviruses. This is how the medical and science pyramids work. Something is announced or *assumed* and then becomes an everybody-knows-that purely through repetition of the assumption as if it is fact. Complete crap becomes accepted truth with no supporting evidence and only repetition of the crap. This is how a 'virus' that doesn't exist became the 'virus' that changed the world. The HIV-AIDS fairy story became a multi-billion pound industry and the media poured out propaganda terrifying the world about the deadly HIV 'virus' that caused the lethal AIDS. By then Mullis was working at a lab in Santa Monica, California, to detect retroviruses with his PCR test in blood donations received by the Red Cross. In doing so he asked a virologist where he could find a reference for HIV being the cause of AIDS. 'You don't need a reference,' the virologist said ... '*Everybody knows it.*' Mullis said he wanted to quote a reference in the report he was doing and he said he felt a little funny about not knowing the source of such an important discovery when everyone else seemed to. The virologist suggested he cite a report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on morbidity and mortality. Mullis read the report, but it only said that an organism had been identified and did not say how. The report did not identify the original scientific work. Physicians, however, *assumed* (key recurring theme) that if the CDC was convinced that HIV caused AIDS then proof must exist. Mullis continues:

I did computer searches. Neither Montagnier, Gallo, nor anyone else had published papers describing experiments which led to the conclusion that HIV probably caused AIDS. I read the papers in *Science* for which they had become well known as AIDS doctors, but all they had said there was that they had found evidence of a past infection by something which was probably HIV in some AIDS patients.

They found antibodies. Antibodies to viruses had always been considered evidence of past disease, not present disease. Antibodies signaled that the virus had been defeated. The patient had saved himself. There was no indication in these papers that this virus caused a disease. They didn't show that everybody with the antibodies had the disease. In fact they found some healthy people with antibodies.

Mullis asked why their work had been published if Montagnier and Gallo hadn't really found this evidence, and why had they been fighting so hard to get credit for the discovery? He says he was hesitant to write 'HIV is the probable cause of AIDS' until he found published evidence to support that. 'Tens of thousands of scientists and researchers were spending billions of dollars a year doing research based on this idea,' Mullis writes. 'The reason had to be there somewhere; otherwise these people would not have allowed their research to settle into one narrow channel of investigation.' He said he lectured about PCR at numerous meetings where people were always talking about HIV and he asked them how they knew that HIV was the cause of AIDS:

Everyone said something. Everyone had the answer at home, in the office, in some drawer. They all knew, and they would send me the papers as soon as they got back. But I never got any papers. Nobody ever sent me the news about how AIDS was caused by HIV.

Eventually Mullis was able to ask Montagnier himself about the reference proof when he lectured in San Diego at the grand opening of the University of California AIDS Research Center. Mullis says this was the last time he would ask his question without showing anger. Montagnier said he should reference the CDC report. 'I read it', Mullis said, and it didn't answer the question. 'If Montagnier didn't know the answer who the hell did?' Then one night Mullis was driving when an interview came on National Public Radio with Peter Duesberg, a prominent virologist at Berkeley and a California Scientist of the Year. Mullis says he finally understood why he could not find references that connected HIV to AIDS – *there weren't any!* No one had ever proved that HIV causes AIDS even though it had spawned a multi-billion pound global industry and the media was repeating this as fact every day in their articles and broadcasts terrifying the shit out of people about AIDS and giving the impression that a positive test for HIV (see 'Covid') was a death sentence. Duesberg was a threat to the AIDS gravy train and the agenda that underpinned it. He was therefore abused and castigated after he told the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences

there was no good evidence implicating the new 'virus'. Editors rejected his manuscripts and his research funds were deleted. Mullis points out that the CDC has defined AIDS as one of more than 30 diseases *if accompanied* by a positive result on a test that detects antibodies to HIV; but those same diseases are not defined as AIDS cases when antibodies are not detected:

If an HIV-positive woman develops uterine cancer, for example, she is considered to have AIDS. If she is not HIV positive, she simply has uterine cancer. An HIV-positive man with tuberculosis has AIDS; if he tests negative he simply has tuberculosis. If he lives in Kenya or Colombia, where the test for HIV antibodies is too expensive, he is simply presumed to have the antibodies and therefore AIDS, and therefore he can be treated in the World Health Organization's clinic. It's the only medical help available in some places. And it's free, because the countries that support WHO are worried about AIDS.

Mullis accuses the CDC of continually adding new diseases (see ever more 'Covid symptoms') to the grand AIDS definition and of virtually doctoring the books to make it appear as if the disease continued to spread. He cites how in 1993 the CDC enormously broadened its AIDS definition and county health authorities were delighted because they received \$2,500 per year from the Federal government for every reported AIDS case. Ladies and gentlemen, I have just described, via Kary Mullis, the 'Covid pandemic' of 2020 and beyond. Every element is the same and it's been pulled off in the same way by the same networks.

The 'Covid virus' exists? Okay – prove it. Er ... still waiting

What Kary Mullis described with regard to 'HIV' has been repeated with 'Covid'. A claim is made that a new, or 'novel', infection has been found and the entire medical system of the world repeats that as fact exactly as they did with HIV and AIDS. No one in the mainstream asks rather relevant questions such as 'How do you know?' and 'Where is your proof?' The SARS-Cov-2 'virus' and the 'Covid-19 disease' became an overnight 'everybody-knows-that'. The origin could be debated and mulled over, but what you could not suggest was that 'SARS-Cov-2' didn't exist. That would be

ridiculous. 'Everybody knows' the 'virus' exists. Well, I didn't for one along with American proper doctors like Andrew Kaufman and Tom Cowan and long-time American proper journalist Jon Rappaport. We dared to pursue the obvious and simple question: 'Where's the evidence?' The overwhelming majority in medicine, journalism and the general public did not think to ask that. After all, *everyone knew* there was a new 'virus'. Everyone was saying so and I heard it on the BBC. Some would eventually argue that the 'deadly virus' was nothing like as deadly as claimed, but few would venture into the realms of its very existence. Had they done so they would have found that the evidence for that claim had gone AWOL as with HIV causes AIDS. In fact, not even that. For something to go AWOL it has to exist in the first place and scientific proof for a 'SARS-Cov-2' can be filed under nothing, nowhere and zilch.

Dr Andrew Kaufman is a board-certified forensic psychiatrist in New York State, a Doctor of Medicine and former Assistant Professor and Medical Director of Psychiatry at SUNY Upstate Medical University, and Medical Instructor of Hematology and Oncology at the Medical School of South Carolina. He also studied biology at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and trained in Psychiatry at Duke University. Kaufman is retired from allopathic medicine, but remains a consultant and educator on natural healing, I saw a video of his very early on in the 'Covid' hoax in which he questioned claims about the 'virus' in the absence of any supporting evidence and with plenty pointing the other way. I did everything I could to circulate his work which I felt was asking the pivotal questions that needed an answer. I can recommend an excellent pull-together interview he did with the website The Last Vagabond entitled *Dr Andrew Kaufman: Virus Isolation, Terrain Theory and Covid-19* and his website is andrewkaufmanmd.com. Kaufman is not only a forensic psychiatrist; he is forensic in all that he does. He always reads original scientific papers, experiments and studies instead of second-third-fourth-hand reports about the 'virus' in the media which are repeating the repeated repetition of the narrative. When he did so with the original Chinese 'virus' papers Kaufman

realised that there was no evidence of a 'SARS-Cov-2'. They had never – from the start – shown it to exist and every repeat of this claim worldwide was based on the accepted existence of proof that was nowhere to be found – see Kary Mullis and HIV. Here we go again.

Let's postulate

Kaufman discovered that the Chinese authorities immediately concluded that the cause of an illness that broke out among about 200 initial patients in Wuhan was a 'new virus' when there were no grounds to make that conclusion. The alleged 'virus' was not isolated from other genetic material in their samples and then shown through a system known as Koch's postulates to be the causative agent of the illness. The world was told that the SARS-Cov-2 'virus' caused a disease they called 'Covid-19' which had 'flu-like' symptoms and could lead to respiratory problems and pneumonia. If it wasn't so tragic it would almost be funny. *'Flu-like' symptoms? Pneumonia? Respiratory disease?* What in CHINA and particularly in Wuhan, one of the most polluted cities in the world with a resulting epidemic of respiratory disease?? Three hundred thousand people get pneumonia in China every year and there are nearly a billion cases worldwide of 'flu-like symptoms'. These have a whole range of causes – including pollution in Wuhan – but no other possibility was credibly considered in late 2019 when the world was told there was a new and deadly 'virus'. The global prevalence of pneumonia and 'flu-like systems' gave the Cult networks unlimited potential to re-diagnose these other causes as the mythical 'Covid-19' and that is what they did from the very start. Kaufman revealed how Chinese medical and science authorities (all subordinates to the Cult-owned communist government) took genetic material from the lungs of only a few of the first patients. The material contained their own cells, bacteria, fungi and other microorganisms living in their bodies. The only way you could prove the existence of the 'virus' and its responsibility for the alleged 'Covid-19' was to isolate the virus from all the other material – a process also known as 'purification' – and

then follow the postulates sequence developed in the late 19th century by German physician and bacteriologist Robert Koch which became the 'gold standard' for connecting an alleged causation agent to a disease:

1. The microorganism (bacteria, fungus, virus, etc.) must be present in every case of the disease and all patients must have the same symptoms. It must also *not be present in healthy individuals*.
2. The microorganism must be isolated from the host with the disease. If the microorganism is a bacteria or fungus it must be grown in a pure culture. If it is a virus, it must be purified (i.e. containing no other material except the virus particles) from a clinical sample.
3. The specific disease, with all of its characteristics, must be reproduced when the infectious agent (the purified virus or a pure culture of bacteria or fungi) is inoculated into a healthy, susceptible host.
4. The microorganism must be recoverable from the experimentally infected host as in step 2.

Not one of these criteria has been met in the case of 'SARS-Cov-2' and 'Covid-19'. Not ONE. EVER. Robert Koch refers to bacteria and not viruses. What are called 'viral particles' are so minute (hence masks are useless by any definition) that they could only be seen after the invention of the electron microscope in the 1930s and can still only be observed through that means. American bacteriologist and virologist Thomas Milton Rivers, the so-called 'Father of Modern Virology' who was very significantly director of the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research in the 1930s, developed a less stringent version of Koch's postulates to identify 'virus' causation known as 'Rivers criteria'. 'Covid' did not pass that process either. Some even doubt whether any 'virus' can be isolated from other particles containing genetic material in the Koch method. Freedom of Information requests in many countries asking for scientific proof that the 'Covid virus' has been purified and isolated and shown to exist have all come back with a 'we don't have that' and when this happened with a request to the UK Department of Health they added this comment:

However, outside of the scope of the [Freedom of Information Act] and on a discretionary basis, the following information has been advised to us, which may be of interest. Most infectious diseases are caused by viruses, bacteria or fungi. Some bacteria or fungi have the capacity to grow on their own in isolation, for example in colonies on a petri dish. Viruses are different in that they are what we call 'obligate pathogens' – that is, they cannot survive or reproduce without infecting a host ...

... For some diseases, it is possible to establish causation between a microorganism and a disease by isolating the pathogen from a patient, growing it in pure culture and reintroducing it to a healthy organism. These are known as 'Koch's postulates' and were developed in 1882. However, as our understanding of disease and different disease-causing agents has advanced, these are no longer the method for determining causation [Andrew Kaufman asks why in that case are there two published articles falsely claiming to satisfy Koch's postulates].

It has long been known that viral diseases cannot be identified in this way as viruses cannot be grown in 'pure culture'. When a patient is tested for a viral illness, this is normally done by looking for the presence of antigens, or viral genetic code in a host with molecular biology techniques [Kaufman asks how you could know the origin of these chemicals without having a pure culture for comparison].

For the record 'antigens' are defined so:

Invading microorganisms have antigens on their surface that the human body can recognise as being foreign – meaning not belonging to it. When the body recognises a foreign antigen, lymphocytes (white blood cells) produce antibodies, which are complementary in shape to the antigen.

Notwithstanding that this is open to question in relation to 'SARS-Cov-2' the presence of 'antibodies' can have many causes and they are found in people that are perfectly well. Kary Mullis said: 'Antibodies ... had always been considered evidence of past disease, not present disease.'

'Covid' really is a *computer* 'virus'

Where the UK Department of Health statement says 'viruses' are now 'diagnosed' through a 'viral genetic code in a host with molecular biology techniques', they mean ... *the PCR test* which its inventor said cannot test for infectious disease. They have no credible method of connecting a 'virus' to a disease and we will see that there is no scientific proof that any 'virus' causes any disease or there is any such thing as a 'virus' in the way that it is described. Tenacious Canadian researcher Christine Massey and her team made

some 40 Freedom of Information requests to national public health agencies in different countries asking for proof that SARS-CoV-2 has been isolated and not one of them could supply that information. Massey said of her request in Canada: 'Freedom of Information reveals Public Health Agency of Canada has no record of 'SARS-COV-2' isolation performed by anyone, anywhere, ever.' If you accept the comment from the UK Department of Health it's because they can't isolate a 'virus'. Even so many 'science' papers claimed to have isolated the 'Covid virus' until they were questioned and had to admit they hadn't. A reply from the Robert Koch Institute in Germany was typical: 'I am not aware of a paper which purified isolated SARS-CoV-2.' So what the hell was Christian Drosten and his gang using to design the 'Covid' testing protocol that has produced all the illusory Covid' cases and 'Covid' deaths when the head of the Chinese version of the CDC admitted there was a problem right from the start in that the 'virus' had never been isolated/purified? Breathe deeply: What they are calling 'Covid' is actually created by a *computer program* i.e. *they made it up* – er, that's it. They took lung fluid, with many sources of genetic material, from one single person alleged to be infected with Covid-19 by a PCR test which they *claimed*, without clear evidence, contained a 'virus'. They used several computer programs to create a model of a theoretical virus genome sequence from more than fifty-six million small sequences of RNA, each of an unknown source, assembling them like a puzzle with no known solution. The computer filled in the gaps with sequences from bits in the gene bank to make it look like a bat SARS-like coronavirus! A wave of the magic wand and poof, an *in silico* (computer-generated) genome, a scientific fantasy, was created. UK health researcher Dr Kevin Corbett made the same point with this analogy:

... It's like giving you a few bones and saying that's your fish. It could be any fish. Not even a skeleton. Here's a few fragments of bones. That's your fish ... It's all from gene bank and the bits of the virus sequence that weren't there they made up.

They synthetically created them to fill in the blanks. That's what genetics is; it's a code. So it's ABBCCDDDD and you're missing some what you think is EEE so you put it in. It's all

synthetic. You just manufacture the bits that are missing. This is the end result of the geneticization of virology. This is basically a computer virus.

Further confirmation came in an email exchange between British citizen journalist Frances Leader and the government's Medicines & Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (the Gates-funded MHRA) which gave emergency permission for untested 'Covid vaccines' to be used. The agency admitted that the 'vaccine' is not based on an isolated 'virus', but comes from a *computer-generated model*. Frances Leader was naturally banned from Cult-owned fascist Twitter for making this exchange public. The process of creating computer-generated alleged 'viruses' is called 'in silico' or 'in silicon' – computer chips – and the term 'in silico' is believed to originate with biological experiments using only a computer in 1989. 'Vaccines' involved with 'Covid' are also produced 'in silico' or by computer not a natural process. If the original 'virus' is nothing more than a made-up computer model how can there be 'new variants' of something that never existed in the first place? They are not new 'variants'; they are new *computer models* only minutely different to the original program and designed to further terrify the population into having the 'vaccine' and submitting to fascism. You want a 'new variant'? Click, click, enter – there you go. Tell the medical profession that you have discovered a 'South African variant', 'UK variants' or a 'Brazilian variant' and in the usual HIV-causes-AIDS manner they will unquestioningly repeat it with no evidence whatsoever to support these claims. They will go on television and warn about the dangers of 'new variants' while doing nothing more than repeating what they have been told to be true and knowing that any deviation from that would be career suicide. Big-time insiders will know it's a hoax, but much of the medical community is clueless about the way they are being played and themselves play the public without even being aware they are doing so. What an interesting 'coincidence' that AstraZeneca and Oxford University were conducting 'Covid vaccine trials' in the three countries – the UK, South Africa and Brazil – where the first three 'variants' were claimed to have 'broken out'.

Here's your 'virus' – it's a unicorn

Dr Andrew Kaufman presented a brilliant analysis describing how the 'virus' was imagined into fake existence when he dissected an article published by *Nature* and written by 19 authors detailing *alleged* 'sequencing of a complete viral genome' of the 'new SARS-CoV-2 virus'. This computer-modelled *in silico* genome was used as a template for all subsequent genome sequencing experiments that resulted in the so-called variants which he said now number more than 6,000. The fake genome was constructed from more than 56 million individual short strands of RNA. Those little pieces were assembled into longer pieces by finding areas of overlapping sequences. The computer programs created over two million possible combinations from which the authors simply chose the longest one. They then compared this to a 'bat virus' and the computer 'alignment' rearranged the sequence and filled in the gaps! They called this computer-generated abomination the 'complete genome'. Dr Tom Cowan, a fellow medical author and collaborator with Kaufman, said such computer-generation constitutes scientific fraud and he makes this superb analogy:

Here is an equivalency: A group of researchers claim to have found a unicorn because they found a piece of a hoof, a hair from a tail, and a snippet of a horn. They then add that information into a computer and program it to re-create the unicorn, and they then claim this computer re-creation is the real unicorn. Of course, they had never actually seen a unicorn so could not possibly have examined its genetic makeup to compare their samples with the actual unicorn's hair, hooves and horn.

The researchers claim they decided which is the real genome of SARS-CoV-2 by 'consensus', sort of like a vote. Again, different computer programs will come up with different versions of the imaginary 'unicorn', so they come together as a group and decide which is the real imaginary unicorn.

This is how the 'virus' that has transformed the world was brought into fraudulent 'existence'. Extraordinary, yes, but as the Nazis said the bigger the lie the more will believe it. Cowan, however, wasn't finished and he went on to identify what he called the real blockbuster in the paper. He quotes this section from a paper written

by virologists and published by the CDC and then explains what it means:

Therefore, we examined the capacity of SARS-CoV-2 to infect and replicate in several common primate and human cell lines, including human adenocarcinoma cells (A549), human liver cells (HUH 7.0), and human embryonic kidney cells (HEK-293T). In addition to Vero E6 and Vero CCL81 cells. ... Each cell line was inoculated at high multiplicity of infection and examined 24h post-infection.

No CPE was observed in any of the cell lines except in Vero cells, which grew to greater than 10 to the 7th power at 24 h post-infection. In contrast, HUH 7.0 and 293T showed only modest viral replication, and A549 cells were incompatible with SARS CoV-2 infection.

Cowan explains that when virologists attempt to prove infection they have three possible 'hosts' or models on which they can test. The first was humans. Exposure to humans was generally not done for ethical reasons and has never been done with SARS-CoV-2 or any coronavirus. The second possible host was animals. Cowan said that forgetting for a moment that they never actually use purified virus when exposing animals they do use solutions that they *claim* contain the virus. Exposure to animals has been done with SARS-CoV-2 in an experiment involving mice and this is what they found: *None of the wild (normal) mice got sick.* In a group of genetically-modified mice, a statistically insignificant number lost weight and had slightly bristled fur, but they experienced nothing like the illness called 'Covid-19'. Cowan said the third method – the one they mostly rely on – is to inoculate solutions they *say* contain the virus onto a variety of tissue cultures. This process had never been shown to kill tissue *unless* the sample material was starved of nutrients and poisoned as *part of the process*. Yes, incredibly, in tissue experiments designed to show the 'virus' is responsible for killing the tissue they starve the tissue of nutrients and add toxic drugs including antibiotics and they do not have control studies to see if it's the starvation and poisoning that is degrading the tissue rather than the 'virus' they allege to be in there somewhere. You want me to pinch you? Yep, I understand. Tom Cowan said this about the whole nonsensical farce as he explains what that quote from the CDC paper really means:

The shocking thing about the above quote is that using their own methods, the virologists found that solutions containing SARS-CoV-2 – even in high amounts – were NOT, I repeat NOT, infective to any of the three human tissue cultures they tested. In plain English, this means they proved, on their terms, that this ‘new coronavirus’ is not infectious to human beings. It is ONLY infective to monkey kidney cells, and only then when you add two potent drugs (gentamicin and amphotericin), known to be toxic to kidneys, to the mix.

My friends, read this again and again. These virologists, published by the CDC, performed a clear proof, on their terms, showing that the SARS-CoV-2 virus is harmless to human beings. That is the only possible conclusion, but, unfortunately, this result is not even mentioned in their conclusion. They simply say they can provide virus stocks cultured only on monkey Vero cells, thanks for coming.

Cowan concluded: ‘If people really understood how this “science” was done, I would hope they would storm the gates and demand honesty, transparency and truth.’ Dr Michael Yeadon, former Vice President and Chief Scientific Adviser at drug giant Pfizer has been a vocal critic of the ‘Covid vaccine’ and its potential for multiple harm. He said in an interview in April, 2021, that ‘not one [vaccine] has the virus. He was asked why vaccines normally using a ‘dead’ version of a disease to activate the immune system were not used for ‘Covid’ and instead we had the synthetic methods of the ‘mRNA Covid vaccine’. Yeadon said that to do the former ‘you’d have to have some of [the virus] wouldn’t you?’ He added: ‘No-one’s got any – seriously.’ Yeadon said that surely they couldn’t have fooled the whole world for a year without having a virus, ‘but oddly enough ask around – no one’s got it’. He didn’t know why with all the ‘great labs’ around the world that the virus had not been isolated – ‘Maybe they’ve been too busy running bad PCR tests and vaccines that people don’t need.’ What is today called ‘science’ is not ‘science’ at all. Science is no longer what is, but whatever people can be manipulated to *believe* that it is. Real science has been hijacked by the Cult to dispense and produce the ‘expert scientists’ and contentions that suit the agenda of the Cult. How big-time this has happened with the ‘Covid’ hoax which is entirely based on fake science delivered by fake ‘scientists’ and fake ‘doctors’. The human-caused climate change hoax is also entirely based on fake science delivered by fake ‘scientists’ and fake ‘climate experts’. In both cases real

scientists, climate experts and doctors have their views suppressed and deleted by the Cult-owned science establishment, media and Silicon Valley. This is the 'science' that politicians claim to be 'following' and a common denominator of 'Covid' and climate are Cult psychopaths Bill Gates and his mate Klaus Schwab at the Gates-funded World Economic Forum. But, don't worry, it's all just a coincidence and absolutely nothing to worry about. Zzzzzzzzz.

What is a 'virus' REALLY?

Dr Tom Cowan is one of many contesting the very existence of viruses let alone that they cause disease. This is understandable when there is no scientific evidence for a disease-causing 'virus'. German virologist Dr Stefan Lanka won a landmark case in 2017 in the German Supreme Court over his contention that there is no such thing as a measles virus. He had offered a big prize for anyone who could prove there is and Lanka won his case when someone sought to claim the money. There is currently a prize of more than 225,000 euros on offer from an Isolate Truth Fund for anyone who can prove the isolation of SARS-CoV-2 and its genetic substance. Lanka wrote in an article headed 'The Misconception Called Virus' that scientists think a 'virus' is causing tissue to become diseased and degraded when in fact it is the *processes they are using* which do that – not a 'virus'. Lanka has done an important job in making this point clear as Cowan did in his analysis of the CDC paper. Lanka says that all claims about viruses as disease-causing pathogens are wrong and based on 'easily recognisable, understandable and verifiable misinterpretations.' Scientists believed they were working with 'viruses' in their laboratories when they were really working with 'typical particles of specific dying tissues or cells ...' Lanka said that the tissue decaying process claimed to be caused by a 'virus' still happens when no alleged 'virus' is involved. It's the *process* that does the damage and not a 'virus'. The genetic sample is deprived of nutrients, removed from its energy supply through removal from the body and then doused in toxic antibiotics to remove any bacteria. He confirms again that establishment scientists do not (pinch me)

conduct control experiments to see if this is the case and if they did they would see the claims that 'viruses' are doing the damage is nonsense. He adds that during the measles 'virus' court case he commissioned an independent laboratory to perform just such a control experiment and the result was that the tissues and cells died in the exact same way as with alleged 'infected' material. This is supported by a gathering number of scientists, doctors and researchers who reject what is called 'germ theory' or the belief in the body being infected by contagious sources emitted by other people. Researchers Dawn Lester and David Parker take the same stance in their highly-detailed and sourced book *What Really Makes You Ill – Why everything you thought you knew about disease is wrong* which was recommended to me by a number of medical professionals genuinely seeking the truth. Lester and Parker say there is no provable scientific evidence to show that a 'virus' can be transmitted between people or people and animals or animals and people:

The definition also claims that viruses are the cause of many diseases, as if this has been definitively proven. But this is not the case; there is no original scientific evidence that definitively demonstrates that any virus is the cause of any disease. The burden of proof for any theory lies with those who proposed it; but none of the existing documents provides 'proof' that supports the claim that 'viruses' are pathogens.

Dr Tom Cowan employs one of his clever analogies to describe the process by which a 'virus' is named as the culprit for a disease when what is called a 'virus' is only material released by cells detoxing themselves from infiltration by chemical or radiation poisoning. The tidal wave of technologically-generated radiation in the 'smart' modern world plus all the toxic food and drink are causing this to happen more than ever. Deluded 'scientists' misread this as a gathering impact of what they wrongly label 'viruses'.

Paper can infect houses

Cowan said in an article for davidicke.com – with his tongue only mildly in his cheek – that he believed he had made a tremendous

discovery that may revolutionise science. He had discovered that small bits of paper are alive, 'well alive-ish', can 'infect' houses, and then reproduce themselves inside the house. The result was that this explosion of growth in the paper inside the house causes the house to explode, blowing it to smithereens. His evidence for this new theory is that in the past months he had carefully examined many of the houses in his neighbourhood and found almost no scraps of paper on the lawns and surrounds of the house. There was an occasional stray label, but nothing more. Then he would return to these same houses a week or so later and with a few, not all of them, particularly the old and decrepit ones, he found to his shock and surprise they were littered with stray bits of paper. He knew then that the paper had infected these houses, made copies of itself, and blew up the house. A young boy on a bicycle at one of the sites told him he had seen a demolition crew using dynamite to explode the house the previous week, but Cowan dismissed this as the idle thoughts of silly boys because 'I was on to something big'. He was on to how 'scientists' mistake genetic material in the detoxifying process for something they call a 'virus'. Cowan said of his house and paper story:

If this sounds crazy to you, it's because it should. This scenario is obviously nuts. But consider this admittedly embellished, for effect, current viral theory that all scientists, medical doctors and virologists currently believe.

He takes the example of the 'novel SARS-Cov2' virus to prove the point. First they take someone with an undefined illness called 'Covid-19' and don't even attempt to find any virus in their sputum. Never mind the scientists still describe how this 'virus', which they have not located attaches to a cell receptor, injects its genetic material, in 'Covid's' case, RNA, into the cell. The RNA once inserted exploits the cell to reproduce itself and makes 'thousands, nay millions, of copies of itself ... Then it emerges victorious to claim its next victim':

If you were to look in the scientific literature for proof, actual scientific proof, that uniform SARS-CoV2 viruses have been properly isolated from the sputum of a sick person, that actual spike proteins could be seen protruding from the virus (which has not been found), you would find that such evidence doesn't exist.

If you go looking in the published scientific literature for actual pictures, proof, that these spike proteins or any viral proteins are ever attached to any receptor embedded in any cell membrane, you would also find that no such evidence exists. If you were to look for a video or documented evidence of the intact virus injecting its genetic material into the body of the cell, reproducing itself and then emerging victorious by budding off the cell membrane, you would find that no such evidence exists.

The closest thing you would find is electron micrograph pictures of cellular particles, possibly attached to cell debris, both of which to be seen were stained by heavy metals, a process that completely distorts their architecture within the living organism. This is like finding bits of paper stuck to the blown-up bricks, thereby proving the paper emerged by taking pieces of the bricks on its way out.

The Enders baloney

Cowan describes the 'Covid' story as being just as make-believe as his paper story and he charts back this fantasy to a Nobel Prize winner called John Enders (1897-1985), an American biomedical scientist who has been dubbed 'The Father of Modern Vaccines'. Enders is claimed to have 'discovered' the process of the viral culture which 'proved' that a 'virus' caused measles. Cowan explains how Enders did this 'by using the EXACT same procedure that has been followed by every virologist to find and characterize every new virus since 1954'. Enders took throat swabs from children with measles and immersed them in 2ml of milk. Penicillin (100u/ml) and the antibiotic streptomycin (50,g/ml) were added and the whole mix was centrifuged – rotated at high speed to separate large cellular debris from small particles and molecules as with milk and cream, for example. Cowan says that if the aim is to find little particles of genetic material ('viruses') in the snot from children with measles it would seem that the last thing you would do is mix the snot with other material – milk –that also has genetic material. 'How are you ever going to know whether whatever you found came from the snot or the milk?' He points out that streptomycin is a 'nephrotoxic' or poisonous-to-the-kidney drug. You will see the relevance of that

shortly. Cowan says that it gets worse, much worse, when Enders describes the culture medium upon which the virus 'grows': 'The culture medium consisted of bovine amniotic fluid (90%), beef embryo extract (5%), horse serum (5%), antibiotics and phenol red as an indicator of cell metabolism.' Cowan asks incredulously: 'Did he just say that the culture medium also contained fluids and tissues that are themselves rich sources of genetic material?' The genetic cocktail, or 'medium', is inoculated onto tissue and cells from rhesus monkey *kidney* tissue. This is where the importance of streptomycin comes in and currently-used antimicrobials and other drugs that are *poisonous to kidneys* and used in ALL modern viral cultures (e.g. gentamicin, streptomycin, and amphotericin). Cowan asks: 'How are you ever going to know from this witch's brew where any genetic material comes from as we now have five different sources of rich genetic material in our mix?' Remember, he says, that all genetic material, whether from monkey kidney tissues, bovine serum, milk, etc., is made from the exact same components. The same central question returns: 'How are you possibly going to know that it was the virus that killed the kidney tissue and not the toxic antibiotic and starvation rations on which you are growing the tissue?' John Enders answered the question himself – *you can't*:

A second agent was obtained from an uninoculated culture of monkey kidney cells. The cytopathic changes [death of the cells] it induced in the unstained preparations could not be distinguished with confidence from the viruses isolated from measles.

The death of the cells ('cytopathic changes') happened in exactly the same manner, whether they inoculated the kidney tissue with the measles snot or not, Cowan says. 'This is evidence that the destruction of the tissue, the very proof of viral causation of illness, was not caused by anything in the snot because they saw the same destructive effect when the snot was not even used ... the cytopathic, i.e., cell-killing, changes come from the process of the culture itself, not from any virus in any snot, period.' Enders quotes in his 1957 paper a virologist called Ruckle as reporting similar findings 'and in addition has isolated an agent from monkey kidney tissue that is so

far indistinguishable from human measles virus'. In other words, Cowan says, these particles called 'measles viruses' are simply and clearly breakdown products of the starved and poisoned tissue. For measles 'virus' see all 'viruses' including the so-called 'Covid virus'. Enders, the 'Father of Modern Vaccines', also said:

There is a potential risk in employing cultures of primate cells for the production of vaccines composed of attenuated virus, since the presence of other agents possibly latent in primate tissues cannot be definitely excluded by any known method.

Cowan further quotes from a paper published in the journal *Viruses* in May, 2020, while the 'Covid pandemic' was well underway in the media if not in reality. 'EVs' here refers to particles of genetic debris from our own tissues, such as exosomes of which more in a moment: 'The remarkable resemblance between EVs and viruses has caused quite a few problems in the studies focused on the analysis of EVs released during viral infections.' Later the paper adds that to date a reliable method that can actually guarantee a complete separation (of EVs from viruses) DOES NOT EXIST. This was published at a time when a fairy tale 'virus' was claimed in total certainty to be causing a fairy tale 'viral disease' called 'Covid-19' – a fairy tale that was already well on the way to transforming human society in the image that the Cult has worked to achieve for so long. Cowan concludes his article:

To summarize, there is no scientific evidence that pathogenic viruses exist. What we think of as 'viruses' are simply the normal breakdown products of dead and dying tissues and cells. When we are well, we make fewer of these particles; when we are starved, poisoned, suffocated by wearing masks, or afraid, we make more.

There is no engineered virus circulating and making people sick. People in laboratories all over the world are making genetically modified products to make people sick. These are called vaccines. There is no virome, no 'ecosystem' of viruses, viruses are not 8%, 50% or 100 % of our genetic material. These are all simply erroneous ideas based on the misconception called a virus.

What is 'Covid'? Load of bollocks

The background described here by Cowan and Lanka was emphasised in the first video presentation that I saw by Dr Andrew Kaufman when he asked whether the 'Covid virus' was in truth a natural defence mechanism of the body called 'exosomes'. These are released by cells when in states of toxicity – see the same themes returning over and over. They are released ever more profusely as chemical and radiation toxicity increases and think of the potential effect therefore of 5G alone as its destructive frequencies infest the human energetic information field with a gathering pace (5G went online in Wuhan in 2019 as the 'virus' emerged). I'll have more about this later. Exosomes transmit a warning to the rest of the body that 'Houston, we have a problem'. Kaufman presented images of exosomes and compared them with 'Covid' under an electron microscope and the similarity was remarkable. They both attach to the same cell receptors (*claimed* in the case of 'Covid'), contain the same genetic material in the form of RNA or ribonucleic acid, and both are found in 'viral cell cultures' with damaged or dying cells. James Hildreth MD, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Meharry Medical College at Johns Hopkins, said: 'The virus is fully an exosome in every sense of the word.' Kaufman's conclusion was that there is no 'virus': 'This entire pandemic is a completely manufactured crisis ... there is no evidence of anyone dying from [this] illness.' Dr Tom Cowan and Sally Fallon Morell, authors of *The Contagion Myth*, published a statement with Dr Kaufman in February, 2021, explaining why the 'virus' does not exist and you can read it that in full in the Appendix.

'Virus' theory can be traced to the 'cell theory' in 1858 of German physician Rudolf Virchow (1821-1920) who contended that disease originates from a single cell infiltrated by a 'virus'. Dr Stefan Lanka said that findings and insights with respect to the structure, function and central importance of tissues in the creation of life, which were already known in 1858, comprehensively refute the cell theory. Virchow ignored them. We have seen the part later played by John Enders in the 1950s and Lanka notes that infection theories were only established as a global dogma through the policies and

eugenics of the Third Reich in Nazi Germany (creation of the same Sabbatian cult behind the 'Covid' hoax). Lanka said: 'Before 1933, scientists dared to contradict this theory; after 1933, these critical scientists were silenced'. Dr Tom Cowan's view is that ill-health is caused by too much of something, too little of something, or toxification from chemicals and radiation – not contagion. We must also highlight as a major source of the 'virus' theology a man still called the 'Father of Modern Virology' – Thomas Milton Rivers (1888-1962). There is no way given the Cult's long game policy that it was a coincidence for the 'Father of Modern Virology' to be director of the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research from 1937 to 1956 when he is credited with making the Rockefeller Institute a leader in 'viral research'. Cult Rockefeller were the force behind the creation of Big Pharma 'medicine', established the World Health Organisation in 1948, and have long and close associations with the Gates family that now runs the WHO during the pandemic hoax through mega-rich Cult gofer and psychopath Bill Gates.

Only a Renegade Mind can see through all this bullshit by asking the questions that need to be answered, not taking 'no' or prevarication for an answer, and certainly not hiding from the truth in fear of speaking it. Renegade Minds have always changed the world for the better and they will change this one no matter how bleak it may currently appear to be.

CHAPTER SIX

Sequence of deceit

If you tell the truth, you don't have to remember anything
Mark Twain

Against the background that I have laid out this far the sequence that took us from an invented 'virus' in Cult-owned China in late 2019 to the fascist transformation of human society can be seen and understood in a whole new context.

We were told that a deadly disease had broken out in Wuhan and the world media began its campaign (coordinated by behavioural psychologists as we shall see) to terrify the population into unquestioning compliance. We were shown images of Chinese people collapsing in the street which never happened in the West with what was supposed to be the same condition. In the earliest days when alleged cases and deaths were few the fear register was hysterical in many areas of the media and this would expand into the common media narrative across the world. The real story was rather different, but we were never told that. The Chinese government, one of the Cult's biggest centres of global operation, said they had discovered a new illness with flu-like and pneumonia-type symptoms in a city with such toxic air that it is overwhelmed with flu-like symptoms, pneumonia and respiratory disease. Chinese scientists said it was a new – 'novel' – coronavirus which they called Sars-Cov-2 and that it caused a disease they labelled 'Covid-19'. There was no evidence for this and the 'virus' has never to this day been isolated, purified and its genetic code established from that. It

was from the beginning a computer-generated fiction. Stories of Chinese whistleblowers saying the number of deaths was being suppressed or that the 'new disease' was related to the Wuhan bio-lab misdirected mainstream and alternative media into cul-de-sacs to obscure the real truth – there was no 'virus'.

Chinese scientists took genetic material from the lung fluid of just a few people and said they had found a 'new' disease when this material had a wide range of content. There was no evidence for a 'virus' for the very reasons explained in the last two chapters. The 'virus' has never been shown to (a) exist and (b) cause any disease. People were diagnosed on symptoms that are so widespread in Wuhan and polluted China and with a PCR test that can't detect infectious disease. On this farce the whole global scam was sold to the rest of the world which would also diagnose respiratory disease as 'Covid-19' from symptoms alone or with a PCR test not testing for a 'virus'. Flu miraculously disappeared *worldwide* in 2020 and into 2021 as it was redesignated 'Covid-19'. It was really the same old flu with its 'flu-like' symptoms attributed to 'flu-like' 'Covid-19'. At the same time with very few exceptions the Chinese response of draconian lockdown and fascism was the chosen weapon to respond across the West as recommended by the Cult-owned Tedros at the Cult-owned World Health Organization run by the Cult-owned Gates. All was going according to plan. Chinese scientists – everything in China is controlled by the Cult-owned government – compared their contaminated RNA lung-fluid material with other RNA sequences and said it appeared to be just under 80 percent identical to the SARS-CoV-1 'virus' claimed to be the cause of the SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) 'outbreak' in 2003. They decreed that because of this the 'new virus' had to be related and they called it SARS-CoV-2. There are some serious problems with this assumption and *assumption* was all it was. Most 'factual' science turns out to be assumptions repeated into everyone-knows-that. A match of under 80-percent is meaningless. Dr Kaufman makes the point that there's a 96 percent genetic correlation between humans and chimpanzees, but 'no one would say our genetic material is part

of the chimpanzee family'. Yet the Chinese authorities were claiming that a much lower percentage, less than 80 percent, proved the existence of a new 'coronavirus'. For goodness sake human DNA is 60 percent similar to a *banana*.

You are feeling sleepy

The entire 'Covid' hoax is a global Psyop, a psychological operation to program the human mind into believing and fearing a complete fantasy. A crucial aspect of this was what *appeared* to happen in Italy. It was all very well streaming out daily images of an alleged catastrophe in Wuhan, but to the Western mind it was still on the other side of the world in a very different culture and setting. A reaction of 'this could happen to me and my family' was still nothing like as intense enough for the mind-doctors. The Cult needed a Western example to push people over that edge and it chose Italy, one of its major global locations going back to the Roman Empire. An Italian 'Covid' crisis was manufactured in a particular area called Lombardy which just happens to be notorious for its toxic air and therefore respiratory disease. Wuhan, China, *déjà vu*. An hysterical media told horror stories of Italians dying from 'Covid' in their droves and how Lombardy hospitals were being overrun by a tidal wave of desperately ill people needing treatment after being struck down by the 'deadly virus'. Here was the psychological turning point the Cult had planned. Wow, if this is happening in Italy, the Western mind concluded, this indeed could happen to me and my family. Another point is that Italian authorities responded by following the Chinese blueprint so vehemently recommended by the Cult-owned World Health Organization. They imposed fascistic lockdowns on the whole country viciously policed with the help of surveillance drones sweeping through the streets seeking out anyone who escaped from mass house arrest. Livelihoods were destroyed and psychology unravelled in the way we have witnessed since in all lockdown countries. Crucial to the plan was that Italy responded in this way to set the precedent of suspending freedom and imposing fascism in a 'Western liberal democracy'. I emphasised in an

animated video explanation on davidicke.com posted in the summer of 2020 how important it was to the Cult to expand the Chinese lockdown model across the West. Without this, and the bare-faced lie that non-symptomatic people could still transmit a 'disease' they didn't have, there was no way locking down the whole population, sick and not sick, could be pulled off. At just the right time and with no evidence Cult operatives and gofers claimed that people without symptoms could pass on the 'disease'. In the name of protecting the 'vulnerable' like elderly people, who lockdowns would kill by the tens of thousands, we had for the first time healthy people told to isolate as well as the sick. The great majority of people who tested positive had no symptoms because there was nothing wrong with them. It was just a trick made possible by a test not testing for the 'virus'.

Months after my animated video the Gates-funded Professor Neil Ferguson at the Gates-funded Imperial College confirmed that I was right. He didn't say it in those terms, naturally, but he did say it. Ferguson will enter the story shortly for his outrageously crazy 'computer models' that led to Britain, the United States and many other countries following the Chinese and now Italian methods of response. Put another way, following the Cult script. Ferguson said that SAGE, the UK government's scientific advisory group which has controlled 'Covid' policy from the start, wanted to follow the Chinese lockdown model (while they all continued to work and be paid), but they wondered if they could possibly, in Ferguson's words, 'get away with it in Europe'. 'Get away with it'? Who the hell do these moronic, arrogant people think they are? This appalling man Ferguson said that once Italy went into national lockdown they realised they, too, could mimic China:

It's a communist one-party state, we said. We couldn't get away with it in Europe, we thought ... and then Italy did it. And we realised we could. Behind this garbage from Ferguson is a simple fact: Doing the same as China in every country was the plan from the start and Ferguson's 'models' would play a central role in achieving that. It's just a coincidence, of course, and absolutely nothing to worry your little head about.

Oops, sorry, our mistake

Once the Italian segment of the Psyop had done the job it was designed to do a very different story emerged. Italian authorities revealed that 99 percent of those who had 'died from Covid-19' in Italy had one, two, three, or more 'co-morbidities' or illnesses and health problems that could have ended their life. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) published a figure of 94 percent for Americans dying of 'Covid' while having other serious medical conditions – on average two to three (some five or six) other potential causes of death. In terms of death from an unproven 'virus' I say it is 100 percent. The other one percent in Italy and six percent in the US would presumably have died from 'Covid's' flu-like symptoms with a range of other possible causes in conjunction with a test not testing for the 'virus'. Fox News reported that even more startling figures had emerged in one US county in which 410 of 422 deaths attributed to 'Covid-19' had other potentially deadly health conditions. The Italian National Health Institute said later that the average age of people dying with a 'Covid-19' diagnosis in Italy was about 81. Ninety percent were over 70 with ten percent over 90. In terms of other reasons to die some 80 percent had two or more chronic diseases with half having three or more including cardiovascular problems, diabetes, respiratory problems and cancer. Why is the phantom 'Covid-19' said to kill overwhelmingly old people and hardly affect the young? Old people continually die of many causes and especially respiratory disease which you can re-diagnose 'Covid-19' while young people die in tiny numbers by comparison and rarely of respiratory disease. Old people 'die of Covid' because they die of other things that can be redesignated 'Covid' and it really is that simple.

Flu has flown

The blueprint was in place. Get your illusory 'cases' from a test not testing for the 'virus' and redesignate other causes of death as 'Covid-19'. You have an instant 'pandemic' from something that is nothing more than a computer-generated fiction. With near-on a

billion people having 'flu-like' symptoms every year the potential was limitless and we can see why flu quickly and apparently miraculously disappeared *worldwide* by being diagnosed 'Covid-19'. The painfully bloody obvious was explained away by the childlike media in headlines like this in the UK '*Independent*': 'Not a single case of flu detected by Public Health England this year as Covid restrictions suppress virus'. I kid you not. The masking, social distancing and house arrest that did not make the 'Covid virus' disappear somehow did so with the 'flu virus'. Even worse the article, by a bloke called Samuel Lovett, suggested that maybe the masking, sanitising and other 'Covid' measures should continue to keep the flu away. With a ridiculousness that disturbs your breathing (it's 'Covid-19') the said Lovett wrote: 'With widespread social distancing and mask-wearing measures in place throughout the UK, the usual routes of transmission for influenza have been blocked.' He had absolutely no evidence to support that statement, but look at the consequences of him acknowledging the obvious. With flu not disappearing at all and only being relabelled 'Covid-19' he would have to contemplate that 'Covid' was a hoax on a scale that is hard to imagine. You need guts and commitment to truth to even go there and that's clearly something Samuel Lovett does not have in abundance. He would never have got it through the editors anyway.

Tens of thousands die in the United States alone every winter from flu including many with pneumonia complications. CDC figures record *45 million* Americans diagnosed with flu in 2017-2018 of which 61,000 died and some reports claim 80,000. Where was the same hysteria then that we have seen with 'Covid-19'? Some 250,000 Americans are admitted to hospital with pneumonia every year with about 50,000 cases proving fatal. About 65 million suffer respiratory disease every year and three million deaths makes this the third biggest cause of death worldwide. You only have to redesignate a portion of all these people 'Covid-19' and you have an instant global pandemic or the *appearance* of one. Why would doctors do this? They are told to do this and all but a few dare not refuse those who must be obeyed. Doctors in general are not researching their own

knowledge and instead take it direct and unquestioned from the authorities that own them and their careers. The authorities say they must now diagnose these symptoms 'Covid-19' and not flu, or whatever, and they do it. Dark suits say put 'Covid-19' on death certificates no matter what the cause of death and the doctors do it. Renegade Minds don't fall for the illusion that doctors and medical staff are all highly-intelligent, highly-principled, seekers of medical truth. *Some are*, but not the majority. They are repeaters, gofers, and yes sir, no sir, purveyors of what the system demands they purvey. The 'Covid' con is not merely confined to diseases of the lungs. Instructions to doctors to put 'Covid-19' on death certificates for anyone dying of *anything* within 28 days (or much more) of a positive test not testing for the 'virus' opened the floodgates. The term dying *with* 'Covid' and not *of* 'Covid' was coined to cover the truth. Whether it was a *with* or an *of* they were all added to the death numbers attributed to the 'deadly virus' compiled by national governments and globally by the Gates-funded Johns Hopkins operation in the United States that was so involved in those 'pandemic' simulations. Fraudulent deaths were added to the ever-growing list of fraudulent 'cases' from false positives from a false test. No wonder Professor Walter Ricciardi, scientific advisor to the Italian minister of health, said after the Lombardy hysteria had done its job that 'Covid' death rates were due to Italy having the second oldest population in the world and to *how hospitals record deaths*:

The way in which we code deaths in our country is very generous in the sense that all the people who die in hospitals with the coronavirus are deemed to be dying of the coronavirus. On re-evaluation by the National Institute of Health, only 12 per cent of death certificates have shown a direct causality from coronavirus, while 88 per cent of patients who have died have at least one pre-morbidity – many had two or three.

This is extraordinary enough when you consider the propaganda campaign to use Italy to terrify the world, but how can they even say twelve percent were genuine when the 'virus' has not been shown to exist, its 'code' is a computer program, and diagnosis comes from a test not testing for it? As in China, and soon the world, 'Covid-19' in

Italy was a redesignation of diagnosis. Lies and corruption were to become the real 'pandemic' fuelled by a pathetically-compliant medical system taking its orders from the tiny few at the top of their national hierarchy who answered to the World Health Organization which answers to Gates and the Cult. Doctors were told – ordered – to diagnose a particular set of symptoms 'Covid-19' and put that on the death certificate for any cause of death if the patient had tested positive with a test not testing for the virus or had 'Covid' symptoms like the flu. The United States even introduced big financial incentives to manipulate the figures with hospitals receiving £4,600 from the Medicare system for diagnosing someone with regular pneumonia, \$13,000 if they made the diagnosis from the same symptoms 'Covid-19' pneumonia, and \$39,000 if they put a 'Covid' diagnosed patient on a ventilator that would almost certainly kill them. A few – painfully and pathetically few – medical whistleblowers revealed (before Cult-owned YouTube deleted their videos) that they had been instructed to 'let the patient crash' and put them straight on a ventilator instead of going through a series of far less intrusive and dangerous methods as they would have done before the pandemic hoax began and the financial incentives kicked in. We are talking cold-blooded murder given that ventilators are so damaging to respiratory systems they are usually the last step before heaven awaits. Renegade Minds never fall for the belief that people in white coats are all angels of mercy and cannot be full-on psychopaths. I have explained in detail in *The Answer* how what I am describing here played out across the world coordinated by the World Health Organization through the medical hierarchies in almost every country.

Medical scientist calls it

Information about the non-existence of the 'virus' began to emerge for me in late March, 2020, and mushroomed after that. I was sent an email by Sir Julian Rose, a writer, researcher, and organic farming promotor, from a medical scientist friend of his in the United States. Even at that early stage in March the scientist was able to explain

how the 'Covid' hoax was being manipulated. He said there were no reliable tests for a specific 'Covid-19 virus' and nor were there any reliable agencies or media outlets for reporting numbers of actual 'Covid-19' cases. We have seen in the long period since then that he was absolutely right. 'Every action and reaction to Covid-19 is based on totally flawed data and we simply cannot make accurate assessments,' he said. Most people diagnosed with 'Covid-19' were showing nothing more than cold and flu-like symptoms 'because most coronavirus strains *are* nothing more than cold/flu-like symptoms'. We had farcical situations like an 84-year-old German man testing positive for 'Covid-19' and his nursing home ordered to quarantine only for him to be found to have a common cold. The scientist described back then why PCR tests and what he called the 'Mickey Mouse test kits' were useless for what they were claimed to be identifying. 'The idea these kits can isolate a specific virus like Covid-19 is nonsense,' he said. Significantly, he pointed out that 'if you want to create a totally false panic about a totally false pandemic – pick a coronavirus'. This is exactly what the Cult-owned Gates, World Economic Forum and Johns Hopkins University did with their Event 201 'simulation' followed by their real-life simulation called the 'pandemic'. The scientist said that all you had to do was select the sickest of people with respiratory-type diseases in a single location – 'say Wuhan' – and administer PCR tests to them. You can then claim that anyone showing 'viral sequences' similar to a coronavirus 'which will inevitably be quite a few' is suffering from a 'new' disease:

Since you already selected the sickest flu cases a fairly high proportion of your sample will go on to die. You can then say this 'new' virus has a CFR [case fatality rate] higher than the flu and use this to infuse more concern and do more tests which will of course produce more 'cases', which expands the testing, which produces yet more 'cases' and so on and so on. Before long you have your 'pandemic', and all you have done is use a simple test kit trick to convert the worst flu and pneumonia cases into something new that doesn't ACTUALLY EXIST [my emphasis].

He said that you then 'just run the same scam in other countries' and make sure to keep the fear message running high 'so that people

will feel panicky and less able to think critically'. The only problem to overcome was the fact *there is no* actual new deadly pathogen and only regular sick people. This meant that deaths from the 'new deadly pathogen' were going to be way too low for a real new deadly virus pandemic, but he said this could be overcome in the following ways – all of which would go on to happen:

1. You can claim this is just the beginning and more deaths are imminent [you underpin this with fantasy 'computer projections']. Use this as an excuse to quarantine everyone and then claim the quarantine prevented the expected millions of dead.
2. You can [say that people] 'minimizing' the dangers are irresponsible and bully them into not talking about numbers.
3. You can talk crap about made up numbers hoping to blind people with pseudoscience.
4. You can start testing well people (who, of course, will also likely have shreds of coronavirus [RNA] in them) and thus inflate your 'case figures' with 'asymptomatic carriers' (you will of course have to spin that to sound deadly even though any virologist knows the more symptom-less cases you have the less deadly is your pathogen).

The scientist said that if you take these simple steps 'you can have your own entirely manufactured pandemic up and running in weeks'. His analysis made so early in the hoax was brilliantly prophetic of what would actually unfold. Pulling all the information together in these recent chapters we have this is simple 1, 2, 3, of how you can delude virtually the entire human population into believing in a 'virus' that doesn't exist:

- A 'Covid case' is someone who tests positive with a test not testing for the 'virus'.
- A 'Covid death' is someone who dies of *any cause* within 28 days (or much longer) of testing positive with a test not testing for the 'virus'.
- Asymptomatic means there is nothing wrong with you, but they claim you can pass on what you don't have to justify locking

down (quarantining) healthy people in totality.

The foundations of the hoax are that simple. A study involving ten million people in Wuhan, published in November, 2020, demolished the whole lie about those without symptoms passing on the 'virus'. They found '300 asymptomatic cases' and traced their contacts to find that not one of them was detected with the 'virus'.

'Asymptomatic' patients and their contacts were isolated for no less than two weeks and nothing changed. I know it's all crap, but if you are going to claim that those without symptoms can transmit 'the virus' then you must produce evidence for that and they never have. Even World Health Organization official Dr Maria Van Kerkhove, head of the emerging diseases and zoonosis unit, said as early as June, 2020, that she doubted the validity of asymptomatic transmission. She said that 'from the data we have, it still seems to be rare that an asymptomatic person actually transmits onward to a secondary individual' and by 'rare' she meant that she couldn't cite any case of asymptomatic transmission.

The Ferguson factor

The problem for the Cult as it headed into March, 2020, when the script had lockdown due to start, was that despite all the manipulation of the case and death figures they still did not have enough people alleged to have died from 'Covid' to justify mass house arrest. This was overcome in the way the scientist described: 'You can claim this is just the beginning and more deaths are imminent ... Use this as an excuse to quarantine everyone and then claim the quarantine prevented the expected millions of dead.' Enter one Professor Neil Ferguson, the Gates-funded 'epidemiologist' at the Gates-funded Imperial College in London. Ferguson is Britain's Christian Drosten in that he has a dire record of predicting health outcomes, but is still called upon to advise government on the next health outcome when another 'crisis' comes along. This may seem to be a strange and ridiculous thing to do. Why would you keep turning for policy guidance to people who have a history of being

monumentally wrong? Ah, but it makes sense from the Cult point of view. These 'experts' keep on producing predictions that suit the Cult agenda for societal transformation and so it was with Neil Ferguson as he revealed his horrific (and clearly insane) computer model predictions that allowed lockdowns to be imposed in Britain, the United States and many other countries. Ferguson does not have even an A-level in biology and would appear to have no formal training in computer modelling, medicine or epidemiology, according to Derek Winton, an MSc in Computational Intelligence. He wrote an article somewhat aghast at what Ferguson did which included taking no account of respiratory disease 'seasonality' which means it is far worse in the winter months. Who would have thought that respiratory disease could be worse in the winter? Well, certainly not Ferguson.

The massively China-connected Imperial College and its bizarre professor provided the excuse for the long-incubated Chinese model of human control to travel westward at lightning speed. Imperial College confirms on its website that it collaborates with the Chinese Research Institute; publishes more than 600 research papers every year with Chinese research institutions; has 225 Chinese staff; 2,600 Chinese students – the biggest international group; 7,000 former students living in China which is the largest group outside the UK; and was selected for a tour by China's President Xi Jinping during his state visit to the UK in 2015. The college takes major donations from China and describes itself as the UK's number one university collaborator with Chinese research institutions. The China communist/fascist government did not appear phased by the woeful predictions of Ferguson and Imperial when during the lockdown that Ferguson induced the college signed a five-year collaboration deal with China tech giant Huawei that will have Huawei's indoor 5G network equipment installed at the college's West London tech campus along with an 'AI cloud platform'. The deal includes Chinese sponsorship of Imperial's Venture Catalyst entrepreneurship competition. Imperial is an example of the enormous influence the Chinese government has within British and North American

universities and research centres – and further afield. Up to 200 academics from more than a dozen UK universities are being investigated on suspicion of ‘unintentionally’ helping the Chinese government build weapons of mass destruction by ‘transferring world-leading research in advanced military technology such as aircraft, missile designs and cyberweapons’. Similar scandals have broken in the United States, but it’s all a coincidence. Imperial College serves the agenda in many other ways including the promotion of every aspect of the United Nations Agenda 21/2030 (the Great Reset) and produced computer models to show that human-caused ‘climate change’ is happening when in the real world it isn’t. Imperial College is driving the climate agenda as it drives the ‘Covid’ agenda (both Cult hoaxes) while Patrick Vallance, the UK government’s Chief Scientific Adviser on ‘Covid’, was named Chief Scientific Adviser to the UN ‘climate change’ conference known as COP26 hosted by the government in Glasgow, Scotland. ‘Covid’ and ‘climate’ are fundamentally connected.

Professor Woeful

From Imperial’s bosom came Neil Ferguson still advising government despite his previous disasters and it was announced early on that he and other key people like UK Chief Medical Adviser Chris Whitty had caught the ‘virus’ as the propaganda story was being sold. Somehow they managed to survive and we had Prime Minister Boris Johnson admitted to hospital with what was said to be a severe version of the ‘virus’ in this same period. His whole policy and demeanour changed when he returned to Downing Street. It’s a small world with these government advisors – especially in their communal connections to Gates – and Ferguson had partnered with Whitty to write a paper called ‘Infectious disease: Tough choices to reduce Ebola transmission’ which involved another scare-story that didn’t happen. Ferguson’s ‘models’ predicted that up to 150,000 could die from ‘mad cow disease’, or BSE, and its version in sheep if it was transmitted to humans. BSE was not transmitted and instead triggered by an organophosphate pesticide used to treat a pest on

cows. Fewer than 200 deaths followed from the human form. Models by Ferguson and his fellow incompetents led to the unnecessary culling of millions of pigs, cattle and sheep in the foot and mouth outbreak in 2001 which destroyed the lives and livelihoods of farmers and their families who had often spent decades building their herds and flocks. Vast numbers of these animals did not have foot and mouth and had no contact with the infection. Another 'expert' behind the cull was Professor Roy Anderson, a computer modeller at Imperial College specialising in the epidemiology of *human*, not animal, disease. Anderson has served on the Bill and Melinda Gates Grand Challenges in Global Health advisory board and chairs another Gates-funded organisation. Gates is everywhere.

In a precursor to the 'Covid' script Ferguson backed closing schools 'for prolonged periods' over the swine flu 'pandemic' in 2009 and said it would affect a third of the world population if it continued to spread at the speed he claimed to be happening. His mates at Imperial College said much the same and a news report said: 'One of the authors, the epidemiologist and disease modeller Neil Ferguson, who sits on the World Health Organisation's emergency committee for the outbreak, said the virus had "full pandemic potential".' Professor Liam Donaldson, the Chris Whitty of his day as Chief Medical Officer, said the worst case could see 30 percent of the British people infected by swine flu with 65,000 dying. Ferguson and Donaldson were indeed proved correct when at the end of the year the number of deaths attributed to swine flu was 392. The term 'expert' is rather liberally applied unfortunately, not least to complete idiots. Swine flu 'projections' were great for GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) as millions rolled in for its Pandemrix influenza vaccine which led to brain damage with children most affected. The British government (taxpayers) paid out more than £60 million in compensation after GSK was given immunity from prosecution. Yet another 'Covid' déjà vu. Swine flu was supposed to have broken out in Mexico, but Dr Wolfgang Wodarg, a German doctor, former member of parliament and critic of the 'Covid' hoax, observed 'the spread of swine flu' in Mexico City at the time. He

said: 'What we experienced in Mexico City was a very mild flu which did not kill more than usual – which killed even fewer people than usual.' Hying the fear against all the facts is not unique to 'Covid' and has happened many times before. Ferguson is reported to have over-estimated the projected death toll of bird flu (H5N1) by some three million-fold, but bird flu vaccine makers again made a killing from the scare. This is some of the background to the Neil Ferguson who produced the perfectly-timed computer models in early 2020 predicting that half a million people would die in Britain without draconian lockdown and 2.2 million in the United States. Politicians panicked, people panicked, and lockdowns of alleged short duration were instigated to 'flatten the curve' of cases gleaned from a test not testing for the 'virus'. I said at the time that the public could forget the 'short duration' bit. This was an agenda to destroy the livelihoods of the population and force them into mass control through dependency and there was going to be nothing 'short' about it. American researcher Daniel Horowitz described the consequences of the 'models' spewed out by Gates-funded Ferguson and Imperial College:

What led our government and the governments of many other countries into panic was a single Imperial College of UK study, funded by global warming activists, that predicted 2.2 million deaths if we didn't lock down the country. In addition, the reported 8-9% death rate in Italy scared us into thinking there was some other mutation of this virus that they got, which might have come here.

Together with the fact that we were finally testing and had the ability to actually report new cases, we thought we were headed for a death spiral. But again ... we can't flatten a curve if we don't know when the curve started.

How about it *never* started?

Giving them what they want

An investigation by German news outlet *Welt Am Sonntag* (*World on Sunday*) revealed how in March, 2020, the German government gathered together 'leading scientists from several research institutes and universities' and 'together, they were to produce a [modelling]

paper that would serve as legitimization for further tough political measures'. The Cult agenda was justified by computer modelling not based on evidence or reality; it was specifically constructed to justify the Cult demand for lockdowns all over the world to destroy the independent livelihoods of the global population. All these modellers and everyone responsible for the 'Covid' hoax have a date with a trial like those in Nuremberg after World War Two when Nazis faced the consequences of their war crimes. These corrupt-beyond-belief 'modellers' wrote the paper according to government instructions and it said that that if lockdown measures were lifted then up to one million Germans would die from 'Covid-19' adding that some would die 'agonizingly at home, gasping for breath' unable to be treated by hospitals that couldn't cope. All lies. No matter – it gave the Cult all that it wanted. What did long-time government 'modeller' Neil Ferguson say? If the UK and the United States didn't lockdown half a million would die in Britain and 2.2 million Americans. Anyone see a theme here? 'Modellers' are such a crucial part of the lockdown strategy that we should look into their background and follow the money. Researcher Rosemary Frei produced an excellent article headlined 'The Modelling-paper Mafiosi'. She highlights a guy called John Edmunds, a British epidemiologist, and professor in the Faculty of Epidemiology and Population Health at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine. He studied at Imperial College. Edmunds is a member of government 'Covid' advisory bodies which have been dictating policy, the New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group (NERVTAG) and the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE).

Ferguson, another member of NERVTAG and SAGE, led the way with the original 'virus' and Edmunds has followed in the 'variant' stage and especially the so-called UK or Kent variant known as the 'Variant of Concern' (VOC) B.1.1.7. He said in a co-written report for the Centre for Mathematical modelling of Infectious Diseases at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, with input from the Centre's 'Covid-19' Working Group, that there was 'a realistic

possibility that VOC B.1.1.7 is associated with an increased risk of death compared to non-VOC viruses'. Fear, fear, fear, get the vaccine, fear, fear, fear, get the vaccine. Rosemary Frei reveals that almost all the paper's authors and members of the modelling centre's 'Covid-19' Working Group receive funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and/or the associated Gates-funded Wellcome Trust. The paper was published by e-journal *Medrx* *xiv* which only publishes papers not peer-reviewed and the journal was established by an organisation headed by Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg and his missus. What a small world it is. Frei discovered that Edmunds is on the Scientific Advisory Board of the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) which was established by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Klaus Schwab's Davos World Economic Forum and Big Pharma giant Wellcome. CEPI was 'launched in Davos [in 2017] to develop vaccines to stop future epidemics', according to its website. 'Our mission is to accelerate the development of vaccines against emerging infectious diseases and enable equitable access to these vaccines for people during outbreaks.' What kind people they are. Rosemary Frei reveals that Public Health England (PHE) director Susan Hopkins is an author of her organisation's non-peer-reviewed reports on 'new variants'. Hopkins is a professor of infectious diseases at London's Imperial College which is gifted tens of millions of dollars a year by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Gates-funded modelling disaster Neil Ferguson also co-authors Public Health England reports and he spoke in December, 2020, about the potential danger of the B.1.1.7. 'UK variant' promoted by Gates-funded modeller John Edmunds. When I come to the 'Covid vaccines' the 'new variants' will be shown for what they are – bollocks.

Connections, connections

All these people and modellers are lockdown-obsessed or, put another way, they demand what the Cult demands. Edmunds said in January, 2021, that to ease lockdowns too soon would be a disaster and they had to 'vaccinate much, much, much more widely than the

elderly'. Rosemary Frei highlights that Edmunds is married to Jeanne Pimenta who is described in a LinkedIn profile as director of epidemiology at GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) and she held shares in the company. Patrick Vallance, co-chair of SAGE and the government's Chief Scientific Adviser, is a former executive of GSK and has a deferred bonus of shares in the company worth £600,000. GSK has serious business connections with Bill Gates and is collaborating with mRNA-'vaccine' company CureVac to make 'vaccines' for the new variants that Edmunds is talking about. GSK is planning a 'Covid vaccine' with drug giant Sanofi. Puppets Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced in the spring of 2021 that up to 60 million vaccine doses were to be made at the GSK facility at Barnard Castle in the English North East. Barnard Castle, with a population of just 6,000, was famously visited in breach of lockdown rules in April, 2020, by Johnson aide Dominic Cummings who said that he drove there 'to test his eyesight' before driving back to London. Cummings would be better advised to test his integrity – not that it would take long. The GSK facility had nothing to do with his visit then although I'm sure Patrick Vallance would have been happy to arrange an introduction and some tea and biscuits. Ruthless psychopath Gates has made yet another fortune from vaccines in collaboration with Big Pharma companies and gushes at the phenomenal profits to be made from vaccines – more than a 20-to-1 return as he told one interviewer. Gates also tweeted in December, 2019, with the foreknowledge of what was coming: 'What's next for our foundation? I'm particularly excited about what the next year could mean for one of the best buys in global health: vaccines.'

Modeller John Edmunds is a big promoter of vaccines as all these people appear to be. He's the dean of the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine's Faculty of Epidemiology and Population Health which is primarily funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Gates-established and funded GAVI vaccine alliance which is the Gates vehicle to vaccinate the world. The organisation Doctors Without Borders has described GAVI as being 'aimed more at supporting drug-industry desires to promote new

products than at finding the most efficient and sustainable means for fighting the diseases of poverty'. But then that's why the psychopath Gates created it. John Edmunds said in a video that the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine is involved in every aspect of vaccine development including large-scale clinical trials. He contends that mathematical modelling can show that vaccines protect individuals and society. That's on the basis of shit in and shit out, I take it. Edmunds serves on the UK Vaccine Network as does Ferguson and the government's foremost 'Covid' adviser, the grim-faced, dark-eyed Chris Whitty. The Vaccine Network says it works 'to support the government to identify and shortlist targeted investment opportunities for the most promising vaccines and vaccine technologies that will help combat infectious diseases with epidemic potential, and to address structural issues related to the UK's broader vaccine infrastructure'. Ferguson is acting Director of the Imperial College Vaccine Impact Modelling Consortium which has funding from the Bill and Melina Gates Foundation and the Gates-created GAVI 'vaccine alliance'. Anyone wonder why these characters see vaccines as the answer to every problem? Ferguson is wildly enthusiastic in his support for GAVI's campaign to vaccinate children en masse in poor countries. You would expect someone like Gates who has constantly talked about the need to reduce the population to want to fund vaccines to keep more people alive. I'm sure that's why he does it. The John Edmunds London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) has a Vaccines Manufacturing Innovation Centre which develops, tests and commercialises vaccines. Rosemary Frei writes:

The vaccines centre also performs affiliated activities like combating 'vaccine hesitancy'. The latter includes the Vaccine Confidence Project. The project's stated purpose is, among other things, 'to provide analysis and guidance for early response and engagement with the public to ensure sustained confidence in vaccines and immunisation'. The Vaccine Confidence Project's director is LSHTM professor Heidi Larson. For more than a decade she's been researching how to combat vaccine hesitancy.

How the bloody hell can blokes like John Edmunds and Neil Ferguson with those connections and financial ties model 'virus' case

and death projections for the government and especially in a way that gives their paymasters like Gates exactly what they want? It's insane, but this is what you find throughout the world.

'Covid' is not dangerous, oops, wait, yes it is

Only days before Ferguson's nightmare scenario made Jackboot Johnson take Britain into a China-style lockdown to save us from a deadly 'virus' the UK government website gov.uk was reporting something very different to Ferguson on a page of official government guidance for 'high consequence infectious diseases (HCID)'. It said this about 'Covid-19':

As of 19 March 2020, COVID-19 is no longer considered to be a high consequence infectious diseases (HCID) in the UK [my emphasis]. The 4 nations public health HCID group made an interim recommendation in January 2020 to classify COVID-19 as an HCID. This was based on consideration of the UK HCID criteria about the virus and the disease with information available during the early stages of the outbreak.

Now that more is known about COVID-19, the public health bodies in the UK have reviewed the most up to date information about COVID-19 against the UK HCID criteria. They have determined that several features have now changed; in particular, more information is available about mortality rates (low overall), and there is now greater clinical awareness and a specific and sensitive laboratory test, the availability of which continues to increase. The Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens (ACDP) is also of the opinion that COVID-19 should no longer be classified as an HCID.

Soon after the government had been exposed for downgrading the risk they upgraded it again and everyone was back to singing from the same Cult hymn book. Ferguson and his fellow Gates clones indicated that lockdowns and restrictions would have to continue until a Gates-funded vaccine was developed. Gates said the same because Ferguson and his like were repeating the Gates script which is the Cult script. 'Flatten the curve' became an ongoing nightmare of continuing lockdowns with periods in between of severe restrictions in pursuit of destroying independent incomes and had nothing to do with protecting health about which the Cult gives not a shit. Why wouldn't Ferguson be pushing a vaccine 'solution' when he's owned by vaccine-obsessive Gates who makes a fortune from them and

when Ferguson heads the Vaccine Impact Modelling Consortium at Imperial College funded by the Gates Foundation and GAVI, the 'vaccine alliance', created by Gates as his personal vaccine promotion operation? To compound the human catastrophe that Ferguson's 'models' did so much to create he was later exposed for breaking his own lockdown rules by having sexual liaisons with his married girlfriend Antonia Staats at his home while she was living at another location with her husband and children. Staats was a 'climate' activist and senior campaigner at the Soros-funded Avaaz which I wouldn't trust to tell me that grass is green. Ferguson had to resign as a government advisor over this hypocrisy in May, 2020, but after a period of quiet he was back being quoted by the ridiculous media on the need for more lockdowns and a vaccine rollout. Other government-advising 'scientists' from Imperial College held the fort in his absence and said lockdown could be indefinite until a vaccine was found. The Cult script was being sung by the payrolled choir. I said there was no intention of going back to 'normal' when the 'vaccine' came because the 'vaccine' is part of a very different agenda that I will discuss in Human 2.0. Why would the Cult want to let the world go back to normal when destroying that normal forever was the whole point of what was happening? House arrest, closing businesses and schools through lockdown, (un)social distancing and masks all followed the Ferguson fantasy models. Again as I predicted (these people are so predictable) when the 'vaccine' arrived we were told that house arrest, lockdown, (un)social distancing and masks would still have to continue. I will deal with the masks in the next chapter because they are of fundamental importance.

Where's the 'pandemic'?

Any mildly in-depth assessment of the figures revealed what was really going on. Cult-funded and controlled organisations still have genuine people working within them such is the number involved. So it is with Genevieve Briand, assistant program director of the Applied Economics master's degree program at Johns Hopkins

University. She analysed the impact that 'Covid-19' had on deaths from *all* causes in the United States using official data from the CDC for the period from early February to early September, 2020. She found that allegedly 'Covid' *related*-deaths exceeded those from heart disease which she found strange with heart disease always the biggest cause of fatalities. Her research became even more significant when she noted the sudden decline in 2020 of *all* non-'Covid' deaths: 'This trend is completely contrary to the pattern observed in all previous years ... the total decrease in deaths by other causes almost exactly equals the increase in deaths by Covid-19.' This was such a game, set and match in terms of what was happening that Johns Hopkins University deleted the article on the grounds that it 'was being used to support false and dangerous inaccuracies about the impact of the pandemic'. No – because it exposed the scam from official CDC figures and this was confirmed when those figures were published in January, 2021. Here we can see the effect of people dying from heart attacks, cancer, road accidents and gunshot wounds – *anything* – having 'Covid-19' on the death certificate along with those diagnosed from 'symptoms' who had even not tested positive with a test not testing for the 'virus'. I am not kidding with the gunshot wounds, by the way. Brenda Bock, coroner in Grand County, Colorado, revealed that two gunshot victims tested positive for the 'virus' within the previous 30 days and were therefore classified as 'Covid deaths'. Bock said: 'These two people had tested positive for Covid, but that's not what killed them. A gunshot wound is what killed them.' She said she had not even finished her investigation when the state listed the gunshot victims as deaths due to the 'virus'. The death and case figures for 'Covid-19' are an absolute joke and yet they are repeated like parrots by the media, politicians and alleged medical 'experts'. The official Cult narrative is the only show in town.

Genevieve Briand found that deaths from all causes were not exceptional in 2020 compared with previous years and a Spanish magazine published figures that said the same about Spain which was a 'Covid' propaganda hotspot at one point. *Discovery Salud*, a

health and medicine magazine, quoted government figures which showed how 17,000 *fewer* people died in Spain in 2020 than in 2019 and more than 26,000 fewer than in 2018. The age-standardised mortality rate for England and Wales when age distribution is taken into account was significantly lower in 2020 than the 1970s, 80s and 90s, and was only the ninth highest since 2000. Where is the 'pandemic'?

Post mortems and autopsies virtually disappeared for 'Covid' deaths amid claims that 'virus-infected' bodily fluids posed a risk to those carrying out the autopsy. This was rejected by renowned German pathologist and forensic doctor Klaus Püschel who said that he and his staff had by then done 150 autopsies on 'Covid' patients with no problems at all. He said they were needed to know why some 'Covid' patients suffered blood clots and not severe respiratory infections. The 'virus' is, after all, called SARS or 'severe acute respiratory syndrome'. I highlighted in the spring of 2020 this phenomenon and quoted New York intensive care doctor Cameron Kyle-Sidell who posted a soon deleted YouTube video to say that they had been told to prepare to treat an infectious disease called 'Covid-19', but that was not what they were dealing with. Instead he likened the lung condition of the most severely ill patients to what you would expect with cabin depressurisation in a plane at 30,000 feet or someone dropped on the top of Everest without oxygen or acclimatisation. I have never said this is not happening to a small minority of alleged 'Covid' patients – I am saying this is not caused by a phantom 'contagious virus'. Indeed Kyle-Sidell said that 'Covid-19' was not the disease they were told was coming their way. 'We are operating under a medical paradigm that is untrue,' he said, and he believed they were treating the wrong disease: 'These people are being slowly starved of oxygen.' Patients would take off their oxygen masks in a state of fear and stress and while they were blue in the face on the brink of death. They did not look like patients dying of pneumonia. You can see why they don't want autopsies when their virus doesn't exist and there is another condition in some people that they don't wish to be uncovered. I should add here that

the 5G system of millimetre waves was being rapidly introduced around the world in 2020 and even more so now as they fire 5G at the Earth from satellites. At 60 gigahertz within the 5G range that frequency interacts with the oxygen molecule and stops people breathing in sufficient oxygen to be absorbed into the bloodstream. They are installing 5G in schools and hospitals. The world is not mad or anything. 5G can cause major changes to the lungs and blood as I detail in *The Answer* and these consequences are labelled 'Covid-19', the alleged symptoms of which can be caused by 5G and other electromagnetic frequencies as cells respond to radiation poisoning.

The 'Covid death' scam

Dr Scott Jensen, a Minnesota state senator and medical doctor, exposed 'Covid' Medicare payment incentives to hospitals and death certificate manipulation. He said he was sent a seven-page document by the US Department of Health 'coaching' him on how to fill out death certificates which had never happened before. The document said that he didn't need to have a laboratory test for 'Covid-19' to put that on the death certificate and that shocked him when death certificates are supposed to be about facts. Jensen described how doctors had been 'encouraged, if not pressured' to make a diagnosis of 'Covid-19' if they thought it was probable or '*presumed*'. No positive test was necessary – not that this would have mattered anyway. He said doctors were told to diagnose 'Covid' by symptoms when these were the same as colds, allergies, other respiratory problems, and certainly with influenza which 'disappeared' in the 'Covid' era. A common sniffle was enough to get the dreaded verdict. Ontario authorities decreed that a single care home resident with *one* symptom from a long list must lead to the isolation of the entire home. Other courageous doctors like Jensen made the same point about death figure manipulation and how deaths by other causes were falling while 'Covid-19 deaths' were rising at the same rate due to re-diagnosis. Their videos rarely survive long on YouTube with its Cult-supporting algorithms courtesy of CEO Susan Wojcicki and her bosses at Google. Figure-tampering was so glaring

and ubiquitous that even officials were letting it slip or outright saying it. UK chief scientific adviser Patrick Vallance said on one occasion that 'Covid' on the death certificate doesn't mean 'Covid' was the cause of death (so why the hell is it there?) and we had the rare sight of a BBC reporter telling the truth when she said: 'Someone could be successfully treated for Covid, in say April, discharged, and then in June, get run over by a bus and die ... That person would still be counted as a Covid death in England.' Yet the BBC and the rest of the world media went on repeating the case and death figures as if they were real. Illinois Public Health Director Dr Ngozi Ezike revealed the deceit while her bosses must have been clenching their buttocks:

If you were in a hospice and given a few weeks to live and you were then found to have Covid that would be counted as a Covid death. [There might be] a clear alternate cause, but it is still listed as a Covid death. So everyone listed as a Covid death doesn't mean that was the cause of the death, but that they had Covid at the time of death.

Yes, a 'Covid virus' never shown to exist and tested for with a test not testing for the 'virus'. In the first period of the pandemic hoax through the spring of 2020 the process began of designating almost everything a 'Covid' death and this has continued ever since. I sat in a restaurant one night listening to a loud conversation on the next table where a family was discussing in bewilderment how a relative who had no symptoms of 'Covid', and had died of a long-term problem, could have been diagnosed a death by the 'virus'. I could understand their bewilderment. If they read this book they will know why this medical fraud has been perpetrated the world over.

Some media truth shock

The media ignored the evidence of death certificate fraud until eventually one columnist did speak out when she saw it first-hand. Bel Mooney is a long-time national newspaper journalist in Britain currently working for the *Daily Mail*. Her article on February 19th, 2021, carried this headline: 'My dad Ted passed three Covid tests

and died of a chronic illness yet he's officially one of Britain's 120,000 victims of the virus and is far from alone ... so how many more are there?' She told how her 99-year-old father was in a care home with a long-standing chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and vascular dementia. Maybe, but he was still aware enough to tell her from the start that there was no 'virus' and he refused the 'vaccine' for that reason. His death was not unexpected given his chronic health problems and Mooney said she was shocked to find that 'Covid-19' was declared the cause of death on his death certificate. She said this was a 'bizarre and unacceptable untruth' for a man with long-time health problems who had tested negative twice at the home for the 'virus'. I was also shocked by this story although not by what she said. I had been highlighting the death certificate manipulation for ten months. It was the confirmation that a professional full-time journalist only realised this was going on when it affected her directly and neither did she know that whether her dad tested positive or negative was irrelevant with the test not testing for the 'virus'. Where had she been? She said she did not believe in 'conspiracy theories' without knowing I'm sure that this and 'conspiracy theorists' were terms put into widespread circulation by the CIA in the 1960s to discredit those who did not accept the ridiculous official story of the Kennedy assassination. A blanket statement of 'I don't believe in conspiracy theories' is always bizarre. The dictionary definition of the term alone means the world is drowning in conspiracies. What she said was even more daft when her dad had just been affected by the 'Covid' conspiracy. Why else does she think that 'Covid-19' was going on the death certificates of people who died of something else?

To be fair once she saw from personal experience what was happening she didn't mince words. Mooney was called by the care home on the morning of February 9th to be told her father had died in his sleep. When she asked for the official cause of death what came back was 'Covid-19'. Mooney challenged this and was told there had been deaths from Covid on the dementia floor (confirmed by a test not testing for the 'virus') so they considered it 'reasonable

to assume'. 'But doctor,' Mooney rightly protested, 'an assumption isn't a diagnosis.' She said she didn't blame the perfectly decent and sympathetic doctor – 'he was just doing his job'. Sorry, but that's *bullshit*. He wasn't doing his job at all. He was putting a false cause of death on the death certificate and that is a criminal offence for which he should be brought to account and the same with the millions of doctors worldwide who have done the same. They were not doing their job they were following orders and that must not wash at new Nuremberg trials any more than it did at the first ones. Mooney's doctor was 'assuming' (presuming) as he was told to, but 'just following orders' makes no difference to his actions. A doctor's job is to serve the patient and the truth, not follow orders, but that's what they have done all over the world and played a central part in making the 'Covid' hoax possible with all its catastrophic consequences for humanity. Shame on them and they must answer for their actions. Mooney said her disquiet worsened when she registered her father's death by telephone and was told by the registrar there had been very many other cases like hers where 'the deceased' had not tested positive for 'Covid' yet it was recorded as the cause of death. The test may not matter, but those involved at their level *think* it matters and it shows a callous disregard for accurate diagnosis. The pressure to do this is coming from the top of the national 'health' pyramids which in turn obey the World Health Organization which obeys Gates and the Cult. Mooney said the registrar agreed that this must distort the national figures adding that 'the strangest thing is that every winter we record countless deaths from flu, and this winter there have been none. Not one!' She asked if the registrar thought deaths from flu were being misdiagnosed and lumped together with 'Covid' deaths. The answer was a 'puzzled yes'. Mooney said that the funeral director said the same about 'Covid' deaths which had nothing to do with 'Covid'. They had lost count of the number of families upset by this and other funeral companies in different countries have had the same experience. Mooney wrote:

The nightly shroud-waving and shocking close-ups of pain imposed on us by the TV news bewildered and terrified the population into eager compliance with lockdowns. We were invited to 'save the NHS' and to grieve for strangers – the real-life loved ones behind those shocking death counts. Why would the public imagine what I now fear, namely that the way Covid-19 death statistics are compiled might make the numbers seem greater than they are?

Oh, just a little bit – like 100 percent.

Do the maths

Mooney asked why a country would wish to skew its mortality figures by wrongly certifying deaths? What had been going on? Well, if you don't believe in conspiracies you will never find the answer which is that *it's a conspiracy*. She did, however, describe what she had discovered as a 'national scandal'. In reality it's a global scandal and happening everywhere. Pillars of this conspiracy were all put into place before the button was pressed with the Drosten PCR protocol and high amplifications to produce the cases and death certificate changes to secure illusory 'Covid' deaths. Mooney notes that normally two doctors were needed to certify a death, with one having to know the patient, and how the rules were changed in the spring of 2020 to allow one doctor to do this. In the same period 'Covid deaths' were decreed to be all cases where Covid-19 was put on the death certificate even without a positive test or any symptoms. Mooney asked: 'How many of the 30,851 (as of January 15) care home resident deaths with Covid-19 on the certificate (32.4 per cent of all deaths so far) were based on an assumption, like that of my father? And what has that done to our national psyche?' All of them is the answer to the first question and it has devastated and dismantled the national psyche, actually the global psyche, on a colossal scale. In the UK case and death data is compiled by organisations like Public Health England (PHE) and the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Mooney highlights the insane policy of counting a death from any cause as 'Covid-19' if this happens within 28 days of a positive test (with a test not testing for the 'virus') and she points out that ONS statistics reflect deaths 'involving Covid' 'or due to Covid' which meant in practice any

death where 'Covid-19' was mentioned on the death certificate. She described the consequences of this fraud:

Most people will accept the narrative they are fed, so panicky governments here and in Europe witnessed the harsh measures enacted in totalitarian China and jumped into lockdown. Headlines about Covid deaths tolled like the knell that would bring doomsday to us all. Fear stalked our empty streets. Politicians parroted the frankly ridiculous aim of 'zero Covid' and shut down the economy, while most British people agreed that lockdown was essential and (astonishingly to me, as a patriotic Brit) even wanted more restrictions.

For what? Lies on death certificates? Never mind the grim toll of lives ruined, suicides, schools closed, rising inequality, depression, cancelled hospital treatments, cancer patients in a torture of waiting, poverty, economic devastation, loneliness, families kept apart, and so on. How many lives have been lost as a direct result of lockdown?

She said that we could join in a national chorus of shock and horror at reaching the 120,000 death toll which was surely certain to have been totally skewed all along, but what about the human cost of lockdown justified by these 'death figures'? *The British Medical Journal* had reported a 1,493 percent increase in cases of children taken to Great Ormond Street Hospital with abusive head injuries alone and then there was the effect on families:

Perhaps the most shocking thing about all this is that families have been kept apart – and obeyed the most irrational, changing rules at the whim of government – because they believed in the statistics. They succumbed to fear, which his generation rejected in that war fought for freedom. Dad (God rest his soul) would be angry. And so am I.

Another theme to watch is that in the winter months when there are more deaths from all causes they focus on 'Covid' deaths and in the summer when the British Lung Foundation says respiratory disease plummets by 80 percent they rage on about 'cases'. Either way fascism on population is always the answer.

Nazi eugenics in the 21st century

Elderly people in care homes have been isolated from their families month after lonely month with no contact with relatives and grandchildren who were banned from seeing them. We were told

that lockdown fascism was to 'protect the vulnerable' like elderly people. At the same time Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) orders were placed on their medical files so that if they needed resuscitation it wasn't done and 'Covid-19' went on their death certificates. Old people were not being 'protected' they were being culled – murdered in truth. DNR orders were being decreed for disabled and young people with learning difficulties or psychological problems. The UK Care Quality Commission, a non-departmental body of the Department of Health and Social Care, found that 34 percent of those working in health and social care were pressured into placing 'do not attempt cardiopulmonary resuscitation' orders on 'Covid' patients who suffered from disabilities and learning difficulties without involving the patient or their families in the decision. UK judges ruled that an elderly woman with dementia should have the DNA-manipulating 'Covid vaccine' against her son's wishes and that a man with severe learning difficulties should have the job despite his family's objections. Never mind that many had already died. The judiciary always supports doctors and government in fascist dictatorships. They wouldn't dare do otherwise. A horrific video was posted showing fascist officers from Los Angeles police forcibly giving the 'Covid' shot to women with special needs who were screaming that they didn't want it. The same fascists are seen giving the jab to a sleeping elderly woman in a care home. This is straight out of the Nazi playbook. Hitler's Nazis committed mass murder of the mentally ill and physically disabled throughout Germany and occupied territories in the programme that became known as Aktion T4, or just T4. Sabbatian-controlled Hitler and his grotesque crazies set out to kill those they considered useless and unnecessary. The Reich Committee for the Scientific Registering of Hereditary and Congenital Illnesses registered the births of babies identified by physicians to have 'defects'. By 1941 alone more than 5,000 children were murdered by the state and it is estimated that in total the number of innocent people killed in Aktion T4 was between 275,000 and 300,000. Parents were told their children had been sent away for 'special treatment' never to return. It is rather pathetic to see claims about plans for new extermination camps being dismissed today

when the same force behind current events did precisely that 80 years ago. Margaret Sanger was a Cult operative who used 'birth control' to sanitise her programme of eugenics. Organisations she founded became what is now Planned Parenthood. Sanger proposed that 'the whole dysgenic population would have its choice of segregation or sterilization'. These included epileptics, 'feeble-minded', and prostitutes. Sanger opposed charity because it perpetuated 'human waste'. She reveals the Cult mentality and if anyone thinks that extermination camps are a 'conspiracy theory' their naivety is touching if breathtakingly stupid.

If you don't believe that doctors can act with callous disregard for their patients it is worth considering that doctors and medical staff agreed to put government-decreed DNR orders on medical files and do nothing when resuscitation is called for. I don't know what you call such people in your house. In mine they are Nazis from the Josef Mengele School of Medicine. Phenomenal numbers of old people have died worldwide from the effects of lockdown, depression, lack of treatment, the 'vaccine' (more later) and losing the will to live. A common response at the start of the manufactured pandemic was to remove old people from hospital beds and transfer them to nursing homes. The decision would result in a mass cull of elderly people in those homes through lack of treatment – *not* 'Covid'. Care home whistleblowers have told how once the 'Covid' era began doctors would not come to their homes to treat patients and they were begging for drugs like antibiotics that often never came. The most infamous example was ordered by New York governor Andrew Cuomo, brother of a moronic CNN host, who amazingly was given an Emmy Award for his handling of the 'Covid crisis' by the ridiculous Wokers that hand them out. Just how ridiculous could be seen in February, 2021, when a Department of Justice and FBI investigation began into how thousands of old people in New York died in nursing homes after being discharged from hospital to make way for 'Covid' patients on Cuomo's say-so – and how he and his staff covered up these facts. This couldn't have happened to a nicer psychopath. Even then there was a 'Covid' spin. Reports said that

thousands of old people who tested positive for 'Covid' in hospital were transferred to nursing homes to both die of 'Covid' and transmit it to others. No – they were in hospital because they were ill and the fact that they tested positive with a test not testing for the 'virus' is irrelevant. They were ill often with respiratory diseases ubiquitous in old people near the end of their lives. Their transfer out of hospital meant that their treatment stopped and many would go on to die.

They're old. Who gives a damn?

I have exposed in the books for decades the Cult plan to cull the world's old people and even to introduce at some point what they call a 'demise pill' which at a certain age everyone would take and be out of here by law. In March, 2021, Spain legalised euthanasia and assisted suicide following the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and Canada on the Tiptoe to the demise pill. Treatment of old people by many 'care' homes has been a disgrace in the 'Covid' era. There are many, many, caring staff – I know some. There have, however, been legions of stories about callous treatment of old people and their families. Police were called when families came to take their loved ones home in the light of isolation that was killing them. They became prisoners of the state. Care home residents in insane, fascist Ontario, Canada, were not allowed to leave their *room* once the 'Covid' hoax began. UK staff have even wheeled elderly people away from windows where family members were talking with them. Oriana Criscuolo from Stockport in the English North West dropped off some things for her 80-year-old father who has Parkinson's disease and dementia and she wanted to wave to him through a ground-floor window. She was told that was 'illegal'. When she went anyway they closed the curtains in the middle of the day. Oriana said:

It's just unbelievable. I cannot understand how care home staff – people who are being paid to care – have become so uncaring. Their behaviour is inhumane and cruel. It's beyond belief.

She was right and this was not a one-off. What a way to end your life in such loveless circumstances. UK registered nurse Nicky Millen, a proper old school nurse for 40 years, said that when she started her career care was based on dignity, choice, compassion and empathy. Now she said 'the things that are important to me have gone out of the window.' She was appalled that people were dying without their loved ones and saying goodbye on iPads. Nicky described how a distressed 89-year-old lady stroked her face and asked her 'how many paracetamol would it take to finish me off'. Life was no longer worth living while not seeing her family. Nicky said she was humiliated in front of the ward staff and patients for letting the lady stroke her face and giving her a cuddle. Such is the dehumanisation that the 'Covid' hoax has brought to the surface. Nicky worked in care homes where patients told her they were being held prisoner. 'I want to live until I die', one said to her. 'I had a lady in tears because she hadn't seen her great-grandson.' Nicky was compassionate old school meeting psychopathic New Normal. She also said she had worked on a 'Covid' ward with no 'Covid' patients. Jewish writer Shai Held wrote an article in March, 2020, which was headlined 'The Staggering, Heartless Cruelty Toward the Elderly'. What he described was happening from the earliest days of lockdown. He said 'the elderly' were considered a group and not unique individuals (the way of the Woke). Shai Held said:

Notice how the all-too-familiar rhetoric of dehumanization works: 'The elderly' are bunched together as a faceless mass, all of them considered culprits and thus effectively deserving of the suffering the pandemic will inflict upon them. Lost entirely is the fact that the elderly are individual human beings, each with a distinctive face and voice, each with hopes and dreams, memories and regrets, friendships and marriages, loves lost and loves sustained.

'The elderly' have become another dehumanised group for which anything goes and for many that has resulted in cold disregard for their rights and their life. The distinctive face that Held talks about is designed to be deleted by masks until everyone is part of a faceless mass.

'War-zone' hospitals myth

Again and again medical professionals have told me what was really going on and how hospitals 'overrun like war zones' according to the media were virtually empty. The mantra from medical whistleblowers was please don't use my name or my career is over. Citizen journalists around the world sneaked into hospitals to film evidence exposing the 'war-zone' lie. They really *were* largely empty with closed wards and operating theatres. I met a hospital worker in my town on the Isle of Wight during the first lockdown in 2020 who said the only island hospital had never been so quiet. Lockdown was justified by the psychopaths to stop hospitals being overrun. At the same time that the island hospital was near-empty the military arrived here to provide *extra beds*. It was all propaganda to ramp up the fear to ensure compliance with fascism as were never-used temporary hospitals with thousands of beds known as Nightingales and never-used make-shift mortuaries opened by the criminal UK government. A man who helped to install those extra island beds attributed to the army said they were never used and the hospital was empty. Doctors and nurses 'stood around talking or on their phones, wandering down to us to see what we were doing'. There were no masks or social distancing. He accused the useless local island paper, the *County Press*, of 'pumping the fear as if our hospital was overrun and we only have one so it should have been'. He described ambulances parked up with crews outside in deck chairs. When his brother called an ambulance he was told there was a two-hour backlog which he called 'bullshit'. An old lady on the island fell 'and was in a bad way', but a caller who rang for an ambulance was told the situation wasn't urgent enough. Ambulance stations were working under capacity while people would hear ambulances with sirens blaring driving through the streets. When those living near the stations realised what was going on they would follow them as they left, circulated around an urban area with the sirens going, and then came back without stopping. All this was to increase levels of fear and the same goes for the 'ventilator shortage crisis' that cost tens of millions for hastily produced ventilators never to be used.

Ambulance crews that agreed to be exploited in this way for fear propaganda might find themselves a mirror. I wish them well with that. Empty hospitals were the obvious consequence of treatment and diagnoses of non-'Covid' conditions cancelled and those involved handed a death sentence. People have been dying at home from undiagnosed and untreated cancer, heart disease and other life-threatening conditions to allow empty hospitals to deal with a 'pandemic' that wasn't happening.

Death of the innocent

'War-zones' have been laying off nursing staff, even doctors where they can. There was no work for them. Lockdown was justified by saving lives and protecting the vulnerable they were actually killing with DNR orders and preventing empty hospitals being 'overrun'. In Britain the mantra of stay at home to 'save the NHS' was everywhere and across the world the same story was being sold when it was all lies. Two California doctors, Dan Erickson and Artin Massihi at Accelerated Urgent Care in Bakersfield, held a news conference in April, 2020, to say that intensive care units in California were 'empty, essentially', with hospitals shutting floors, not treating patients and laying off doctors. The California health system was working at minimum capacity 'getting rid of doctors because we just don't have the volume'. They said that people with conditions such as heart disease and cancer were not coming to hospital out of fear of 'Covid-19'. Their video was deleted by Susan Wojcicki's Cult-owned YouTube after reaching five million views. Florida governor Ron Desantis, who rejected the severe lockdowns of other states and is being targeted for doing so, said that in March, 2020, every US governor was given models claiming they would run out of hospital beds in days. That was never going to happen and the 'modellers' knew it. Deceit can be found at every level of the system. Urgent children's operations were cancelled including fracture repairs and biopsies to spot cancer. Eric Nicholls, a consultant paediatrician, said 'this is obviously concerning and we need to return to normal operating and to increase capacity as soon as possible'. Psychopaths

in power were rather less concerned *because* they are psychopaths. Deletion of urgent care and diagnosis has been happening all over the world and how many kids and others have died as a result of the actions of these cold and heartless lunatics dictating 'health' policy? The number must be stratospheric. Richard Sullivan, professor of cancer and global health at King's College London, said people feared 'Covid' more than cancer such was the campaign of fear. 'Years of lost life will be quite dramatic', Sullivan said, with 'a huge amount of avoidable mortality'. Sarah Woolnough, executive director for policy at Cancer Research UK, said there had been a 75 percent drop in urgent referrals to hospitals by family doctors of people with suspected cancer. Sullivan said that 'a lot of services have had to scale back – we've seen a dramatic decrease in the amount of elective cancer surgery'. Lockdown deaths worldwide has been absolutely fantastic with the *New York Post* reporting how data confirmed that 'lockdowns end more lives than they save':

There was a sharp decline in visits to emergency rooms and an increase in fatal heart attacks because patients didn't receive prompt treatment. Many fewer people were screened for cancer. Social isolation contributed to excess deaths from dementia and Alzheimer's.

Researchers predicted that the social and economic upheaval would lead to tens of thousands of "deaths of despair" from drug overdoses, alcoholism and suicide. As unemployment surged and mental-health and substance-abuse treatment programs were interrupted, the reported levels of anxiety, depression and suicidal thoughts increased dramatically, as did alcohol sales and fatal drug overdoses.

This has been happening while nurses and other staff had so much time on their hands in the 'war-zones' that Tic-Tok dancing videos began appearing across the Internet with medical staff dancing around in empty wards and corridors as people died at home from causes that would normally have been treated in hospital.

Mentions in dispatches

One brave and truth-committed whistleblower was Louise Hampton, a call handler with the UK NHS who made a viral Internet video saying she had done 'fuck all' during the 'pandemic'

which was 'a load of bollocks'. She said that 'Covid-19' was rebranded flu and of course she lost her job. This is what happens in the medical and endless other professions now when you tell the truth. Louise filmed inside 'war-zone' accident and emergency departments to show they were empty and I mean *empty* as in no one there. The mainstream media could have done the same and blown the gaff on the whole conspiracy. They haven't to their eternal shame. Not that most 'journalists' seem capable of manifesting shame as with the psychopaths they slavishly repeat without question. The relative few who were admitted with serious health problems were left to die alone with no loved ones allowed to see them because of 'Covid' rules and they included kids dying without the comfort of mum and dad at their bedside while the evil behind this couldn't give a damn. It was all good fun to them. A Scottish NHS staff nurse publicly quit in the spring of 2021 saying: 'I can no longer be part of the lies and the corruption by the government.' She said hospitals 'aren't full, the beds aren't full, beds have been shut, wards have been shut'. Hospitals were never busy throughout 'Covid'. The staff nurse said that Nicola Sturgeon, tragically the leader of the Scottish government, was on television saying save the hospitals and the NHS – 'but the beds are empty' and 'we've not seen flu, we always see flu every year'. She wrote to government and spoke with her union Unison (the unions are Cult-compromised and *useless*, but nothing changed. Many of her colleagues were scared of losing their jobs if they spoke out as they wanted to. She said nursing staff were being affected by wearing masks all day and 'my head is splitting every shift from wearing a mask'. The NHS is part of the fascist tyranny and must be dismantled so we can start again with human beings in charge. (Ironically, hospitals were reported to be busier again when official 'Covid' cases *fell* in spring/summer of 2021 and many other conditions required treatment at the same time as *the fake vaccine rollout*.)

I will cover the 'Covid vaccine' scam in detail later, but it is another indicator of the sickening disregard for human life that I am highlighting here. The DNA-manipulating concoctions do not fulfil

the definition of a 'vaccine', have never been used on humans before and were given only emergency approval because trials were not completed and they continued using the unknowing public. The result was what a NHS senior nurse with responsibility for 'vaccine' procedure said was 'genocide'. She said the 'vaccines' were not 'vaccines'. They had not been shown to be safe and claims about their effectiveness by drug companies were 'poetic licence'. She described what was happening as a 'horrid act of human annihilation'. The nurse said that management had instigated a policy of not providing a Patient Information Leaflet (PIL) before people were 'vaccinated' even though health care professionals are supposed to do this according to protocol. Patients should also be told that they are taking part in an ongoing clinical trial. Her challenges to what is happening had seen her excluded from meetings and ridiculed in others. She said she was told to 'watch my step ... or I would find myself surplus to requirements'. The nurse, who spoke anonymously in fear of her career, said she asked her NHS manager why he/she was content with taking part in genocide against those having the 'vaccines'. The reply was that everyone had to play their part and to 'put up, shut up, and get it done'. Government was 'leaning heavily' on NHS management which was clearly leaning heavily on staff. This is how the global 'medical' hierarchy operates and it starts with the Cult and its World Health Organization.

She told the story of a doctor who had the Pfizer jab and when questioned had no idea what was in it. The doctor had never read the literature. We have to stop treating doctors as intellectual giants when so many are moral and medical pygmies. The doctor did not even know that the 'vaccines' were not fully approved or that their trials were ongoing. They were, however, asking their patients if they minded taking part in follow-ups for research purposes – yes, the *ongoing clinical trial*. The nurse said the doctor's ignorance was not rare and she had spoken to a hospital consultant who had the jab without any idea of the background or that the 'trials' had not been completed. Nurses and pharmacists had shown the same ignorance.

'My NHS colleagues have forsaken their duty of care, broken their code of conduct – Hippocratic Oath – and have been brainwashed just the same as the majority of the UK public through propaganda ...' She said she had not been able to recruit a single NHS colleague, doctor, nurse or pharmacist to stand with her and speak out. Her union had refused to help. She said that if the genocide came to light she would not hesitate to give evidence at a Nuremberg-type trial against those in power who could have affected the outcomes but didn't.

And all for what?

To put the nonsense into perspective let's say the 'virus' does exist and let's go completely crazy and accept that the official manipulated figures for cases and deaths are accurate. *Even then* a study by Stanford University epidemiologist Dr John Ioannidis published on the World Health Organization website produced an average infection to fatality rate of ... *0.23 percent!* Ioannidis said: 'If one could sample equally from all locations globally, the median infection fatality rate might even be substantially lower than the 0.23% observed in my analysis.' For healthy people under 70 it was ... *0.05 percent!* This compares with the 3.4 percent claimed by the Cult-owned World Health Organization when the hoax was first played and maximum fear needed to be generated. An updated Stanford study in April, 2021, put the 'infection' to 'fatality' rate at just 0.15 percent. Another team of scientists led by Megan O'Driscoll and Henrik Salje studied data from 45 countries and published their findings on the Nature website. For children and young people the figure is so small it virtually does not register although authorities will be hyping dangers to the young when they introduce DNA-manipulating 'vaccines' for children. The O'Driscoll study produced an average infection-fatality figure of 0.003 for children from birth to four; 0.001 for 5 to 14; 0.003 for 15 to 19; and it was still only 0.456 up to 64. To claim that children must be 'vaccinated' to protect them from 'Covid' is an obvious lie and so there must be another reason and there is. What's more the average age of a 'Covid' death is akin

to the average age that people die in general. The average age of death in England is about 80 for men and 83 for women. The average age of death from alleged 'Covid' is between 82 and 83. California doctors, Dan Erickson and Artin Massihi, said at their April media conference that projection models of millions of deaths had been 'woefully inaccurate'. They produced detailed figures showing that Californians had a 0.03 chance of dying from 'Covid' based on the number of people who tested positive (with a test not testing for the 'virus'). Erickson said there was a 0.1 percent chance of dying from 'Covid' in the *state* of New York, not just the city, and a 0.05 percent chance in Spain, a centre of 'Covid-19' hysteria at one stage. The Stanford studies supported the doctors' data with fatality rate estimates of 0.23 and 0.15 percent. How close are these figures to my estimate of *zero*? Death-rate figures claimed by the World Health Organization at the start of the hoax were some 15 times higher. The California doctors said there was no justification for lockdowns and the economic devastation they caused. Everything they had ever learned about quarantine was that you quarantine the *sick* and not the healthy. They had never seen this before and it made no medical sense.

Why in the in the light of all this would governments and medical systems the world over say that billions must go under house arrest; lose their livelihood; in many cases lose their mind, their health and their life; force people to wear masks dangerous to health and psychology; make human interaction and even family interaction a criminal offence; ban travel; close restaurants, bars, watching live sport, concerts, theatre, and any activity involving human togetherness and discourse; and closing schools to isolate children from their friends and cause many to commit suicide in acts of hopelessness and despair? The California doctors said lockdown consequences included increased child abuse, partner abuse, alcoholism, depression, and other impacts they were seeing every day. Who would do that to the entire human race if not mentally-ill psychopaths of almost unimaginable extremes like Bill Gates? We must face the reality of what we are dealing with and come out of

denial. Fascism and tyranny are made possible only by the target population submitting and acquiescing to fascism and tyranny. The whole of human history shows that to be true. Most people naively and unquestioning believed what they were told about a 'deadly virus' and meekly and weakly submitted to house arrest. Those who didn't believe it – at least in total – still submitted in fear of the consequences of not doing so. For the rest who wouldn't submit draconian fines have been imposed, brutal policing by psychopaths *for* psychopaths, and condemnation from the meek and weak who condemn the Pushbackers on behalf of the very force that has them, too, in its gunights. 'Pathetic' does not even begin to suffice. Britain's brainless 'Health' Secretary Matt Hancock warned anyone lying to border officials about returning from a list of 'hotspot' countries could face a jail sentence of up to ten years which is more than for racially-aggravated assault, incest and attempting to have sex with a child under 13. Hancock is a lunatic, but he has the state apparatus behind him in a Cult-led chain reaction and the same with UK 'Vaccine Minister' Nadhim Zahawi, a prominent member of the mega-Cult secret society, Le Cercle, which featured in my earlier books. The Cult enforces its will on governments and medical systems; government and medical systems enforce their will on business and police; business enforces its will on staff who enforce it on customers; police enforce the will of the Cult on the population and play their essential part in creating a world of fascist control that their own children and grandchildren will have to live in their entire lives. It is a hierarchical pyramid of imposition and acquiescence and, yes indeed, of clinical insanity.

Does anyone bright enough to read this book have to ask what the answer is? I think not, but I will reveal it anyway in the fewest of syllables: Tell the psychos and their moronic lackeys to fuck off and let's get on with our lives. We are many – They are few.

CHAPTER SEVEN

War on your mind

One believes things because one has been conditioned to believe them

Aldous Huxley, Brave New World

I have described the 'Covid' hoax as a 'Psyop' and that is true in every sense and on every level in accordance with the definition of that term which is psychological warfare. Break down the 'Covid pandemic' to the foundation themes and it is psychological warfare on the human individual and collective mind.

The same can be said for the entire human belief system involving every subject you can imagine. Huxley was right in his contention that people believe what they are conditioned to believe and this comes from the repetition throughout their lives of the same falsehoods. They spew from government, corporations, media and endless streams of 'experts' telling you what the Cult wants you to believe and often believing it themselves (although *far* from always). 'Experts' are rewarded with 'prestigious' jobs and titles and as agents of perceptual programming with regular access to the media. The Cult has to control the narrative – control *information* – or they lose control of the vital, crucial, without-which-they-cannot-prevail public perception of reality. The foundation of that control today is the Internet made possible by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), the incredibly sinister technological arm of the Pentagon. The Internet is the result of military technology.

DARPA openly brags about establishing the Internet which has been a long-term project to lasso the minds of the global population. I have said for decades the plan is to control information to such an extreme that eventually no one would see or hear anything that the Cult does not approve. We are closing in on that end with ferocious censorship since the 'Covid' hoax began and in my case it started back in the 1990s in terms of books and speaking venues. I had to create my own publishing company in 1995 precisely because no one else would publish my books even then. I think they're all still running.

Cult Internet

To secure total control of information they needed the Internet in which pre-programmed algorithms can seek out 'unclean' content for deletion and even stop it being posted in the first place. The Cult had to dismantle print and non-Internet broadcast media to ensure the transfer of information to the appropriate-named 'Web' – a critical expression of the *Cult* web. We've seen the ever-quickening demise of traditional media and control of what is left by a tiny number of corporations operating worldwide. Independent journalism in the mainstream is already dead and never was that more obvious than since the turn of 2020. The Cult wants all information communicated via the Internet to globally censor and allow the plug to be pulled any time. Lockdowns and forced isolation has meant that communication between people has been through electronic means and no longer through face-to-face discourse and discussion. Cult psychopaths have targeted the bars, restaurants, sport, venues and meeting places in general for this reason. None of this is by chance and it's to stop people gathering in any kind of privacy or number while being able to track and monitor all Internet communications and block them as necessary. Even private messages between individuals have been censored by these fascists that control Cult fronts like Facebook, Twitter, Google and YouTube which are all officially run by Sabbatian place-people and from the background by higher-level Sabbatian place people.

Facebook, Google, Amazon and their like were seed-funded and supported into existence with money-no-object infusions of funds either directly or indirectly from DARPA and CIA technology arm In-Q-Tel. The Cult plays the long game and prepares very carefully for big plays like 'Covid'. Amazon is another front in the psychological war and pretty much controls the global market in book sales and increasingly publishing. Amazon's limitless funds have deleted fantastic numbers of independent publishers to seize global domination on the way to deciding which books can be sold and circulated and which cannot. Moves in that direction are already happening. Amazon's leading light Jeff Bezos is the grandson of Lawrence Preston Gise who worked with DARPA predecessor ARPA. Amazon has big connections to the CIA and the Pentagon. The plan I have long described went like this:

1. Employ military technology to establish the Internet.
2. Sell the Internet as a place where people can freely communicate without censorship and allow that to happen until the Net becomes the central and irreversible pillar of human society. If the Internet had been highly censored from the start many would have rejected it.
3. Fund and manipulate major corporations into being to control the circulation of information on your Internet using cover stories about geeks in garages to explain how they came about. Give them unlimited funds to expand rapidly with no need to make a profit for years while non-Cult companies who need to balance the books cannot compete. You know that in these circumstances your Googles, YouTubes, Facebooks and Amazons are going to secure near monopolies by either crushing or buying up the opposition.
4. Allow freedom of expression on both the Internet and communication platforms to draw people in until the Internet is the central and irreversible pillar of human society and your communication corporations have reached a stage of near monopoly domination.
5. Then unleash your always-planned frenzy of censorship on the basis of 'where else are you going to go?' and continue to expand that until nothing remains that the Cult does not want its human targets to see.

The process was timed to hit the 'Covid' hoax to ensure the best chance possible of controlling the narrative which they knew they had to do at all costs. They were, after all, about to unleash a 'deadly virus' that didn't really exist. If you do that in an environment of free-flowing information and opinion you would be dead in the

water before you could say Gates is a psychopath. The network was in place through which the Cult-created-and-owned World Health Organization could dictate the 'Covid' narrative and response policy slavishly supported by Cult-owned Internet communication giants and mainstream media while those telling a different story were censored. Google, YouTube, Facebook and Twitter openly announced that they would do this. What else would we expect from Cult-owned operations like Facebook which former executives have confirmed set out to make the platform more addictive than cigarettes and coldly manipulates emotions of its users to sow division between people and groups and scramble the minds of the young? If Zuckerberg lives out the rest of his life without going to jail for crimes against humanity, and most emphatically against the young, it will be a travesty of justice. Still, no matter, cause and effect will catch up with him eventually and the same with Sergey Brin and Larry Page at Google with its CEO Sundar Pichai who fix the Google search results to promote Cult narratives and hide the opposition. Put the same key words into Google and other search engines like DuckDuckGo and you will see how different results can be. Wikipedia is another intensely biased 'encyclopaedia' which skews its content to the Cult agenda. YouTube links to Wikipedia's version of 'Covid' and 'climate change' on video pages in which experts in their field offer a different opinion (even that is increasingly rare with Wojcicki censorship). Into this 'Covid' silence-them network must be added government media censors, sorry 'regulators', such as Ofcom in the UK which imposed tyrannical restrictions on British broadcasters that had the effect of banning me from ever appearing. Just to debate with me about my evidence and views on 'Covid' would mean breaking the fascistic impositions of Ofcom and its CEO career government bureaucrat Melanie Dawes. Gutless British broadcasters tremble at the very thought of fascist Ofcom.

Psychos behind 'Covid'

The reason for the 'Covid' catastrophe in all its facets and forms can be seen by whom and what is driving the policies worldwide in such a coordinated way. Decisions are not being made to protect health, but to target psychology. The dominant group guiding and 'advising' government policy are not medical professionals. They are psychologists and behavioural scientists. Every major country has its own version of this phenomenon and I'll use the British example to show how it works. In many ways the British version has been affecting the wider world in the form of the huge behaviour manipulation network in the UK which operates in other countries. The network involves private companies, government, intelligence and military. The Cabinet Office is at the centre of the government 'Covid' Psyop and part-owns, with 'innovation charity' Nesta, the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) which claims to be independent of government but patently isn't. The BIT was established in 2010 and its job is to manipulate the psyche of the population to acquiesce to government demands and so much more. It is also known as the 'Nudge Unit', a name inspired by the 2009 book by two ultra-Zionists, Cass Sunstein and Richard Thaler, called *Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness*. The book, as with the Behavioural Insights Team, seeks to 'nudge' behaviour (manipulate it) to make the public follow patterns of action and perception that suit those in authority (the Cult). Sunstein is so skilled at this that he advises the World Health Organization and the UK Behavioural Insights Team and was Administrator of the White House Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs in the Obama administration. Biden appointed him to the Department of Homeland Security – another ultra-Zionist in the fold to oversee new immigration laws which is another policy the Cult wants to control. Sunstein is desperate to silence anyone exposing conspiracies and co-authored a 2008 report on the subject in which suggestions were offered to ban 'conspiracy theorizing' or impose 'some kind of tax, financial or otherwise, on those who disseminate such theories'. I guess a psychiatrist's chair is out of the question?

Sunstein's mate Richard Thaler, an 'academic affiliate' of the UK Behavioural Insights Team, is a proponent of 'behavioural economics' which is defined as the study of 'the effects of psychological, cognitive, emotional, cultural and social factors on the decisions of individuals and institutions'. Study the effects so they can be manipulated to be what you want them to be. Other leading names in the development of behavioural economics are ultra-Zionists Daniel Kahneman and Robert J. Shiller and they, with Thaler, won the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences for their work in this field. The Behavioural Insights Team is operating at the heart of the UK government and has expanded globally through partnerships with several universities including Harvard, Oxford, Cambridge, University College London (UCL) and Pennsylvania. They claim to have 'trained' (reframed) 20,000 civil servants and run more than 750 projects involving 400 randomised controlled trials in dozens of countries' as another version of mind reframers Common Purpose. BIT works from its office in New York with cities and their agencies, as well as other partners, across the United States and Canada – this is a company part-owned by the British government Cabinet Office. An executive order by President Cult-servant Obama established a US Social and Behavioral Sciences Team in 2015. They all have the same reason for being and that's to brainwash the population directly and by brainwashing those in positions of authority.

'Covid' mind game

Another prime aspect of the UK mind-control network is the 'independent' [joke] Scientific Pandemic Insights Group on Behaviours (SPI-B) which 'provides behavioural science advice aimed at anticipating and helping people adhere to interventions that are recommended by medical or epidemiological experts'. That means manipulating public perception and behaviour to do whatever government tells them to do. It's disgusting and if they really want the public to be 'safe' this lot should all be under lock and key. According to the government website SPI-B consists of

'behavioural scientists, health and social psychologists, anthropologists and historians' and advises the Whitty-Vallance-led Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) which in turn advises the government on 'the science' (it doesn't) and 'Covid' policy. When politicians say they are being guided by 'the science' this is the rabble in each country they are talking about and that 'science' is dominated by behaviour manipulators to enforce government fascism through public compliance. The Behaviour Insight Team is headed by psychologist David Solomon Halpern, a visiting professor at King's College London, and connects with a national and global web of other civilian and military organisations as the Cult moves towards its goal of fusing them into one fascistic whole in every country through its 'Fusion Doctrine'. The behaviour manipulation network involves, but is not confined to, the Foreign Office; National Security Council; government communications headquarters (GCHQ); MI5; MI6; the Cabinet Office-based Media Monitoring Unit; and the Rapid Response Unit which 'monitors digital trends to spot emerging issues; including misinformation and disinformation; and identifies the best way to respond'.

There is also the 77th Brigade of the UK military which operates like the notorious Israeli military's Unit 8200 in manipulating information and discussion on the Internet by posing as members of the public to promote the narrative and discredit those who challenge it. Here we have the military seeking to manipulate *domestic* public opinion while the Nazis in government are fine with that. Conservative Member of Parliament Tobias Ellwood, an advocate of lockdown and control through 'vaccine passports', is a Lieutenant Colonel reservist in the 77th Brigade which connects with the military operation jHub, the 'innovation centre' for the Ministry of Defence and Strategic Command. jHub has also been involved with the civilian National Health Service (NHS) in 'symptom tracing' the population. The NHS is a key part of this mind control network and produced a document in December, 2020, explaining to staff how to use psychological manipulation with different groups and ages to get them to have the DNA-manipulating 'Covid vaccine'

that's designed to cumulatively rewrite human genetics. The document, called 'Optimising Vaccination Roll Out – Do's and Don'ts for all messaging, documents and "communications" in the widest sense', was published by NHS England and the NHS Improvement *Behaviour Change Unit* in partnership with Public Health England and Warwick Business School. I hear the mantra about 'save the NHS' and 'protect the NHS' when we need to scrap the NHS and start again. The current version is far too corrupt, far too anti-human and totally compromised by Cult operatives and their assets. UK government broadcast media censor Ofcom will connect into this web – as will the BBC with its tremendous Ofcom influence – to control what the public see and hear and dictate mass perception. Nuremberg trials must include personnel from all these organisations.

The fear factor

The 'Covid' hoax has led to the creation of the UK Cabinet Office-connected Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC) which is officially described as providing 'expert advice on pandemics' using its independent [all Cult operations are 'independent'] analytical function to provide real-time analysis about infection outbreaks to identify and respond to outbreaks of Covid-19'. Another role is to advise the government on a response to spikes in infections – 'for example by closing schools or workplaces in local areas where infection levels have risen'. Put another way, promoting the Cult agenda. The Joint Biosecurity Centre is modelled on the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre which analyses intelligence to set 'terrorism threat levels' and here again you see the fusion of civilian and military operations and intelligence that has led to military intelligence producing documents about 'vaccine hesitancy' and how it can be combated. Domestic civilian matters and opinions should not be the business of the military. The Joint Biosecurity Centre is headed by Tom Hurd, director general of the Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism from the establishment-to-its-fingertips Hurd family. His father is former Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd. How coincidental that Tom

Hurd went to the elite Eton College and Oxford University with Boris Johnson. Imperial College with its ridiculous computer modeller Neil Ferguson will connect with this gigantic web that will itself interconnect with similar set-ups in other major and not so major countries. Compared with this Cult network the politicians, be they Boris Johnson, Donald Trump or Joe Biden, are bit-part players 'following the science'. The network of psychologists was on the 'Covid' case from the start with the aim of generating maximum fear of the 'virus' to ensure compliance by the population. A government behavioural science group known as SPI-B produced a paper in March, 2020, for discussion by the main government science advisory group known as SAGE. It was headed 'Options for increasing adherence to social distancing measures' and it said the following in a section headed 'Persuasion':

- A substantial number of people still do not feel sufficiently personally threatened; it could be that they are reassured by the low death rate in their demographic group, although levels of concern may be rising. Having a good understanding of the risk has been found to be positively associated with adoption of COVID-19 social distancing measures in Hong Kong.
- The perceived level of personal threat needs to be increased among those who are complacent, using hard-hitting evaluation of options for increasing social distancing emotional messaging. To be effective this must also empower people by making clear the actions they can take to reduce the threat.
- Responsibility to others: There seems to be insufficient understanding of, or feelings of responsibility about, people's role in transmitting the infection to others ... Messaging about actions need to be framed positively in terms of protecting oneself and the community, and increase confidence that they will be effective.
- Some people will be more persuaded by appeals to play by the rules, some by duty to the community, and some to personal risk.

All these different approaches are needed. The messaging also needs to take account of the realities of different people's lives. Messaging needs to take account of the different motivational levers and circumstances of different people.

All this could be achieved the SPI-B psychologists said by *using the media to increase the sense of personal threat* which translates as terrify the shit out of the population, including children, so they all do what we want. That's not happened has it? Those excuses for 'journalists' who wouldn't know journalism if it bit them on the arse (the great majority) have played their crucial part in serving this Cult-government Psyop to enslave their own kids and grandkids. How they live with themselves I have no idea. The psychological war has been underpinned by constant government 'Covid' propaganda in almost every television and radio ad break, plus the Internet and print media, which has pounded out the fear with taxpayers footing the bill for their own programming. The result has been people terrified of a 'virus' that doesn't exist or one with a tiny fatality rate even if you believe it does. People walk down the street and around the shops wearing face-nappies damaging their health and psychology while others report those who refuse to be that naïve to the police who turn up in their own face-nappies. I had a cameraman come to my flat and he was so frightened of 'Covid' he came in wearing a mask and refused to shake my hand in case he caught something. He had – naïveitis – and the thought that he worked in the mainstream media was both depressing and made his behaviour perfectly explainable. The fear which has gripped the minds of so many and frozen them into compliance has been carefully cultivated by these psychologists who are really psychopaths. If lives get destroyed and a lot of young people commit suicide it shows our plan is working. SPI-B then turned to compulsion on the public to comply. 'With adequate preparation, rapid change can be achieved', it said. Some countries had introduced mandatory self-isolation on a wide scale without evidence of major public unrest and a large majority of the UK's population appeared to be supportive of more coercive measures with 64 percent of adults saying they would

support putting London under a lockdown (watch the 'polls' which are designed to make people believe that public opinion is in favour or against whatever the subject in hand).

For 'aggressive protective measures' to be effective, the SPI-B paper said, special attention should be devoted to those population groups that are more at risk. Translated from the Orwellian this means making the rest of population feel guilty for not protecting the 'vulnerable' such as old people which the Cult and its agencies were about to kill on an industrial scale with lockdown, lack of treatment and the Gates 'vaccine'. Psychopath psychologists sold their guilt-trip so comprehensively that Los Angeles County Supervisor Hilda Solis reported that children were apologising (from a distance) to their parents and grandparents for bringing 'Covid' into their homes and getting them sick. '... These apologies are just some of the last words that loved ones will ever hear as they die alone,' she said. Gut-wrenchingly Solis then used this childhood tragedy to tell children to stay at home and 'keep your loved ones alive'. Imagine heaping such potentially life-long guilt on a kid when it has absolutely nothing to do with them. These people are deeply disturbed and the psychologists behind this even more so.

Uncivil war – divide and rule

Professional mind-controllers at SPI-B wanted the media to increase a sense of responsibility to others (do as you're told) and promote 'positive messaging' for those actions while in contrast to invoke 'social disapproval' by the unquestioning, obedient, community of anyone with a mind of their own. Again the compliant Goebbels-like media obliged. This is an old, old, trick employed by tyrannies the world over throughout human history. You get the target population to keep the target population in line – *your* line. SPI-B said this could 'play an important role in preventing anti-social behaviour or discouraging failure to enact pro-social behaviour'. For 'anti-social' in the Orwellian parlance of SPI-B see any behaviour that government doesn't approve. SPI-B recommendations said that 'social disapproval' should be accompanied by clear messaging and

promotion of strong collective identity – hence the government and celebrity mantra of ‘we’re all in this together’. Sure we are. The mind doctors have such contempt for their targets that they think some clueless comedian, actor or singer telling them to do what the government wants will be enough to win them over. We have had UK comedian Lenny Henry, actor Michael Caine and singer Elton John wheeled out to serve the propagandists by urging people to have the DNA-manipulating ‘Covid’ non-‘vaccine’. The role of Henry and fellow black celebrities in seeking to coax a ‘vaccine’ reluctant black community into doing the government’s will was especially stomach-turning. An emotion-manipulating script and carefully edited video featuring these black ‘celebs’ was such an insult to the intelligence of black people and where’s the self-respect of those involved selling their souls to a fascist government agenda? Henry said he heard black people’s ‘legitimate worries and concerns’, but people must ‘trust the facts’ when they were doing exactly that by not having the ‘vaccine’. They had to include the obligatory reference to Black Lives Matter with the line ... ‘Don’t let coronavirus cost even more black lives – because we matter’. My god, it was pathetic. ‘I know the vaccine is safe and what it does.’ How? ‘I’m a comedian and it says so in my script.’

SPI-B said social disapproval needed to be carefully managed to avoid victimisation, scapegoating and misdirected criticism, but they knew that their ‘recommendations’ would lead to exactly that and the media were specifically used to stir-up the divide-and-conquer hostility. Those who conform like good little baa, baas, are praised while those who have seen through the tidal wave of lies are ‘Covidiot’s’. The awake have been abused by the fast asleep for not conforming to fascism and impositions that the awake know are designed to endanger their health, dehumanise them, and tear asunder the very fabric of human society. We have had the curtain-twitchers and morons reporting neighbours and others to the face-napped police for breaking ‘Covid rules’ with fascist police delighting in posting links and phone numbers where this could be done. The Cult cannot impose its will without a compliant police

and military or a compliant population willing to play their part in enslaving themselves and their kids. The words of a pastor in Nazi Germany are so appropriate today:

First they came for the socialists and I did not speak out because I was not a socialist.

Then they came for the trade unionists and I did not speak out because I was not a trade unionist.

Then they came for the Jews and I did not speak out because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me and there was no one left to speak for me.

Those who don't learn from history are destined to repeat it and so many are.

'Covid' rules: Rewiring the mind

With the background laid out to this gigantic national and global web of psychological manipulation we can put 'Covid' rules into a clear and sinister perspective. Forget the claims about protecting health. 'Covid' rules are about dismantling the human mind, breaking the human spirit, destroying self-respect, and then putting Humpty Dumpty together again as a servile, submissive slave. Social isolation through lockdown and distancing have devastating effects on the human psyche as the psychological psychopaths well know and that's the real reason for them. Humans need contact with each other, discourse, closeness and touch, or they eventually, and literally, go crazy. Masks, which I will address at some length, fundamentally add to the effects of isolation and the Cult agenda to dehumanise and de-individualise the population. To do this while knowing – in fact *seeking* – this outcome is the very epitome of evil and psychologists involved in this *are* the epitome of evil. They must like all the rest of the Cult demons and their assets stand trial for crimes against humanity on a scale that defies the imagination. Psychopaths in uniform use isolation to break enemy troops and agents and make them subservient and submissive to tell what they know. The technique is rightly considered a form of torture and

torture is most certainly what has been imposed on the human population.

Clinically-insane American psychologist Harry Harlow became famous for his isolation experiments in the 1950s in which he separated baby monkeys from their mothers and imprisoned them for months on end in a metal container or 'pit of despair'. They soon began to show mental distress and depression as any idiot could have predicted. Harlow put other monkeys in steel chambers for three, six or twelve months while denying them any contact with animals or humans. He said that the effects of total social isolation for six months were 'so devastating and debilitating that we had assumed initially that twelve months of isolation would not produce any additional decrement'; but twelve months of isolation 'almost obliterated the animals socially'. This is what the Cult and its psychopaths are doing to you and your children. Even monkeys in partial isolation in which they were not allowed to form relationships with other monkeys became 'aggressive and hostile, not only to others, but also towards their own bodies'. We have seen this in the young as a consequence of lockdown. UK government psychopaths launched a public relations campaign telling people not to hug each other even after they received the 'Covid-19 vaccine' which we were told with more lies would allow a return to 'normal life'. A government source told *The Telegraph*: 'It will be along the lines that it is great that you have been vaccinated, but if you are going to visit your family and hug your grandchildren there is a chance you are going to infect people you love.' The source was apparently speaking from a secure psychiatric facility. Janet Lord, director of Birmingham University's Institute of Inflammation and Ageing, said that parents and grandparents should avoid hugging their children. Well, how can I put it, Ms Lord? Fuck off. Yep, that'll do.

Destroying the kids – where are the parents?

Observe what has happened to people enslaved and isolated by lockdown as suicide and self-harm has soared worldwide,

particularly among the young denied the freedom to associate with their friends. A study of 49,000 people in English-speaking countries concluded that almost half of young adults are at clinical risk of mental health disorders. A national survey in America of 1,000 currently enrolled high school and college students found that 5 percent reported attempting suicide during the pandemic. Data from the US CDC's National Syndromic Surveillance Program from January 1st to October 17th, 2020, revealed a 31 percent increase in mental health issues among adolescents aged 12 to 17 compared with 2019. The CDC reported that America in general suffered the biggest drop in life expectancy since World War Two as it fell by a year in the first half of 2020 as a result of 'deaths of despair' – overdoses and suicides. Deaths of despair have leapt by more than 20 percent during lockdown and include the highest number of fatal overdoses ever recorded in a single year – 81,000. Internet addiction is another consequence of being isolated at home which lowers interest in physical activities as kids fall into inertia and what's the point? Children and young people are losing hope and giving up on life, sometimes literally. A 14-year-old boy killed himself in Maryland because he had 'given up' when his school district didn't reopen; an 11-year-old boy shot himself during a zoom class; a teenager in Maine succumbed to the isolation of the 'pandemic' when he ended his life after experiencing a disrupted senior year at school. Children as young as nine have taken their life and all these stories can be repeated around the world. Careers are being destroyed before they start and that includes those in sport in which promising youngsters have not been able to take part. The plan of the psycho-psychologists is working all right. Researchers at Cambridge University found that lockdowns cause significant harm to children's mental health. Their study was published in the *Archives of Disease in Childhood*, and followed 168 children aged between 7 and 11. The researchers concluded:

During the UK lockdown, children's depression symptoms have increased substantially, relative to before lockdown. The scale of this effect has direct relevance for the continuation of different elements of lockdown policy, such as complete or partial school closures ...

... Specifically, we observed a statistically significant increase in ratings of depression, with a medium-to-large effect size. Our findings emphasise the need to incorporate the potential impact of lockdown on child mental health in planning the ongoing response to the global pandemic and the recovery from it.

Not a chance when the Cult's psycho-psychologists were getting exactly what they wanted. The UK's Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health has urged parents to look for signs of eating disorders in children and young people after a three to four fold increase. Specialists say the 'pandemic' is a major reason behind the rise. You don't say. The College said isolation from friends during school closures, exam cancellations, loss of extra-curricular activities like sport, and an increased use of social media were all contributory factors along with fears about the virus (psycho-psychologists again), family finances, and students being forced to quarantine. Doctors said young people were becoming severely ill by the time they were seen with 'Covid' regulations reducing face-to-face consultations. Nor is it only the young that have been devastated by the psychopaths. Like all bullies and cowards the Cult is targeting the young, elderly, weak and infirm. A typical story was told by a British lady called Lynn Parker who was not allowed to visit her husband in 2020 for the last ten and half months of his life 'when he needed me most' between March 20th and when he died on December 19th. This vacates the criminal and enters the territory of evil. The emotional impact on the immune system alone is immense as are the number of people of all ages worldwide who have died as a result of Cult-demanded, Gates-demanded, lockdowns.

Isolation is torture

The experience of imposing solitary confinement on millions of prisoners around the world has shown how a large percentage become 'actively psychotic and/or acutely suicidal'. Social isolation has been found to trigger 'a specific psychiatric syndrome, characterized by hallucinations; panic attacks; overt paranoia; diminished impulse control; hypersensitivity to external stimuli; and difficulties with thinking, concentration and memory'. Juan Mendez,

a United Nations rapporteur (investigator), said that isolation is a form of torture. Research has shown that even after isolation prisoners find it far more difficult to make social connections and I remember chatting to a shop assistant after one lockdown who told me that when her young son met another child again he had no idea how to act or what to do. Hannah Flanagan, Director of Emergency Services at Journey Mental Health Center in Dane County, Wisconsin, said: 'The specificity about Covid social distancing and isolation that we've come across as contributing factors to the suicides are really new to us this year.' But they are not new to those that devised them. They are getting the effect they want as the population is psychologically dismantled to be rebuilt in a totally different way. Children and the young are particularly targeted. They will be the adults when the full-on fascist AI-controlled technocracy is planned to be imposed and they are being prepared to meekly submit. At the same time older people who still have a memory of what life was like before – and how fascist the new normal really is – are being deleted. You are going to see efforts to turn the young against the old to support this geriatric genocide. Hannah Flanagan said the big increase in suicide in her county proved that social isolation is not only harmful, but deadly. Studies have shown that isolation from others is one of the main risk factors in suicide and even more so with women. Warnings that lockdown could create a 'perfect storm' for suicide were ignored. After all this was one of the *reasons* for lockdown. Suicide, however, is only the most extreme of isolation consequences. There are many others. Dr Dhruv Khullar, assistant professor of healthcare policy at Weill Cornell Medical College, said in a *New York Times* article in 2016 long before the fake 'pandemic':

A wave of new research suggests social separation is bad for us. Individuals with less social connection have disrupted sleep patterns, altered immune systems, more inflammation and higher levels of stress hormones. One recent study found that isolation increases the risk of heart disease by 29 percent and stroke by 32 percent. Another analysis that pooled data from 70 studies and 3.4 million people found that socially isolated individuals had a 30 percent higher risk of dying in the next seven years, and that this effect was largest in middle age.

Loneliness can accelerate cognitive decline in older adults, and isolated individuals are twice as likely to die prematurely as those with more robust social interactions. These effects start early: Socially isolated children have significantly poorer health 20 years later, even after controlling for other factors. All told, loneliness is as important a risk factor for early death as obesity and smoking.

There you have proof from that one article alone four years before 2020 that those who have enforced lockdown, social distancing and isolation knew what the effect would be and that is even more so with professional psychologists that have been driving the policy across the globe. We can go back even further to the years 2000 and 2003 and the start of a major study on the effects of isolation on health by Dr Janine Gronewold and Professor Dirk M. Hermann at the University Hospital in Essen, Germany, who analysed data on 4,316 people with an average age of 59 who were recruited for the long-term research project. They found that socially isolated people are more than 40 percent more likely to have a heart attack, stroke, or other major cardiovascular event and nearly 50 percent more likely to die from any cause. Given the financial Armageddon unleashed by lockdown we should note that the study found a relationship between increased cardiovascular risk and lack of financial support. After excluding other factors social isolation was still connected to a 44 percent increased risk of cardiovascular problems and a 47 percent increased risk of death by any cause. Lack of financial support was associated with a 30 percent increase in the risk of cardiovascular health events. Dr Gronewold said it had been known for some time that feeling lonely or lacking contact with close friends and family can have an impact on physical health and the study had shown that having strong social relationships is of high importance for heart health. Gronewold said they didn't understand yet why people who are socially isolated have such poor health outcomes, but this was obviously a worrying finding, particularly during these times of prolonged social distancing. Well, it can be explained on many levels. You only have to identify the point in the body where people feel loneliness and missing people they are parted from – it's in the centre of the chest where they feel the ache of loneliness and the ache of missing people. 'My heart aches for

you' ... 'My heart aches for some company.' I will explain this more in the chapter Escaping Wetiko, but when you realise that the body is the mind – they are expressions of each other – the reason why state of the mind dictates state of the body becomes clear.

American psychologist Ranjit Powar was highlighting the effects of lockdown isolation as early as April, 2020. She said humans have evolved to be social creatures and are wired to live in interactive groups. Being isolated from family, friends and colleagues could be unbalancing and traumatic for most people and could result in short or even long-term psychological and physical health problems. An increase in levels of anxiety, aggression, depression, forgetfulness and hallucinations were possible psychological effects of isolation. 'Mental conditions may be precipitated for those with underlying pre-existing susceptibilities and show up in many others without any pre-condition.' Powar said personal relationships helped us cope with stress and if we lost this outlet for letting off steam the result can be a big emotional void which, for an average person, was difficult to deal with. 'Just a few days of isolation can cause increased levels of anxiety and depression' – so what the hell has been the effect on the global population of *18 months* of this at the time of writing? Powar said: 'Add to it the looming threat of a dreadful disease being repeatedly hammered in through the media and you have a recipe for many shades of mental and physical distress.' For those with a house and a garden it is easy to forget that billions have had to endure lockdown isolation in tiny overcrowded flats and apartments with nowhere to go outside. The psychological and physical consequences of this are unimaginable and with lunatic and abusive partners and parents the consequences have led to tremendous increases in domestic and child abuse and alcoholism as people seek to shut out the horror. Ranjit Powar said:

Staying in a confined space with family is not all a rosy picture for everyone. It can be extremely oppressive and claustrophobic for large low-income families huddled together in small single-room houses. Children here are not lucky enough to have many board/electronic games or books to keep them occupied.

Add to it the deep insecurity of running out of funds for food and basic necessities. On the other hand, there are people with dysfunctional family dynamics, such as domineering, abusive or alcoholic partners, siblings or parents which makes staying home a period of trial. Incidence of suicide and physical abuse against women has shown a worldwide increase. Heightened anxiety and depression also affect a person's immune system, making them more susceptible to illness.

To think that Powar's article was published on April 11th, 2020.

Six-foot fantasy

Social (unsocial) distancing demanded that people stay six feet or two metres apart. UK government advisor Robert Dingwall from the New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group said in a radio interview that the two-metre rule was 'conjured up out of nowhere' and was not based on science. No, it was not based on *medical* science, but it didn't come out of nowhere. The distance related to *psychological* science. Six feet/two metres was adopted in many countries and we were told by people like the criminal Anthony Fauci and his ilk that it was founded on science. Many schools could not reopen because they did not have the space for six-foot distancing. Then in March, 2021, after a year of six-foot 'science', a study published in the *Journal of Infectious Diseases* involving more than 500,000 students and almost 100,000 staff over 16 weeks revealed no significant difference in 'Covid' cases between six feet and three feet and Fauci changed his tune. Now three feet was okay. There is no difference between six feet and three *inches* when there is no 'virus' and they got away with six feet for psychological reasons for as long as they could. I hear journalists and others talk about 'unintended consequences' of lockdown. They are not *unintended* at all; they have been coldly-calculated for a specific outcome of human control and that's why super-psychopaths like Gates have called for them so vehemently. Super-psychopath psychologists have demanded them and psychopathic or clueless, spineless, politicians have gone along with them by 'following the science'. But it's not science at all. 'Science' is not what is; it's only what people can be manipulated to believe it is. The whole 'Covid' catastrophe is

founded on mind control. Three word or three statement mantras issued by the UK government are a well-known mind control technique and so we've had 'Stay home/protect the NHS/save lives', 'Stay alert/control the virus/save lives' and 'hands/face/space'. One of the most vocal proponents of extreme 'Covid' rules in the UK has been Professor Susan Michie, a member of the British Communist Party, who is not a medical professional. Michie is the director of the Centre for Behaviour Change at University College London. She is a *behavioural psychologist* and another filthy rich 'Marxist' who praised China's draconian lockdown. She was known by fellow students at Oxford University as 'Stalin's nanny' for her extreme Marxism. Michie is an influential member of the UK government's Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) and behavioural manipulation groups which have dominated 'Covid' policy. She is a consultant adviser to the World Health Organization on 'Covid-19' and behaviour. Why the hell are lockdowns anything to do with her when they are claimed to be about health? Why does a behavioural psychologist from a group charged with changing the behaviour of the public want lockdown, human isolation and mandatory masks? Does that question really need an answer? Michie *absolutely* has to explain herself before a Nuremberg court when humanity takes back its world again and even more so when you see the consequences of masks that she demands are compulsory. This is a Michie classic:

The benefits of getting primary school children to wear masks is that regardless of what little degree of transmission is occurring in those age groups it could help normalise the practice. Young children wearing masks may be more likely to get their families to accept masks.

Those words alone should carry a prison sentence when you ponder on the callous disregard for children involved and what a statement it makes about the mind and motivations of Susan Michie. What a lovely lady and what she said there encapsulates the mentality of the psychopaths behind the 'Covid' horror. Let us compare what Michie said with a countrywide study in Germany published at [researchsquare.com](https://www.researchsquare.com) involving 25,000 school children and 17,854 health complaints submitted by parents. Researchers

found that masks are harming children physically, psychologically, and behaviourally with 24 health issues associated with mask wearing. They include: shortness of breath (29.7%); dizziness (26.4%); increased headaches (53%); difficulty concentrating (50%); drowsiness or fatigue (37%); and malaise (42%). Nearly a third of children experienced more sleep issues than before and a quarter developed new fears. Researchers found health issues and other impairments in 68 percent of masked children covering their faces for an average of 4.5 hours a day. Hundreds of those taking part experienced accelerated respiration, tightness in the chest, weakness, and short-term impairment of consciousness. A reminder of what Michie said again:

The benefits of getting primary school children to wear masks is that regardless of what little degree of transmission is occurring in those age groups it could help normalise the practice. Young children wearing masks may be more likely to get their families to accept masks.

Psychopaths in government and psychology now have children and young people – plus all the adults – wearing masks for hours on end while clueless teachers impose the will of the psychopaths on the young they should be protecting. What the hell are parents doing?

Cult lab rats

We have some schools already imposing on students microchipped buzzers that activate when they get 'too close' to their pals in the way they do with lab rats. How apt. To the Cult and its brain-dead servants our children *are* lab rats being conditioned to be unquestioning, dehumanised slaves for the rest of their lives. Children and young people are being weaned and frightened away from the most natural human instincts including closeness and touch. I have tracked in the books over the years how schools were banning pupils from greeting each other with a hug and the whole Cult-induced Me Too movement has terrified men and boys from a relaxed and natural interaction with female friends and work colleagues to the point where many men try never to be in a room

alone with a woman that's not their partner. Airhead celebrities have as always played their virtue-signalling part in making this happen with their gross exaggeration. For every monster like Harvey Weinstein there are at least tens of thousands of men that don't treat women like that; but everyone must be branded the same and policy changed for them as well as the monster. I am going to be using the word 'dehumanise' many times in this chapter because that is what the Cult is seeking to do and it goes very deep as we shall see. Don't let them kid you that social distancing is planned to end one day. That's not the idea. We are seeing more governments and companies funding and producing wearable gadgets to keep people apart and they would not be doing that if this was meant to be short-term. A tech start-up company backed by GCHQ, the British Intelligence and military surveillance headquarters, has created a social distancing wrist sensor that alerts people when they get too close to others. The CIA has also supported tech companies developing similar devices. The wearable sensor was developed by Tended, one of a number of start-up companies supported by GCHQ (see the CIA and DARPA). The device can be worn on the wrist or as a tag on the waistband and will vibrate whenever someone wearing the device breaches social distancing and gets anywhere near natural human contact. The company had a lucky break in that it was developing a distancing sensor when the 'Covid' hoax arrived which immediately provided a potentially enormous market. How fortunate. The government in big-time Cult-controlled Ontario in Canada is investing \$2.5 million in wearable contact tracing technology that 'will alert users if they may have been exposed to the Covid-19 in the workplace and will beep or vibrate if they are within six feet of another person'. Facedrive Inc., the technology company behind this, was founded in 2016 with funding from the Ontario Together Fund and obviously they, too, had a prophet on the board of directors. The human surveillance and control technology is called TraceSCAN and would be worn by the human cyborgs in places such as airports, workplaces, construction sites, care homes and ... *schools*.

I emphasise schools with children and young people the prime targets. You know what is planned for society as a whole if you keep your eyes on the schools. They have always been places where the state program the next generation of slaves to be its compliant worker-ants – or Woker-ants these days; but in the mist of the ‘Covid’ madness they have been transformed into mind laboratories on a scale never seen before. Teachers and head teachers are just as programmed as the kids – often more so. Children are kept apart from human interaction by walk lanes, classroom distancing, staggered meal times, masks, and the rolling-out of buzzer systems. Schools are now physically laid out as a laboratory maze for lab-rats. Lunatics at a school in Anchorage, Alaska, who should be prosecuted for child abuse, took away desks and forced children to kneel (know your place) on a mat for five hours a day while wearing a mask and using their chairs as a desk. How this was supposed to impact on a ‘virus’ only these clinically insane people can tell you and even then it would be clap-trap. The school banned recess (interaction), art classes (creativity), and physical exercise (getting body and mind moving out of inertia). Everyone behind this outrage should be in jail or better still a mental institution. The behavioural manipulators are all for this dystopian approach to schools. Professor Susan Michie, the mind-doctor and British Communist Party member, said it was wrong to say that schools were safe. They had to be made so by ‘distancing’, masks and ventilation (sitting all day in the cold). I must ask this lady round for dinner on a night I know I am going to be out and not back for weeks. She probably wouldn’t be able to make it, anyway, with all the visits to her own psychologist she must have block-booked.

Masking identity

I know how shocking it must be for you that a behaviour manipulator like Michie wants everyone to wear masks which have long been a feature of mind-control programs like the infamous MKUltra in the United States, but, there we are. We live and learn. I spent many years from 1996 to right across the millennium

researching mind control in detail on both sides of the Atlantic and elsewhere. I met a large number of mind-control survivors and many had been held captive in body and mind by MKUltra. MK stands for mind-control, but employs the German spelling in deference to the Nazis spirited out of Germany at the end of World War Two by Operation Paperclip in which the US authorities, with help from the Vatican, transported Nazi mind-controllers and engineers to America to continue their work. Many of them were behind the creation of NASA and they included Nazi scientist and SS officer Wernher von Braun who swapped designing V-2 rockets to bombard London with designing the Saturn V rockets that powered the NASA moon programme's Apollo craft. I think I may have mentioned that the Cult has no borders. Among Paperclip escapees was Josef Mengele, the Angel of Death in the Nazi concentration camps where he conducted mind and genetic experiments on children often using twins to provide a control twin to measure the impact of his 'work' on the other. If you want to observe the Cult mentality in all its extremes of evil then look into the life of Mengele. I have met many people who suffered mercilessly under Mengele in the United States where he operated under the name Dr Greene and became a stalwart of MKUltra programming and torture. Among his locations was the underground facility in the Mojave Desert in California called the China Lake Naval Weapons Station which is almost entirely below the surface. My books *The Biggest Secret*, *Children of the Matrix* and *The Perception Deception* have the detailed background to MKUltra.

The best-known MKUltra survivor is American Cathy O'Brien. I first met her and her late partner Mark Phillips at a conference in Colorado in 1996. Mark helped her escape and deprogram from decades of captivity in an offshoot of MKUltra known as Project Monarch in which 'sex slaves' were provided for the rich and famous including Father George Bush, Dick Cheney and the Clintons. Read Cathy and Mark's book *Trance-Formation of America* and if you are new to this you will be shocked to the core. I read it in 1996 shortly before, with the usual synchronicity of my life, I found

myself given a book table at the conference right next to hers. MKUltra never ended despite being very publicly exposed (only a small part of it) in the 1970s and continues in other guises. I am still in touch with Cathy. She contacted me during 2020 after masks became compulsory in many countries to tell me how they were used as part of MKUltra programming. I had been observing 'Covid regulations' and the relationship between authority and public for months. I saw techniques that I knew were employed on individuals in MKUltra being used on the global population. I had read many books and manuals on mind control including one called *Silent Weapons for Quiet Wars* which came to light in the 1980s and was a guide on how to perceptually program on a mass scale. 'Silent Weapons' refers to mind-control. I remembered a line from the manual as governments, medical authorities and law enforcement agencies have so obviously talked to – or rather at – the adult population since the 'Covid' hoax began as if they are children. The document said:

If a person is spoken to by a T.V. advertiser as if he were a twelve-year-old, then, due to suggestibility, he will, with a certain probability, respond or react to that suggestion with the uncritical response of a twelve-year-old and will reach in to his economic reservoir and deliver its energy to buy that product on impulse when he passes it in the store.

That's why authority has spoken to adults like children since all this began.

Why did Michael Jackson wear masks?

Every aspect of the 'Covid' narrative has mind-control as its central theme. Cathy O'Brien wrote an article for davidicke.com about the connection between masks and mind control. Her daughter Kelly who I first met in the 1990s was born while Cathy was still held captive in MKUltra. Kelly was forced to wear a mask as part of her programming from the age of *two* to dehumanise her, target her sense of individuality and reduce the amount of oxygen her brain and body received. *Bingo*. This is the real reason for compulsory

masks, why they have been enforced en masse, and why they seek to increase the number they demand you wear. First one, then two, with one disgraceful alleged 'doctor' recommending four which is nothing less than a death sentence. Where and how often they must be worn is being expanded for the purpose of mass mind control and damaging respiratory health which they can call 'Covid-19'. Canada's government headed by the man-child Justin Trudeau, says it's fine for children of two and older to wear masks. An insane 'study' in Italy involving just 47 children concluded there was no problem for babies as young as *four months* wearing them. Even after people were 'vaccinated' they were still told to wear masks by the criminal that is Anthony Fauci. Cathy wrote that mandating masks is allowing the authorities literally to control the air we breathe which is what was done in MKUltra. You might recall how the singer Michael Jackson wore masks and there is a reason for that. He was subjected to MKUltra mind control through Project Monarch and his psyche was scrambled by these simpletons. Cathy wrote:

In MKUltra Project Monarch mind control, Michael Jackson had to wear a mask to silence his voice so he could not reach out for help. Remember how he developed that whisper voice when he wasn't singing? Masks control the mind from the outside in, like the redefining of words is doing. By controlling what we can and cannot say for fear of being labeled racist or beaten, for example, it ultimately controls thought that drives our words and ultimately actions (or lack thereof).

Likewise, a mask muffles our speech so that we are not heard, which controls voice ... words ... mind. This is Mind Control. Masks are an obvious mind control device, and I am disturbed so many people are complying on a global scale. Masks depersonalize while making a person feel as though they have no voice. It is a barrier to others. People who would never choose to comply but are forced to wear a mask in order to keep their job, and ultimately their family fed, are compromised. They often feel shame and are subdued. People have stopped talking with each other while media controls the narrative.

The 'no voice' theme has often become literal with train passengers told not to speak to each other in case they pass on the 'virus', singing banned for the same reason and bonkers California officials telling people riding roller coasters that they cannot shout and scream. Cathy said she heard every day from healed MKUltra survivors who cannot wear a mask without flashing back on ways

their breathing was controlled – ‘from ball gags and penises to water boarding’. She said that through the years when she saw images of people in China wearing masks ‘due to pollution’ that it was really to control their oxygen levels. ‘I knew it was as much of a population control mechanism of depersonalisation as are burkas’, she said. Masks are another Chinese communist/fascist method of control that has been swept across the West as the West becomes China at lightning speed since we entered 2020.

Mask-19

There are other reasons for mandatory masks and these include destroying respiratory health to call it ‘Covid-19’ and stunting brain development of children and the young. Dr Margarite Griesz-Brisson MD, PhD, is a Consultant Neurologist and Neurophysiologist and the Founder and Medical Director of the London Neurology and Pain Clinic. Her CV goes down the street and round the corner. She is clearly someone who cares about people and won’t parrot the propaganda. Griesz-Brisson has a PhD in pharmacology, with special interest in neurotoxicology, environmental medicine, neuroregeneration and neuroplasticity (the way the brain can change in the light of information received). She went public in October, 2020, with a passionate warning about the effects of mask-wearing laws:

The reinhalation of our exhaled air will without a doubt create oxygen deficiency and a flooding of carbon dioxide. We know that the human brain is very sensitive to oxygen deprivation. There are nerve cells for example in the hippocampus that can’t be longer than 3 minutes without oxygen – they cannot survive. The acute warning symptoms are headaches, drowsiness, dizziness, issues in concentration, slowing down of reaction time – reactions of the cognitive system.

Oh, I know, let’s tell bus, truck and taxi drivers to wear them and people working machinery. How about pilots, doctors and police? Griesz-Brisson makes the important point that while the symptoms she mentions may fade as the body readjusts this does not alter the fact that people continue to operate in oxygen deficit with long list of

potential consequences. She said it was well known that neurodegenerative diseases take years or decades to develop. 'If today you forget your phone number, the breakdown in your brain would have already started 20 or 30 years ago.' She said degenerative processes in your brain are getting amplified as your oxygen deprivation continues through wearing a mask. Nerve cells in the brain are unable to divide themselves normally in these circumstances and lost nerve cells will no longer be regenerated. 'What is gone is gone.' Now consider that people like shop workers and *schoolchildren* are wearing masks for hours every day. What in the name of sanity is going to be happening to them? 'I do not wear a mask, I need my brain to think', Griesz-Brisson said, 'I want to have a clear head when I deal with my patients and not be in a carbon dioxide-induced anaesthesia'. If you are told to wear a mask anywhere ask the organisation, police, store, whatever, for their risk assessment on the dangers and negative effects on mind and body of enforcing mask-wearing. They won't have one because it has never been done not even by government. All of them must be subject to class-action lawsuits as the consequences come to light. They don't do mask risk assessments for an obvious reason. They know what the conclusions would be and independent scientific studies that *have* been done tell a horror story of consequences.

'Masks are criminal'

Dr Griesz-Brisson said that for children and adolescents, masks are an absolute no-no. They had an extremely active and adaptive immune system and their brain was incredibly active with so much to learn. 'The child's brain, or the youth's brain, is thirsting for oxygen.' The more metabolically active an organ was, the more oxygen it required; and in children and adolescents every organ was metabolically active. Griesz-Brisson said that to deprive a child's or adolescent's brain of oxygen, or to restrict it in any way, was not only dangerous to their health, it was absolutely criminal. 'Oxygen deficiency inhibits the development of the brain, and the damage that has taken place as a result CANNOT be reversed.' Mind

manipulators of MKUltra put masks on two-year-olds they wanted to neurologically rewire and you can see why. Griesz-Brisson said a child needs the brain to learn and the brain needs oxygen to function. 'We don't need a clinical study for that. This is simple, indisputable physiology.' Consciously and purposely induced oxygen deficiency was an absolutely deliberate health hazard, and an absolute medical contraindication which means that 'this drug, this therapy, this method or measure should not be used, and is not allowed to be used'. To coerce an entire population to use an absolute medical contraindication by force, she said, there had to be definite and serious reasons and the reasons must be presented to competent interdisciplinary and independent bodies to be verified and authorised. She had this warning of the consequences that were coming if mask wearing continued:

When, in ten years, dementia is going to increase exponentially, and the younger generations couldn't reach their god-given potential, it won't help to say 'we didn't need the masks'. I know how damaging oxygen deprivation is for the brain, cardiologists know how damaging it is for the heart, pulmonologists know how damaging it is for the lungs. Oxygen deprivation damages every single organ. Where are our health departments, our health insurance, our medical associations? It would have been their duty to be vehemently against the lockdown and to stop it and stop it from the very beginning.

Why do the medical boards issue punishments to doctors who give people exemptions? Does the person or the doctor seriously have to prove that oxygen deprivation harms people? What kind of medicine are our doctors and medical associations representing? Who is responsible for this crime? The ones who want to enforce it? The ones who let it happen and play along, or the ones who don't prevent it?

All of the organisations and people she mentions there either answer directly to the Cult or do whatever hierarchical levels above them tell them to do. The outcome of both is the same. 'It's not about masks, it's not about viruses, it's certainly not about your health', Griesz-Brisson said. 'It is about much, much more. I am not participating. I am not afraid.' They were taking our air to breathe and there was no unfounded medical exemption from face masks. Oxygen deprivation was dangerous for every single brain. It had to be the free decision of every human being whether they want to

wear a mask that was absolutely ineffective to protect themselves from a virus. She ended by rightly identifying where the responsibility lies for all this:

The imperative of the hour is personal responsibility. We are responsible for what we think, not the media. We are responsible for what we do, not our superiors. We are responsible for our health, not the World Health Organization. And we are responsible for what happens in our country, not the government.

Halle-bloody-lujah.

But surgeons wear masks, right?

Independent studies of mask-wearing have produced a long list of reports detailing mental, emotional and physical dangers. What a definition of insanity to see police officers imposing mask-wearing on the public which will cumulatively damage their health while the police themselves wear masks that will cumulatively damage *their* health. It's utter madness and both public and police do this because 'the government says so' – yes a government of brain-donor idiots like UK Health Secretary Matt Hancock reading the 'follow the science' scripts of psychopathic, lunatic psychologists. The response you get from Stockholm syndrome sufferers defending the very authorities that are destroying them and their families is that 'surgeons wear masks'. This is considered the game, set and match that they must work and don't cause oxygen deficit. Well, actually, scientific studies have shown that they *do* and oxygen levels are monitored in operating theatres to compensate. Surgeons wear masks to stop spittle and such like dropping into open wounds – not to stop 'viral particles' which are so miniscule they can only be seen through an electron microscope. Holes in the masks are significantly bigger than 'viral particles' and if you sneeze or cough they will breach the mask. I watched an incredibly disingenuous 'experiment' that claimed to prove that masks work in catching 'virus' material from the mouth and nose. They did this with a slow motion camera and the mask did block big stuff which stayed inside the mask and

against the face to be breathed in or cause infections on the face as we have seen with many children. 'Viral particles', however, would never have been picked up by the camera as they came through the mask when they are far too small to be seen. The 'experiment' was therefore disingenuous *and* useless.

Studies have concluded that wearing masks in operating theatres (and thus elsewhere) make no difference to preventing infection while the opposite is true with toxic shite building up in the mask and this had led to an explosion in tooth decay and gum disease dubbed by dentists 'mask mouth'. You might have seen the Internet video of a furious American doctor urging people to take off their masks after a four-year-old patient had been rushed to hospital the night before and nearly died with a lung infection that doctors sourced to mask wearing. A study in the journal *Cancer Discovery* found that inhalation of harmful microbes can contribute to advanced stage lung cancer in adults and long-term use of masks can help breed dangerous pathogens. Microbiologists have said frequent mask wearing creates a moist environment in which microbes can grow and proliferate before entering the lungs. The Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health, or CADTH, a Canadian national organisation that provides research and analysis to healthcare decision-makers, said this as long ago as 2013 in a report entitled 'Use of Surgical Masks in the Operating Room: A Review of the Clinical Effectiveness and Guidelines'. It said:

- No evidence was found to support the use of surgical face masks to reduce the frequency of surgical site infections
- No evidence was found on the effectiveness of wearing surgical face masks to protect staff from infectious material in the operating room.
- Guidelines recommend the use of surgical face masks by staff in the operating room to protect both operating room staff and patients (despite the lack of evidence).

We were told that the world could go back to 'normal' with the arrival of the 'vaccines'. When they came, fraudulent as they are, the story changed as I knew that it would. We are in the midst of transforming 'normal', not going back to it. Mary Ramsay, head of immunisation at Public Health England, echoed the words of US criminal Anthony Fauci who said masks and other regulations must stay no matter if people are vaccinated. The Fauci idiot continued to wear two masks – different colours so both could be clearly seen – after he *claimed* to have been vaccinated. Senator Rand Paul told Fauci in one exchange that his double-masks were 'theatre' and he was right. It's all theatre. Mary Ramsay back-tracked on the vaccine-return-to-normal theme when she said the public may need to wear masks and social-distance for years despite the jabs. 'People have got used to those lower-level restrictions now, and [they] can live with them', she said telling us what the idea has been all along. 'The vaccine does not give you a pass, even if you have had it, you must continue to follow all the guidelines' said a Public Health England statement which reneged on what we had been told before and made having the 'vaccine' irrelevant to 'normality' even by the official story. Spain's fascist government trumped everyone by passing a law mandating the wearing of masks on the beach and even when swimming in the sea. The move would have devastated what's left of the Spanish tourist industry, posed potential breathing dangers to swimmers and had Northern European sunbathers walking around with their forehead brown and the rest of their face white as a sheet. The ruling was so crazy that it had to be retracted after pressure from public and tourist industry, but it confirmed where the Cult wants to go with masks and how clinically insane authority has become. The determination to make masks permanent and hide the serious dangers to body and mind can be seen in the censorship of scientist Professor Denis Rancourt by Bill Gates-funded academic publishing website ResearchGate over his papers exposing the dangers and uselessness of masks. Rancourt said:

ResearchGate today has permanently locked my account, which I have had since 2015. Their reasons graphically show the nature of their attack against democracy, and their corruption of

science ... By their obscene non-logic, a scientific review of science articles reporting on harms caused by face masks has a 'potential to cause harm'. No criticism of the psychological device (face masks) is tolerated, if the said criticism shows potential to influence public policy.

This is what happens in a fascist world.

Where are the 'greens' (again)?

Other dangers of wearing masks especially regularly relate to the inhalation of minute plastic fibres into the lungs and the deluge of discarded masks in the environment and oceans. Estimates predicted that more than 1.5 billion disposable masks will end up in the world's oceans every year polluting the water with tons of plastic and endangering marine wildlife. Studies project that humans are using 129 billion face masks each month worldwide – about three million a minute. Most are disposable and made from plastic, non-biodegradable microfibers that break down into smaller plastic particles that become widespread in ecosystems. They are littering cities, clogging sewage channels and turning up in bodies of water. I have written in other books about the immense amounts of microplastics from endless sources now being absorbed into the body. Rolf Halden, director of the Arizona State University (ASU) Biodesign Center for Environmental Health Engineering, was the senior researcher in a 2020 study that analysed 47 human tissue samples and found microplastics in all of them. 'We have detected these chemicals of plastics in every single organ that we have investigated', he said. I wrote in *The Answer* about the world being deluged with microplastics. A study by the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) found that people are consuming on average every week some 2,000 tiny pieces of plastic mostly through water and also through marine life and the air. Every year humans are ingesting enough microplastics to fill a heaped dinner plate and in a life-time of 79 years it is enough to fill two large waste bins. Marco Lambertini, WWF International director general said: 'Not only are plastics polluting our oceans and waterways and killing marine life – it's in all of us and we can't escape consuming plastics,' American

geologists found tiny plastic fibres, beads and shards in rainwater samples collected from the remote slopes of the Rocky Mountain National Park near Denver, Colorado. Their report was headed: 'It is raining plastic.' Rachel Adams, senior lecturer in Biomedical Science at Cardiff Metropolitan University, said that among health consequences are internal inflammation and immune responses to a 'foreign body'. She further pointed out that microplastics become carriers of toxins including mercury, pesticides and dioxins (a known cause of cancer and reproductive and developmental problems). These toxins accumulate in the fatty tissues once they enter the body through microplastics. Now this is being compounded massively by people putting plastic on their face and throwing it away.

Workers exposed to polypropylene plastic fibres known as 'flock' have developed 'flock worker's lung' from inhaling small pieces of the flock fibres which can damage lung tissue, reduce breathing capacity and exacerbate other respiratory problems. *Now ...* commonly used surgical masks have three layers of melt-blown textiles made of ... polypropylene. We have billions of people putting these microplastics against their mouth, nose and face for hours at a time day after day in the form of masks. How does anyone think that will work out? I mean – what could possibly go wrong? We posted a number of scientific studies on this at davidicke.com, but when I went back to them as I was writing this book the links to the science research website where they were hosted were dead. Anything that challenges the official narrative in any way is either censored or vilified. The official narrative is so unsupportable by the evidence that only deleting the truth can protect it. A study by Chinese scientists still survived – with the usual twist which it why it was still active, I guess. Yes, they found that virtually all the masks they tested increased the daily intake of microplastic fibres, but people should still wear them because the danger from the 'virus' was worse said the crazy 'team' from the Institute of Hydrobiology in Wuhan. Scientists first discovered microplastics in lung tissue of some patients who died of lung cancer

in the 1990s. Subsequent studies have confirmed the potential health damage with the plastic degrading slowly and remaining in the lungs to accumulate in volume. Wuhan researchers used a machine simulating human breathing to establish that masks shed up to nearly 4,000 microplastic fibres in a month with reused masks producing more. Scientists said some masks are laced with toxic chemicals and a variety of compounds seriously restricted for both health and environmental reasons. They include cobalt (used in blue dye) and formaldehyde known to cause watery eyes, burning sensations in the eyes, nose, and throat, plus coughing, wheezing and nausea. No – that must be ‘Covid-19’.

Mask ‘worms’

There is another and potentially even more sinister content of masks. Mostly new masks of different makes filmed under a microscope around the world have been found to contain strange black fibres or ‘worms’ that appear to move or ‘crawl’ by themselves and react to heat and water. The nearest I have seen to them are the self-replicating fibres that are pulled out through the skin of those suffering from Morgellons disease which has been connected to the phenomena of ‘chemtrails’ which I will bring into the story later on. Morgellons fibres continue to grow outside the body and have a form of artificial intelligence. Black ‘worm’ fibres in masks have that kind of feel to them and there is a nanotechnology technique called ‘worm micelles’ which carry and release drugs or anything else you want to deliver to the body. For sure the suppression of humanity by mind altering drugs is the Cult agenda big time and the more excuses they can find to gain access to the body the more opportunities there are to make that happen whether through ‘vaccines’ or masks pushed against the mouth and nose for hours on end.

So let us summarise the pros and cons of masks:

Against masks: Breathing in your own carbon dioxide; depriving the body and brain of sufficient oxygen; build-up of toxins in the mask that can be breathed into the lungs and cause rashes on the face and 'mask-mouth'; breathing microplastic fibres and toxic chemicals into the lungs; dehumanisation and deleting individualisation by literally making people faceless; destroying human emotional interaction through facial expression and deleting parental connection with their babies which look for guidance to their facial expression.

For masks: They don't protect you from a 'virus' that doesn't exist and even if it did 'viral' particles are so minute they are smaller than the holes in the mask.

Governments, police, supermarkets, businesses, transport companies, and all the rest who seek to impose masks have done no risk assessment on their consequences for health and psychology and are now open to group lawsuits when the impact becomes clear with a cumulative epidemic of respiratory and other disease. Authorities will try to exploit these effects and hide the real cause by dubbing them 'Covid-19'. Can you imagine setting out to force the population to wear health-destroying masks without doing any assessment of the risks? It is criminal and it is evil, but then how many people targeted in this way, who see their children told to wear them all day at school, have asked for a risk assessment? Billions can't be imposed upon by the few unless the billions allow it. Oh, yes, with just a tinge of irony, 85 percent of all masks made worldwide come from *China*.

Wash your hands in toxic shite

'Covid' rules include the use of toxic sanitisers and again the health consequences of constantly applying toxins to be absorbed through the skin is obvious to any level of Renegade Mind. America's Food and Drug Administration (FDA) said that sanitisers are drugs and issued a warning about 75 dangerous brands which contain

methanol used in antifreeze and can cause death, kidney damage and blindness. The FDA circulated the following warning even for those brands that it claims to be safe:

Store hand sanitizer out of the reach of pets and children, and children should use it only with adult supervision. Do not drink hand sanitizer. This is particularly important for young children, especially toddlers, who may be attracted by the pleasant smell or brightly colored bottles of hand sanitizer.

Drinking even a small amount of hand sanitizer can cause alcohol poisoning in children. (However, there is no need to be concerned if your children eat with or lick their hands after using hand sanitizer.) During this coronavirus pandemic, poison control centers have had an increase in calls about accidental ingestion of hand sanitizer, so it is important that adults monitor young children's use.

Do not allow pets to swallow hand sanitizer. If you think your pet has eaten something potentially dangerous, call your veterinarian or a pet poison control center right away. Hand sanitizer is flammable and should be stored away from heat and flames. When using hand sanitizer, rub your hands until they feel completely dry before performing activities that may involve heat, sparks, static electricity, or open flames.

There you go, perfectly safe, then, and that's without even a mention of the toxins absorbed through the skin. Come on kids – sanitise your hands everywhere you go. It will save you from the 'virus'. Put all these elements together of the 'Covid' normal and see how much health and psychology is being cumulatively damaged, even devastated, to 'protect your health'. Makes sense, right? They are only imposing these things because they care, right? *Right?*

Submitting to insanity

Psychological reframing of the population goes very deep and is done in many less obvious ways. I hear people say how contradictory and crazy 'Covid' rules are and how they are ever changing. This is explained away by dismissing those involved as idiots. It is a big mistake. The Cult is delighted if its cold calculation is perceived as incompetence and idiocy when it is anything but. Oh, yes, there are idiots within the system – lots of them – but they are *administering* the Cult agenda, mostly unknowingly. They are not deciding and dictating it. The bulwark against tyranny is self-

respect, always has been, always will be. It is self-respect that has broken every tyranny in history. By its very nature self-respect will not bow to oppression and its perpetrators. There is so little self-respect that it's always the few that overturn dictators. Many may eventually follow, but the few with the iron spines (self-respect) kick it off and generate the momentum. The Cult targets self-respect in the knowledge that once this has gone only submission remains. Crazy, contradictory, ever-changing 'Covid' rules are systematically applied by psychologists to delete self-respect. They *want* you to see that the rules make no sense. It is one thing to decide to do something when *you* have made the choice based on evidence and logic. You still retain your self-respect. It is quite another when you can see what you are being told to do is insane, ridiculous and makes no sense, and *yet you still do it*. Your self-respect is extinguished and this has been happening as ever more obviously stupid and nonsensical things have been demanded and the great majority have complied even when they can see they are stupid and nonsensical.

People walk around in face-nappies knowing they are damaging their health and make no difference to a 'virus'. They do it in fear of not doing it. I know it's daft, but I'll do it anyway. When that happens something dies inside of you and submissive reframing has begun. Next there's a need to hide from yourself that you have conceded your self-respect and you convince yourself that you have not really submitted to fear and intimidation. You begin to believe that you are complying with craziness because it's the right thing to do. When first you concede your self-respect of $2+2 = 4$ to $2+2 = 5$ you *know* you are compromising your self-respect. Gradually to avoid facing that fact you begin to *believe* that $2+2=5$. You have been reframed and I have been watching this process happening in the human psyche on an industrial scale. The Cult is working to break your spirit and one of its major tools in that war is humiliation. I read how former American soldier Bradley Manning (later Chelsea Manning after a sex-change) was treated after being jailed for supplying WikiLeaks with documents exposing the enormity of

government and elite mendacity. Manning was isolated in solitary confinement for eight months, put under 24-hour surveillance, forced to hand over clothing before going to bed, and stand naked for every roll call. This is systematic humiliation. The introduction of anal swab 'Covid' tests in China has been done for the same reason to delete self-respect and induce compliant submission. Anal swabs are mandatory for incoming passengers in parts of China and American diplomats have said they were forced to undergo the indignity which would have been calculated humiliation by the Cult-owned Chinese government that has America in its sights.

Government-people: An abusive relationship

Spirit-breaking psychological techniques include giving people hope and apparent respite from tyranny only to take it away again. This happened in the UK during Christmas, 2020, when the psychopsychologists and their political lackeys announced an easing of restrictions over the holiday only to reimpose them almost immediately on the basis of yet another lie. There is a big psychological difference between getting used to oppression and being given hope of relief only to have that dashed. Psychologists know this and we have seen the technique used repeatedly. Then there is traumatising people before you introduce more extreme regulations that require compliance. A perfect case was the announcement by the dark and sinister Whitty and Vallance in the UK that 'new data' predicted that 4,000 could die every day over the winter of 2020/2021 if we did not lockdown again. I think they call it lying and after traumatising people with that claim out came Jackboot Johnson the next day with new curbs on human freedom. Psychologists know that a frightened and traumatised mind becomes suggestable to submission and behaviour reframing. Underpinning all this has been to make people fearful and suspicious of each other and see themselves as a potential danger to others. In league with deleted self-respect you have the perfect psychological recipe for self-loathing. The relationship between authority and public is now demonstrably the same as that of

subservience to an abusive partner. These are signs of an abusive relationship explained by psychologist Leslie Becker-Phelps:

Psychological and emotional abuse: Undermining a partner's self-worth with verbal attacks, name-calling, and belittling. Humiliating the partner in public, unjustly accusing them of having an affair, or interrogating them about their every behavior. Keeping partner confused or off balance by saying they were just kidding or blaming the partner for 'making' them act this way ... Feigning in public that they care while turning against them in private. This leads to victims frequently feeling confused, incompetent, unworthy, hopeless, and chronically self-doubting. [Apply these techniques to how governments have treated the population since New Year, 2020, and the parallels are obvious.]

Physical abuse: The abuser might physically harm their partner in a range of ways, such as grabbing, hitting, punching, or shoving them. They might throw objects at them or harm them with a weapon. [Observe the physical harm imposed by masks, lockdown, and so on.]

Threats and intimidation: One way abusers keep their partners in line is by instilling fear. They might be verbally threatening, or give threatening looks or gestures. Abusers often make it known that they are tracking their partner's every move. They might destroy their partner's possessions, threaten to harm them, or threaten to harm their family members. Not surprisingly, victims of this abuse often feel anxiety, fear, and panic. [No words necessary.]

Isolation: Abusers often limit their partner's activities, forbidding them to talk or interact with friends or family. They might limit access to a car or even turn off their phone. All of this might be done by physically holding them against their will, but is often accomplished through psychological abuse and intimidation. The more isolated a person feels, the fewer resources they have to help gain perspective on their situation and to escape from it. [No words necessary.]

Economic abuse: Abusers often make their partners beholden to them for money by controlling access to funds of any kind. They might prevent their partner from getting a job or withhold access to money they earn from a job. This creates financial dependency that makes leaving the relationship very difficult. [See destruction of livelihoods and the proposed meagre 'guaranteed income' so long as you do whatever you are told.]

Using children: An abuser might disparage their partner's parenting skills, tell their children lies about their partner, threaten to take custody of their children, or threaten to harm their children. These tactics instil fear and often elicit compliance. [See reframed social service mafia and how children are being mercilessly abused by the state over 'Covid' while their parents look on too frightened to do anything.]

A further recurring trait in an abusive relationship is the abused blaming themselves for their abuse and making excuses for the abuser. We have the public blaming each other for lockdown abuse by government and many making excuses for the government while attacking those who challenge the government. How often we have heard authorities say that rules are being imposed or reimposed only because people have refused to 'behave' and follow the rules. We don't want to do it – it's *you*.

Renegade Minds are an antidote to all of these things. They will never concede their self-respect no matter what the circumstances. Even when apparent humiliation is heaped upon them they laugh in its face and reflect back the humiliation on the abuser where it belongs. Renegade Minds will never wear masks they know are only imposed to humiliate, suppress and damage both physically and psychologically. Consequences will take care of themselves and they will never break their spirit or cause them to concede to tyranny. UK newspaper columnist Peter Hitchens was one of the few in the mainstream media to speak out against lockdowns and forced vaccinations. He then announced he had taken the jab. He wanted to see family members abroad and he believed vaccine passports were inevitable even though they had not yet been introduced. Hitchens

has a questioning and critical mind, but not a Renegade one. If he had no amount of pressure would have made him concede. Hitchens excused his action by saying that the battle has been lost. Renegade Minds never accept defeat when freedom is at stake and even if they are the last one standing the self-respect of not submitting to tyranny is more important than any outcome or any consequence.

That's why Renegade Minds are the only minds that ever changed anything worth changing.

CHAPTER EIGHT

'Reframing' insanity

Insanity is relative. It depends on who has who locked in what cage
Ray Bradbury

Reframing' a mind means simply to change its perception and behaviour. This can be done subconsciously to such an extent that subjects have no idea they have been 'reframed' while to any observer changes in behaviour and attitudes are obvious.

Human society is being reframed on a ginormous scale since the start of 2020 and here we have the reason why psychologists rather than doctors have been calling the shots. Ask most people who have succumbed to 'Covid' reframing if they have changed and most will say 'no'; but they *have* and fundamentally. The Cult's long-game has been preparing for these times since way back and crucial to that has been to prepare both population and officialdom mentally and emotionally. To use the mind-control parlance they had to reframe the population with a mentality that would submit to fascism and reframe those in government and law enforcement to impose fascism or at least go along with it. The result has been the fact-deleted mindlessness of 'Wokeness' and officialdom that has either enthusiastically or unquestioningly imposed global tyranny demanded by reframed politicians on behalf of psychopathic and deeply evil cultists. 'Cognitive reframing' identifies and challenges the way someone sees the world in the form of situations, experiences and emotions and then restructures those perceptions to view the same set of circumstances in a different way. This can have

benefits if the attitudes are personally destructive while on the other side it has the potential for individual and collective mind control which the subject has no idea has even happened.

Cognitive therapy was developed in the 1960s by Aaron T. Beck who was born in Rhode Island in 1921 as the son of Jewish immigrants from the Ukraine. He became interested in the techniques as a treatment for depression. Beck's daughter Judith S. Beck is prominent in the same field and they founded the Beck Institute for Cognitive Behavior Therapy in Philadelphia in 1994. Cognitive reframing, however, began to be used worldwide by those with a very dark agenda. The Cult reframes politicians to change their attitudes and actions until they are completely at odds with what they once appeared to stand for. The same has been happening to government administrators at all levels, law enforcement, military and the human population. Cultists love mind control for two main reasons: It allows them to control what people think, do and say to secure agenda advancement and, by definition, it calms their legendary insecurity and fear of the unexpected. I have studied mind control since the time I travelled America in 1996. I may have been talking to next to no one in terms of an audience in those years, but my goodness did I gather a phenomenal amount of information and knowledge about so many things including the techniques of mind control. I have described this in detail in other books going back to *The Biggest Secret* in 1998. I met a very large number of people recovering from MKUltra and its offshoots and successors and I began to see how these same techniques were being used on the population in general. This was never more obvious than since the 'Covid' hoax began.

Reframing the enforcers

I have observed over the last two decades and more the very clear transformation in the dynamic between the police, officialdom and the public. I tracked this in the books as the relationship mutated from one of serving the public to seeing them as almost the enemy and certainly a lower caste. There has always been a class divide

based on income and always been some psychopathic, corrupt, and big-I-am police officers. This was different. Wholesale change was unfolding in the collective dynamic; it was less about money and far more about position and perceived power. An us-and-them was emerging. Noses were lifted skyward by government administration and law enforcement and their attitude to the public they were *supposed* to be serving changed to one of increasing contempt, superiority and control. The transformation was so clear and widespread that it had to be planned. Collective attitudes and dynamics do not change naturally and organically that quickly on that scale. I then came across an organisation in Britain called Common Purpose created in the late 1980s by Julia Middleton who would work in the office of Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott during the long and disastrous premiership of war criminal Tony Blair. When Blair speaks the Cult is speaking and the man should have been in jail a long time ago. Common Purpose proclaims itself to be one of the biggest 'leadership development' organisations in the world while functioning as a *charity* with all the financial benefits which come from that. It hosts 'leadership development' courses and programmes all over the world and claims to have 'brought together' what it calls 'leaders' from more than 100 countries on six continents. The modus operandi of Common Purpose can be compared with the work of the UK government's reframing network that includes the Behavioural Insights Team 'nudge unit' and 'Covid' reframing specialists at SPI-B. WikiLeaks described Common Purpose long ago as 'a hidden virus in our government and schools' which is unknown to the general public: 'It recruits and trains "leaders" to be loyal to the directives of Common Purpose and the EU, instead of to their own departments, which they then undermine or subvert, the NHS [National Health Service] being an example.' This is a vital point to understand the 'Covid' hoax. The NHS, and its equivalent around the world, has been utterly reframed in terms of administrators and much of the medical personnel with the transformation underpinned by recruitment policies. The outcome has been the criminal and psychopathic behaviour of the

NHS over 'Covid' and we have seen the same in every other major country. WikiLeaks said Common Purpose trainees are 'learning to rule without regard to democracy' and to usher in a police state (current events explained). Common Purpose operated like a 'glue' and had members in the NHS, BBC, police, legal profession, church, many of Britain's 7,000 quangos, local councils, the Civil Service, government ministries and Parliament, and controlled many RDA's (Regional Development Agencies). Here we have one answer for how and why British institutions and their like in other countries have changed so negatively in relation to the public. This further explains how and why the beyond-disgraceful reframed BBC has become a propaganda arm of 'Covid' fascism. They are all part of a network pursuing the same goal.

By 2019 Common Purpose was quoting a figure of 85,000 'leaders' that had attended its programmes. These 'students' of all ages are known as Common Purpose 'graduates' and they consist of government, state and local government officials and administrators, police chiefs and officers, and a whole range of others operating within the national, local and global establishment. Cressida Dick, Commissioner of the London Metropolitan Police, is the Common Purpose graduate who was the 'Gold Commander' that oversaw what can only be described as the murder of Brazilian electrician Jean Charles de Menezes in 2005. He was held down by psychopathic police and shot seven times in the head by a psychopathic lunatic after being mistaken for a terrorist when he was just a bloke going about his day. Dick authorised officers to pursue and keep surveillance on de Menezes and ordered that he be stopped from entering the underground train system. Police psychopaths took her at her word clearly. She was 'disciplined' for this outrage by being *promoted* – eventually to the top of the 'Met' police where she has been a disaster. Many Chief Constables controlling the police in different parts of the UK are and have been Common Purpose graduates. I have heard the 'graduate' network described as a sort of Mafia or secret society operating within the fabric of government at all levels pursuing a collective policy

ingrained at Common Purpose training events. Founder Julia Middleton herself has said:

Locally and internationally, Common Purpose graduates will be 'lighting small fires' to create change in their organisations and communities ... The Common Purpose effect is best illustrated by the many stories of small changes brought about by leaders, who themselves have changed.

A Common Purpose mission statement declared:

Common Purpose aims to improve the way society works by expanding the vision, decision-making ability and influence of all kinds of leaders. The organisation runs a variety of educational programmes for leaders of all ages, backgrounds and sectors, in order to provide them with the inspirational, information and opportunities they need to change the world.

Yes, but into what? Since 2020 the answer has become clear.

NLP and the Delphi technique

Common Purpose would seem to be a perfect name or would common programming be better? One of the foundation methods of reaching 'consensus' (group think) is by setting the agenda theme and then encouraging, cajoling or pressuring everyone to agree a 'consensus' in line with the core theme promoted by Common Purpose. The methodology involves the 'Delphi technique', or an adaptation of it, in which opinions are expressed that are summarised by a 'facilitator or change agent' at each stage. Participants are 'encouraged' to modify their views in the light of what others have said. Stage by stage the former individual opinions are merged into group consensus which just happens to be what Common Purpose wants them to believe. A key part of this is to marginalise anyone refusing to concede to group think and turn the group against them to apply pressure to conform. We are seeing this very technique used on the general population to make 'Covid' group-thinkers hostile to those who have seen through the bullshit. People can be reframed by using perception manipulation methods such as Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) in which you change perception with the use of

carefully constructed language. An NLP website described the technique this way:

... A method of influencing brain behaviour (the 'neuro' part of the phrase) through the use of language (the 'linguistic' part) and other types of communication to enable a person to 'recode' the way the brain responds to stimuli (that's the 'programming') and manifest new and better behaviours. Neuro-Linguistic Programming often incorporates hypnosis and self-hypnosis to help achieve the change (or 'programming') that is wanted.

British alternative media operation UKColumn has done very detailed research into Common Purpose over a long period. I quoted co-founder and former naval officer Brian Gerrish in my book *Remember Who You Are*, published in 2011, as saying the following years before current times:

It is interesting that many of the mothers who have had children taken by the State speak of the Social Services people being icily cool, emotionless and, as two ladies said in slightly different words, '... like little robots'. We know that NLP is cumulative, so people can be given small imperceptible doses of NLP in a course here, another in a few months, next year etc. In this way, major changes are accrued in their personality, but the day by day change is almost unnoticeable.

In these and other ways 'graduates' have had their perceptions uniformly reframed and they return to their roles in the institutions of government, law enforcement, legal profession, military, 'education', the UK National Health Service and the whole swathe of the establishment structure to pursue a common agenda preparing for the 'post-industrial', 'post-democratic' society. I say 'preparing' but we are now there. 'Post-industrial' is code for the Great Reset and 'post-democratic' is 'Covid' fascism. UKColumn has spoken to partners of those who have attended Common Purpose 'training'. They have described how personalities and attitudes of 'graduates' changed very noticeably for the worse by the time they had completed the course. They had been 'reframed' and told they are the 'leaders' – the special ones – who know better than the population. There has also been the very demonstrable recruitment of psychopaths and narcissists into government administration at all

levels and law enforcement. If you want psychopathy hire psychopaths and you get a simple cause and effect. If you want administrators, police officers and 'leaders' to perceive the public as lesser beings who don't matter then employ narcissists. These personalities are identified using 'psychometrics' that identifies knowledge, abilities, attitudes and personality traits, mostly through carefully-designed questionnaires and tests. As this policy has passed through the decades we have had power-crazy, power-trippers appointed into law enforcement, security and government administration in preparation for current times and the dynamic between public and law enforcement/officialdom has been transformed. UKColumn's Brian Gerrish said of the narcissistic personality:

Their love of themselves and power automatically means that they will crush others who get in their way. I received a major piece of the puzzle when a friend pointed out that when they made public officials re-apply for their own jobs several years ago they were also required to do psychometric tests. This was undoubtedly the start of the screening process to get 'their' sort of people in post.

How obvious that has been since 2020 although it was clear what was happening long before if people paid attention to the changing public-establishment dynamic.

Change agents

At the centre of events in 'Covid' Britain is the National Health Service (NHS) which has behaved disgracefully in slavishly following the Cult agenda. The NHS management structure is awash with Common Purpose graduates or 'change agents' working to a common cause. Helen Bevan, a Chief of Service Transformation at the NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement, co-authored a document called 'Towards a million change agents, a review of the social movements literature: implications for large scale change in the NHS'. The document compared a project management approach to that of change and social movements where 'people change

themselves and each other – peer to peer’. Two definitions given for a ‘social movement’ were:

A group of people who consciously attempt to build a radically new social order; involves people of a broad range of social backgrounds; and deploys politically confrontational and socially disruptive tactics – Cyrus Zirakzadeh 1997

Collective challenges, based on common purposes and social solidarities, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents, and authorities – Sidney Tarrow 1994

Helen Bevan wrote another NHS document in which she defined ‘framing’ as ‘the process by which leaders construct, articulate and put across their message in a powerful and compelling way in order to win people to their cause and call them to action’. I think I could come up with another definition that would be rather more accurate. The National Health Service and institutions of Britain and the wider world have been taken over by reframed ‘change agents’ and that includes everything from the United Nations to national governments, local councils and social services which have been kidnapping children from loving parents on an extraordinary and gathering scale on the road to the end of parenthood altogether. Children from loving homes are stolen and kidnapped by the state and put into the ‘care’ (inversion) of the local authority through council homes, foster parents and forced adoption. At the same time children are allowed to be abused without response while many are under council ‘care’. UKColumn highlighted the Common Purpose connection between South Yorkshire Police and Rotherham council officers in the case of the scandal in that area of the sexual exploitation of children to which the authorities turned not one blind eye, but both:

We were alarmed to discover that the Chief Executive, the Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services, the Manager for the Local Strategic Partnership, the Community Cohesion Manager, the Cabinet Member for Cohesion, the Chief Constable and his predecessor had all attended Leadership training courses provided by the pseudo-charity Common Purpose.

Once 'change agents' have secured positions of hire and fire within any organisation things start to move very quickly. Personnel are then hired and fired on the basis of whether they will work towards the agenda the change agent represents. If they do they are rapidly promoted even though they may be incompetent. Those more qualified and skilled who are pre-Common Purpose 'old school' see their careers stall and even disappear. This has been happening for decades in every institution of state, police, 'health' and social services and all of them have been transformed as a result in their attitudes to their jobs and the public. Medical professions, including nursing, which were once vocations for the caring now employ many cold, callous and couldn't give a shit personality types. The UKColumn investigation concluded:

By blurring the boundaries between people, professions, public and private sectors, responsibility and accountability, Common Purpose encourages 'graduates' to believe that as new selected leaders, they can work together, outside of the established political and social structures, to achieve a paradigm shift or CHANGE – so called 'Leading Beyond Authority'. In doing so, the allegiance of the individual becomes 'reframed' on CP colleagues and their NETWORK.

Reframing the Face-Nappies

Nowhere has this process been more obvious than in the police where recruitment of psychopaths and development of unquestioning mind-controlled group-thinkers have transformed law enforcement into a politically-correct 'Woke' joke and a travesty of what should be public service. Today they wear their face-nappies like good little gofers and enforce 'Covid' rules which are fascism under another name. Alongside the specifically-recruited psychopaths we have software minds incapable of free thought. Brian Gerrish again:

An example is the policeman who would not get on a bike for a press photo because he had not done the cycling proficiency course. Normal people say this is political correctness gone mad. Nothing could be further from the truth. The policeman has been reframed, and in his reality it is perfect common sense not to get on the bike 'because he hasn't done the cycling course'.

Another example of this is where the police would not rescue a boy from a pond until they had taken advice from above on the 'risk assessment'. A normal person would have arrived, perhaps thought of the risk for a moment, and dived in. To the police now 'reframed', they followed 'normal' procedure.

There are shocking cases of reframed ambulance crews doing the same. Sheer unthinking stupidity of London Face-Nappies headed by Common Purpose graduate Cressida Dick can be seen in their behaviour at a vigil in March, 2021, for a murdered woman, Sarah Everard. A police officer had been charged with the crime. Anyone with a brain would have left the vigil alone in the circumstances. Instead they 'manhandled' women to stop them breaking 'Covid rules' to betray classic reframing. Minds in the thrall of perception control have no capacity for seeing a situation on its merits and acting accordingly. 'Rules is rules' is their only mind-set. My father used to say that rules and regulations are for the guidance of the intelligent and the blind obedience of the idiot. Most of the intelligent, decent, coppers have gone leaving only the other kind and a few old school for whom the job must be a daily nightmare. The combination of psychopaths and rule-book software minds has been clearly on public display in the 'Covid' era with automaton robots in uniform imposing fascistic 'Covid' regulations on the population without any personal initiative or judging situations on their merits. There are thousands of examples around the world, but I'll make my point with the infamous Derbyshire police in the English East Midlands – the ones who think pouring dye into beauty spots and using drones to track people walking in the countryside away from anyone is called 'policing'. To them there are rules decreed by the government which they have to enforce and in their bewildered state a group gathering in a closed space and someone walking alone in the countryside are the same thing. It is beyond idiocy and enters the realm of clinical insanity.

Police officers in Derbyshire said they were 'horrified' – *horrified* – to find 15 to 20 'irresponsible' kids playing a football match at a closed leisure centre 'in breach of coronavirus restrictions'. When they saw the police the kids ran away leaving their belongings behind and the reframed men and women of Derbyshire police were seeking to establish their identities with a view to fining their parents. The most natural thing for youngsters to do – kicking a ball about – is turned into a criminal activity and enforced by the moronic software programs of Derbyshire police. You find the same mentality in every country. These barely conscious 'horrified' officers said they had to take action because 'we need to ensure these rules are being followed' and 'it is of the utmost importance that you ensure your children are following the rules and regulations for Covid-19'. Had any of them done ten seconds of research to see if this parroting of their masters' script could be supported by any evidence? Nope. Reframed people don't think – others think for them and that's the whole idea of reframing. I have seen police officers one after the other repeating without question word for word what officialdom tells them just as I have seen great swathes of the public doing the same. Ask either for 'their' opinion and out spews what they have been told to think by the official narrative. Police and public may seem to be in different groups, but their mentality is the same. Most people do whatever they are told in fear not doing so or because they believe what officialdom tells them; almost the entirety of the police do what they are told for the same reason. Ultimately it's the tiny inner core of the global Cult that's telling both what to do.

So Derbyshire police were 'horrified'. Oh, really? Why did they think those kids were playing football? It was to relieve the psychological consequences of lockdown and being denied human contact with their friends and interaction, touch and discourse vital to human psychological health. Being denied this month after month has dismantled the psyche of many children and young people as depression and suicide have exploded. Were Derbyshire police *horrified by that*? Are you kidding? Reframed people don't have those

mental and emotional processes that can see how the impact on the psychological health of youngsters is far more dangerous than any 'virus' even if you take the mendacious official figures to be true. The reframed are told (programmed) how to act and so they do. The Derbyshire Chief Constable in the first period of lockdown when the black dye and drones nonsense was going on was Peter Goodman. He was the man who severed the connection between his force and the Derbyshire Constabulary *Male Voice* Choir when he decided that it was not inclusive enough to allow women to join. The fact it was a male voice choir making a particular sound produced by male voices seemed to elude a guy who terrifyingly ran policing in Derbyshire. He retired weeks after his force was condemned as disgraceful by former Supreme Court Justice Jonathan Sumption for their behaviour over extreme lockdown impositions. Goodman was replaced by his deputy Rachel Swann who was in charge when her officers were 'horrified'. The police statement over the boys committing the hanging-offence of playing football included the line about the youngsters being 'irresponsible in the times we are all living through' missing the point that the real relevance of the 'times we are all living through' is the imposition of fascism enforced by psychopaths and reframed minds of police officers playing such a vital part in establishing the fascist tyranny that their own children and grandchildren will have to live in their entire lives. As a definition of insanity that is hard to beat although it might be run close by imposing masks on people that can have a serious effect on their health while wearing a face nappy all day themselves. Once again public and police do it for the same reason – the authorities tell them to and who are they to have the self-respect to say no?

Workers in uniform

How reframed do you have to be to arrest a *six-year-old* and take him to court for *picking a flower* while waiting for a bus? Brain dead police and officialdom did just that in North Carolina where criminal proceedings happen regularly for children under nine. Attorney Julie Boyer gave the six-year-old crayons and a colouring book

during the 'flower' hearing while the 'adults' decided his fate. County Chief District Court Judge Jay Corpening asked: 'Should a child that believes in Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny and the tooth fairy be making life-altering decisions?' Well, of course not, but common sense has no meaning when you have a common purpose and a reframed mind. Treating children in this way, and police operating in American schools, is all part of the psychological preparation for children to accept a police state as normal all their adult lives. The same goes for all the cameras and biometric tracking technology in schools. Police training is focused on reframing them as snowflake Wokers and this is happening in the military. Pentagon top brass said that 'training sessions on extremism' were needed for troops who asked why they were so focused on the Capitol Building riot when Black Lives Matter riots were ignored. What's the difference between them some apparently and rightly asked. Actually, there is a difference. Five people died in the Capitol riot, only one through violence, and that was a police officer shooting an unarmed protestor. BLM riots killed at least 25 people and cost billions. Asking the question prompted the psychopaths and reframed minds that run the Pentagon to say that more 'education' (programming) was needed. Troop training is all based on psychological programming to make them fodder for the Cult – 'Military men are just dumb, stupid animals to be used as pawns in foreign policy' as Cult-to-his-DNA former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger famously said. Governments see the police in similar terms and it's time for those among them who can see this to defend the people and stop being enforcers of the Cult agenda upon the people.

The US military, like the country itself, is being targeted for destruction through a long list of Woke impositions. Cult-owned gaga 'President' Biden signed an executive order when he took office to allow taxpayer money to pay for transgender surgery for active military personnel and veterans. Are you a man soldier? No, I'm a LGBTQIA+ with a hint of Skoliosexual and Spectrasexual. Oh, good man. Bad choice of words you bigot. The Pentagon announced in March, 2021, the appointment of the first 'diversity and inclusion

officer' for US Special Forces. Richard Torres-Estrada arrived with the publication of a 'D&I Strategic Plan which will guide the enterprise-wide effort to institutionalize and sustain D&I'. If you think a Special Forces 'Strategic Plan' should have something to do with defending America you haven't been paying attention. Defending Woke is now the military's new role. Torres-Estrada has posted images comparing Donald Trump with Adolf Hitler and we can expect no bias from him as a representative of the supposedly non-political Pentagon. Cable news host Tucker Carlson said: 'The Pentagon is now the Yale faculty lounge but with cruise missiles.' Meanwhile Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, a board member of weapons-maker Raytheon with stock and compensation interests in October, 2020, worth \$1.4 million, said he was purging the military of the 'enemy within' – anyone who isn't Woke and supports Donald Trump. Austin refers to his targets as 'racist extremists' while in true Woke fashion being himself a racist extremist. Pentagon documents pledge to 'eradicate, eliminate and conquer all forms of racism, sexism and homophobia'. The definitions of these are decided by 'diversity and inclusion committees' peopled by those who see racism, sexism and homophobia in every situation and opinion. Woke (the Cult) is dismantling the US military and purging testosterone as China expands its military and gives its troops 'masculinity training'. How do we think that is going to end when this is all Cult coordinated? The US military, like the British military, is controlled by Woke and spineless top brass who just go along with it out of personal career interests.

'Woke' means fast asleep

Mind control and perception manipulation techniques used on individuals to create group-think have been unleashed on the global population in general. As a result many have no capacity to see the obvious fascist agenda being installed all around them or what 'Covid' is really all about. Their brains are firewalled like a computer system not to process certain concepts, thoughts and realisations that are bad for the Cult. The young are most targeted as the adults they

will be when the whole fascist global state is planned to be fully implemented. They need to be prepared for total compliance to eliminate all pushback from entire generations. The Cult has been pouring billions into taking complete control of 'education' from schools to universities via its operatives and corporations and not least Bill Gates as always. The plan has been to transform 'education' institutions into programming centres for the mentality of 'Woke'. James McConnell, professor of psychology at the University of Michigan, wrote in *Psychology Today* in 1970:

The day has come when we can combine sensory deprivation with drugs, hypnosis, and astute manipulation of reward and punishment, to gain almost absolute control over an individual's behaviour. It should then be possible to achieve a very rapid and highly effective type of brainwashing that would allow us to make dramatic changes in a person's behaviour and personality ...

... We should reshape society so that we all would be trained from birth to want to do what society wants us to do. We have the techniques to do it... no-one owns his own personality you acquired, and there's no reason to believe you should have the right to refuse to acquire a new personality if your old one is anti-social.

This was the potential for mass brainwashing in 1970 and the mentality there displayed captures the arrogant psychopathy that drives it forward. I emphasise that not all young people have succumbed to Woke programming and those that haven't are incredibly impressive people given that today's young are the most perceptually-targeted generations in history with all the technology now involved. Vast swathes of the young generations, however, have fallen into the spell – and that's what it is – of Woke. The Woke mentality and perceptual program is founded on *inversion* and you will appreciate later why that is so significant. Everything with Woke is inverted and the opposite of what it is claimed to be. Woke was a term used in African-American culture from the 1900s and referred to an awareness of social and racial justice. This is not the meaning of the modern version or 'New Woke' as I call it in *The Answer*. Oh, no, Woke today means something very different no matter how much Wokers may seek to hide that and insist Old Woke and New

Woke are the same. See if you find any 'awareness of social justice' here in the modern variety:

- Woke demands 'inclusivity' while excluding anyone with a different opinion and calls for mass censorship to silence other views.
- Woke claims to stand against oppression when imposing oppression is the foundation of all that it does. It is the driver of political correctness which is nothing more than a Cult invention to manipulate the population to silence itself.
- Woke believes itself to be 'liberal' while pursuing a global society that can only be described as fascist (see 'anti-fascist' fascist Antifa).
- Woke calls for 'social justice' while spreading injustice wherever it goes against the common 'enemy' which can be easily identified as a differing view.
- Woke is supposed to be a metaphor for 'awake' when it is solid-gold asleep and deep in a Cult-induced coma that meets the criteria for 'off with the fairies'.

I state these points as obvious facts if people only care to look. I don't do this with a sense of condemnation. We need to appreciate that the onslaught of perceptual programming on the young has been incessant and merciless. I can understand why so many have been reframed, or, given their youth, framed from the start to see the world as the Cult demands. The Cult has had access to their minds day after day in its 'education' system for their entire formative years. Perception is formed from information received and the Cult-created system is a life-long download of information delivered to elicit a particular perception, thus behaviour. The more this has expanded into still new extremes in recent decades and ever-increasing censorship has deleted other opinions and information why wouldn't that lead to a perceptual reframing on a mass scale? I

have described already cradle-to-grave programming and in more recent times the targeting of young minds from birth to adulthood has entered the stratosphere. This has taken the form of skewing what is 'taught' to fit the Cult agenda and the omnipresent techniques of group-think to isolate non-believers and pressure them into line. There has always been a tendency to follow the herd, but we really are in a new world now in relation to that. We have parents who can see the 'Covid' hoax told by their children not to stop them wearing masks at school, being 'Covid' tested or having the 'vaccine' in fear of the peer-pressure consequences of being different. What is 'peer-pressure' if not pressure to conform to group-think? Renegade Minds never group-think and always retain a set of perceptions that are unique to them. Group-think is always underpinned by consequences for not group-thinking. Abuse now aimed at those refusing DNA-manipulating 'Covid vaccines' are a potent example of this. The biggest pressure to conform comes from the very group which is itself being manipulated. 'I am programmed to be part of a hive mind and so you must be.'

Woke control structures in 'education' now apply to every mainstream organisation. Those at the top of the 'education' hierarchy (the Cult) decide the policy. This is imposed on governments through the Cult network; governments impose it on schools, colleges and universities; their leadership impose the policy on teachers and academics and they impose it on children and students. At any level where there is resistance, perhaps from a teacher or university lecturer, they are targeted by the authorities and often fired. Students themselves regularly demand the dismissal of academics (increasingly few) at odds with the narrative that the students have been programmed to believe in. It is quite a thought that students who are being targeted by the Cult become so consumed by programmed group-think that they launch protests and demand the removal of those who are trying to push back against those targeting the students. Such is the scale of perceptual inversion. We see this with 'Covid' programming as the Cult imposes the rules via psycho-psychologists and governments on

shops, transport companies and businesses which impose them on their staff who impose them on their customers who pressure Pushbackers to conform to the will of the Cult which is in the process of destroying them and their families. Scan all aspects of society and you will see the same sequence every time.

Fact free Woke and hijacking the 'left'

There is no more potent example of this than 'Woke', a mentality only made possible by the deletion of factual evidence by an 'education' system seeking to produce an ever more uniform society. Why would you bother with facts when you don't know any? Deletion of credible history both in volume and type is highly relevant. Orwell said: 'Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past.' They who control the perception of the past control the perception of the future and they who control the present control the perception of the past through the writing and deleting of history. Why would you oppose the imposition of Marxism in the name of Wokeism when you don't know that Marxism cost at least 100 million lives in the 20th century alone? Watch videos and read reports in which Woker generations are asked basic historical questions – it's mind-blowing. A survey of 2,000 people found that six percent of millennials (born approximately early 1980s to early 2000s) believed the Second World War (1939-1945) broke out with the assassination of President Kennedy (in 1963) and one in ten thought Margaret Thatcher was British Prime Minister at the time. She was in office between 1979 and 1990. We are in a post-fact society. Provable facts are no defence against the fascism of political correctness or Silicon Valley censorship. Facts don't matter anymore as we have witnessed with the 'Covid' hoax. Sacrificing uniqueness to the Woke group-think religion is all you are required to do and that means thinking for yourself is the biggest Woke no, no. All religions are an expression of group-think and censorship and Woke is just another religion with an orthodoxy defended by group-think and censorship. Burned at

the stake becomes burned on Twitter which leads back eventually to burned at the stake as Woke humanity regresses to ages past.

The biggest Woke inversion of all is its creators and funders. I grew up in a traditional left of centre political household on a council estate in Leicester in the 1950s and 60s – you know, the left that challenged the power of wealth-hoarding elites and threats to freedom of speech and opinion. In those days students went on marches defending freedom of speech while today's Wokers march for its deletion. What on earth could have happened? Those very elites (collectively the Cult) that we opposed in my youth and early life have funded into existence the antithesis of that former left and hijacked the 'brand' while inverting everything it ever stood for. We have a mentality that calls itself 'liberal' and 'progressive' while acting like fascists. Cult billionaires and their corporations have funded themselves into control of 'education' to ensure that Woke programming is unceasing throughout the formative years of children and young people and that non-Wokers are isolated (that word again) whether they be students, teachers or college professors. The Cult has funded into existence the now colossal global network of Woke organisations that have spawned and promoted all the 'causes' on the Cult wish-list for global transformation and turned Wokers into demanders of them. Does anyone really think it's a coincidence that the Cult agenda for humanity is a carbon (sorry) copy of the societal transformations desired by Woke?? These are only some of them:

Political correctness: The means by which the Cult deletes all public debates that it knows it cannot win if we had the free-flow of information and evidence.

Human-caused 'climate change': The means by which the Cult seeks to transform society into a globally-controlled dictatorship imposing its will over the fine detail of everyone's lives 'to save the planet' which doesn't actually need saving.

Transgender obsession: Preparing collective perception to accept the 'new human' which would not have genders because it would be created technologically and not through procreation. I'll have much more on this in Human 2.0.

Race obsession: The means by which the Cult seeks to divide and rule the population by triggering racial division through the perception that society is more racist than ever when the opposite is the case. Is it perfect in that regard? No. But to compare today with the racism of apartheid and segregation brought to an end by the civil rights movement in the 1960s is to insult the memory of that movement and inspirations like Martin Luther King. Why is the 'anti-racism' industry (which it is) so dominated by privileged white people?

White supremacy: This is a label used by privileged white people to demonise poor and deprived white people pushing back on tyranny to marginalise and destroy them. White people are being especially targeted as the dominant race by number within Western society which the Cult seeks to transform in its image. If you want to change a society you must weaken and undermine its biggest group and once you have done that by using the other groups you next turn on them to do the same ... 'Then they came for the Jews and I was not a Jew so I did nothing.'

Mass migration: The mass movement of people from the Middle East, Africa and Asia into Europe, from the south into the United States and from Asia into Australia are another way the Cult seeks to dilute the racial, cultural and political influence of white people on Western society. White people ask why their governments appear to be working against them while being politically and culturally biased towards incoming cultures. Well, here's your answer. In the same way sexually 'straight' people, men and women, ask why the

authorities are biased against them in favour of other sexualities. The answer is the same – that's the way the Cult wants it to be for very sinister motives.

These are all central parts of the Cult agenda and central parts of the Woke agenda and Woke was created and continues to be funded to an immense degree by Cult billionaires and corporations. If anyone begins to say 'coincidence' the syllables should stick in their throat.

Billionaire 'social justice warriors'

Joe Biden is a 100 percent-owned asset of the Cult and the Wokers' man in the White House whenever he can remember his name and for however long he lasts with his rapidly diminishing cognitive function. Even walking up the steps of an aircraft without falling on his arse would appear to be a challenge. He's not an empty-shell puppet or anything. From the minute Biden took office (or the Cult did) he began his executive orders promoting the Woke wish-list. You will see the Woke agenda imposed ever more severely because it's really the *Cult* agenda. Woke organisations and activist networks spawned by the Cult are funded to the extreme so long as they promote what the Cult wants to happen. Woke is funded to promote 'social justice' by billionaires who become billionaires by destroying social justice. The social justice mantra is only a cover for dismantling social justice and funded by billionaires that couldn't give a damn about social justice. Everything makes sense when you see that. One of Woke's premier funders is Cult billionaire financier George Soros who said: 'I am basically there to make money, I cannot and do not look at the social consequences of what I do.' This is the same Soros who has given more than \$32 billion to his Open Society Foundations global Woke network and funded Black Lives Matter, mass immigration into Europe and the United States, transgender activism, climate change activism, political correctness and groups targeting 'white supremacy' in the form of privileged white thugs that dominate Antifa. What a scam it all is and when

you are dealing with the unquestioning fact-free zone of Woke scamming them is child's play. All you need to pull it off in all these organisations are a few in-the-know agents of the Cult and an army of naïve, reframed, uninformed, narcissistic, know-nothings convinced of their own self-righteousness, self-purity and virtue.

Soros and fellow billionaires and billionaire corporations have poured hundreds of millions into Black Lives Matter and connected groups and promoted them to a global audience. None of this is motivated by caring about black people. These are the billionaires that have controlled and exploited a system that leaves millions of black people in abject poverty and deprivation which they do absolutely nothing to address. The same Cult networks funding BLM were behind the *slave trade*! Black Lives Matter hijacked a phrase that few would challenge and they have turned this laudable concept into a political weapon to divide society. You know that BLM is a fraud when it claims that *All Lives Matter*, the most inclusive statement of all, is 'racist'. BLM and its Cult masters don't want to end racism. To them it's a means to an end to control all of humanity never mind the colour, creed, culture or background. What has destroying the nuclear family got to do with ending racism? Nothing – but that is one of the goals of BLM and also happens to be a goal of the Cult as I have been exposing in my books for decades. Stealing children from loving parents and giving schools ever more power to override parents is part of that same agenda. BLM is a Marxist organisation and why would that not be the case when the Cult created Marxism *and* BLM? Patrisse Cullors, a BLM co-founder, said in a 2015 video that she and her fellow organisers, including co-founder Alicia Garza, are 'trained Marxists'. The lady known after marriage as Patrisse Khan-Cullors bought a \$1.4 million home in 2021 in one of the whitest areas of California with a black population of just 1.6 per cent and has so far bought *four* high-end homes for a total of \$3.2 million. How very Marxist. There must be a bit of spare in the BLM coffers, however, when Cult corporations and billionaires have handed over the best part of \$100 million. Many black people can see that Black Lives Matter is not

working for them, but against them, and this is still more confirmation. Black journalist Jason Whitlock, who had his account suspended by Twitter for simply linking to the story about the 'Marxist's' home buying spree, said that BLM leaders are 'making millions of dollars off the backs of these dead black men who they wouldn't spit on if they were on fire and alive'.

Black Lies Matter

Cult assets and agencies came together to promote BLM in the wake of the death of career criminal George Floyd who had been jailed a number of times including for forcing his way into the home of a black woman with others in a raid in which a gun was pointed at her stomach. Floyd was filmed being held in a Minneapolis street in 2020 with the knee of a police officer on his neck and he subsequently died. It was an appalling thing for the officer to do, but the same technique has been used by police on peaceful protestors of lockdown without any outcry from the Woke brigade. As unquestioning supporters of the Cult agenda Wokers have supported lockdown and all the 'Covid' claptrap while attacking anyone standing up to the tyranny imposed in its name. Court documents would later include details of an autopsy on Floyd by County Medical Examiner Dr Andrew Baker who concluded that Floyd had taken a fatal level of the drug fentanyl. None of this mattered to fact-free, question-free, Woke. Floyd's death was followed by worldwide protests against police brutality amid calls to defund the police. Throwing babies out with the bathwater is a Woke speciality. In the wake of the murder of British woman Sarah Everard a Green Party member of the House of Lords, Baroness Jones of Moulscroomb (Nincompoopia would have been better), called for a 6pm curfew for all men. This would be in breach of the Geneva Conventions on war crimes which ban collective punishment, but that would never have crossed the black and white Woke mind of Baroness Nincompoopia who would have been far too convinced of her own self-righteousness to compute such details. Many American cities did defund the police in the face of Floyd riots

and after \$15 million was deleted from the police budget in Washington DC under useless Woke mayor Muriel Bowser car-jacking alone rose by 300 percent and within six months the US capital recorded its highest murder rate in 15 years. The same happened in Chicago and other cities in line with the Cult/Soros plan to bring fear to streets and neighbourhoods by reducing the police, releasing violent criminals and not prosecuting crime. This is the mob-rule agenda that I have warned in the books was coming for so long. Shootings in the area of Minneapolis where Floyd was arrested increased by 2,500 percent compared with the year before. Defunding the police over George Floyd has led to a big increase in dead people with many of them black. Police protection for politicians making these decisions stayed the same or increased as you would expect from professional hypocrites. The Cult doesn't actually want to abolish the police. It wants to abolish local control over the police and hand it to federal government as the psychopaths advance the Hunger Games Society. Many George Floyd protests turned into violent riots with black stores and businesses destroyed by fire and looting across America fuelled by Black Lives Matter. Woke doesn't do irony. If you want civil rights you must loot the liquor store and the supermarket and make off with a smart TV. It's the only way.

It's not a race war – it's a class war

Black people are patronised by privileged blacks and whites alike and told they are victims of white supremacy. I find it extraordinary to watch privileged blacks supporting the very system and bloodline networks behind the slave trade and parroting the same Cult-serving manipulative crap of their privileged white, often billionaire, associates. It is indeed not a race war but a class war and colour is just a diversion. Black Senator Cory Booker and black Congresswoman Maxine Waters, more residents of Nincompoopia, personify this. Once you tell people they are victims of someone else you devalue both their own responsibility for their plight and the power they have to impact on their reality and experience. Instead

we have: 'You are only in your situation because of whitey – turn on them and everything will change.' It won't change. Nothing changes in our lives unless *we* change it. Crucial to that is never seeing yourself as a victim and always as the creator of your reality. Life is a simple sequence of choice and consequence. Make different choices and you create different consequences. *You* have to make those choices – not Black Lives Matter, the Woke Mafia and anyone else that seeks to dictate your life. Who are they these Wokers, an emotional and psychological road traffic accident, to tell you what to do? Personal empowerment is the last thing the Cult and its Black Lives Matter want black people or anyone else to have. They claim to be defending the underdog while *creating* and perpetuating the underdog. The Cult's worst nightmare is human unity and if they are going to keep blacks, whites and every other race under economic servitude and control then the focus must be diverted from what they have in common to what they can be manipulated to believe divides them. Blacks have to be told that their poverty and plight is the fault of the white bloke living on the street in the same poverty and with the same plight they are experiencing. The difference is that your plight black people is due to him, a white supremacist with 'white privilege' living on the street. Don't unite as one human family against your mutual oppressors and suppressors – fight the oppressor with the white face who is as financially deprived as you are. The Cult knows that as its 'Covid' agenda moves into still new levels of extremism people are going to respond and it has been spreading the seeds of disunity everywhere to stop a united response to the evil that targets *all of us*.

Racist attacks on 'whiteness' are getting ever more outrageous and especially through the American Democratic Party which has an appalling history for anti-black racism. Barack Obama, Joe Biden, Hillary Clinton and Nancy Pelosi all eulogised about Senator Robert Byrd at his funeral in 2010 after a nearly 60-year career in Congress. Byrd was a brutal Ku Klux Klan racist and a violent abuser of Cathy O'Brien in MKUltra. He said he would never fight in the military 'with a negro by my side' and 'rather I should die a thousand times,

and see Old Glory trampled in the dirt never to rise again, than to see this beloved land of ours become degraded by race mongrels, a throwback to the blackest specimen from the wilds'. Biden called Byrd a 'very close friend and mentor'. These 'Woke' hypocrites are not anti-racist they are anti-poor and anti-people not of their perceived class. Here is an illustration of the scale of anti-white racism to which we have now descended. Seriously Woke and moronic *New York Times* contributor Damon Young described whiteness as a 'virus' that 'like other viruses will not die until there are no bodies left for it to infect'. He went on: '... the only way to stop it is to locate it, isolate it, extract it, and kill it.' Young can say that as a black man with no consequences when a white man saying the same in reverse would be facing a jail sentence. *That's* racism. We had super-Woke numbskull senators Tammy Duckworth and Mazie Hirono saying they would object to future Biden Cabinet appointments if he did not nominate more Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. Never mind the ability of the candidate what do they look like? Duckworth said: 'I will vote for racial minorities and I will vote for LGBTQ, but anyone else I'm not voting for.' Appointing people on the grounds of race is illegal, but that was not a problem for this ludicrous pair. They were on-message and that's a free pass in any situation.

Critical race racism

White children are told at school they are intrinsically racist as they are taught the divisive 'critical race theory'. This claims that the law and legal institutions are inherently racist and that race is a socially constructed concept used by white people to further their economic and political interests at the expense of people of colour. White is a 'virus' as we've seen. Racial inequality results from 'social, economic, and legal differences that white people create between races to maintain white interests which leads to poverty and criminality in minority communities'. I must tell that to the white guy sleeping on the street. The principal of East Side Community School in New York sent white parents a manifesto that called on

them to become 'white traitors' and advocate for full 'white abolition'. These people are teaching your kids when they urgently need a psychiatrist. The 'school' included a chart with 'eight white identities' that ranged from 'white supremacist' to 'white abolition' and defined the behaviour white people must follow to end 'the regime of whiteness'. Woke blacks and their privileged white associates are acting exactly like the slave owners of old and Ku Klux Klan racists like Robert Byrd. They are too full of their own self-purity to see that, but it's true. Racism is not a body type; it's a state of mind that can manifest through any colour, creed or culture.

Another racial fraud is '*equity*'. Not equality of treatment and opportunity – equity. It's a term spun as equality when it means something very different. Equality in its true sense is a raising up while '*equity*' is a race to the bottom. Everyone in the same level of poverty is '*equity*'. Keep everyone down – that's equity. The Cult doesn't want anyone in the human family to be empowered and BLM leaders, like all these 'anti-racist' organisations, continue their privileged, pampered existence by perpetuating the perception of gathering racism. When is the last time you heard an 'anti-racist' or 'anti-Semitism' organisation say that acts of racism and discrimination have *fallen*? It's not in the interests of their fundraising and power to influence and the same goes for the professional soccer anti-racism operation, Kick It Out. Two things confirmed that the Black Lives Matter riots in the summer of 2020 were Cult creations. One was that while anti-lockdown protests were condemned in this same period for 'transmitting 'Covid' the authorities supported mass gatherings of Black Lives Matter supporters. I even saw self-deluding people claiming to be doctors say the two types of protest were not the same. No – the non-existent 'Covid' was in favour of lockdowns and attacked those that protested against them while 'Covid' supported Black Lives Matter and kept well away from its protests. The whole thing was a joke and as lockdown protestors were arrested, often brutally, by reframed Face-Nappies we had the grotesque sight of police officers taking the knee to Black Lives Matter, a Cult-funded Marxist

organisation that supports violent riots and wants to destroy the nuclear family and white people.

He's not white? Shucks!

Woke obsession with race was on display again when ten people were shot dead in Boulder, Colorado, in March, 2021. Cult-owned Woke TV channels like CNN said the shooter appeared to be a white man and Wokers were on Twitter condemning 'violent white men' with the usual mantras. Then the shooter's name was released as Ahmad Al Aliwi Alissa, an anti-Trump Arab-American, and the sigh of disappointment could be heard five miles away. Never mind that ten people were dead and what that meant for their families. Race baiting was all that mattered to these sick Cult-serving people like Barack Obama who exploited the deaths to further divide America on racial grounds which is his job for the Cult. This is the man that 'racist' white Americans made the first black president of the United States and then gave him a second term. Not-very-bright Obama has become filthy rich on the back of that and today appears to have a big influence on the Biden administration. Even so he's still a downtrodden black man and a victim of white supremacy. This disingenuous fraud reveals the contempt he has for black people when he puts on a Deep South Alabama accent whenever he talks to them, no, *at* them.

Another BLM red flag was how the now fully-Woke (fully-Cult) and fully-virtue-signalled professional soccer authorities had their teams taking the knee before every match in support of Marxist Black Lives Matter. Soccer authorities and clubs displayed 'Black Lives Matter' on the players' shirts and flashed the name on electronic billboards around the pitch. Any fans that condemned what is a Freemasonic taking-the-knee ritual were widely condemned as you would expect from the Woke virtue-signallers of professional sport and the now fully-Woke media. We have reverse racism in which you are banned from criticising any race or culture except for white people for whom anything goes – say what you like, no problem. What has this got to do with racial harmony and

equality? We've had black supremacists from Black Lives Matter telling white people to fall to their knees in the street and apologise for their white supremacy. Black supremacists acting like white supremacist slave owners of the past couldn't breach their self-obsessed, race-obsessed sense of self-purity. Joe Biden appointed a race-obsessed black supremacist Kristen Clarke to head the Justice Department Civil Rights Division. Clarke claimed that blacks are endowed with 'greater mental, physical and spiritual abilities' than whites. If anyone reversed that statement they would be vilified. Clarke is on-message so no problem. She's never seen a black-white situation in which the black figure is anything but a virtuous victim and she heads the Civil Rights Division which should treat everyone the same or it isn't civil rights. Another perception of the Renegade Mind: If something or someone is part of the Cult agenda they will be supported by Woke governments and media no matter what. If they're not, they will be condemned and censored. It really is that simple and so racist Clarke prospers despite (make that because of) her racism.

The end of culture

Biden's administration is full of such racial, cultural and economic bias as the Cult requires the human family to be divided into warring factions. We are now seeing racially-segregated graduations and everything, but everything, is defined through the lens of perceived 'racism'. We have 'racist' mathematics, 'racist' food and even 'racist' *plants*. World famous Kew Gardens in London said it was changing labels on plants and flowers to tell its pre-'Covid' more than two million visitors a year how racist they are. Kew director Richard Deverell said this was part of an effort to 'move quickly to decolonise collections' after they were approached by one Ajay Chhabra 'an actor with an insight into how sugar cane was linked to slavery'. They are *plants* you idiots. 'Decolonisation' in the Woke manual really means colonisation of society with its mentality and by extension colonisation by the Cult. We are witnessing a new Chinese-style 'Cultural Revolution' so essential to the success of all

Marxist takeovers. Our cultural past and traditions have to be swept away to allow a new culture to be built-back-better. Woke targeting of long-standing Western cultural pillars including historical monuments and cancelling of historical figures is what happened in the Mao revolution in China which 'purged remnants of capitalist and traditional elements from Chinese society' and installed Maoism as the dominant ideology'. For China see the Western world today and for 'dominant ideology' see Woke. Better still see Marxism or Maoism. The 'Covid' hoax has specifically sought to destroy the arts and all elements of Western culture from people meeting in a pub or restaurant to closing theatres, music venues, sports stadiums, places of worship and even banning *singing*. Destruction of Western society is also why criticism of any religion is banned except for Christianity which again is the dominant religion as white is the numerically-dominant race. Christianity may be fading rapidly, but its history and traditions are weaved through the fabric of Western society. Delete the pillars and other structures will follow until the whole thing collapses. I am not a Christian defending that religion when I say that. I have no religion. It's just a fact. To this end Christianity has itself been turned Woke to usher its own downfall and its ranks are awash with 'change agents' – knowing and unknowing – at every level including Pope Francis (*definitely* knowing) and the clueless Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby (possibly not, but who can be sure?). Woke seeks to coordinate attacks on Western culture, traditions, and ways of life through 'intersectionality' defined as 'the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect especially in the experiences of marginalised individuals or groups'. Wade through the Orwellian Woke-speak and this means coordinating disparate groups in a common cause to overthrow freedom and liberal values.

The entire structure of public institutions has been infested with Woke – government at all levels, political parties, police, military, schools, universities, advertising, media and trade unions. This abomination has been achieved through the Cult web by appointing

Wokers to positions of power and battering non-Wokers into line through intimidation, isolation and threats to their job. Many have been fired in the wake of the empathy-deleted, vicious hostility of 'social justice' Wokers and the desire of gutless, spineless employers to virtue-signal their Wokeness. Corporations are filled with Wokers today, most notably those in Silicon Valley. Ironically at the top they are not Woke at all. They are only exploiting the mentality their Cult masters have created and funded to censor and enslave while the Wokers cheer them on until it's their turn. Thus the Woke 'liberal left' is an inversion of the traditional liberal left. Campaigning for justice on the grounds of power and wealth distribution has been replaced by campaigning for identity politics. The genuine traditional left would never have taken money from today's billionaire abusers of fairness and justice and nor would the billionaires have wanted to fund that genuine left. It would not have been in their interests to do so. The division of opinion in those days was between the haves and have nots. This all changed with Cult manipulated and funded identity politics. The division of opinion today is between Wokers and non-Wokers and not income brackets. Cult corporations and their billionaires may have taken wealth disparity to cataclysmic levels of injustice, but as long as they speak the language of Woke, hand out the dosh to the Woke network and censor the enemy they are 'one of us'. Billionaires who don't give a damn about injustice are laughing at them till their bellies hurt. Wokers are not even close to self-aware enough to see that. The transformed 'left' dynamic means that Wokers who drone on about 'social justice' are funded by billionaires that have destroyed social justice the world over. It's *why* they are billionaires.

The climate con

Nothing encapsulates what I have said more comprehensively than the hoax of human-caused global warming. I have detailed in my books over the years how Cult operatives and organisations were the pump-primers from the start of the climate con. A purpose-built vehicle for this is the Club of Rome established by the Cult in 1968

with the Rockefellers and Rothschilds centrally involved all along. Their gofer frontman Maurice Strong, a Canadian oil millionaire, hosted the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992 where the global 'green movement' really expanded in earnest under the guiding hand of the Cult. The Earth Summit established Agenda 21 through the Cult-created-and-owned United Nations to use the illusion of human-caused climate change to justify the transformation of global society to save the world from climate disaster. It is a No-Problem-Reaction-Solution sold through governments, media, schools and universities as whole generations have been terrified into believing that the world was going to end in their lifetimes unless what old people had inflicted upon them was stopped by a complete restructuring of how everything is done. Chill, kids, it's all a hoax. Such restructuring is precisely what the Cult agenda demands (purely by coincidence of course). Today this has been given the codename of the Great Reset which is only an updated term for Agenda 21 and its associated Agenda 2030. The latter, too, is administered through the UN and was voted into being by the General Assembly in 2015. Both 21 and 2030 seek centralised control of all resources and food right down to the raindrops falling on your own land. These are some of the demands of Agenda 21 established in 1992. See if you recognise this society emerging today:

- End national sovereignty
- State planning and management of all land resources, ecosystems, deserts, forests, mountains, oceans and fresh water; agriculture; rural development; biotechnology; and ensuring 'equity'
- The state to 'define the role' of business and financial resources
- Abolition of private property
- 'Restructuring' the family unit (see BLM)
- Children raised by the state
- People told what their job will be
- Major restrictions on movement
- Creation of 'human settlement zones'

- Mass resettlement as people are forced to vacate land where they live
- Dumbing down education
- Mass global depopulation in pursuit of all the above

The United Nations was created as a Trojan horse for world government. With the climate con of critical importance to promoting that outcome you would expect the UN to be involved. Oh, it's involved all right. The UN is promoting Agenda 21 and Agenda 2030 justified by 'climate change' while also driving the climate hoax through its Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), one of the world's most corrupt organisations. The IPCC has been lying ferociously and constantly since the day it opened its doors with the global media hanging unquestioningly on its every mendacious word. The Green movement is entirely Woke and has long lost its original environmental focus since it was co-opted by the Cult. An obsession with 'global warming' has deleted its values and scrambled its head. I experienced a small example of what I mean on a beautiful country walk that I have enjoyed several times a week for many years. The path merged into the fields and forests and you felt at one with the natural world. Then a 'Green' organisation, the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, took over part of the land and proceeded to cut down a large number of trees, including mature ones, to install a horrible big, bright steel 'this-is-ours-stay-out' fence that destroyed the whole atmosphere of this beautiful place. No one with a feel for nature would do that. Day after day I walked to the sound of chainsaws and a magnificent mature weeping willow tree that I so admired was cut down at the base of the trunk. When I challenged a Woke young girl in a green shirt (of course) about this vandalism she replied: 'It's a weeping willow – it will grow back.' This is what people are paying for when they donate to the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and many other 'green' organisations today. It is not the environmental movement that I knew and instead has become a support-system – as with Extinction Rebellion – for a very dark agenda.

Private jets for climate justice

The Cult-owned, Gates-funded, World Economic Forum and its founder Klaus Schwab were behind the emergence of Greta Thunberg to harness the young behind the climate agenda and she was invited to speak to the world at ... the UN. Schwab published a book, *Covid-19: The Great Reset* in 2020 in which he used the 'Covid' hoax and the climate hoax to lay out a new society straight out of Agenda 21 and Agenda 2030. Bill Gates followed in early 2021 when he took time out from destroying the world to produce a book in his name about the way to save it. Gates flies across the world in private jets and admitted that 'I probably have one of the highest greenhouse gas footprints of anyone on the planet ... my personal flying alone is gigantic.' He has also bid for the planet's biggest private jet operator. Other climate change saviours who fly in private jets include John Kerry, the US Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, and actor Leonardo DiCaprio, a 'UN Messenger of Peace with special focus on climate change'. These people are so full of bullshit they could corner the market in manure. We mustn't be sceptical, though, because the Gates book, *How to Avoid a Climate Disaster: The Solutions We Have and the Breakthroughs We Need*, is a genuine attempt to protect the world and not an obvious pile of excrement attributed to a mega-psychopath aimed at selling his masters' plans for humanity. The Gates book and the other shite-pile by Klaus Schwab could have been written by the same person and may well have been. Both use 'climate change' and 'Covid' as the excuses for their new society and by coincidence the Cult's World Economic Forum and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation promote the climate hoax and hosted Event 201 which pre-empted with a 'simulation' the very 'coronavirus' hoax that would be simulated for real on humanity within weeks. The British 'royal' family is promoting the 'Reset' as you would expect through Prince 'climate change caused the war in Syria' Charles and his hapless son Prince William who said that we must 'reset our relationship with nature and our trajectory as a species' to avoid a climate disaster. Amazing how many promoters of the 'Covid' and 'climate change' control

systems are connected to Gates and the World Economic Forum. A 'study' in early 2021 claimed that carbon dioxide emissions must fall by the equivalent of a global lockdown roughly every two years for the next decade to save the planet. The 'study' appeared in the same period that the Schwab mob claimed in a video that lockdowns destroying the lives of billions are good because they make the earth 'quieter' with less 'ambient noise'. They took down the video amid a public backlash for such arrogant, empathy-deleted stupidity You see, however, where they are going with this. Corinne Le Quéré, a professor at the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, University of East Anglia, was lead author of the climate lockdown study, and she writes for ... the World Economic Forum. Gates calls in 'his' book for changing 'every aspect of the economy' (long-time Cult agenda) and for humans to eat synthetic 'meat' (predicted in my books) while cows and other farm animals are eliminated. Australian TV host and commentator Alan Jones described what carbon emission targets would mean for farm animals in Australia alone if emissions were reduced as demanded by 35 percent by 2030 and zero by 2050:

Well, let's take agriculture, the total emissions from agriculture are about 75 million tonnes of carbon dioxide, equivalent. Now reduce that by 35 percent and you have to come down to 50 million tonnes, I've done the maths. So if you take for example 1.5 million cows, you're going to have to reduce the herd by 525,000 [by] 2030, nine years, that's 58,000 cows a year. The beef herd's 30 million, reduce that by 35 percent, that's 10.5 million, which means 1.2 million cattle have to go every year between now and 2030. This is insanity!

There are 75 million sheep. Reduce that by 35 percent, that's 26 million sheep, that's almost 3 million a year. So under the Paris Agreement over 30 million beasts. dairy cows, cattle, pigs and sheep would go. More than 8,000 every minute of every hour for the next decade, do these people know what they're talking about?

Clearly they don't at the level of campaigners, politicians and administrators. The Cult *does* know; that's the outcome it wants. We are faced with not just a war on humanity. Animals and the natural world are being targeted and I have been saying since the 'Covid' hoax began that the plan eventually was to claim that the 'deadly virus' is able to jump from animals, including farm animals and

domestic pets, to humans. Just before this book went into production came this story: 'Russia registers world's first Covid-19 vaccine for cats & dogs as makers of Sputnik V warn pets & farm animals could spread virus'. The report said 'top scientists warned that the deadly pathogen could soon begin spreading through homes and farms' and 'the next stage is the infection of farm and domestic animals'. Know the outcome and you'll see the journey. Think what that would mean for animals and keep your eye on a term called zoonosis or zoonotic diseases which transmit between animals and humans. The Cult wants to break the connection between animals and people as it does between people and people. Farm animals fit with the Cult agenda to transform food from natural to synthetic.

The gas of life is killing us

There can be few greater examples of Cult inversion than the condemnation of carbon dioxide as a dangerous pollutant when it is the gas of life. Without it the natural world would be dead and so we would all be dead. We breathe in oxygen and breathe out carbon dioxide while plants produce oxygen and absorb carbon dioxide. It is a perfect symbiotic relationship that the Cult wants to dismantle for reasons I will come to in the final two chapters. Gates, Schwab, other Cult operatives and mindless repeaters, want the world to be 'carbon neutral' by at least 2050 and the earlier the better. 'Zero carbon' is the cry echoed by lunatics calling for 'Zero Covid' when we already have it. These carbon emission targets will deindustrialise the world in accordance with Cult plans – the post-industrial, post-democratic society – and with so-called renewables like solar and wind not coming even close to meeting human energy needs blackouts and cold are inevitable. Texans got the picture in the winter of 2021 when a snow storm stopped wind turbines and solar panels from working and the lights went down along with water which relies on electricity for its supply system. Gates wants everything to be powered by electricity to ensure that his masters have the kill switch to stop all human activity, movement, cooking, water and warmth any time they like. The climate lie is so

stupendously inverted that it claims we must urgently reduce carbon dioxide when we *don't have enough*.

Co2 in the atmosphere is a little above 400 parts per million when the optimum for plant growth is 2,000 ppm and when it falls anywhere near 150 ppm the natural world starts to die and so do we. It fell to as low as 280 ppm in an 1880 measurement in Hawaii and rose to 413 ppm in 2019 with industrialisation which is why the planet has become *greener* in the industrial period. How insane then that psychopathic madman Gates is not satisfied only with blocking the rise of Co2. He's funding technology to suck it out of the atmosphere. The reason why will become clear. The industrial era is not destroying the world through Co2 and has instead turned around a potentially disastrous ongoing fall in Co2. Greenpeace co-founder and scientist Patrick Moore walked away from Greenpeace in 1986 and has exposed the green movement for fear-mongering and lies. He said that 500 million years ago there was *17 times* more Co2 in the atmosphere than we have today and levels have been falling for hundreds of millions of years. In the last 150 million years Co2 levels in Earth's atmosphere had reduced by *90 percent*. Moore said that by the time humanity began to unlock carbon dioxide from fossil fuels we were at '38 seconds to midnight' and in that sense: 'Humans are [the Earth's] salvation.' Moore made the point that only half the Co2 emitted by fossil fuels stays in the atmosphere and we should remember that all pollution pouring from chimneys that we are told is carbon dioxide is in fact nothing of the kind. It's pollution. Carbon dioxide is an invisible gas.

William Happer, Professor of Physics at Princeton University and long-time government adviser on climate, has emphasised the Co2 deficiency for maximum growth and food production. Greenhouse growers don't add carbon dioxide for a bit of fun. He said that most of the warming in the last 100 years, after the earth emerged from the super-cold period of the 'Little Ice Age' into a natural warming cycle, was over by 1940. Happer said that a peak year for warming in 1988 can be explained by a 'monster El Nino' which is a natural and cyclical warming of the Pacific that has nothing to do with 'climate

change'. He said the effect of Co2 could be compared to painting a wall with red paint in that once two or three coats have been applied it didn't matter how much more you slapped on because the wall will not get much redder. Almost all the effect of the rise in Co2 has already happened, he said, and the volume in the atmosphere would now have to *double* to increase temperature by a single degree. Climate hoaxers know this and they have invented the most ridiculously complicated series of 'feedback' loops to try to overcome this rather devastating fact. You hear puppet Greta going on cluelessly about feedback loops and this is why.

The Sun affects temperature? No you *climate denier*

Some other nonsense to contemplate: Climate graphs show that rises in temperature do not follow rises in Co2 – *it's the other way round* with a lag between the two of some 800 years. If we go back 800 years from present time we hit the Medieval Warm Period when temperatures were higher than now without any industrialisation and this was followed by the Little Ice Age when temperatures plummeted. The world was still emerging from these centuries of serious cold when many climate records began which makes the ever-repeated line of the 'hottest year since records began' meaningless when you are not comparing like with like. The coldest period of the Little Ice Age corresponded with the lowest period of sunspot activity when the Sun was at its least active. Proper scientists will not be at all surprised by this when it confirms the obvious fact that earth temperature is affected by the scale of Sun activity and the energetic power that it subsequently emits; but when is the last time you heard a climate hoaxer talking about the Sun as a source of earth temperature?? Everything has to be focussed on Co2 which makes up just 0.117 percent of so-called greenhouse gases and only a fraction of even that is generated by human activity. The rest is natural. More than *90 percent* of those greenhouse gases are water vapour and clouds ([Fig 9](#)). Ban moisture I say. Have you noticed that the climate hoaxers no longer use the polar bear as their promotion image? That's because far from becoming extinct polar

bear communities are stable or thriving. Joe Bastardi, American meteorologist, weather forecaster and outspoken critic of the climate lie, documents in his book *The Climate Chronicles* how weather patterns and events claimed to be evidence of climate change have been happening since long before industrialisation: 'What happened before naturally is happening again, as is to be expected given the cyclical nature of the climate due to the design of the planet.' If you read the detailed background to the climate hoax in my other books you will shake your head and wonder how anyone could believe the crap which has spawned a multi-trillion dollar industry based on absolute garbage (see HIV causes AIDs and Sars-Cov-2 causes 'Covid-19'). Climate and 'Covid' have much in common given they have the same source. They both have the contradictory *everything* factor in which everything is explained by reference to them. It's hot – 'it's climate change'. It's cold – 'it's climate change'. I got a sniffle – 'it's Covid'. I haven't got a sniffle – 'it's Covid'. Not having a sniffle has to be a symptom of 'Covid'. Everything is and not having a sniffle is especially dangerous if you are a slow walker. For sheer audacity I offer you a Cambridge University 'study' that actually linked 'Covid' to 'climate change'. It had to happen eventually. They concluded that climate change played a role in 'Covid-19' spreading from animals to humans because ... wait for it ... I kid you not ... *the two groups were forced closer together as populations grow*. Er, that's it. The whole foundation on which this depended was that 'Bats are the likely zoonotic origin of SARS-CoV-1 and SARS-CoV-2'. Well, they are not. They are nothing to do with it. Apart from bats not being the origin and therefore 'climate change' effects on bats being irrelevant I am in awe of their academic insight. Where would we be without them? Not where we are that's for sure.

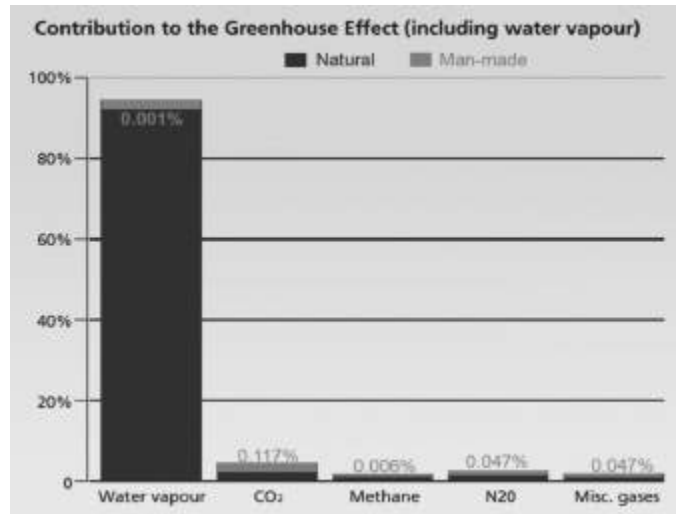


Figure 9: The idea that the gas of life is disastrously changing the climate is an insult to brain cell activity.

One other point about the weather is that climate modification is now well advanced and not every major weather event is natural – or earthquake come to that. I cover this subject at some length in other books. China is openly planning a rapid expansion of its weather modification programme which includes changing the climate in an area more than one and a half times the size of India. China used weather manipulation to ensure clear skies during the 2008 Olympics in Beijing. I have quoted from US military documents detailing how to employ weather manipulation as a weapon of war and they did that in the 1960s and 70s during the conflict in Vietnam with Operation Popeye manipulating monsoon rains for military purposes. Why would there be international treaties on weather modification if it wasn't possible? Of course it is. Weather is energetic information and it can be changed.

How was the climate hoax pulled off? See 'Covid'

If you can get billions to believe in a 'virus' that doesn't exist you can get them to believe in human-caused climate change that doesn't exist. Both are being used by the Cult to transform global society in the way it has long planned. Both hoaxes have been achieved in pretty much the same way. First you declare a lie is a fact. There's a

'virus' you call SARS-Cov-2 or humans are warming the planet with their behaviour. Next this becomes, via Cult networks, the foundation of government, academic and science policy and belief. Those who parrot the mantra are given big grants to produce research that confirms the narrative is true and ever more 'symptoms' are added to make the 'virus'/'climate change' sound even more scary. Scientists and researchers who challenge the narrative have their grants withdrawn and their careers destroyed. The media promote the lie as the unquestionable truth and censor those with an alternative view or evidence. A great percentage of the population believe what they are told as the lie becomes an everybody-knows-that and the believing-masses turn on those with a mind of their own. The technique has been used endlessly throughout human history. Wokers are the biggest promoters of the climate lie *and* 'Covid' fascism because their minds are owned by the Cult; their sense of self-righteous self-purity knows no bounds; and they exist in a bubble of reality in which facts are irrelevant and only get in the way of looking without seeing.

Running through all of this like veins in a blue cheese is control of information, which means control of perception, which means control of behaviour, which collectively means control of human society. The Cult owns the global media and Silicon Valley fascists for the simple reason that it *has* to. Without control of information it can't control perception and through that human society. Examine every facet of the Cult agenda and you will see that anything supporting its introduction is never censored while anything pushing back is always censored. I say again: Psychopaths that know why they are doing this must go before Nuremberg trials and those that follow their orders must trot along behind them into the same dock. 'I was just following orders' didn't work the first time and it must not work now. Nuremberg trials must be held all over the world before public juries for politicians, government officials, police, compliant doctors, scientists and virologists, and all Cult operatives such as Gates, Tedros, Fauci, Vallance, Whitty, Ferguson, Zuckerberg, Wojcicki, Brin, Page, Dorsey, the whole damn lot of

them – including, no *especially*, the psychopath psychologists. Without them and the brainless, gutless excuses for journalists that have repeated their lies, none of this could be happening. Nobody can be allowed to escape justice for the psychological and economic Armageddon they are all responsible for visiting upon the human race.

As for the compliant, unquestioning, swathes of humanity, and the self-obsessed, all-knowing ignorance of the Wokers ... don't start me. God help their kids. God help their grandkids. God *help them*.

CHAPTER NINE

We must have it? So what is it?

Well I won't back down. No, I won't back down. You can stand me up at the Gates of Hell. But I won't back down

Tom Petty

I will now focus on the genetically-manipulating 'Covid vaccines' which do not meet this official definition of a vaccine by the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC): 'A product that stimulates a person's immune system to produce immunity to a specific disease, protecting the person from that disease.' On that basis 'Covid vaccines' are not a vaccine in that the makers don't even claim they stop infection or transmission.

They are instead part of a multi-levelled conspiracy to change the nature of the human body and what it means to be 'human' and to depopulate an enormous swathe of humanity. What I shall call Human 1.0 is on the cusp of becoming Human 2.0 and for very sinister reasons. Before I get to the 'Covid vaccine' in detail here's some background to vaccines in general. Government regulators do not test vaccines – the makers do – and the makers control which data is revealed and which isn't. Children in America are given 50 vaccine doses by age six and 69 by age 19 and the effect of the whole combined schedule has never been tested. Autoimmune diseases when the immune system attacks its own body have soared in the mass vaccine era and so has disease in general in children and the young. Why wouldn't this be the case when vaccines target the *immune system*? The US government gave Big Pharma drug

companies immunity from prosecution for vaccine death and injury in the 1986 National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act (NCVIA) and since then the government (taxpayer) has been funding compensation for the consequences of Big Pharma vaccines. The criminal and satanic drug giants can't lose and the vaccine schedule has increased dramatically since 1986 for this reason. There is no incentive to make vaccines safe and a big incentive to make money by introducing ever more. Even against a ridiculously high bar to prove vaccine liability, and with the government controlling the hearing in which it is being challenged for compensation, the vaccine court has so far paid out more than \$4 billion. These are the vaccines we are told are safe and psychopaths like Zuckerberg censor posts saying otherwise. The immunity law was even justified by a ruling that vaccines by their nature were 'unavoidably unsafe'.

Check out the ingredients of vaccines and you will be shocked if you are new to this. *They put that in children's bodies?? What??* Try aluminium, a brain toxin connected to dementia, aborted foetal tissue and formaldehyde which is used to embalm corpses. World-renowned aluminium expert Christopher Exley had his research into the health effect of aluminium in vaccines shut down by Keele University in the UK when it began taking funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Research when diseases 'eradicated' by vaccines began to decline and you will find the fall began long *before* the vaccine was introduced. Sometimes the fall even plateaued after the vaccine. Diseases like scarlet fever for which there was no vaccine declined in the same way because of environmental and other factors. A perfect case in point is the polio vaccine. Polio began when lead arsenate was first sprayed as an insecticide and residues remained in food products. Spraying started in 1892 and the first US polio epidemic came in Vermont in 1894. The simple answer was to stop spraying, but Rockefeller-created Big Pharma had a better idea. Polio was decreed to be caused by the *poliovirus* which 'spreads from person to person and can infect a person's spinal cord'. Lead arsenate was replaced by the lethal DDT which had the same effect of causing paralysis by damaging the brain and central nervous

system. Polio plummeted when DDT was reduced and then banned, but the vaccine is still given the credit for something it didn't do. Today by far the biggest cause of polio is the vaccines promoted by Bill Gates. Vaccine justice campaigner Robert Kennedy Jr, son of assassinated (by the Cult) US Attorney General Robert Kennedy, wrote:

In 2017, the World Health Organization (WHO) reluctantly admitted that the global explosion in polio is predominantly vaccine strain. The most frightening epidemics in Congo, Afghanistan, and the Philippines, are all linked to vaccines. In fact, by 2018, 70% of global polio cases were vaccine strain.

Vaccines make fortunes for Cult-owned Gates and Big Pharma while undermining the health and immune systems of the population. We had a glimpse of the mentality behind the Big Pharma cartel with a report on WION (World is One News), an international English language TV station based in India, which exposed the extraordinary behaviour of US drug company Pfizer over its 'Covid vaccine'. The WION report told how Pfizer had made fantastic demands of Argentina, Brazil and other countries in return for its 'vaccine'. These included immunity from prosecution, even for Pfizer negligence, government insurance to protect Pfizer from law suits and handing over as collateral sovereign assets of the country to include Argentina's bank reserves, military bases and embassy buildings. Pfizer demanded the same of Brazil in the form of waiving sovereignty of its assets abroad; exempting Pfizer from Brazilian laws; and giving Pfizer immunity from all civil liability. This is a 'vaccine' developed with government funding. Big Pharma is evil incarnate as a creation of the Cult and all must be handed tickets to Nuremberg.

Phantom 'vaccine' for a phantom 'disease'

I'll expose the 'Covid vaccine' fraud and then go on to the wider background of why the Cult has set out to 'vaccinate' every man, woman and child on the planet for an alleged 'new disease' with a survival rate of 99.77 percent (or more) even by the grotesquely-

manipulated figures of the World Health Organization and Johns Hopkins University. The 'infection' to 'death' ratio is 0.23 to 0.15 percent according to Stanford epidemiologist Dr John Ioannidis and while estimates vary the danger remains tiny. I say that if the truth be told the fake infection to fake death ratio is zero. Never mind all the evidence I have presented here and in *The Answer* that there is no 'virus' let us just focus for a moment on that death-rate figure of say 0.23 percent. The figure includes all those worldwide who have tested positive with a test not testing for the 'virus' and then died within 28 days or even longer of any other cause – *any other cause*. Now subtract all those illusory 'Covid' deaths on the global data sheets from the 0.23 percent. What do you think you would be left with? *Zero*. A vaccination has never been successfully developed for a so-called coronavirus. They have all failed at the animal testing stage when they caused hypersensitivity to what they were claiming to protect against and made the impact of a disease far worse. Cult-owned vaccine corporations got around that problem this time by bypassing animal trials, going straight to humans and making the length of the 'trials' before the public rollout as short as they could get away with. Normally it takes five to ten years or more to develop vaccines that still cause demonstrable harm to many people and that's without including the long-term effects that are never officially connected to the vaccination. 'Covid' non-vaccines have been officially produced and approved in a matter of months from a standing start and part of the reason is that (a) they were developed before the 'Covid' hoax began and (b) they are based on computer programs and not natural sources. Official non-trials were so short that government agencies gave *emergency*, not full, approval. 'Trials' were not even completed and full approval cannot be secured until they are. Public 'Covid vaccination' is actually a *continuation of the trial*. Drug company 'trials' are not scheduled to end until 2023 by which time a lot of people are going to be dead. Data on which government agencies gave this emergency approval was supplied by the Big Pharma corporations themselves in the form of Pfizer/BioNTech, AstraZeneca, Moderna, Johnson & Johnson, and

others, and this is the case with all vaccines. By its very nature *emergency* approval means drug companies do not have to prove that the 'vaccine' is 'safe and effective'. How could they with trials way short of complete? Government regulators only have to *believe* that they *could* be safe and effective. It is criminal manipulation to get products in circulation with no testing worth the name. Agencies giving that approval are infested with Big Pharma-connected place-people and they act in the interests of Big Pharma (the Cult) and not the public about whom they do not give a damn.

More human lab rats

'Covid vaccines' produced in record time by Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna employ a technique *never approved before for use on humans*. They are known as mRNA 'vaccines' and inject a synthetic version of 'viral' mRNA or 'messenger RNA'. The key is in the term 'messenger'. The body works, or doesn't, on the basis of information messaging. Communications are constantly passing between and within the genetic system and the brain. Change those messages and you change the state of the body and even its very nature and you can change psychology and behaviour by the way the brain processes information. I think you are going to see significant changes in personality and perception of many people who have had the 'Covid vaccine' synthetic potions. Insider Aldous Huxley predicted the following in 1961 and mRNA 'vaccines' can be included in the term 'pharmacological methods':

There will be, in the next generation or so, a pharmacological method of making people love their servitude, and producing dictatorship without tears, so to speak, producing a kind of painless concentration camp for entire societies, so that people will in fact have their own liberties taken away from them, but rather enjoy it, because they will be distracted from any desire to rebel by propaganda or brainwashing, or brainwashing enhanced by pharmacological methods. And this seems to be the final revolution.

Apologists claim that mRNA synthetic 'vaccines' don't change the DNA genetic blueprint because RNA does not affect DNA only the other way round. This is so disingenuous. A process called 'reverse

transcription' can convert RNA into DNA and be integrated into DNA in the cell nucleus. This was highlighted in December, 2020, by scientists at Harvard and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Geneticists report that more than 40 percent of mammalian genomes results from reverse transcription. On the most basic level if messaging changes then that sequence must lead to changes in DNA which is receiving and transmitting those communications. How can introducing synthetic material into cells not change the cells where DNA is located? The process is known as transfection which is defined as 'a technique to insert foreign nucleic acid (DNA or RNA) into a cell, typically with the intention of altering the properties of the cell'. Researchers at the Sloan Kettering Institute in New York found that changes in messenger RNA can deactivate tumour-suppressing proteins and thereby promote cancer. This is what happens when you mess with messaging. 'Covid vaccine' maker Moderna was founded in 2010 by Canadian stem cell biologist Derrick J. Rossi after his breakthrough discovery in the field of transforming and reprogramming stem cells. These are neutral cells that can be programmed to become any cell including sperm cells. Moderna was therefore founded on the principle of genetic manipulation and has never produced any vaccine or drug before its genetically-manipulating synthetic 'Covid' shite. Look at the name – Mode-RNA or Modify-RNA. Another important point is that the US Supreme Court has ruled that genetically-modified DNA, or complementary DNA (cDNA) synthesized in the laboratory from messenger RNA, can be patented and owned. These psychopaths are doing this to the human body.

Cells replicate synthetic mRNA in the 'Covid vaccines' and in theory the body is tricked into making antigens which trigger antibodies to target the 'virus spike proteins' which as Dr Tom Cowan said have *never been seen*. Cut the crap and these 'vaccines' deliver *self-replicating* synthetic material to the cells with the effect of changing human DNA. The more of them you have the more that process is compounded while synthetic material is all the time self-replicating. 'Vaccine'-maker Moderna describes mRNA as 'like

software for the cell' and so they are messing with the body's software. What happens when you change the software in a computer? Everything changes. For this reason the Cult is preparing a production line of mRNA 'Covid vaccines' and a long list of excuses to use them as with all the 'variants' of a 'virus' never shown to exist. The plan is further to transfer the mRNA technique to other vaccines mostly given to children and young people. The cumulative consequences will be a transformation of human DNA through a constant infusion of synthetic genetic material which will kill many and change the rest. Now consider that governments that have given emergency approval for a vaccine that's not a vaccine; never been approved for humans before; had no testing worth the name; and the makers have been given immunity from prosecution for any deaths or adverse effects suffered by the public. The UK government awarded *permanent legal indemnity* to itself and its employees for harm done when a patient is being treated for 'Covid-19' or 'suspected Covid-19'. That is quite a thought when these are possible 'side-effects' from the 'vaccine' (they are not 'side', they are effects) listed by the US Food and Drug Administration:

Guillain-Barre syndrome; acute disseminated encephalomyelitis; transverse myelitis; encephalitis; myelitis; encephalomyelitis; meningoencephalitis; meningitis; encephalopathy; convulsions; seizures; stroke; narcolepsy; cataplexy; anaphylaxis; acute myocardial infarction (heart attack); myocarditis; pericarditis; autoimmune disease; death; implications for pregnancy, and birth outcomes; other acute demyelinating diseases; non anaphylactic allergy reactions; thrombocytopenia ; disseminated intravascular coagulation; venous thromboembolism; arthritis; arthralgia; joint pain; Kawasaki disease; multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children; vaccine enhanced disease. The latter is the way the 'vaccine' has the potential to make diseases far worse than they would otherwise be.

UK doctor and freedom campaigner Vernon Coleman described the conditions in this list as 'all unpleasant, most of them very serious, and you can't get more serious than death'. The thought that anyone at all has had the 'vaccine' in these circumstances is testament to the potential that humanity has for clueless, unquestioning, stupidity and for many that programmed stupidity has already been terminal.

An insider speaks

Dr Michael Yeadon is a former Vice President, head of research and Chief Scientific Adviser at vaccine giant Pfizer. Yeadon worked on the inside of Big Pharma, but that did not stop him becoming a vocal critic of 'Covid vaccines' and their potential for multiple harms, including infertility in women. By the spring of 2021 he went much further and even used the no, no, term 'conspiracy'. When you begin to see what is going on it is impossible not to do so. Yeadon spoke out in an interview with freedom campaigner James Delingpole and I mentioned earlier how he said that no one had samples of 'the virus'. He explained that the mRNA technique originated in the anti-cancer field and ways to turn on and off certain genes which could be advantageous if you wanted to stop cancer growing out of control. 'That's the origin of them. They are a very unusual application, really.' Yeadon said that treating a cancer patient with an aggressive procedure might be understandable if the alternative was dying, but it was quite another thing to use the same technique as a public health measure. Most people involved wouldn't catch the infectious agent you were vaccinating against and if they did they probably wouldn't die:

If you are really using it as a public health measure you really want to as close as you can get to zero sides-effects ... I find it odd that they chose techniques that were really cutting their teeth in the field of oncology and I'm worried that in using gene-based vaccines that have to be injected in the body and spread around the body, get taken up into some cells, and the regulators haven't quite told us which cells they get taken up into ... you are going to be generating a wide range of responses ... with multiple steps each of which could go well or badly.

I doubt the Cult intends it to go well. Yeadon said that you can put any gene you like into the body through the 'vaccine'. 'You can certainly give them a gene that would do them some harm if you wanted.' I was intrigued when he said that when used in the cancer field the technique could turn genes on and off. I explore this process in *The Answer* and with different genes having different functions you could create mayhem – physically and psychologically – if you turned the wrong ones on and the right ones off. I read reports of an experiment by researchers at the University of Washington's school of computer science and engineering in which they encoded DNA to infect computers. The body is itself a biological computer and if human DNA can inflict damage on a computer why can't the computer via synthetic material mess with the human body? It can. The Washington research team said it was possible to insert malicious malware into 'physical DNA strands' and corrupt the computer system of a gene sequencing machine as it 'reads gene letters and stores them as binary digits 0 and 1'. They concluded that hackers could one day use blood or spit samples to access computer systems and obtain sensitive data from police forensics labs or infect genome files. It is at this level of digital interaction that synthetic 'vaccines' need to be seen to get the full picture and that will become very clear later on. Michael Yeadon said it made no sense to give the 'vaccine' to younger people who were in no danger from the 'virus'. What was the benefit? It was all downside with potential effects:

The fact that my government in what I thought was a civilised, rational country, is raining [the 'vaccine'] on people in their 30s and 40s, even my children in their 20s, they're getting letters and phone calls, I know this is not right and any of you doctors who are vaccinating you know it's not right, too. They are not at risk. They are not at risk from the disease, so you are now hoping that the side-effects are so rare that you get away with it. You don't give new technology ... that you don't understand to 100 percent of the population.

Blood clot problems with the AstraZeneca 'vaccine' have been affecting younger people to emphasise the downside risks with no benefit. AstraZeneca's version, produced with Oxford University, does not use mRNA, but still gets its toxic cocktail inside cells where

it targets DNA. The Johnson & Johnson 'vaccine' which uses a similar technique has also produced blood clot effects to such an extent that the United States paused its use at one point. They are all 'gene therapy' (cell modification) procedures and not 'vaccines'. The truth is that once the content of these injections enter cells we have no idea what the effect will be. People can speculate and some can give very educated opinions and that's good. In the end, though, only the makers know what their potions are designed to do and even they won't know every last consequence. Michael Yeadon was scathing about doctors doing what they knew to be wrong. 'Everyone's mute', he said. Doctors in the NHS must know this was not right, coming into work and injecting people. 'I don't know how they sleep at night. I know I couldn't do it. I know that if I were in that position I'd have to quit.' He said he knew enough about toxicology to know this was not a good risk-benefit. Yeadon had spoken to seven or eight university professors and all except two would not speak out publicly. Their universities had a policy that no one said anything that countered the government and its medical advisors. They were afraid of losing their government grants. This is how intimidation has been used to silence the truth at every level of the system. I say silence, but these people could still speak out if they made that choice. Yeadon called them 'moral cowards' – 'This is about your children and grandchildren's lives and you have just buggered off and left it.'

'Variant' nonsense

Some of his most powerful comments related to the alleged 'variants' being used to instil more fear, justify more lockdowns, and introduce more 'vaccines'. He said government claims about 'variants' were nonsense. He had checked the alleged variant 'codes' and they were 99.7 percent identical to the 'original'. This was the human identity difference equivalent to putting a baseball cap on and off or wearing it the other way round. A 0.3 percent difference would make it impossible for that 'variant' to escape immunity from the 'original'. This made no sense of having new 'vaccines' for

'variants'. He said there would have to be at least a *30 percent* difference for that to be justified and even then he believed the immune system would still recognise what it was. Gates-funded 'variant modeller' and 'vaccine'-pusher John Edmunds might care to comment. Yeadon said drug companies were making new versions of the 'vaccine' as a 'top up' for 'variants'. Worse than that, he said, the 'regulators' around the world like the MHRA in the UK had got together and agreed that because 'vaccines' for 'variants' were so similar to the first 'vaccines' *they did not have to do safety studies*. How transparently sinister that is. This is when Yeadon said: 'There is a conspiracy here.' There was no need for another vaccine for 'variants' and yet we were told that there was and the country had shut its borders because of them. 'They are going into hundreds of millions of arms without passing 'go' or any regulator. Why did they do that? Why did they pick this method of making the vaccine?'

The reason had to be something bigger than that it seemed and 'it's not protection against the virus'. It's was a far bigger project that meant politicians and advisers were willing to do things and not do things that knowingly resulted in avoidable deaths – 'that's already happened when you think about lockdown and deprivation of health care for a year.' He spoke of people prepared to do something that results in the avoidable death of their fellow human beings and it not bother them. This is the penny-drop I have been working to get across for more than 30 years – the level of pure evil we are dealing with. Yeadon said his friends and associates could not believe there could be that much evil, but he reminded them of Stalin, Pol Pot and Hitler and of what Stalin had said: 'One death is a tragedy. A million? A statistic.' He could not think of a benign explanation for why you need top-up vaccines 'which I'm sure you don't' and for the regulators 'to just get out of the way and wave them through'. Why would the regulators do that when they were still wrestling with the dangers of the 'parent' vaccine? He was clearly shocked by what he had seen since the 'Covid' hoax began and now he was thinking the previously unthinkable:

If you wanted to depopulate a significant proportion of the world and to do it in a way that doesn't involve destruction of the environment with nuclear weapons, poisoning everyone with anthrax or something like that, and you wanted plausible deniability while you had a multi-year infectious disease crisis, I actually don't think you could come up with a better plan of work than seems to be in front of me. I can't say that's what they are going to do, but I can't think of a benign explanation why they are doing it.

He said he never thought that they would get rid of 99 percent of humans, but now he wondered. 'If you wanted to that this would be a hell of a way to do it – it would be unstoppable folks.' Yeadon had concluded that those who submitted to the 'vaccine' would be allowed to have some kind of normal life (but for how long?) while screws were tightened to coerce and mandate the last few percent. 'I think they'll put the rest of them in a prison camp. I wish I was wrong, but I don't think I am.' Other points he made included: There were no coronavirus vaccines then suddenly they all come along at the same time; we have no idea of the long term affect with trials so short; coercing or forcing people to have medical procedures is against the Nuremberg Code instigated when the Nazis did just that; people should at least delay having the 'vaccine'; a quick Internet search confirms that masks don't reduce respiratory viral transmission and 'the government knows that'; they have smashed civil society and they know that, too; two dozen peer-reviewed studies show no connection between lockdown and reducing deaths; he knew from personal friends the elite were still flying around and going on holiday while the public were locked down; the elite were not having the 'vaccines'. He was also asked if 'vaccines' could be made to target difference races. He said he didn't know, but the document by the Project for the New American Century in September, 2000, said developing 'advanced forms of biological warfare that can target *specific genotypes* may transform biological warfare from the realm of terror to a politically useful tool.' Oh, they're evil all right. Of that we can be *absolutely* sure.

Another cull of old people

We have seen from the CDC definition that the mRNA 'Covid vaccine' is not a vaccine and nor are the others that *claim* to reduce 'severity of symptoms' in *some* people, but not protect from infection or transmission. What about all the lies about returning to 'normal' if people were 'vaccinated'? If they are not claimed to stop infection and transmission of the alleged 'virus', how does anything change? This was all lies to manipulate people to take the jabs and we are seeing that now with masks and distancing still required for the 'vaccinated'. How did they think that elderly people with fragile health and immune responses were going to be affected by infusing their cells with synthetic material and other toxic substances? They *knew* that in the short and long term it would be devastating and fatal as the culling of the old that began with the first lockdowns was continued with the 'vaccine'. Death rates in care homes soared immediately residents began to be 'vaccinated' – infused with synthetic material. Brave and committed whistleblower nurses put their careers at risk by exposing this truth while the rest kept their heads down and their mouths shut to put their careers before those they are supposed to care for. A long-time American Certified Nursing Assistant who gave his name as James posted a video in which he described emotionally what happened in his care home when vaccination began. He said that during 2020 very few residents were sick with 'Covid' and no one died during the entire year; but shortly after the Pfizer mRNA injections 14 people died within two weeks and many others were near death. 'They're dropping like flies', he said. Residents who walked on their own before the shot could no longer and they had lost their ability to conduct an intelligent conversation. The home's management said the sudden deaths were caused by a 'super-spreader' of 'Covid-19'. Then how come, James asked, that residents who refused to take the injections were not sick? It was a case of inject the elderly with mRNA synthetic potions and blame their illness and death that followed on the 'virus'. James described what was happening in care homes as 'the greatest crime of genocide this country has ever seen'. Remember the NHS staff nurse from earlier who used the same

word 'genocide' for what was happening with the 'vaccines' and that it was an 'act of human annihilation'. A UK care home whistleblower told a similar story to James about the effect of the 'vaccine' in deaths and 'outbreaks' of illness dubbed 'Covid' after getting the jab. She told how her care home management and staff had zealously imposed government regulations and no one was allowed to even question the official narrative let alone speak out against it. She said the NHS was even worse. Again we see the results of reframing. A worker at a local care home where I live said they had not had a single case of 'Covid' there for almost a year and when the residents were 'vaccinated' they had 19 positive cases in two weeks with eight dying.

It's not the 'vaccine' – honest

The obvious cause and effect was being ignored by the media and most of the public. Australia's health minister Greg Hunt (a former head of strategy at the World Economic Forum) was admitted to hospital after he had the 'vaccine'. He was suffering according to reports from the skin infection 'cellulitis' and it must have been a severe case to have warranted days in hospital. Immediately the authorities said this was nothing to do with the 'vaccine' when an effect of some vaccines is a 'cellulitis-like reaction'. We had families of perfectly healthy old people who died after the 'vaccine' saying that if only they had been given the 'vaccine' earlier they would still be alive. As a numbskull rating that is off the chart. A father of four 'died of Covid' at aged 48 when he was taken ill two days after having the 'vaccine'. The man, a health administrator, had been 'shielding during the pandemic' and had 'not really left the house' until he went for the 'vaccine'. Having the 'vaccine' and then falling ill and dying does not seem to have qualified as a possible cause and effect and 'Covid-19' went on his death certificate. His family said they had no idea how he 'caught the virus'. A family member said: 'Tragically, it could be that going for a vaccination ultimately led to him catching Covid ...The sad truth is that they are never going to know where it came from.' The family warned people to remember

that the virus still existed and was 'very real'. So was their stupidity. Nurses and doctors who had the first round of the 'vaccine' were collapsing, dying and ending up in a hospital bed while they or their grieving relatives were saying they'd still have the 'vaccine' again despite what happened. I kid you not. You mean if your husband returned from the dead he'd have the same 'vaccine' again that killed him??

Doctors at the VCU Medical Center in Richmond, Virginia, said the Johnson & Johnson 'vaccine' was to blame for a man's skin peeling off. Patient Richard Terrell said: 'It all just happened so fast. My skin peeled off. It's still coming off on my hands now.' He said it was stinging, burning and itching and when he bent his arms and legs it was very painful with 'the skin swollen and rubbing against itself'. Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna vaccines use mRNA to change the cell while the Johnson & Johnson version uses DNA in a process similar to AstraZeneca's technique. Johnson & Johnson and AstraZeneca have both had their 'vaccines' paused by many countries after causing serious blood problems. Terrell's doctor Fnu Nutan said he could have died if he hadn't got medical attention. It sounds terrible so what did Nutan and Terrell say about the 'vaccine' now? Oh, they still recommend that people have it. A nurse in a hospital bed 40 minutes after the vaccination and unable to swallow due to throat swelling was told by a doctor that he lost mobility in his arm for 36 hours following the vaccination. What did he say to the ailing nurse? 'Good for you for getting the vaccination.' We are dealing with a serious form of cognitive dissonance madness in both public and medical staff. There is a remarkable correlation between those having the 'vaccine' and trumpeting the fact and suffering bad happenings shortly afterwards. Witold Rogiewicz, a Polish doctor, made a video of his 'vaccination' and ridiculed those who were questioning its safety and the intentions of Bill Gates: 'Vaccinate yourself to protect yourself, your loved ones, friends and also patients. And to mention quickly I have info for anti-vaxxers and anti-Coviders if you want to contact Bill Gates you can do this through me.' He further ridiculed the dangers of 5G. Days later he

was dead, but naturally the vaccination wasn't mentioned in the verdict of 'heart attack'.

Lies, lies and more lies

So many members of the human race have slipped into extreme states of insanity and unfortunately they include reframed doctors and nursing staff. Having a 'vaccine' and dying within minutes or hours is not considered a valid connection while death from any cause within 28 days or longer of a positive test with a test not testing for the 'virus' means 'Covid-19' goes on the death certificate. How could that 'vaccine'-death connection not have been made except by calculated deceit? US figures in the initial rollout period to February 12th, 2020, revealed that a third of the deaths reported to the CDC after 'Covid vaccines' happened within 48 hours. Five men in the UK suffered an 'extremely rare' blood clot problem after having the AstraZeneca 'vaccine', but no causal link was established said the Gates-funded Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) which had given the 'vaccine' emergency approval to be used. Former Pfizer executive Dr Michael Yeadon explained in his interview how the procedures could cause blood coagulation and clots. People who should have been at no risk were dying from blood clots in the brain and he said he had heard from medical doctor friends that people were suffering from skin bleeding and massive headaches. The AstraZeneca 'shot' was stopped by some 20 countries over the blood clotting issue and still the corrupt MHRA, the European Medicines Agency (EMA) and the World Health Organization said that it should continue to be given even though the EMA admitted that it 'still cannot rule out definitively' a link between blood clotting and the 'vaccine'. Later Marco Cavaleri, head of EMA vaccine strategy, said there was indeed a clear link between the 'vaccine' and thrombosis, but they didn't know why. So much for the trials showing the 'vaccine' is safe. Blood clots were affecting younger people who would be under virtually no danger from 'Covid' even if it existed which makes it all the more stupid and sinister.

The British government responded to public alarm by wheeling out June Raine, the terrifyingly weak infant school headmistress sound-alike who heads the UK MHRA drug 'regulator'. The idea that she would stand up to Big Pharma and government pressure is laughable and she told us that all was well in the same way that she did when allowing untested, never-used-on-humans-before, genetically-manipulating 'vaccines' to be exposed to the public in the first place. Mass lying is the new normal of the 'Covid' era. The MHRA later said 30 cases of rare blood clots had by then been connected with the AstraZeneca 'vaccine' (that means a lot more in reality) while stressing that the benefits of the jab in preventing 'Covid-19' outweighed any risks. A more ridiculous and disingenuous statement with callous disregard for human health it is hard to contemplate. Immediately after the mendacious 'all-clears' two hospital workers in Denmark experienced blood clots and cerebral haemorrhaging following the AstraZeneca jab and one died. Top Norwegian health official Pål Andre Holme said the 'vaccine' was the only common factor: 'There is nothing in the patient history of these individuals that can give such a powerful immune response ... I am confident that the antibodies that we have found are the cause, and I see no other explanation than it being the vaccine which triggers it.' Strokes, a clot or bleed in the brain, were clearly associated with the 'vaccine' from word of mouth and whistleblower reports. Similar consequences followed with all these 'vaccines' that we were told were so safe and as the numbers grew by the day it was clear we were witnessing human carnage.

Learning the hard way

A woman interviewed by UKColumn told how her husband suffered dramatic health effects after the vaccine when he'd been in good health all his life. He went from being a little unwell to losing all feeling in his legs and experiencing 'excruciating pain'. Misdiagnosis followed twice at Accident and Emergency (an 'allergy' and 'sciatica') before he was admitted to a neurology ward where doctors said his serious condition had been caused by the

'vaccine'. Another seven 'vaccinated' people were apparently being treated on the same ward for similar symptoms. The woman said he had the 'vaccine' because they believed media claims that it was safe. 'I didn't think the government would give out a vaccine that does this to somebody; I believed they would be bringing out a vaccination that would be safe.' What a tragic way to learn that lesson. Another woman posted that her husband was transporting stroke patients to hospital on almost every shift and when he asked them if they had been 'vaccinated' for 'Covid' they all replied 'yes'. One had a 'massive brain bleed' the day after his second dose. She said her husband reported the 'just been vaccinated' information every time to doctors in A and E only for them to ignore it, make no notes and appear annoyed that it was even mentioned. This particular report cannot be verified, but it expresses a common theme that confirms the monumental underreporting of 'vaccine' consequences. Interestingly as the 'vaccines' and their brain blood clot/stroke consequences began to emerge the UK National Health Service began a publicity campaign telling the public what to do in the event of a stroke. A Scottish NHS staff nurse who quit in disgust in March, 2021, said:

I have seen traumatic injuries from the vaccine, they're not getting reported to the yellow card [adverse reaction] scheme, they're treating the symptoms, not asking why, why it's happening. It's just treating the symptoms and when you speak about it you're dismissed like you're crazy, I'm not crazy, I'm not crazy because every other colleague I've spoken to is terrified to speak out, they've had enough.

Videos appeared on the Internet of people uncontrollably shaking after the 'vaccine' with no control over muscles, limbs and even their face. A Scottish mother broke out in a severe rash all over her body almost immediately after she was given the AstraZeneca 'vaccine'. The pictures were horrific. Leigh King, a 41-year-old hairdresser from Lanarkshire said: 'Never in my life was I prepared for what I was about to experience ... My skin was so sore and constantly hot ... I have never felt pain like this ...' But don't you worry, the 'vaccine' is perfectly safe. Then there has been the effect on medical

staff who have been pressured to have the 'vaccine' by psychopathic 'health' authorities and government. A London hospital consultant who gave the name K. Polyakova wrote this to the *British Medical Journal* or *BMJ*:

I am currently struggling with ... the failure to report the reality of the morbidity caused by our current vaccination program within the health service and staff population. The levels of sickness after vaccination is unprecedented and staff are getting very sick and some with neurological symptoms which is having a huge impact on the health service function. Even the young and healthy are off for days, some for weeks, and some requiring medical treatment. Whole teams are being taken out as they went to get vaccinated together.

Mandatory vaccination in this instance is stupid, unethical and irresponsible when it comes to protecting our staff and public health. We are in the voluntary phase of vaccination, and encouraging staff to take an unlicensed product that is impacting on their immediate health ... it is clearly stated that these vaccine products do not offer immunity or stop transmission. In which case why are we doing it?

Not to protect health that's for sure. Medical workers are lauded by governments for agenda reasons when they couldn't give a toss about them any more than they can for the population in general. Schools across America faced the same situation as they closed due to the high number of teachers and other staff with bad reactions to the Pfizer/BioNTech, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson 'Covid vaccines' all of which were linked to death and serious adverse effects. The *BMJ* took down the consultant's comments pretty quickly on the grounds that they were being used to spread 'disinformation'. They were exposing the truth about the 'vaccine' was the real reason. The cover-up is breathtaking.

Hiding the evidence

The scale of the 'vaccine' death cover-up worldwide can be confirmed by comparing official figures with the personal experience of the public. I heard of many people in my community who died immediately or soon after the vaccine that would never appear in the media or even likely on the official totals of 'vaccine' fatalities and adverse reactions when only about ten percent are estimated to be

reported and I have seen some estimates as low as one percent in a Harvard study. In the UK alone by April 29th, 2021, some 757,654 adverse reactions had been officially reported from the Pfizer/BioNTech, Oxford/AstraZeneca and Moderna 'vaccines' with more than a thousand deaths linked to jabs and that means an estimated ten times this number in reality from a ten percent reporting rate percentage. That's seven million adverse reactions and 10,000 potential deaths and a one percent reporting rate would be ten times *those* figures. In 1976 the US government pulled the swine flu vaccine after 53 deaths. The UK data included a combined 10,000 eye disorders from the 'Covid vaccines' with more than 750 suffering visual impairment or blindness and again multiply by the estimated reporting percentages. As 'Covid cases' officially fell hospitals virtually empty during the 'Covid crisis' began to fill up with a range of other problems in the wake of the 'vaccine' rollout. The numbers across America have also been catastrophic. Deaths linked to *all* types of vaccine increased by 6,000 percent in the first quarter of 2021 compared with 2020. A 39-year-old woman from Ogden, Utah, died four days after receiving a second dose of Moderna's 'Covid vaccine' when her liver, heart and kidneys all failed despite the fact that she had no known medical issues or conditions. Her family sought an autopsy, but Dr Erik Christensen, Utah's chief medical examiner, said proving vaccine injury as a cause of death almost never happened. He could think of only one instance where an autopsy would name a vaccine as the official cause of death and that would be anaphylaxis where someone received a vaccine and died almost instantaneously. 'Short of that, it would be difficult for us to definitively say this is the vaccine,' Christensen said. If that is true this must be added to the estimated ten percent (or far less) reporting rate of vaccine deaths and serious reactions and the conclusion can only be that vaccine deaths and serious reactions – including these 'Covid' potions' – are phenomenally understated in official figures. The same story can be found everywhere. Endless accounts of deaths and serious reactions among the public, medical

and care home staff while official figures did not even begin to reflect this.

Professional script-reader Dr David Williams, a 'top public-health official' in Ontario, Canada, insulted our intelligence by claiming only four serious adverse reactions and no deaths from the more than 380,000 vaccine doses then given. This bore no resemblance to what people knew had happened in their own circles and we had Dirk Huyer in charge of getting millions vaccinated in Ontario while at the same time he was Chief Coroner for the province investigating causes of death including possible death from the vaccine. An aide said he had stepped back from investigating deaths, but evidence indicated otherwise. Rosemary Frei, who secured a Master of Science degree in molecular biology at the Faculty of Medicine at Canada's University of Calgary before turning to investigative journalism, was one who could see that official figures for 'vaccine' deaths and reactions made no sense. She said that doctors seldom reported adverse events and when people got really sick or died after getting a vaccination they would attribute that to anything except the vaccines. It had been that way for years and anyone who wondered aloud whether the 'Covid vaccines' or other shots cause harm is immediately branded as 'anti-vax' and 'anti-science'. This was 'career-threatening' for health professionals. Then there was the huge pressure to support the push to 'vaccinate' billions in the quickest time possible. Frei said:

So that's where we're at today. More than half a million vaccine doses have been given to people in Ontario alone. The rush is on to vaccinate all 15 million of us in the province by September. And the mainstream media are screaming for this to be sped up even more. That all adds up to only a very slim likelihood that we're going to be told the truth by officials about how many people are getting sick or dying from the vaccines.

What is true of Ontario is true of everywhere.

They KNEW – and still did it

The authorities knew what was going to happen with multiple deaths and adverse reactions. The UK government's Gates-funded

and Big Pharma-dominated Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) hired a company to employ AI in compiling the projected reactions to the 'vaccine' that would otherwise be uncountable. The request for applications said: 'The MHRA urgently seeks an Artificial Intelligence (AI) software tool to process the expected high volume of Covid-19 vaccine Adverse Drug Reaction ...' This was from the agency, headed by the disingenuous June Raine, that gave the 'vaccines' emergency approval and the company was hired before the first shot was given. 'We are going to kill and maim you – is that okay?' 'Oh, yes, perfectly fine – I'm very grateful, thank you, doctor.' The range of 'Covid vaccine' adverse reactions goes on for page after page in the MHRA criminally underreported 'Yellow Card' system and includes affects to eyes, ears, skin, digestion, blood and so on. Raine's MHRA amazingly claimed that the 'overall safety experience ... is so far as expected from the clinical trials'. The death, serious adverse effects, deafness and blindness were *expected*? When did they ever mention that? If these human tragedies were expected then those that gave approval for the use of these 'vaccines' must be guilty of crimes against humanity including murder – a definition of which is 'killing a person with malice aforethought or with recklessness manifesting extreme indifference to the value of human life.' People involved at the MHRA, the CDC in America and their equivalent around the world must go before Nuremberg trials to answer for their callous inhumanity. We are only talking here about the immediate effects of the 'vaccine'. The longer-term impact of the DNA synthetic manipulation is the main reason they are so hysterically desperate to inoculate the entire global population in the shortest possible time.

Africa and the developing world are a major focus for the 'vaccine' depopulation agenda and a mass vaccination sales-pitch is underway thanks to caring people like the Rockefellers and other Cult assets. The Rockefeller Foundation, which pre-empted the 'Covid pandemic' in a document published in 2010 that 'predicted' what happened a decade later, announced an initial \$34.95 million grant in February, 2021, 'to ensure more equitable access to Covid-19

testing and vaccines' among other things in Africa in collaboration with '24 organizations, businesses, and government agencies'. The pan-Africa initiative would focus on 10 countries: Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia'. Rajiv Shah, President of the Rockefeller Foundation and former administrator of CIA-controlled USAID, said that if Africa was not mass-vaccinated (to change the DNA of its people) it was a 'threat to all of humanity' and not fair on Africans. When someone from the Rockefeller Foundation says they want to do something to help poor and deprived people and countries it is time for a belly-laugh. They are doing this out of the goodness of their 'heart' because 'vaccinating' the entire global population is what the 'Covid' hoax set out to achieve. Official 'decolonisation' of Africa by the Cult was merely a prelude to financial colonisation on the road to a return to physical colonisation. The 'vaccine' is vital to that and the sudden and convenient death of the 'Covid' sceptic president of Tanzania can be seen in its true light. A lot of people in Africa are aware that this is another form of colonisation and exploitation and they need to stand their ground.

The 'vaccine is working' scam

A potential problem for the Cult was that the 'vaccine' is meant to change human DNA and body messaging and not to protect anyone from a 'virus' never shown to exist. The vaccine couldn't work because it was not designed to work and how could they make it *appear* to be working so that more people would have it? This was overcome by lowering the amplification rate of the PCR test to produce fewer 'cases' and therefore fewer 'deaths'. Some of us had been pointing out since March, 2020, that the amplification rate of the test not testing for the 'virus' had been made artificially high to generate positive tests which they could call 'cases' to justify lockdowns. The World Health Organization recommended an absurdly high 45 amplification cycles to ensure the high positives required by the Cult and then remained silent on the issue until January 20th, 2021 – Biden's Inauguration Day. This was when the

'vaccinations' were seriously underway and on that day the WHO recommended after discussions with America's CDC that laboratories *lowered their testing amplification*. Dr David Samadi, a certified urologist and health writer, said the WHO was encouraging all labs to reduce their cycle count for PCR tests. He said the current cycle was much too high and was 'resulting in any particle being declared a positive case'. Even one mainstream news report I saw said this meant the number of 'Covid' infections may have been 'dramatically inflated'. Oh, just a little bit. The CDC in America issued new guidance to laboratories in April, 2021, to use 28 cycles *but only for 'vaccinated' people*. The timing of the CDC/WHO interventions were cynically designed to make it appear the 'vaccines' were responsible for falling cases and deaths when the real reason can be seen in the following examples. New York's state lab, the Wadsworth Center, identified 872 positive tests in July, 2020, based on a threshold of 40 cycles. When the figure was lowered to 35 cycles 43 percent of the 872 were no longer 'positives'. At 30 cycles the figure was 63 percent. A Massachusetts lab found that between 85 to 90 percent of people who tested positive in July with a cycle threshold of 40 would be negative at 30 cycles, Ashish Jha, MD, director of the Harvard Global Health Institute, said: 'I'm really shocked that it could be that high ... Boy, does it really change the way we need to be thinking about testing.' I'm shocked that I could see the obvious in the spring of 2020, with no medical background, and most medical professionals still haven't worked it out. No, that's not shocking – it's terrifying.

Three weeks after the WHO directive to lower PCR cycles the London *Daily Mail* ran this headline: 'Why ARE Covid cases plummeting? New infections have fallen 45% in the US and 30% globally in the past 3 weeks but experts say vaccine is NOT the main driver because only 8% of Americans and 13% of people worldwide have received their first dose.' They acknowledged that the drop could not be attributed to the 'vaccine', but soon this morphed throughout the media into the 'vaccine' has caused cases and deaths to fall when it was the PCR threshold. In December, 2020, there was

chaos at English Channel ports with truck drivers needing negative 'Covid' tests before they could board a ferry home for Christmas. The government wanted to remove the backlog as fast as possible and they brought in troops to do the 'testing'. Out of 1,600 drivers just 36 tested positive and the rest were given the all clear to cross the Channel. I guess the authorities thought that 36 was the least they could get away with without the unquestioning catching on. The amplification trick which most people believed in the absence of information in the mainstream applied more pressure on those refusing the 'vaccine' to succumb when it 'obviously worked'. The truth was the exact opposite with deaths in care homes soaring with the 'vaccine' and in Israel the term used was 'skyrocket'. A re-analysis of published data from the Israeli Health Ministry led by Dr Hervé Seligmann at the Medicine Emerging Infectious and Tropical Diseases at Aix-Marseille University found that Pfizer's 'Covid vaccine' killed 'about 40 times more [elderly] people than the disease itself would have killed' during a five-week vaccination period and *260 times* more younger people than would have died from the 'virus' even according to the manipulated 'virus' figures. Dr Seligmann and his co-study author, Haim Yativ, declared after reviewing the Israeli 'vaccine' death data: 'This is a new Holocaust.'

Then, in mid-April, 2021, after vast numbers of people worldwide had been 'vaccinated', the story changed with clear coordination. The UK government began to prepare the ground for more future lockdowns when Nuremberg-destined Boris Johnson told yet another whopper. He said that cases had fallen because of *lockdowns* not 'vaccines'. Lockdowns are irrelevant when *there is no 'virus'* and the test and fraudulent death certificates are deciding the number of 'cases' and 'deaths'. Study after study has shown that lockdowns don't work and instead kill and psychologically destroy people. Meanwhile in the United States Anthony Fauci and Rochelle Walensky, the ultra-Zionist head of the CDC, peddled the same line. More lockdown was the answer and not the 'vaccine', a line repeated on cue by the moron that is Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. Why all the hysteria to get everyone 'vaccinated' if lockdowns and

not 'vaccines' made the difference? None of it makes sense on the face of it. Oh, but it does. The Cult wants lockdowns *and* the 'vaccine' and if the 'vaccine' is allowed to be seen as the total answer lockdowns would no longer be justified when there are still livelihoods to destroy. 'Variants' and renewed upward manipulation of PCR amplification are planned to instigate never-ending lockdown *and* more 'vaccines'.

You *must* have it – we're desperate

Israel, where the Jewish and Arab population are ruled by the Sabbatian Cult, was the front-runner in imposing the DNA-manipulating 'vaccine' on its people to such an extent that Jewish refusers began to liken what was happening to the early years of Nazi Germany. This would seem to be a fantastic claim. Why would a government of Jewish people be acting like the Nazis did? If you realise that the Sabbatian Cult was behind the Nazis and that Sabbatians hate Jews the pieces start to fit and the question of why a 'Jewish' government would treat Jews with such callous disregard for their lives and freedom finds an answer. Those controlling the government of Israel *aren't Jewish* – they're Sabbatian. Israeli lawyer Tamir Turgal was one who made the Nazi comparison in comments to German lawyer Reiner Fuellmich who is leading a class action lawsuit against the psychopaths for crimes against humanity. Turgal described how the Israeli government was vaccinating children and pregnant women on the basis that there was no evidence that this was dangerous when they had no evidence that it *wasn't* dangerous either. They just had no evidence. This was medical experimentation and Turgal said this breached the Nuremberg Code about medical experimentation and procedures requiring informed consent and choice. Think about that. A Nuremberg Code developed because of Nazi experimentation on Jews and others in concentration camps by people like the evil-beyond-belief Josef Mengele is being breached by the *Israeli* government; but when you know that it's a *Sabbatian* government along with its intelligence and military agencies like Mossad, Shin Bet and the Israeli Defense Forces, and that Sabbatians

were the force behind the Nazis, the kaleidoscope comes into focus. What have we come to when Israeli Jews are suing their government for violating the Nuremberg Code by essentially making Israelis subject to a medical experiment using the controversial 'vaccines'? It's a shocker that this has to be done in the light of what happened in Nazi Germany. The Anshe Ha-Emet, or 'People of the Truth', made up of Israeli doctors, lawyers, campaigners and public, have launched a lawsuit with the International Criminal Court. It says:

When the heads of the Ministry of Health as well as the prime minister presented the vaccine in Israel and began the vaccination of Israeli residents, the vaccinated were not advised, that, in practice, they are taking part in a medical experiment and that their consent is required for this under the Nuremberg Code.

The irony is unbelievable, but easily explained in one word: Sabbatians. The foundation of Israeli 'Covid' apartheid is the 'green pass' or 'green passport' which allows Jews and Arabs who have had the DNA-manipulating 'vaccine' to go about their lives – to work, fly, travel in general, go to shopping malls, bars, restaurants, hotels, concerts, gyms, swimming pools, theatres and sports venues, while non-'vaccinated' are banned from all those places and activities. Israelis have likened the 'green pass' to the yellow stars that Jews in Nazi Germany were forced to wear – the same as the yellow stickers that a branch of UK supermarket chain Morrisons told exempt mask-wearers they had to display when shopping. How very sensitive. The Israeli system is blatant South African-style apartheid on the basis of compliance or non-compliance to fascism rather than colour of the skin. How appropriate that the Sabbatian Israeli government was so close to the pre-Mandela apartheid regime in Pretoria. The Sabbatian-instigated 'vaccine passport' in Israel is planned for everywhere. Sabbatians struck a deal with Pfizer that allowed them to lead the way in the percentage of a national population infused with synthetic material and the result was catastrophic. Israeli freedom activist Shai Dannon told me how chairs were appearing on beaches that said 'vaccinated only'. Health Minister Yuli Edelstein said that anyone unwilling or unable to get

the jabs that 'confer immunity' will be 'left behind'. The man's a liar. Not even the makers claim the 'vaccines' confer immunity. When you see those figures of 'vaccine' deaths these psychopaths were saying that you must take the chance the 'vaccine' will kill you or maim you while knowing it will change your DNA or lockdown for you will be permanent. That's fascism. The Israeli parliament passed a law to allow personal information of the non-vaccinated to be shared with local and national authorities for three months. This was claimed by its supporters to be a way to 'encourage' people to be vaccinated. Hadas Ziv from Physicians for Human Rights described this as a 'draconian law which crushed medical ethics and the patient rights'. But that's the idea, the Sabbatians would reply.

Your papers, please

Sabbatian Israel was leading what has been planned all along to be a global 'vaccine pass' called a 'green passport' without which you would remain in permanent lockdown restriction and unable to do anything. This is how badly – *desperately* – the Cult is to get everyone 'vaccinated'. The term and colour 'green' was not by chance and related to the psychology of fusing the perception of the green climate hoax with the 'Covid' hoax and how the 'solution' to both is the same Great Reset. Lying politicians, health officials and psychologists denied there were any plans for mandatory vaccinations or restrictions based on vaccinations, but they knew that was exactly what was meant to happen with governments of all countries reaching agreements to enforce a global system. 'Free' Denmark and 'free' Sweden unveiled digital vaccine certification. Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, and Spain have all committed to a vaccine passport system and the rest including the whole of the EU would follow. The satanic UK government will certainly go this way despite mendacious denials and at the time of writing it is trying to manipulate the public into having the 'vaccine' so they could go abroad on a summer holiday. How would that work without something to prove you had the synthetic toxicity injected into you?

Documents show that the EU's European Commission was moving towards 'vaccine certificates' in 2018 and 2019 before the 'Covid' hoax began. They knew what was coming. Abracadabra – Ursula von der Leyen, the German President of the Commission, announced in March, 2021, an EU 'Digital Green Certificate' – green again – to track the public's 'Covid status'. The passport sting is worldwide and the Far East followed the same pattern with South Korea ruling that only those with 'vaccination' passports – again the *green* pass – would be able to 'return to their daily lives'.

Bill Gates has been preparing for this 'passport' with other Cult operatives for years and beyond the paper version is a Gates-funded 'digital tattoo' to identify who has been vaccinated and who hasn't. The 'tattoo' is reported to include a substance which is externally readable to confirm who has been vaccinated. This is a bio-luminous light-generating enzyme (think fireflies) called ... *Luciferase*. Yes, named after the Cult 'god' Lucifer the 'light bringer' of whom more to come. Gates said he funded the readable tattoo to ensure children in the developing world were vaccinated and no one was missed out. He cares so much about poor kids as we know. This was just the cover story to develop a vaccine tagging system for everyone on the planet. Gates has been funding the ID2020 'alliance' to do just that in league with other lovely people at Microsoft, GAVI, the Rockefeller Foundation, Accenture and IDEO.org. He said in interviews in March, 2020, before any 'vaccine' publicly existed, that the world must have a globalised digital certificate to track the 'virus' and who had been vaccinated. Gates knew from the start that the mRNA vaccines were coming and when they would come and that the plan was to tag the 'vaccinated' to marginalise the intelligent and stop them doing anything including travel. Evil just doesn't suffice. Gates was exposed for offering a \$10 million bribe to the Nigerian House of Representatives to invoke compulsory 'Covid' vaccination of all Nigerians. Sara Cunial, a member of the Italian Parliament, called Gates a 'vaccine criminal'. She urged the Italian President to hand him over to the International Criminal Court for crimes against

humanity and condemned his plans to 'chip the human race' through ID2020.

You know it's a long-planned agenda when war criminal and Cult gofer Tony Blair is on the case. With the scale of arrogance only someone as dark as Blair can muster he said: 'Vaccination in the end is going to be your route to liberty.' Blair is a disgusting piece of work and he confirms that again. The media has given a lot of coverage to a bloke called Charlie Mullins, founder of London's biggest independent plumbing company, Pimlico Plumbers, who has said he won't employ anyone who has not been vaccinated or have them go to any home where people are not vaccinated. He said that if he had his way no one would be allowed to walk the streets if they have not been vaccinated. Gates was cheering at the time while I was alerting the white coats. The plan is that people will qualify for 'passports' for having the first two doses and then to keep it they will have to have all the follow ups and new ones for invented 'variants' until human genetics is transformed and many are dead who can't adjust to the changes. Hollywood celebrities – the usual propaganda stunt – are promoting something called the WELL Health-Safety Rating to verify that a building or space has 'taken the necessary steps to prioritize the health and safety of their staff, visitors and other stakeholders'. They included Lady Gaga, Jennifer Lopez, Michael B. Jordan, Robert DeNiro, Venus Williams, Wolfgang Puck, Deepak Chopra and 17th Surgeon General Richard Carmona. Yawn. WELL Health-Safety has big connections with China. Parent company Delos is headed by former Goldman Sachs partner Paul Scialla. This is another example – and we will see so many others – of using the excuse of 'health' to dictate the lives and activities of the population. I guess one confirmation of the 'safety' of buildings is that only 'vaccinated' people can go in, right?

Electronic concentration camps

I wrote decades ago about the plans to restrict travel and here we are for those who refuse to bow to tyranny. This can be achieved in one go with air travel if the aviation industry makes a blanket decree.

The 'vaccine' and guaranteed income are designed to be part of a global version of China's social credit system which tracks behaviour 24/7 and awards or deletes 'credits' based on whether your behaviour is supported by the state or not. I mean your entire lifestyle – what you do, eat, say, everything. Once your credit score falls below a certain level consequences kick in. In China tens of millions have been denied travel by air and train because of this. All the locations and activities denied to refusers by the 'vaccine' passports will be included in one big mass ban on doing almost anything for those that don't bow their head to government. It's beyond fascist and a new term is required to describe its extremes – I guess fascist technocracy will have to do. The way the Chinese system of technological – technocratic – control is sweeping the West can be seen in the Los Angeles school system and is planned to be expanded worldwide. Every child is required to have a 'Covid'-tracking app scanned daily before they can enter the classroom. The so-called Daily Pass tracking system is produced by Gates' Microsoft which I'm sure will shock you rigid. The pass will be scanned using a barcode (one step from an inside-the-body barcode) and the information will include health checks, 'Covid' tests and vaccinations. Entry codes are for one specific building only and access will only be allowed if a student or teacher has a negative test with a test not testing for the 'virus', has no symptoms of anything alleged to be related to 'Covid' (symptoms from a range of other illness), and has a temperature under 100 degrees. No barcode, no entry, is planned to be the case for everywhere and not only schools.

Kids are being psychologically prepared to accept this as 'normal' their whole life which is why what they can impose in schools is so important to the Cult and its gofers. Long-time American freedom campaigner John Whitehead of the Rutherford Institute was not exaggerating when he said: 'Databit by databit, we are building our own electronic concentration camps.' Canada under its Cult gofer prime minister Justin Trudeau has taken a major step towards the real thing with people interned against their will if they test positive with a test not testing for the 'virus' when they arrive at a Canadian

airport. They are jailed in internment hotels often without food or water for long periods and with many doors failing to lock there have been sexual assaults. The interned are being charged sometimes \$2,000 for the privilege of being abused in this way. Trudeau is fully on board with the Cult and says the 'Covid pandemic' has provided an opportunity for a global 'reset' to permanently change Western civilisation. His number two, Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland, is a trustee of the World Economic Forum and a Rhodes Scholar. The Trudeau family have long been servants of the Cult. See *The Biggest Secret* and Cathy O'Brien's book *Trance-Formation of America* for the horrific background to Trudeau's father Pierre Trudeau another Canadian prime minister. Hide your fascism behind the façade of a heart-on-the-sleeve liberal. It's a well-honed Cult technique.

What can the 'vaccine' really do?

We have a 'virus' never shown to exist and 'variants' of the 'virus' that have also never been shown to exist except, like the 'original', as computer-generated fictions. Even if you believe there's a 'virus' the 'case' to 'death' rate is in the region of 0.23 to 0.15 percent and those 'deaths' are concentrated among the very old around the same average age that people die anyway. In response to this lack of threat (in truth none) psychopaths and idiots, knowingly and unknowingly answering to Gates and the Cult, are seeking to 'vaccinate' every man, woman and child on Planet Earth. Clearly the 'vaccine' is not about 'Covid' – none of this ever has been. So what is it all about *really*? Why the desperation to infuse genetically-manipulating synthetic material into everyone through mRNA fraudulent 'vaccines' with the intent of doing this over and over with the excuses of 'variants' and other 'virus' inventions? Dr Sherri Tenpenny, an osteopathic medical doctor in the United States, has made herself an expert on vaccines and their effects as a vehement campaigner against their use. Tenpenny was board certified in emergency medicine, the director of a level two trauma centre for 12 years, and moved to Cleveland in 1996 to start an integrative

medicine practice which has treated patients from all 50 states and some 17 other countries. Weaning people off pharmaceutical drugs is a speciality.

She became interested in the consequences of vaccines after attending a meeting at the National Vaccine Information Center in Washington DC in 2000 where she 'sat through four days of listening to medical doctors and scientists and lawyers and parents of vaccine injured kids' and asked: 'What's going on?' She had never been vaccinated and never got ill while her father was given a list of vaccines to be in the military and was 'sick his entire life'. The experience added to her questions and she began to examine vaccine documents from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). After reading the first one, the 1998 version of *The General Recommendations of Vaccination*, she thought: 'This is it?' The document was poorly written and bad science and Tenpenny began 20 years of research into vaccines that continues to this day. She began her research into 'Covid vaccines' in March, 2020, and she describes them as 'deadly'. For many, as we have seen, they already have been. Tenpenny said that in the first 30 days of the 'vaccine' rollout in the United States there had been more than 40,000 adverse events reported to the vaccine adverse event database. A document had been delivered to her the day before that was 172 pages long. 'We have over 40,000 adverse events; we have over 3,100 cases of [potentially deadly] anaphylactic shock; we have over 5,000 neurological reactions.' Effects ranged from headaches to numbness, dizziness and vertigo, to losing feeling in hands or feet and paraesthesia which is when limbs 'fall asleep' and people have the sensation of insects crawling underneath their skin. All this happened in the first 30 days and remember that only about *ten percent* (or far less) of adverse reactions and vaccine-related deaths are estimated to be officially reported. Tenpenny said:

So can you think of one single product in any industry, any industry, for as long as products have been made on the planet that within 30 days we have 40,000 people complaining of side effects that not only is still on the market but ... we've got paid actors telling us how great

they are for getting their vaccine. We're offering people \$500 if they will just get their vaccine and we've got nurses and doctors going; 'I got the vaccine, I got the vaccine'.

Tenpenny said they were not going to be 'happy dancing folks' when they began to suffer Bell's palsy (facial paralysis), neuropathies, cardiac arrhythmias and autoimmune reactions that kill through a blood disorder. 'They're not going to be so happy, happy then, but we're never going to see pictures of those people' she said. Tenpenny described the 'vaccine' as 'a well-designed killing tool'.

No off-switch

Bad as the initial consequences had been Tenpenny said it would be maybe 14 months before we began to see the 'full ravage' of what is going to happen to the 'Covid vaccinated' with full-out consequences taking anything between two years and 20 years to show. You can understand why when you consider that variations of the 'Covid vaccine' use mRNA (messenger RNA) to in theory activate the immune system to produce protective antibodies without using the actual 'virus'. How can they when it's a computer program and they've never isolated what they claim is the 'real thing'? Instead they use *synthetic* mRNA. They are inoculating synthetic material into the body which through a technique known as the Trojan horse is absorbed into cells to change the nature of DNA. Human DNA is changed by an infusion of messenger RNA and with each new 'vaccine' of this type it is changed even more. Say so and you are banned by Cult Internet platforms. The contempt the contemptuous Mark Zuckerberg has for the truth and human health can be seen in an internal Facebook video leaked to the Project Veritas investigative team in which he said of the 'Covid vaccines': '... I share some caution on this because we just don't know the long term side-effects of basically modifying people's DNA and RNA.' At the same time this disgusting man's Facebook was censoring and banning anyone saying exactly the same. He must go before a Nuremberg trial for crimes against humanity when he *knows* that he

is censoring legitimate concerns and denying the right of informed consent on behalf of the Cult that owns him. People have been killed and damaged by the very 'vaccination' technique he cast doubt on himself when they may not have had the 'vaccine' with access to information that he denied them. The plan is to have at least annual 'Covid vaccinations', add others to deal with invented 'variants', and change all other vaccines into the mRNA system. Pfizer executives told shareholders at a virtual Barclays Global Healthcare Conference in March, 2021, that the public may need a third dose of 'Covid vaccine', plus regular yearly boosters and the company planned to hike prices to milk the profits in a 'significant opportunity for our vaccine'. These are the professional liars, cheats and opportunists who are telling you their 'vaccine' is safe. Given this volume of mRNA planned to be infused into the human body and its ability to then replicate we will have a transformation of human genetics from biological to synthetic biological – exactly the long-time Cult plan for reasons we'll see – and many will die. Sherri Tenpenny said of this replication:

It's like having an on-button but no off-button and that whole mechanism ... they actually give it a name and they call it the Trojan horse mechanism, because it allows that [synthetic] virus and that piece of that [synthetic] virus to get inside of your cells, start to replicate and even get inserted into other parts of your DNA as a Trojan-horse.

Ask the overwhelming majority of people who have the 'vaccine' what they know about the contents and what they do and they would reply: 'The government says it will stop me getting the virus.' Governments give that false impression on purpose to increase take-up. You can read Sherri Tenpenny's detailed analysis of the health consequences in her blog at [Vaxxter.com](https://www.vaxxter.com), but in summary these are some of them. She highlights the statement by Bill Gates about how human beings can become their own 'vaccine manufacturing machine'. The man is insane. ['Vaccine'-generated] 'antibodies' carry synthetic messenger RNA into the cells and the damage starts, Tenpenny contends, and she says that lungs can be adversely affected through varying degrees of pus and bleeding which

obviously affects breathing and would be dubbed 'Covid-19'. Even more sinister was the impact of 'antibodies' on macrophages, a white blood cell of the immune system. They consist of Type 1 and Type 2 which have very different functions. She said Type 1 are 'hyper-vigilant' white blood cells which 'gobble up' bacteria etc. However, in doing so, this could cause inflammation and in extreme circumstances be fatal. She says these affects are mitigated by Type 2 macrophages which kick in to calm down the system and stop it going rogue. They clear up dead tissue debris and reduce inflammation that the Type 1 'fire crews' have caused. Type 1 kills the infection and Type 2 heals the damage, she says. This is her punchline with regard to 'Covid vaccinations': She says that mRNA 'antibodies' block Type 2 macrophages by attaching to them and deactivating them. This meant that when the Type 1 response was triggered by infection there was nothing to stop that getting out of hand by calming everything down. There's an on-switch, but no off-switch, she says. What follows can be 'over and out, see you when I see you'.

Genetic suicide

Tenpenny also highlights the potential for autoimmune disease – the body attacking itself – which has been associated with vaccines since they first appeared. Infusing a synthetic foreign substance into cells could cause the immune system to react in a panic believing that the body is being overwhelmed by an invader (it is) and the consequences can again be fatal. There is an autoimmune response known as a 'cytokine storm' which I have likened to a homeowner panicked by an intruder and picking up a gun to shoot randomly in all directions before turning the fire on himself. The immune system unleashes a storm of inflammatory response called cytokines to a threat and the body commits hara-kiri. The lesson is that you mess with the body's immune response at your peril and these 'vaccines' seriously – fundamentally – mess with immune response. Tenpenny refers to a consequence called anaphylactic shock which is a severe and highly dangerous allergic reaction when the immune system

floods the body with chemicals. She gives the example of having a bee sting which primes the immune system and makes it sensitive to those chemicals. When people are stung again maybe years later the immune response can be so powerful that it leads to anaphylactic shock. Tenpenny relates this 'shock' with regard to the 'Covid vaccine' to something called polyethylene glycol or PEG. Enormous numbers of people have become sensitive to this over decades of use in a whole range of products and processes including food, drink, skin creams and 'medicine'. Studies have claimed that some 72 percent of people have antibodies triggered by PEG compared with two percent in the 1960s and allergic hypersensitive reactions to this become a gathering cause for concern. Tenpenny points out that the 'mRNA vaccine' is coated in a 'bubble' of polyethylene glycol which has the potential to cause anaphylactic shock through immune sensitivity. Many reports have appeared of people reacting this way after having the 'Covid vaccine'. What do we think is going to happen as humanity has more and more of these 'vaccines'?

Tenpenny said: 'All these pictures we have seen with people with these rashes ... these weepy rashes, big reactions on their arms and things like that – it's an acute allergic reaction most likely to the polyethylene glycol that you've been previously primed and sensitised to.'

Those who have not studied the conspiracy and its perpetrators at length might think that making the population sensitive to PEG and then putting it in these 'vaccines' is just a coincidence. It is not. It is instead testament to how carefully and coldly-planned current events have been and the scale of the conspiracy we are dealing with. Tenpenny further explains that the 'vaccine' mRNA procedure can breach the blood-brain barrier which protects the brain from toxins and other crap that will cause malfunction. In this case they could make two proteins corrupt brain function to cause Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), a progressive nervous system disease leading to loss of muscle control, and frontal lobe degeneration – Alzheimer's and dementia. Immunologist J. Bart Classon published a paper connecting mRNA 'vaccines' to prion

disease which can lead to Alzheimer's and other forms of neurodegenerative disease while others have pointed out the potential to affect the placenta in ways that make women infertile. This will become highly significant in the next chapter when I will discuss other aspects of this non-vaccine that relate to its nanotechnology and transmission from the injected to the uninjected.

Qualified in idiocy

Tenpenny describes how research has confirmed that these 'vaccine'-generated antibodies can interact with a range of other tissues in the body and attack many other organs including the lungs. 'This means that if you have a hundred people standing in front of you that all got this shot they could have a hundred different symptoms.'

Anyone really think that Cult gofers like the Queen, Tony Blair, Christopher Whitty, Anthony Fauci, and all the other psychopaths have really had this 'vaccine' in the pictures we've seen? Not a bloody chance. Why don't doctors all tell us about all these dangers and consequences of the 'Covid vaccine'? Why instead do they encourage and pressure patients to have the shot? Don't let's think for a moment that doctors and medical staff can't be stupid, lazy, and psychopathic and that's without the financial incentives to give the jab. Tenpenny again:

Some people are going to die from the vaccine directly but a large number of people are going to start to get horribly sick and get all kinds of autoimmune diseases 42 days to maybe a year out. What are they going to do, these stupid doctors who say; 'Good for you for getting that vaccine.' What are they going to say; 'Oh, it must be a mutant, we need to give an extra dose of that vaccine.'

Because now the vaccine, instead of one dose or two doses we need three or four because the stupid physicians aren't taking the time to learn anything about it. If I can learn this sitting in my living room reading a 19 page paper and several others so can they. There's nothing special about me, I just take the time to do it.

Remember how Sara Kayat, the NHS and TV doctor, said that the 'Covid vaccine' would '100 percent prevent hospitalisation and death'. Doctors can be idiots like every other profession and they

should not be worshipped as infallible. They are not and far from it. Behind many medical and scientific 'experts' lies an uninformed prat trying to hide themselves from you although in the 'Covid' era many have failed to do so as with UK narrative-repeating 'TV doctor' Hilary Jones. Pushing back against the minority of proper doctors and scientists speaking out against the 'vaccine' has been the entire edifice of the Cult global state in the form of governments, medical systems, corporations, mainstream media, Silicon Valley, and an army of compliant doctors, medical staff and scientists willing to say anything for money and to enhance their careers by promoting the party line. If you do that you are an 'expert' and if you won't you are an 'anti-vaxxer' and 'Covidiot'. The pressure to be 'vaccinated' is incessant. We have even had reports claiming that the 'vaccine' can help cure cancer and Alzheimer's and make the lame walk. I am waiting for the announcement that it can bring you coffee in the morning and cook your tea. Just as the symptoms of 'Covid' seem to increase by the week so have the miracles of the 'vaccine'. American supermarket giant Kroger Co. offered nearly 500,000 employees in 35 states a \$100 bonus for having the 'vaccine' while donut chain Krispy Kreme promised 'vaccinated' customers a free glazed donut every day for the rest of 2021. Have your DNA changed and you will get a doughnut although we might not have to give you them for long. Such offers and incentives confirm the desperation.

Perhaps the worse vaccine-stunt of them all was UK 'Health' Secretary Matt-the-prat Hancock on live TV after watching a clip of someone being 'vaccinated' when the roll-out began. Hancock faked tears so badly it was embarrassing. Brain-of-Britain Piers Morgan, the lockdown-supporting, 'vaccine' supporting, 'vaccine' passport-supporting, TV host played along with Hancock – 'You're quite emotional about that' he said in response to acting so atrocious it would have been called out at a school nativity which will presumably today include Mary and Jesus in masks, wise men keeping their camels six feet apart, and shepherds under tent arrest. System-serving Morgan tweeted this: 'Love the idea of covid vaccine passports for everywhere: flights, restaurants, clubs, football, gyms,

shops etc. It's time covid-denying, anti-vaxxer loonies had their bullsh*t bluff called & bar themselves from going anywhere that responsible citizens go.' If only I could aspire to his genius. To think that Morgan, who specialises in shouting over anyone he disagrees with, was lauded as a free speech hero when he lost his job after storming off the set of his live show like a child throwing his dolly out of the pram. If he is a free speech hero we are in real trouble. I have no idea what 'bullsh*t' means, by the way, the * throws me completely.

The Cult is desperate to infuse its synthetic DNA-changing concoction into everyone and has been using every lie, trick and intimidation to do so. The question of '*Why?*' we shall now address.

CHAPTER TEN

Human 2.0

I believe that at the end of the century the use of words and general educated opinion will have altered so much that one will be able to speak of machines thinking without expecting to be contradicted – Alan Turing (1912-1954), the ‘Father of artificial intelligence’

I have been exposing for decades the plan to transform the human body from a biological to a synthetic-biological state. The new human that I will call Human 2.0 is planned to be connected to artificial intelligence and a global AI ‘Smart Grid’ that would operate as one global system in which AI would control everything from your fridge to your heating system to your car to your mind. Humans would no longer be ‘human’, but post-human and sub-human, with their thinking and emotional processes replaced by AI.

What I said sounded crazy and beyond science fiction and I could understand that. To any balanced, rational, mind it *is* crazy. Today, however, that world is becoming reality and it puts the ‘Covid vaccine’ into its true context. Ray Kurzweil is the ultra-Zionist ‘computer scientist, inventor and futurist’ and co-founder of the Singularity University. Singularity refers to the merging of humans with machines or ‘transhumanism’. Kurzweil has said humanity would be connected to the cyber ‘cloud’ in the period of the ever-recurring year of 2030:

Our thinking ... will be a hybrid of biological and non-biological thinking ... humans will be able to extend their limitations and ‘think in the cloud’ ... We’re going to put gateways to the

cloud in our brains ... We're going to gradually merge and enhance ourselves ... In my view, that's the nature of being human – we transcend our limitations. As the technology becomes vastly superior to what we are then the small proportion that is still human gets smaller and smaller and smaller until it's just utterly negligible.

They are trying to sell this end-of-humanity-as-we-know-it as the next stage of 'evolution' when we become super-human and 'like the gods'. They are lying to you. Shocked, eh? The population, and again especially the young, have been manipulated into addiction to technologies designed to enslave them for life. First they induced an addiction to smartphones (holdables); next they moved to technology on the body (wearables); and then began the invasion of the body (implantables). I warned way back about the plan for microchipped people and we are now entering that era. We should not be diverted into thinking that this refers only to chips we can see. Most important are the nanochips known as smart dust, neural dust and nanobots which are far too small to be seen by the human eye. Nanotechnology is everywhere, increasingly in food products, and released into the atmosphere by the geoengineering of the skies funded by Bill Gates to 'shut out the Sun' and 'save the planet from global warming'. Gates has been funding a project to spray millions of tonnes of chalk (calcium carbonate) into the stratosphere over Sweden to 'dim the Sun' and cool the Earth. Scientists warned the move could be disastrous for weather systems in ways no one can predict and opposition led to the Swedish space agency announcing that the 'experiment' would not be happening as planned in the summer of 2021; but it shows where the Cult is going with dimming the impact of the Sun and there's an associated plan to change the planet's atmosphere. Who gives psychopath Gates the right to dictate to the entire human race and dismantle planetary systems? The world will not be safe while this man is at large.

The global warming hoax has made the Sun, like the gas of life, something to fear when both are essential to good health and human survival (more inversion). The body transforms sunlight into vital vitamin D through a process involving ... *cholesterol*. This is the cholesterol we are also told to fear. We are urged to take Big Pharma

statin drugs to reduce cholesterol and it's all systematic. Reducing cholesterol means reducing vitamin D uptake with all the multiple health problems that will cause. At least if you take statins long term it saves the government from having to pay you a pension. The delivery system to block sunlight is widely referred to as chemtrails although these have a much deeper agenda, too. They appear at first to be contrails or condensation trails streaming from aircraft into cold air at high altitudes. Contrails disperse very quickly while chemtrails do not and spread out across the sky before eventually their content falls to earth. Many times I have watched aircraft cross-cross a clear blue sky releasing chemtrails until it looks like a cloudy day. Chemtrails contain many things harmful to humans and the natural world including toxic heavy metals, aluminium (see Alzheimer's) and nanotechnology. Ray Kurzweil reveals the reason without actually saying so: 'Nanobots will infuse all the matter around us with information. Rocks, trees, everything will become these intelligent creatures.' How do you deliver that? *From the sky.* Self-replicating nanobots would connect everything to the Smart Grid. The phenomenon of Morgellons disease began in the chemtrail era and the correlation has led to it being dubbed the 'chemtrail disease'. Self-replicating fibres appear in the body that can be pulled out through the skin. Morgellons fibres continue to grow outside the body and have a form of artificial intelligence. I cover this at greater length in *Phantom Self*.

'Vaccine' operating system

'Covid vaccines' with their self-replicating synthetic material are also designed to make the connection between humanity and Kurzweil's 'cloud'. American doctor and dedicated campaigner for truth, Carrie Madej, an Internal Medicine Specialist in Georgia with more than 20 years medical experience, has highlighted the nanotechnology aspect of the fake 'vaccines'. She explains how one of the components in at least the Moderna and Pfizer synthetic potions are 'lipid nanoparticles' which are 'like little tiny computer bits' – a 'sci-fi substance' known as nanobots and hydrogel which can be 'triggered

at any moment to deliver its payload' and act as 'biosensors'. The synthetic substance had 'the ability to accumulate data from your body like your breathing, your respiration, thoughts and emotions, all kind of things' and each syringe could carry a *million* nanobots:

This substance because it's like little bits of computers in your body, crazy, but it's true, it can do that, [and] obviously has the ability to act through Wi-Fi. It can receive and transmit energy, messages, frequencies or impulses. That issue has never been addressed by these companies. What does that do to the human?

Just imagine getting this substance in you and it can react to things all around you, the 5G, your smart device, your phones, what is happening with that? What if something is triggering it, too, like an impulse, a frequency? We have something completely foreign in the human body.

Madej said her research revealed that electromagnetic (EMF) frequencies emitted by phones and other devices had increased dramatically in the same period of the 'vaccine' rollout and she was seeing more people with radiation problems as 5G and other electromagnetic technology was expanded and introduced to schools and hospitals. She said she was 'floored with the EMF coming off' the devices she checked. All this makes total sense and syncs with my own work of decades when you think that Moderna refers in documents to its mRNA 'vaccine' as an 'operating system':

Recognizing the broad potential of mRNA science, we set out to create an mRNA technology platform that functions very much like an operating system on a computer. It is designed so that it can plug and play interchangeably with different programs. In our case, the 'program' or 'app' is our mRNA drug – the unique mRNA sequence that codes for a protein ...

... Our MRNA Medicines – 'The 'Software Of Life': When we have a concept for a new mRNA medicine and begin research, fundamental components are already in place. Generally, the only thing that changes from one potential mRNA medicine to another is the coding region – the actual genetic code that instructs ribosomes to make protein. Utilizing these instruction sets gives our investigational mRNA medicines a software-like quality. We also have the ability to combine different mRNA sequences encoding for different proteins in a single mRNA investigational medicine.

Who needs a real 'virus' when you can create a computer version to justify infusing your operating system into the entire human race on the road to making living, breathing people into cyborgs? What is missed with the 'vaccines' is the *digital* connection between synthetic material and the body that I highlighted earlier with the study that hacked a computer with human DNA. On one level the body is digital, based on mathematical codes, and I'll have more about that in the next chapter. Those who ridiculously claim that mRNA 'vaccines' are not designed to change human genetics should explain the words of Dr Tal Zaks, chief medical officer at Moderna, in a 2017 TED talk. He said that over the last 30 years 'we've been living this phenomenal digital scientific revolution, and I'm here today to tell you, that we are actually *hacking the software of life*, and that it's changing the way we think about prevention and treatment of disease':

In every cell there's this thing called messenger RNA, or mRNA for short, that transmits the critical information from the DNA in our genes to the protein, which is really the stuff we're all made out of. This is the critical information that determines what the cell will do. So we think about it as an operating system. So if you could change that, if you could introduce a line of code, or change a line of code, it turns out, that has profound implications for everything, from the flu to cancer.

Zaks should more accurately have said that this has profound implications for the human genetic code and the nature of DNA. Communications within the body go both ways and not only one. But, hey, no, the 'Covid vaccine' will not affect your genetics. Cult fact-checkers say so even though the man who helped to develop the mRNA technique says that it does. Zaks said in 2017:

If you think about what it is we're trying to do. We've taken information and our understanding of that information and how that information is transmitted in a cell, and we've taken our understanding of medicine and how to make drugs, and we're fusing the two. We think of it as information therapy.

I have been writing for decades that the body is an information field communicating with itself and the wider world. This is why

radiation which is information can change the information field of body and mind through phenomena like 5G and change their nature and function. 'Information therapy' means to change the body's information field and change the way it operates. DNA is a receiver-transmitter of information and can be mutated by information like mRNA synthetic messaging. Technology to do this has been ready and waiting in the underground bases and other secret projects to be rolled out when the 'Covid' hoax was played. 'Trials' of such short and irrelevant duration were only for public consumption. When they say the 'vaccine' is 'experimental' that is not true. It may appear to be 'experimental' to those who don't know what's going on, but the trials have already been done to ensure the Cult gets the result it desires. Zaks said that it took decades to sequence the human genome, completed in 2003, but now they could do it in a week. By 'they' he means scientists operating in the public domain. In the secret projects they were sequencing the genome in a week long before even 2003.

Deluge of mRNA

Highly significantly the Moderna document says the guiding premise is that if using mRNA as a medicine works for one disease then it should work for many diseases. They were leveraging the flexibility afforded by their platform and the fundamental role mRNA plays in protein synthesis to pursue mRNA medicines for a broad spectrum of diseases. Moderna is confirming what I was saying through 2020 that multiple 'vaccines' were planned for 'Covid' (and later invented 'variants') and that previous vaccines would be converted to the mRNA system to infuse the body with massive amounts of genetically-manipulating synthetic material to secure a transformation to a synthetic-biological state. The 'vaccines' are designed to kill stunning numbers as part of the long-exposed Cult depopulation agenda and transform the rest. Given this is the goal you can appreciate why there is such hysterical demand for every human to be 'vaccinated' for an alleged 'disease' that has an estimated 'infection' to 'death' ratio of 0.23-0.15 percent. As I write

children are being given the 'vaccine' in trials (their parents are a disgrace) and ever-younger people are being offered the vaccine for a 'virus' that even if you believe it exists has virtually zero chance of harming them. Horrific effects of the 'trials' on a 12-year-old girl were revealed by a family member to be serious brain and gastric problems that included a bowel obstruction and the inability to swallow liquids or solids. She was unable to eat or drink without throwing up, had extreme pain in her back, neck and abdomen, and was paralysed from the waist down which stopped her urinating unaided. When the girl was first taken to hospital doctors said it was all in her mind. She was signed up for the 'trial' by her parents for whom no words suffice. None of this 'Covid vaccine' insanity makes any sense unless you see what the 'vaccine' really is – a body-changer. Synthetic biology or 'SynBio' is a fast-emerging and expanding scientific discipline which includes everything from genetic and molecular engineering to electrical and computer engineering. Synthetic biology is defined in these ways:

- A multidisciplinary area of research that seeks to create new biological parts, devices, and systems, or to redesign systems that are already found in nature.
- The use of a mixture of physical engineering and genetic engineering to create new (and therefore synthetic) life forms.
- An emerging field of research that aims to combine the knowledge and methods of biology, engineering and related disciplines in the design of chemically-synthesized DNA to create organisms with novel or enhanced characteristics and traits (synthetic organisms including humans).

We now have synthetic blood, skin, organs and limbs being developed along with synthetic body parts produced by 3D printers. These are all elements of the synthetic human programme and this comment by Kurzweil's co-founder of the Singularity University,

Peter Diamandis, can be seen in a whole new light with the 'Covid' hoax and the sanctions against those that refuse the 'vaccine':

Anybody who is going to be resisting the progress forward [to transhumanism] is going to be resisting evolution and, fundamentally, they will die out. It's not a matter of whether it's good or bad. It's going to happen.

'Resisting evolution'? What absolute bollocks. The arrogance of these people is without limit. His 'it's going to happen' mantra is another way of saying 'resistance is futile' to break the spirit of those pushing back and we must not fall for it. Getting this genetically-transforming 'vaccine' into everyone is crucial to the Cult plan for total control and the desperation to achieve that is clear for anyone to see. Vaccine passports are a major factor in this and they, too, are a form of resistance is futile. It's NOT. The paper funded by the Rockefeller Foundation for the 2013 'health conference' in China said:

We will interact more with artificial intelligence. The use of robotics, bio-engineering to augment human functioning is already well underway and will advance. Re-engineering of humans into potentially separate and unequal forms through genetic engineering or mixed human-robots raises debates on ethics and equality.

A new demography is projected to emerge after 2030 [that year again] of technologies (robotics, genetic engineering, nanotechnology) producing robots, engineered organisms, 'nanobots' and artificial intelligence (AI) that can self-replicate. Debates will grow on the implications of an impending reality of human designed life.

What is happening today is so long planned. The world army enforcing the will of the world government is intended to be a robot army, not a human one. Today's military and its technologically 'enhanced' troops, pilotless planes and driverless vehicles are just stepping stones to that end. Human soldiers are used as Cult fodder and its time they woke up to that and worked for the freedom of the population instead of their own destruction and their family's destruction – the same with the police. Join us and let's sort this out. The phenomenon of enforce my own destruction is widespread in the 'Covid' era with Woker 'luvvies' in the acting and entertainment

industries supporting 'Covid' rules which have destroyed their profession and the same with those among the public who put signs on the doors of their businesses 'closed due to Covid – stay safe' when many will never reopen. It's a form of masochism and most certainly insanity.

Transgender = transhumanism

When something explodes out of nowhere and is suddenly everywhere it is always the Cult agenda and so it is with the tidal wave of claims and demands that have infiltrated every aspect of society under the heading of 'transgenderism'. The term 'trans' is so 'in' and this is the dictionary definition:

A prefix meaning 'across', 'through', occurring ... in loanwords from Latin, used in particular for denoting movement or conveyance from place to place (transfer; transmit; transplant) or complete change (transform; transmute), or to form adjectives meaning 'crossing', 'on the other side of', or 'going beyond' the place named (transmontane; transnational; trans-Siberian).

Transgender means to go beyond gender and transhuman means to go beyond human. Both are aspects of the Cult plan to transform the human body to a synthetic state with *no gender*. Human 2.0 is not designed to procreate and would be produced technologically with no need for parents. The new human would mean the end of parents and so men, and increasingly women, are being targeted for the deletion of their rights and status. Parental rights are disappearing at an ever-quickenning speed for the same reason. The new human would have no need for men or women when there is no procreation and no gender. Perhaps the transgender movement that appears to be in a permanent state of frenzy might now contemplate on how it is being used. This was never about transgender rights which are only the interim excuse for confusing gender, particularly in the young, on the road to *fusing* gender. Transgender activism is not an end; it is a *means* to an end. We see again the technique of creative destruction in which you destroy the status quo to 'build back better' in the form that you want. The gender status quo had to be

destroyed by persuading the Cult-created Woke mentality to believe that you can have 100 genders or more. A programme for 9 to 12 year olds produced by the Cult-owned BBC promoted the 100 genders narrative. The very idea may be the most monumental nonsense, but it is not what is true that counts, only what you can make people *believe* is true. Once the gender of $2 + 2 = 4$ has been dismantled through indoctrination, intimidation and $2 + 2 = 5$ then the new no-gender normal can take its place with Human 2.0.

Aldous Huxley revealed the plan in his prophetic *Brave New World* in 1932:

Natural reproduction has been done away with and children are created, decanted', and raised in 'hatcheries and conditioning centres'. From birth, people are genetically designed to fit into one of five castes, which are further split into 'Plus' and 'Minus' members and designed to fulfil predetermined positions within the social and economic strata of the World State.

How could Huxley know this in 1932? For the same reason George Orwell knew about the Big Brother state in 1948, Cult insiders I have quoted knew about it in 1969, and I have known about it since the early 1990s. If you are connected to the Cult or you work your balls off to uncover the plan you can predict the future. The process is simple. If there is a plan for the world and nothing intervenes to stop it then it will happen. Thus if you communicate the plan ahead of time you are perceived to have predicted the future, but you haven't. You have revealed the plan which without intervention will become the human future. The whole reason I have done what I have is to alert enough people to inspire an intervention and maybe at last that time has come with the Cult and its intentions now so obvious to anyone with a brain in working order.

The future is here

Technological wombs that Huxley described to replace parent procreation are already being developed and they are only the projects we know about in the public arena. Israeli scientists told *The Times of Israel* in March, 2021, that they have grown 250-cell embryos

into mouse fetuses with fully formed organs using artificial wombs in a development they say could pave the way for gestating humans outside the womb. Professor Jacob Hanna of the Weizmann Institute of Science said:

We took mouse embryos from the mother at day five of development, when they are just of 250 cells, and had them in the incubator from day five until day 11, by which point they had grown all their organs.

By day 11 they make their own blood and have a beating heart, a fully developed brain. Anybody would look at them and say, 'this is clearly a mouse foetus with all the characteristics of a mouse.' It's gone from being a ball of cells to being an advanced foetus.

A special liquid is used to nourish embryo cells in a laboratory dish and they float on the liquid to duplicate the first stage of embryonic development. The incubator creates all the right conditions for its development, Hanna said. The liquid gives the embryo 'all the nutrients, hormones and sugars they need' along with a custom-made electronic incubator which controls gas concentration, pressure and temperature. The cutting-edge in the underground bases and other secret locations will be light years ahead of that, however, and this was reported by the London *Guardian* in 2017:

We are approaching a biotechnological breakthrough. Ectogenesis, the invention of a complete external womb, could completely change the nature of human reproduction. In April this year, researchers at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia announced their development of an artificial womb.

The article was headed 'Artificial wombs could soon be a reality. What will this mean for women?' What would it mean for children is an even bigger question. No mother to bond with only a machine in preparation for a life of soulless interaction and control in a world governed by machines (see the *Matrix* movies). Now observe the calculated manipulations of the 'Covid' hoax as human interaction and warmth has been curtailed by distancing, isolation and fear with people communicating via machines on a scale never seen before.

These are all dots in the same picture as are all the personal assistants, gadgets and children's toys through which kids and adults communicate with AI as if it is human. The AI 'voice' on Sat-Nav should be included. All these things are psychological preparation for the Cult endgame. Before you can make a physical connection with AI you have to make a psychological connection and that is what people are being conditioned to do with this ever gathering human-AI interaction. Movies and TV programmes depicting the transhuman, robot dystopia relate to a phenomenon known as 'pre-emptive programming' in which the world that is planned is portrayed everywhere in movies, TV and advertising. This is conditioning the conscious and subconscious mind to become familiar with the planned reality to dilute resistance when it happens for real. What would have been a shock such is the change is made less so. We have young children put on the road to transgender transition surgery with puberty blocking drugs at an age when they could never be able to make those life-changing decisions.

Rachel Levine, a professor of paediatrics and psychiatry who believes in treating children this way, became America's highest-ranked openly-transgender official when she was confirmed as US Assistant Secretary at the Department of Health and Human Services after being nominated by Joe Biden (the Cult). Activists and governments press for laws to deny parents a say in their children's transition process so the kids can be isolated and manipulated into agreeing to irreversible medical procedures. A Canadian father Robert Hoogland was denied bail by the Vancouver Supreme Court in 2021 and remained in jail for breaching a court order that he stay silent over his young teenage daughter, a minor, who was being offered life-changing hormone therapy without parental consent. At the age of 12 the girl's 'school counsellor' said she may be transgender, referred her to a doctor and told the school to treat her like a boy. This is another example of state-serving schools imposing ever more control over children's lives while parents have ever less.

Contemptible and extreme child abuse is happening all over the world as the Cult gender-fusion operation goes into warp-speed.

Why the war on men – and now women?

The question about what artificial wombs mean for women should rightly be asked. The answer can be seen in the deletion of women's rights involving sport, changing rooms, toilets and status in favour of people in male bodies claiming to identify as women. I can identify as a mountain climber, but it doesn't mean I can climb a mountain any more than a biological man can be a biological woman. To believe so is a triumph of belief over factual reality which is the very perceptual basis of everything Woke. Women's sport is being destroyed by allowing those with male bodies who say they identify as female to 'compete' with girls and women. Male body 'women' dominate 'women's' competition with their greater muscle mass, bone density, strength and speed. With that disadvantage sport for women loses all meaning. To put this in perspective nearly 300 American high school boys can run faster than the quickest woman sprinter in the world. Women are seeing their previously protected spaces invaded by male bodies simply because they claim to identify as women. That's all they need to do to access all women's spaces and activities under the Biden 'Equality Act' that destroys equality for women with the usual Orwellian Woke inversion. Male sex offenders have already committed rapes in women's prisons after claiming to identify as women to get them transferred. Does this not matter to the Woke 'equality' hypocrites? Not in the least. What matters to Cult manipulators and funders behind transgender activists is to advance gender fusion on the way to the no-gender 'human'. When you are seeking to impose transparent nonsense like this, or the 'Covid' hoax, the only way the nonsense can prevail is through censorship and intimidation of dissenters, deletion of factual information, and programming of the unquestioning, bewildered and naive. You don't have to scan the world for long to see that all these things are happening.

Many women's rights organisations have realised that rights and status which took such a long time to secure are being eroded and that it is systematic. Kara Dansky of the global Women's Human Rights Campaign said that Biden's transgender executive order immediately he took office, subsequent orders, and Equality Act legislation that followed 'seek to erase women and girls in the law as a category'. *Exactly*. I said during the long ago-started war on men (in which many women play a crucial part) that this was going to turn into a war on them. The Cult is phasing out *both* male and female genders. To get away with that they are brought into conflict so they are busy fighting each other while the Cult completes the job with no unity of response. Unity, people, *unity*. We need unity everywhere. Transgender is the only show in town as the big step towards the no-gender human. It's not about rights for transgender people and never has been. Woke political correctness is deleting words relating to genders to the same end. Wokers believe this is to be 'inclusive' when the opposite is true. They are deleting words describing gender because gender *itself* is being deleted by Human 2.0. Terms like 'man', 'woman', 'mother' and 'father' are being deleted in the universities and other institutions to be replaced by the *no-gender*, not trans-gender, 'individuals' and 'guardians'. Women's rights campaigner Maria Keffler of Partners for Ethical Care said: 'Children are being taught from kindergarten upward that some boys have a vagina, some girls have a penis, and that kids can be any gender they want to be.' Do we really believe that suddenly countries all over the world at the same time had the idea of having drag queens go into schools or read transgender stories to very young children in the local library? It's coldly-calculated confusion of gender on the way to the fusion of gender. Suzanne Vierling, a psychologist from Southern California, made another important point:

Yesterday's slave woman who endured gynecological medical experiments is today's girl-child being butchered in a booming gender-transitioning sector. Ovaries removed, pushing her into menopause and osteoporosis, uncharted territory, and parents' rights and authority decimated.

The erosion of parental rights is a common theme in line with the Cult plans to erase the very concept of parents and 'ovaries removed, pushing her into menopause' means what? Those born female lose the ability to have children – another way to discontinue humanity as we know it.

Eliminating Human 1.0 (before our very eyes)

To pave the way for Human 2.0 you must phase out Human 1.0. This is happening through plummeting sperm counts and making women infertile through an onslaught of chemicals, radiation (including smartphones in pockets of men) and mRNA 'vaccines'. Common agriculture pesticides are also having a devastating impact on human fertility. I have been tracking collapsing sperm counts in the books for a long time and in 2021 came a book by fertility scientist and reproductive epidemiologist Shanna Swan, *Count Down: How Our Modern World Is Threatening Sperm Counts, Altering Male and Female Reproductive Development and Imperiling the Future of the Human Race*. She reports how the global fertility rate dropped by *half* between 1960 and 2016 with America's birth rate 16 percent below where it needs to be to sustain the population. Women are experiencing declining egg quality, more miscarriages, and more couples suffer from infertility. Other findings were an increase in erectile dysfunction, infant boys developing more genital abnormalities, male problems with conception, and plunging levels of the male hormone testosterone which would explain why so many men have lost their backbone and masculinity. This has been very evident during the 'Covid' hoax when women have been prominent among the Pushbackers and big strapping blokes have bowed their heads, covered their faces with a nappy and quietly submitted. Mind control expert Cathy O'Brien also points to how global education introduced the concept of 'we're all winners' in sport and classrooms: 'Competition was defused, and it in turn defused a sense of fighting back.' This is another version of the 'equity' doctrine in which you drive down rather than raise up. What a contrast in Cult-controlled China with its global ambitions

where the government published plans in January, 2021, to 'cultivate masculinity' in boys from kindergarten through to high school in the face of a 'masculinity crisis'. A government adviser said boys would be soon become 'delicate, timid and effeminate' unless action was taken. Don't expect any similar policy in the targeted West. A 2006 study showed that a 65-year-old man in 2002 had testosterone levels *15 percent* lower than a 65-year-old man in 1987 while a 2020 study found a similar story with young adults and adolescents. Men are getting prescriptions for testosterone replacement therapy which causes an even greater drop in sperm count with up to 99 percent seeing sperm counts drop to zero during the treatment. More sperm is defective and malfunctioning with some having two heads or not pursuing an egg.

A class of *synthetic* chemicals known as phthalates are being blamed for the decline. These are found everywhere in plastics, shampoos, cosmetics, furniture, flame retardants, personal care products, pesticides, canned foods and even receipts. Why till receipts? Everyone touches them. Let no one delude themselves that all this is not systematic to advance the long-time agenda for human body transformation. Phthalates mimic hormones and disrupt the hormone balance causing testosterone to fall and genital birth defects in male infants. Animals and fish have been affected in the same way due to phthalates and other toxins in rivers. When fish turn gay or change sex through chemicals in rivers and streams it is a pointer to why there has been such an increase in gay people and the sexually confused. It doesn't matter to me what sexuality people choose to be, but if it's being affected by chemical pollution and consumption then we need to know. Does anyone really think that this is not connected to the transgender agenda, the war on men and the condemnation of male 'toxic masculinity'? You watch this being followed by 'toxic femininity'. It's already happening. When breastfeeding becomes 'chest-feeding', pregnant women become pregnant people along with all the other Woke claptrap you know that the world is going insane and there's a Cult scam in progress. Transgender activists are promoting the Cult agenda while Cult

billionaires support and fund the insanity as they laugh themselves to sleep at the sheer stupidity for which humans must be infamous in galaxies far, far away.

'Covid vaccines' and female infertility

We can now see why the 'vaccine' has been connected to potential infertility in women. Dr Michael Yeadon, former Vice President and Chief Scientific Advisor at Pfizer, and Dr Wolfgang Wodarg in Germany, filed a petition with the European Medicines Agency in December, 2020, urging them to stop trials for the Pfizer/BioNTech shot and all other mRNA trials until further studies had been done. They were particularly concerned about possible effects on fertility with 'vaccine'-produced antibodies attacking the protein Syncytin-1 which is responsible for developing the placenta. The result would be infertility 'of indefinite duration' in women who have the 'vaccine' with the placenta failing to form. Section 10.4.2 of the Pfizer/BioNTech trial protocol says that pregnant women or those who might become so should not have mRNA shots. Section 10.4 warns men taking mRNA shots to 'be abstinent from heterosexual intercourse' and not to donate sperm. The UK government said that it *did not know* if the mRNA procedure had an effect on fertility. *Did not know?* These people have to go to jail. UK government advice did not recommend at the start that pregnant women had the shot and said they should avoid pregnancy for at least two months after 'vaccination'. The 'advice' was later updated to pregnant women should only have the 'vaccine' if the benefits outweighed the risks to mother and foetus. What the hell is that supposed to mean? Then 'spontaneous abortions' began to appear and rapidly increase on the adverse reaction reporting schemes which include only a fraction of adverse reactions. Thousands and ever-growing numbers of 'vaccinated' women are describing changes to their menstrual cycle with heavier blood flow, irregular periods and menstruating again after going through the menopause – all links to reproduction effects. Women are passing blood clots and the lining of their uterus while men report erectile dysfunction and blood effects. Most

significantly of all *unvaccinated* women began to report similar menstrual changes after interaction with '*vaccinated*' people and men and children were also affected with bleeding noses, blood clots and other conditions. 'Shedding' is when vaccinated people can emit the content of a vaccine to affect the unvaccinated, but this is different. 'Vaccinated' people were not shedding a 'live virus' allegedly in 'vaccines' as before because the fake 'Covid vaccines' involve synthetic material and other toxicity. Doctors exposing what is happening prefer the term 'transmission' to shedding. Somehow those that have had the shots are transmitting effects to those that haven't. Dr Carrie Madej said the nano-content of the 'vaccines' can 'act like an antenna' to others around them which fits perfectly with my own conclusions. This 'vaccine' transmission phenomenon was becoming known as the book went into production and I deal with this further in the Postscript.

Vaccine effects on sterility are well known. The World Health Organization was accused in 2014 of sterilising millions of women in Kenya with the evidence confirmed by the content of the vaccines involved. The same WHO behind the 'Covid' hoax admitted its involvement for more than ten years with the vaccine programme. Other countries made similar claims. Charges were lodged by Tanzania, Nicaragua, Mexico, and the Philippines. The Gardasil vaccine claimed to protect against a genital 'virus' known as HPV has also been linked to infertility. Big Pharma and the WHO (same thing) are criminal and satanic entities. Then there's the Bill Gates Foundation which is connected through funding and shared interests with 20 pharmaceutical giants and laboratories. He stands accused of directing the policy of United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), vaccine alliance GAVI, and other groupings, to advance the vaccine agenda and silence opposition at great cost to women and children. At the same time Gates wants to reduce the global population. Coincidence?

Great Reset = Smart Grid = new human

The Cult agenda I have been exposing for 30 years is now being openly promoted by Cult assets like Gates and Klaus Schwab of the World Economic Forum under code-terms like the 'Great Reset', 'Build Back Better' and 'a rare but narrow window of opportunity to reflect, reimagine, and reset our world'. What provided this 'rare but narrow window of opportunity'? The 'Covid' hoax did. Who created that? *They* did. My books from not that long ago warned about the planned 'Internet of Things' (IoT) and its implications for human freedom. This was the plan to connect all technology to the Internet and artificial intelligence and today we are way down that road with an estimated 36 billion devices connected to the World Wide Web and that figure is projected to be 76 billion by 2025. I further warned that the Cult planned to go beyond that to the Internet of *Everything* when the human brain was connected via AI to the Internet and Kurzweil's 'cloud'. Now we have Cult operatives like Schwab calling for precisely that under the term 'Internet of Bodies', a fusion of the physical, digital and biological into one centrally-controlled Smart Grid system which the Cult refers to as the 'Fourth Industrial Revolution'. They talk about the 'biological', but they really mean the synthetic-biological which is required to fully integrate the human body and brain into the Smart Grid and artificial intelligence planned to replace the human mind. We have everything being synthetically manipulated including the natural world through GMO and smart dust, the food we eat and the human body itself with synthetic 'vaccines'. I said in *The Answer* that we would see the Cult push for synthetic meat to replace animals and in February, 2021, the so predictable psychopath Bill Gates called for the introduction of synthetic meat to save us all from 'climate change'. The climate hoax just keeps on giving like the 'Covid' hoax. The war on meat by vegan activists is a carbon (oops, sorry) copy of the manipulation of transgender activists. They have no idea (except their inner core) that they are being used to promote and impose the agenda of the Cult or that they are only the *vehicle* and not the *reason*. This is not to say those who choose not to eat meat shouldn't be respected and supported in that right, but there are ulterior motives

for those in power. A *Forbes* article in December, 2019, highlighted the plan so beloved of Schwab and the Cult under the heading: 'What Is The Internet of Bodies? And How Is It Changing Our World?' The article said the human body is the latest data platform (remember 'our vaccine is an operating system'). *Forbes* described the plan very accurately and the words could have come straight out of my books from long before:

The Internet of Bodies (IoB) is an extension of the IoT and basically connects the human body to a network through devices that are ingested, implanted, or connected to the body in some way. Once connected, data can be exchanged, and the body and device can be remotely monitored and controlled.

They were really describing a human hive mind with human perception centrally-dictated via an AI connection as well as allowing people to be 'remotely monitored and controlled'. Everything from a fridge to a human mind could be directed from a central point by these insane psychopaths and 'Covid vaccines' are crucial to this. *Forbes* explained the process I mentioned earlier of holdable and wearable technology followed by implantable. The article said there were three generations of the Internet of Bodies that include:

- Body external: These are wearable devices such as Apple Watches or Fitbits that can monitor our health.
- Body internal: These include pacemakers, cochlear implants, and digital pills that go inside our bodies to monitor or control various aspects of health.
- Body embedded: The third generation of the Internet of Bodies is embedded technology where technology and the human body are melded together and have a real-time connection to a remote machine.

Forbes noted the development of the Brain Computer Interface (BCI) which merges the brain with an external device for monitoring and controlling in real-time. 'The ultimate goal is to help restore function to individuals with disabilities by using brain signals rather than conventional neuromuscular pathways.' Oh, do fuck off. The goal of brain interface technology is controlling human thought and emotion from the central point in a hive mind serving its masters wishes. Many people are now agreeing to be chipped to open doors without a key. You can recognise them because they'll be wearing a mask, social distancing and lining up for the 'vaccine'. The Cult plans a Great Reset money system after they have completed the demolition of the global economy in which 'money' will be exchanged through communication with body operating systems. Rand Corporation, a Cult-owned think tank, said of the Internet of Bodies or IoB:

Internet of Bodies technologies fall under the broader IoT umbrella. But as the name suggests, IoB devices introduce an even more intimate interplay between humans and gadgets. IoB devices monitor the human body, collect health metrics and other personal information, and transmit those data over the Internet. Many devices, such as fitness trackers, are already in use ... IoB devices ... and those in development can track, record, and store users' whereabouts, bodily functions, and what they see, hear, and even think.

Schwab's World Economic Forum, a long-winded way of saying 'fascism' or 'the Cult', has gone full-on with the Internet of Bodies in the 'Covid' era. 'We're entering the era of the Internet of Bodies', it declared, 'collecting our physical data via a range of devices that can be implanted, swallowed or worn'. The result would be a huge amount of health-related data that could improve human wellbeing around the world, and prove crucial in fighting the 'Covid-19 pandemic'. Does anyone think these clowns care about 'human wellbeing' after the death and devastation their pandemic hoax has purposely caused? Schwab and co say we should move forward with the Internet of Bodies because 'Keeping track of symptoms could help us stop the spread of infection, and quickly detect new cases'. How wonderful, but keeping track' is all they are really bothered

about. Researchers were investigating if data gathered from smartwatches and similar devices could be used as viral infection alerts by tracking the user's heart rate and breathing. Schwab said in his 2018 book *Shaping the Future of the Fourth Industrial Revolution*:

The lines between technologies and beings are becoming blurred and not just by the ability to create lifelike robots or synthetics. Instead it is about the ability of new technologies to literally become part of us. Technologies already influence how we understand ourselves, how we think about each other, and how we determine our realities. As the technologies ... give us deeper access to parts of ourselves, we may begin to integrate digital technologies into our bodies.

You can see what the game is. Twenty-four hour control and people – if you could still call them that – would never know when something would go ping and take them out of circulation. It's the most obvious rush to a global fascist dictatorship and the complete submission of humanity and yet still so many are locked away in their Cult-induced perceptual coma and can't see it.

Smart Grid control centres

The human body is being transformed by the 'vaccines' and in other ways into a synthetic cyborg that can be attached to the global Smart Grid which would be controlled from a central point and other sub-locations of Grid manipulation. Where are these planned to be? Well, China for a start which is one of the Cult's biggest centres of operation. The technological control system and technocratic rule was incubated here to be unleashed across the world after the 'Covid' hoax came out of China in 2020. Another Smart Grid location that will surprise people new to this is Israel. I have exposed in *The Trigger* how Sabbatian technocrats, intelligence and military operatives were behind the horrors of 9/11 and not 19 Arab hijackers' who somehow manifested the ability to pilot big passenger airliners when instructors at puddle-jumping flying schools described some of them as a joke. The 9/11 attacks were made possible through control of civilian and military air computer systems and those of the White House, Pentagon and connected agencies. See *The Trigger* – it

will blow your mind. The controlling and coordinating force were the Sabbatian networks in Israel and the United States which by then had infiltrated the entire US government, military and intelligence system. The real name of the American Deep State is 'Sabbatian State'. Israel is a tiny country of only nine million people, but it is one of the global centres of cyber operations and fast catching Silicon Valley in importance to the Cult. Israel is known as the 'start-up nation' for all the cyber companies spawned there with the Sabbatian specialisation of 'cyber security' that I mentioned earlier which gives those companies access to computer systems of their clients in real time through 'backdoors' written into the coding when security software is downloaded. The Sabbatian centre of cyber operations outside Silicon Valley is the Israeli military Cyber Intelligence Unit, the biggest infrastructure project in Israel's history, headquartered in the desert-city of Beersheba and involving some 20,000 'cyber soldiers'. Here are located a literal army of Internet trolls scanning social media, forums and comment lists for anyone challenging the Cult agenda. The UK military has something similar with its 77th Brigade and associated operations. The Beersheba complex includes research and development centres for other Cult operations such as Intel, Microsoft, IBM, Google, Apple, Hewlett-Packard, Cisco Systems, Facebook and Motorola. Techcrunch.com ran an article about the Beersheba global Internet technology centre headlined 'Israel's desert city of Beersheba is turning into a cybertech oasis':

The military's massive relocation of its prestigious technology units, the presence of multinational and local companies, a close proximity to Ben Gurion University and generous government subsidies are turning Beersheba into a major global cybertech hub. Beersheba has all of the ingredients of a vibrant security technology ecosystem, including Ben Gurion University with its graduate program in cybersecurity and Cyber Security Research Center, and the presence of companies such as EMC, Deutsche Telekom, PayPal, Oracle, IBM, and Lockheed Martin. It's also the future home of the INCB (Israeli National Cyber Bureau); offers a special income tax incentive for cyber security companies, and was the site for the relocation of the army's intelligence corps units.

Sabbatians have taken over the cyber world through the following process: They scan the schools for likely cyber talent and develop them at Ben Gurion University and their period of conscription in the Israeli Defense Forces when they are stationed at the Beersheba complex. When the cyber talented officially leave the army they are funded to start cyber companies with technology developed by themselves or given to them by the state. Much of this is stolen through backdoors of computer systems around the world with America top of the list. Others are sent off to Silicon Valley to start companies or join the major ones and so we have many major positions filled by apparently 'Jewish' but really Sabbatian operatives. Google, YouTube and Facebook are all run by 'Jewish' CEOs while Twitter is all but run by ultra-Zionist hedge-fund shark Paul Singer. At the centre of the Sabbatian global cyber web is the Israeli army's Unit 8200 which specialises in hacking into computer systems of other countries, inserting viruses, gathering information, instigating malfunction, and even taking control of them from a distance. A long list of Sabbatians involved with 9/11, Silicon Valley and Israeli cyber security companies are operatives of Unit 8200. This is not about Israel. It's about the Cult. Israel is planned to be a Smart Grid hub as with China and what is happening at Beersheba is not for the benefit of Jewish people who are treated disgustingly by the Sabbatian elite that control the country. A glance at the Nuremberg Codes will tell you that.

The story is much bigger than 'Covid', important as that is to where we are being taken. Now, though, it's time to really strap in. There's more ... much more ...

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Who controls the Cult?

Awake, arise or be forever fall'n
John Milton, *Paradise Lost*

I have exposed this far the level of the Cult conspiracy that operates in the world of the seen and within the global secret society and satanic network which operates in the shadows one step back from the seen. The story, however, goes much deeper than that.

The 'Covid' hoax is major part of the Cult agenda, but only part, and to grasp the biggest picture we have to expand our attention beyond the realm of human sight and into the infinity of possibility that we cannot see. It is from here, ultimately, that humanity is being manipulated into a state of total control by the force which dictates the actions of the Cult. How much of reality can we see? Next to damn all is the answer. We may appear to see all there is to see in the 'space' our eyes survey and observe, but little could be further from the truth. The human 'world' is only a tiny band of frequency that the body's visual and perceptual systems can decode into *perception* of a 'world'. According to mainstream science the electromagnetic spectrum is 0.005 percent of what exists in the Universe ([Fig 10](#)). The maximum estimate I have seen is 0.5 percent and either way it's miniscule. I say it is far, far, smaller even than 0.005 percent when you compare reality we see with the totality of reality that we don't. Now get this if you are new to such information: Visible light, the only band of frequency that we can see, is a *fraction* of the 0.005

percent (Fig 11 overleaf). Take this further and realise that our universe is one of infinite universes and that universes are only a fragment of overall reality – *infinite* reality. Then compare that with the almost infinitesimal frequency band of visible light or human sight. You see that humans are as near blind as it is possible to be without actually being so. Artist and filmmaker, Sergio Toporek, said:

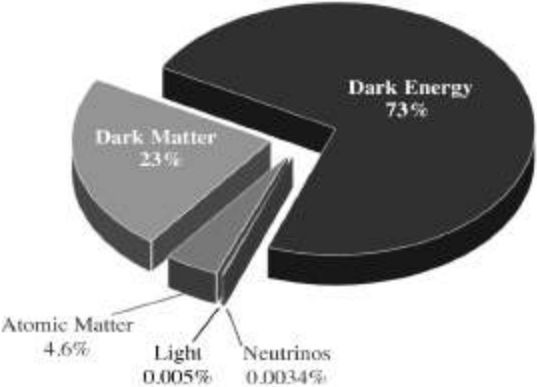


Figure 10: Humans can perceive such a tiny band of visual reality it's laughable.

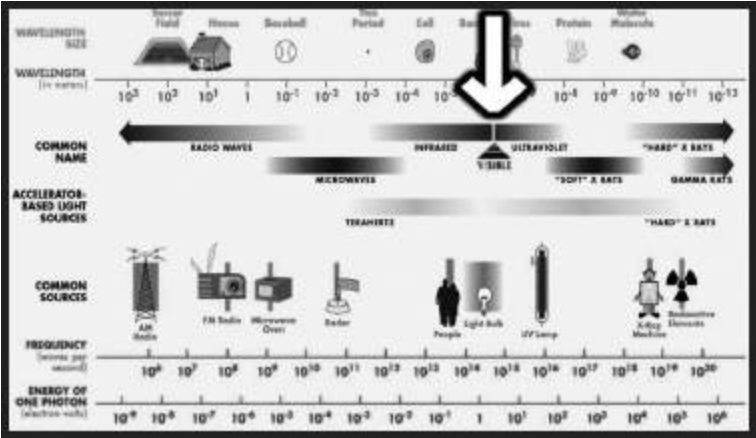


Figure 11: We can see a smear of the 0.005 percent electromagnetic spectrum, but we still know it all. Yep, makes sense.

Consider that you can see less than 1% of the electromagnetic spectrum and hear less than 1% of the acoustic spectrum. 90% of the cells in your body carry their own microbial DNA and are not 'you'. The atoms in your body are 99.999999999999999% empty space and none of them are the ones you were born with ... Human beings have 46 chromosomes, two less than a potato.

The existence of the rainbow depends on the conical photoreceptors in your eyes; to animals without cones, the rainbow does not exist. So you don't just look at a rainbow, you create it. This is pretty amazing, especially considering that all the beautiful colours you see represent less than 1% of the electromagnetic spectrum.

Suddenly the 'world' of humans looks a very different place. Take into account, too, that Planet Earth when compared with the projected size of this single universe is the equivalent of a billionth of a pinhead. Imagine the ratio that would be when compared to infinite reality. To think that Christianity once insisted that Earth and humanity were the centre of everything. This background is vital if we are going to appreciate the nature of 'human' and how we can be manipulated by an unseen force. To human visual reality virtually *everything* is unseen and yet the prevailing perception within the institutions and so much of the public is that if we can't see it, touch it, hear it, taste it and smell it then it cannot exist. Such perception is indoctrinated and encouraged by the Cult and its agents because it isolates believers in the strictly limited, village-idiot, realm of the five senses where perceptions can be firewalled and information controlled. Most of those perpetuating the 'this-world-is-all-there-is' insanity are themselves indoctrinated into believing the same delusion. While major players and influencers know that official reality is laughable most of those in science, academia and medicine really believe the nonsense they peddle and teach succeeding generations. Those who challenge the orthodoxy are dismissed as nutters and freaks to protect the manufactured illusion from exposure. Observe the dynamic of the 'Covid' hoax and you will see how that takes the same form. The inner-circle psychopaths knows it's a gigantic scam, but almost the entirety of those imposing their fascist rules believe that 'Covid' is all that they're told it is.

Stolen identity

Ask people who they are and they will give you their name, place of birth, location, job, family background and life story. Yet that is not who they are – it is what they are *experiencing*. The difference is *absolutely crucial*. The true 'I', the eternal, infinite 'I', is consciousness,

a state of being aware. Forget 'form'. That is a vehicle for a brief experience. Consciousness does not come *from* the brain, but *through* the brain and even that is more symbolic than literal. We are awareness, pure awareness, and this is what withdraws from the body at what we call 'death' to continue our eternal beingness, *isness*, in other realms of reality within the limitlessness of infinity or the Biblical 'many mansions in my father's house'. Labels of a human life, man, woman, transgender, black, white, brown, nationality, circumstances and income are not who we are. They are what we are – awareness – is *experiencing* in a brief connection with a band of frequency we call 'human'. The labels are not the self; they are, to use the title of one of my books, a *Phantom Self*. I am not David Icke born in Leicester, England, on April 29th, 1952. I am the consciousness *having that experience*. The Cult and its non-human masters seek to convince us through the institutions of 'education', science, medicine, media and government that what we are *experiencing* is who we *are*. It's so easy to control and direct perception locked away in the bewildered illusions of the five senses with no expanded radar. Try, by contrast, doing the same with a humanity aware of its true self and its true power to consciously create its reality and experience. How is it possible to do this? We do it all day every day. If you perceive yourself as 'little me' with no power to impact upon your life and the world then your life experience will reflect that. You will hand the power you don't think you have to authority in all its forms which will use it to control your experience. This, in turn, will appear to confirm your perception of 'little me' in a self-fulfilling feedback loop. But that is what 'little me' really is – a *perception*. We are all 'big-me', infinite me, and the Cult has to make us forget that if its will is to prevail. We are therefore manipulated and pressured into self-identifying with human labels and not the consciousness/awareness *experiencing* those human labels.

The phenomenon of identity politics is a Cult-instigated manipulation technique to sub-divide previous labels into even smaller ones. A United States university employs this list of letters to

describe student identity: LGBTTQQFAGPBDSM or lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, queer, questioning, flexual, asexual, gender-fuck, polyamorous, bondage/discipline, dominance/submission and sadism/masochism. I'm sure other lists are even longer by now as people feel the need to self-identity the 'I' with the minutiae of race and sexual preference. Wokers programmed by the Cult for generations believe this is about 'inclusivity' when it's really the Cult locking them away into smaller and smaller versions of Phantom Self while firewalling them from the influence of their true self, the infinite, eternal 'I'. You may notice that my philosophy which contends that we are all unique points of attention/awareness within the same infinite whole or Oneness is the ultimate non-racism. The very sense of Oneness makes the judgement of people by their body-type, colour or sexuality utterly ridiculous and confirms that racism has no understanding of reality (including anti-white racism). Yet despite my perception of life Cult agents and fast-asleep Wokers label me racist to discredit my information while they are themselves phenomenally racist and sexist. All they see is race and sexuality and they judge people as good or bad, demons or untouchables, by their race and sexuality. All they see is *Phantom Self* and perceive themselves in terms of Phantom Self. They are pawns and puppets of the Cult agenda to focus attention and self-identity in the five senses and play those identities against each other to divide and rule. Columbia University has introduced segregated graduations in another version of social distancing designed to drive people apart and teach them that different racial and cultural groups have nothing in common with each other. The last thing the Cult wants is unity. Again the pump-primers of this will be Cult operatives in the knowledge of what they are doing, but the rest are just the Phantom Self blind leading the Phantom Self blind. We *do* have something in common – we are all *the same consciousness* having different temporary experiences.

What is this 'human'?

Yes, what *is* 'human'? That is what we are supposed to be, right? I mean 'human'? True, but 'human' is the experience not the 'I'. Break it down to basics and 'human' is the way that information is processed. If we are to experience and interact with this band of frequency we call the 'world' we must have a vehicle that operates within that band of frequency. Our consciousness in its prime form cannot do that; it is way beyond the frequency of the human realm. My consciousness or awareness could not tap these keys and pick up the cup in front of me in the same way that radio station A cannot interact with radio station B when they are on different frequencies. The human body is the means through which we have that interaction. I have long described the body as a biological computer which processes information in a way that allows consciousness to experience this reality. The body is a receiver, transmitter and processor of information in a particular way that we call human. We visually perceive only the world of the five senses in a wakened state – that is the limit of the body's visual decoding system. In truth it's not even visual in the way we experience 'visual reality' as I will come to in a moment. We are 'human' because the body processes the information sources of human into a reality and behaviour system that we *perceive* as human. Why does an elephant act like an elephant and not like a human or a duck? The elephant's biological computer is a different information field and processes information according to that program into a visual and behaviour type we call an elephant. The same applies to everything in our reality. These body information fields are perpetuated through procreation (like making a copy of a software program). The Cult wants to break that cycle and intervene technologically to transform the human information field into one that will change what we call humanity. If it can change the human information field it will change the way that field processes information and change humanity both 'physically' and psychologically. Hence the *messenger* (information) RNA 'vaccines' and so much more that is targeting human genetics by changing the body's information – *messaging* – construct through food, drink, radiation, toxicity and other means.

Reality that we experience is nothing like reality as it really is in the same way that the reality people experience in virtual reality games is not the reality they are really living in. The game is only a decoded source of information that appears to be a reality. Our world is also an information construct – a *simulation* (more later). In its base form our reality is a wavefield of information much the same in theme as Wi-Fi. The five senses decode wavefield information into electrical information which they communicate to the brain to decode into holographic (illusory ‘physical’) information. Different parts of the brain specialise in decoding different senses and the information is fused into a reality that appears to be outside of us but is really inside the brain and the genetic structure in general (Fig 12 overleaf). DNA is a receiver-transmitter of information and a vital part of this decoding process and the body’s connection to other realities. Change DNA and you change the way we decode and connect with reality – see ‘Covid vaccines’. Think of computers decoding Wi-Fi. You have information encoded in a radiation field and the computer decodes that information into a very different form on the screen. You can’t see the Wi-Fi until its information is made manifest on the screen and the information on the screen is inside the computer and not outside. I have just described how we decode the ‘human world’. All five senses decode the waveform ‘Wi-Fi’ field into electrical signals and the brain (computer) constructs reality inside the brain and not outside – ‘You don’t just look at a rainbow, you create it’. Sound is a simple example. We don’t hear sound until the brain decodes it. Waveform sound waves are picked up by the hearing sense and communicated to the brain in an electrical form to be decoded into the sounds that we hear. Everything we hear is inside the brain along with everything we see, feel, smell and taste. Words and language are waveform fields generated by our vocal chords which pass through this process until they are decoded by the brain into words that we hear. Different languages are different frequency fields or sound waves generated by vocal chords. Late British philosopher Alan Watts said:

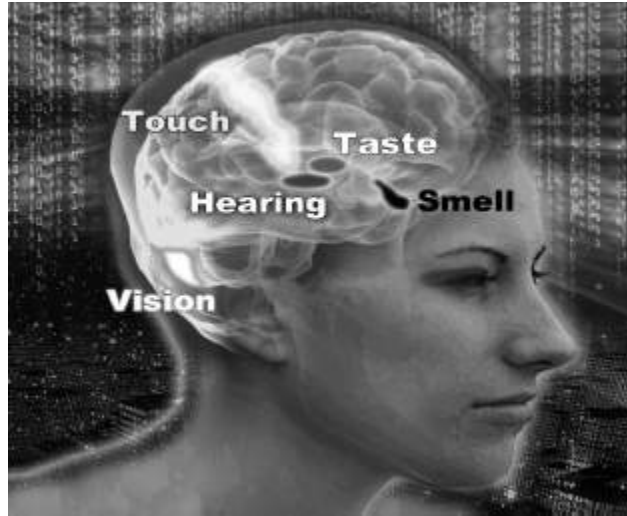


Figure 12: The brain receives information from the five senses and constructs from that our perceived reality.

[Without the brain] the world is devoid of light, heat, weight, solidity, motion, space, time or any other imaginable feature. All these phenomena are interactions, or transactions, of vibrations with a certain arrangement of neurons.

That's exactly what they are and scientist Robert Lanza describes in his book, *Biocentrism*, how we decode electromagnetic waves and energy into visual and 'physical' experience. He uses the example of a flame emitting photons, electromagnetic energy, each pulsing electrically and magnetically:

... these ... invisible electromagnetic waves strike a human retina, and if (and only if) the waves happen to measure between 400 and 700 nano meters in length from crest to crest, then their energy is just right to deliver a stimulus to the 8 million cone-shaped cells in the retina.

Each in turn send an electrical pulse to a neighbour neuron, and on up the line this goes, at 250 mph, until it reaches the ... occipital lobe of the brain, in the back of the head. There, a cascading complex of neurons fire from the incoming stimuli, and we subjectively perceive this experience as a yellow brightness occurring in a place we have been conditioned to call the 'external world'.

You hear what you decode

If a tree falls or a building collapses they make no noise unless someone is there to decode the energetic waves generated by the disturbance into what we call sound. Does a falling tree make a noise? Only if you hear it – *decode* it. Everything in our reality is a frequency field of information operating within the overall ‘Wi-Fi’ field that I call The Field. A vibrational disturbance is generated in The Field by the fields of the falling tree or building. These disturbance waves are what we decode into the sound of them falling. If no one is there to do that then neither will make any noise. Reality is created by the observer – *decoder* – and the *perceptions* of the observer affect the decoding process. For this reason different people – different *perceptions* – will perceive the same reality or situation in a different way. What one may perceive as a nightmare another will see as an opportunity. The question of why the Cult is so focused on controlling human perception now answers itself. All experienced reality is the act of decoding and we don’t experience Wi-Fi until it is decoded on the computer screen. The sight and sound of an Internet video is encoded in the Wi-Fi all around us, but we don’t see or hear it until the computer decodes that information. Taste, smell and touch are all phenomena of the brain as a result of the same process. We don’t taste, smell or feel anything except in the brain and there are pain relief techniques that seek to block the signal from the site of discomfort to the brain because if the brain doesn’t decode that signal we don’t feel pain. Pain is in the brain and only appears to be at the point of impact thanks to the feedback loop between them. We don’t see anything until electrical information from the sight senses is decoded in an area at the back of the brain. If that area is damaged we can go blind when our eyes are perfectly okay. So why do we go blind if we damage an eye? We damage the information processing between the waveform visual information and the visual decoding area of the brain. If information doesn’t reach the brain in a form it can decode then we can’t see the visual reality that it represents. What’s more the brain is decoding only a fraction of the information it receives and the rest is absorbed by the

sub-conscious mind. This explanation is from the science magazine, *Wonderpedia*:

Every second, 11 million sensations crackle along these [brain] pathways ... The brain is confronted with an alarming array of images, sounds and smells which it rigorously filters down until it is left with a manageable list of around 40. Thus 40 sensations per second make up what we perceive as reality.

The 'world' is not what people are told to believe that is it and the inner circles of the Cult *know that*.

Illusory 'physical' reality

We can only see a smear of 0.005 percent of the Universe which is only one of a vast array of universes – 'mansions' – within infinite reality. Even then the brain decodes only 40 pieces of information ('sensations') from a potential *11 million* that we receive every second. Two points strike you from this immediately: The sheer breathtaking stupidity of believing we know anything so rigidly that there's nothing more to know; and the potential for these processes to be manipulated by a malevolent force to control the reality of the population. One thing I can say for sure with no risk of contradiction is that when you can perceive an almost indescribable fraction of infinite reality there is always more to know as in tidal waves of it. Ancient Greek philosopher Socrates was so right when he said that wisdom is to know how little we know. How obviously true that is when you think that we are experiencing a physical world of solidity that is neither physical nor solid and a world of apartness when everything is connected. Cult-controlled 'science' dismisses the so-called 'paranormal' and all phenomena related to that when the 'para'-normal is perfectly normal and explains the alleged 'great mysteries' which dumbfound scientific minds. There is a reason for this. A 'scientific mind' in terms of the mainstream is a material mind, a five-sense mind imprisoned in see it, touch it, hear it, smell it and taste it. Phenomena and happenings that can't be explained that way leave the 'scientific mind' bewildered and the rule is that if they

can't account for why something is happening then it can't, by definition, be happening. I beg to differ. Telepathy is thought waves passing through The Field (think wave disturbance again) to be decoded by someone able to connect with that wavelength (information). For example: You can pick up the thought waves of a friend at any distance and at the very least that will bring them to mind. A few minutes later the friend calls you. 'My god', you say, 'that's incredible – I was just thinking of you.' Ah, but *they* were thinking of *you* before they made the call and that's what you decoded. Native peoples not entrapped in five-sense reality do this so well it became known as the 'bush telegraph'. Those known as psychics and mediums (genuine ones) are doing the same only across dimensions of reality. 'Mind over matter' comes from the fact that matter and mind are the *same*. The state of one influences the state of the other. Indeed one *and* the other are illusions. They are aspects of the same field. Paranormal phenomena are all explainable so why are they still considered 'mysteries' or not happening? Once you go down this road of understanding you begin to expand awareness beyond the five senses and that's the nightmare for the Cult.



Figure 13: Holograms are not solid, but the best ones appear to be.

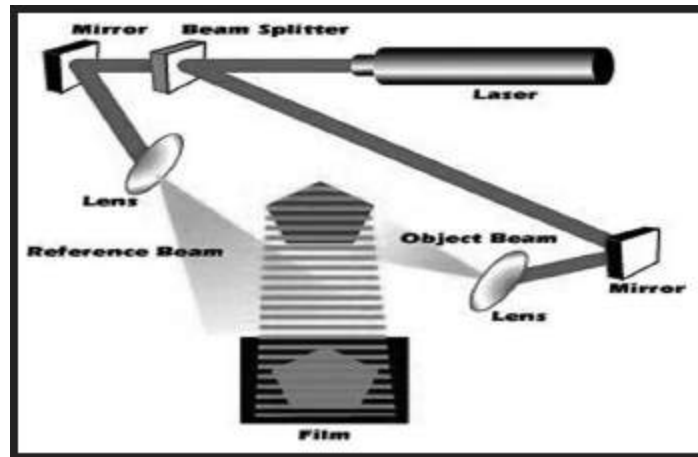


Figure 14: How holograms are created by capturing a waveform version of the subject image.

Holographic 'solidity'

Our reality is not solid, it is holographic. We are now well aware of holograms which are widely used today. Two-dimensional information is decoded into a three-dimensional reality that is not solid although can very much appear to be (Fig 13). Holograms are created with a laser divided into two parts. One goes directly onto a holographic photographic print ('reference beam') and the other takes a waveform image of the subject ('working beam') before being directed onto the print where it 'collides' with the other half of the laser (Fig 14). This creates a *waveform* interference pattern which contains the wavefield information of whatever is being photographed (Fig 15 overleaf). The process can be likened to dropping pebbles in a pond. Waves generated by each one spread out across the water to collide with the others and create a wave representation of where the stones fell and at what speed, weight and distance. A waveform interference pattern of a hologram is akin to the waveform information in The Field which the five senses decode into electrical signals to be decoded by the brain into a holographic illusory 'physical' reality. In the same way when a laser (think human attention) is directed at the waveform interference pattern a three-dimensional version of the subject is projected into apparently 'solid' reality (Fig 16). An amazing trait of holograms reveals more 'paranormal mysteries'. Information of the *whole*

hologram is encoded in waveform in every part of the interference pattern by the way they are created. This means that every *part* of a hologram is a smaller version of the whole. Cut the interference wave-pattern into four and you won't get four parts of the image. You get quarter-sized versions of the *whole* image. The body is a hologram and the same applies. Here we have the basis of acupuncture, reflexology and other forms of healing which identify representations of the whole body in all of the parts, hands, feet, ears, everywhere. Skilled palm readers can do what they do because the information of whole body is encoded in the hand. The concept of as above, so below, comes from this.



Figure 15: A waveform interference pattern that holds the information that transforms into a hologram.



Figure 16: Holographic people including 'Elvis' holographically inserted to sing a duet with Celine Dion.

The question will be asked of why, if solidity is illusory, we can't just walk through walls and each other. The resistance is not solid against solid; it is electromagnetic field against electromagnetic field and we decode this into the *experience* of solid against solid. We should also not underestimate the power of belief to dictate reality. What you believe is impossible *will be*. Your belief impacts on your decoding processes and they won't decode what you think is impossible. What we believe we perceive and what we perceive we experience. 'Can't dos' and 'impossibles' are like a firewall in a computer system that won't put on the screen what the firewall blocks. How vital that is to understanding how human experience has been hijacked. I explain in *The Answer, Everything You Need To Know But Have Never Been Told* and other books a long list of 'mysteries' and 'paranormal' phenomena that are not mysterious and perfectly normal once you realise what reality is and how it works. 'Ghosts' can be seen to pass through 'solid' walls because the walls are not solid and the ghost is a discarnate entity operating on a frequency so different to that of the wall that it's like two radio stations sharing the same space while never interfering with each other. I have seen ghosts do this myself. The apartness of people and objects is also an illusion. Everything is connected by the Field like all sea life is connected by the sea. It's just that within the limits of our visual reality we only 'see' holographic information and not the field of information that connects everything and from which the holographic world is made manifest. If you can only see holographic 'objects' and not the field that connects them they will appear to you as unconnected to each other in the same way that we see the computer while not seeing the Wi-Fi.

What you don't know *can* hurt you

Okay, we return to those 'two worlds' of human society and the Cult with its global network of interconnecting secret societies and satanic groups which manipulate through governments, corporations, media, religions, etc. The fundamental difference between them is *knowledge*. The idea has been to keep humanity

ignorant of the plan for its total enslavement underpinned by a crucial ignorance of reality – who we are and where we are – and how we interact with it. ‘Human’ should be the interaction between our expanded eternal consciousness and the five-sense body experience. We are meant to be *in* this world in terms of the five senses but not *of* this world in relation to our greater consciousness and perspective. In that state we experience the small picture of the five senses within the wider context of the big picture of awareness beyond the five senses. Put another way the five senses see the dots and expanded awareness connects them into pictures and patterns that give context to the apparently random and unconnected. Without the context of expanded awareness the five senses see only apartness and randomness with apparently no meaning. The Cult and its other-dimensional controllers seek to intervene in the frequency realm where five-sense reality is supposed to connect with expanded reality and to keep the two apart (more on this in the final chapter). When that happens five-sense mental and emotional processes are no longer influenced by expanded awareness, or the True ‘I’, and instead are driven by the isolated perceptions of the body’s decoding systems. They are in the world *and* of it. Here we have the human plight and why humanity with its potential for infinite awareness can be so easily manipulatable and descend into such extremes of stupidity.

Once the Cult isolates five-sense mind from expanded awareness it can then program the mind with perceptions and beliefs by controlling information that the mind receives through the ‘education’ system of the formative years and the media perceptual bombardment and censorship of an entire lifetime. Limit perception and a sense of the possible through limiting knowledge by limiting and skewing information while censoring and discrediting that which could set people free. As the title of another of my books says ... *And The Truth Shall Set You Free*. For this reason the last thing the Cult wants in circulation is the truth about anything – especially the reality of the eternal ‘I’ – and that’s why it is desperate to control information. The Cult knows that information becomes perception

which becomes behaviour which, collectively, becomes human society. Cult-controlled and funded mainstream 'science' denies the existence of an eternal 'I' and seeks to dismiss and trash all evidence to the contrary. Cult-controlled mainstream religion has a version of 'God' that is little more than a system of control and dictatorship that employs threats of damnation in an afterlife to control perceptions and behaviour in the here and now through fear and guilt. Neither is true and it's the 'neither' that the Cult wishes to suppress. This 'neither' is that everything is an expression, a point of attention, within an infinite state of consciousness which is the real meaning of the term 'God'.

Perceptual obsession with the 'physical body' and five-senses means that 'God' becomes personified as a bearded bloke sitting among the clouds or a raging bully who loves us if we do what 'he' wants and condemns us to the fires of hell if we don't. These are no more than a 'spiritual' fairy tales to control and dictate events and behaviour through fear of this 'God' which has bizarrely made 'God-fearing' in religious circles a state to be desired. I would suggest that fearing *anything* is not to be encouraged and celebrated, but rather deleted. You can see why 'God fearing' is so beneficial to the Cult and its religions when *they* decide what 'God' wants and what 'God' demands (the Cult demands) that everyone do. As the great American comedian Bill Hicks said satirising a Christian zealot: 'I think what God meant to say.' How much of this infinite awareness ('God') that we access is decided by how far we choose to expand our perceptions, self-identity and sense of the possible. The scale of self-identity reflects itself in the scale of awareness that we can connect with and are influenced by – how much knowing and insight we have instead of programmed perception. You cannot expand your awareness into the infinity of possibility when you believe that you are little me Peter the postman or Mary in marketing and nothing more. I'll deal with this in the concluding chapter because it's crucial to how we turnaround current events.

Where the Cult came from

When I realised in the early 1990s there was a Cult network behind global events I asked the obvious question: When did it start? I took it back to ancient Rome and Egypt and on to Babylon and Sumer in Mesopotamia, the 'Land Between Two Rivers', in what we now call Iraq. The two rivers are the Tigris and Euphrates and this region is of immense historical and other importance to the Cult, as is the land called Israel only 550 miles away by air. There is much more going on with deep esoteric meaning across this whole region. It's not only about 'wars for oil'. Priceless artefacts from Mesopotamia were stolen or destroyed after the American and British invasion of Iraq in 2003 justified by the lies of Boy Bush and Tony Blair (their Cult masters) about non-existent 'weapons of mass destruction'.

Mesopotamia was the location of Sumer (about 5,400BC to 1,750BC), and Babylon (about 2,350BC to 539BC). Sabbatians may have become immensely influential in the Cult in modern times but they are part of a network that goes back into the mists of history. Sumer is said by historians to be the 'cradle of civilisation'. I disagree. I say it was the re-start of what we call human civilisation after cataclysmic events symbolised in part as the 'Great Flood' destroyed the world that existed before. These fantastic upheavals that I have been describing in detail in the books since the early 1990s appear in accounts and legends of ancient cultures across the world and they are supported by geological and biological evidence. Stone tablets found in Iraq detailing the Sumer period say the cataclysms were caused by non-human 'gods' they call the Anunnaki. These are described in terms of extraterrestrial visitations in which knowledge supplied by the Anunnaki is said to have been the source of at least one of the world's oldest writing systems and developments in astronomy, mathematics and architecture that were way ahead of their time. I have covered this subject at length in *The Biggest Secret* and *Children of the Matrix* and the same basic 'Anunnaki' story can be found in Zulu accounts in South Africa where the late and very great Zulu high shaman Credo Mutwa told me that the Sumerian Anunnaki were known by Zulus as the Chitauri or 'children of the serpent'. See my six-hour video interview with Credo on this subject entitled *The*

Reptilian Agenda recorded at his then home near Johannesburg in 1999 which you can watch on the Ickonic media platform.

The Cult emerged out of Sumer, Babylon and Egypt (and elsewhere) and established the Roman Empire before expanding with the Romans into northern Europe from where many empires were savagely imposed in the form of Cult-controlled societies all over the world. Mass death and destruction was their calling card. The Cult established its centre of operations in Europe and European Empires were Cult empires which allowed it to expand into a global force. Spanish and Portuguese colonialists headed for Central and South America while the British and French targeted North America. Africa was colonised by Britain, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Italy, and Germany. Some like Britain and France moved in on the Middle East. The British Empire was by far the biggest for a simple reason. By now Britain was the headquarters of the Cult from which it expanded to form Canada, the United States, Australia and New Zealand. The Sun never set on the British Empire such was the scale of its occupation. London remains a global centre for the Cult along with Rome and the Vatican although others have emerged in Israel and China. It is no accident that the 'virus' is alleged to have come out of China while Italy was chosen as the means to terrify the Western population into compliance with 'Covid' fascism. Nor that Israel has led the world in 'Covid' fascism and mass 'vaccination'.

You would think that I would mention the United States here, but while it has been an important means of imposing the Cult's will it is less significant than would appear and is currently in the process of having what power it does have deleted. The Cult in Europe has mostly loaded the guns for the US to fire. America has been controlled from Europe from the start through Cult operatives in Britain and Europe. The American Revolution was an illusion to make it appear that America was governing itself while very different forces were pulling the strings in the form of Cult families such as the Rothschilds through the Rockefellers and other subordinates. The Rockefellers are extremely close to Bill Gates and

established both scalpel and drug 'medicine' and the World Health Organization. They play a major role in the development and circulation of vaccines through the Rockefeller Foundation on which Bill Gates said his Foundation is based. Why wouldn't this be the case when the Rockefellers and Gates are on the same team? Cult infiltration of human society goes way back into what we call history and has been constantly expanding and centralising power with the goal of establishing a global structure to dictate everything. Look how this has been advanced in great leaps with the 'Covid' hoax.

The non-human dimension

I researched and observed the comings and goings of Cult operatives through the centuries and even thousands of years as they were born, worked to promote the agenda within the secret society and satanic networks, and then died for others to replace them. Clearly there had to be a coordinating force that spanned this entire period while operatives who would not have seen the end goal in their lifetimes came and went advancing the plan over millennia. I went in search of that coordinating force with the usual support from the extraordinary synchronicity of my life which has been an almost daily experience since 1990. I saw common themes in religious texts and ancient cultures about a non-human force manipulating human society from the hidden. Christianity calls this force Satan, the Devil and demons; Islam refers to the Jinn or Djinn; Zulus have their Chitauri (spelt in other ways in different parts of Africa); and the Gnostic people in Egypt in the period around and before 400AD referred to this phenomena as the 'Archons', a word meaning rulers in Greek. Central American cultures speak of the 'Predators' among other names and the same theme is everywhere. I will use 'Archons' as a collective name for all of them. When you see how their nature and behaviour is described all these different sources are clearly talking about the same force. Gnostics described the Archons in terms of 'luminous fire' while Islam relates the Jinn to 'smokeless fire'. Some refer to beings in form that could occasionally be seen, but the most common of common theme is that they operate from

unseen realms which means almost all existence to the visual processes of humans. I had concluded that this was indeed the foundation of human control and that the Cult was operating within the human frequency band on behalf of this hidden force when I came across the writings of Gnostics which supported my conclusions in the most extraordinary way.

A sealed earthen jar was found in 1945 near the town of Nag Hammadi about 75-80 miles north of Luxor on the banks of the River Nile in Egypt. Inside was a treasure trove of manuscripts and texts left by the Gnostic people some 1,600 years earlier. They included 13 leather-bound papyrus codices (manuscripts) and more than 50 texts written in Coptic Egyptian estimated to have been hidden in the jar in the period of 400AD although the source of the information goes back much further. Gnostics oversaw the Great or Royal Library of Alexandria, the fantastic depository of ancient texts detailing advanced knowledge and accounts of human history. The Library was dismantled and destroyed in stages over a long period with the death-blow delivered by the Cult-established Roman Church in the period around 415AD. The Church of Rome was the Church of Babylon relocated as I said earlier. Gnostics were not a race. They were a way of perceiving reality. Whenever they established themselves and their information circulated the terrorists of the Church of Rome would target them for destruction. This happened with the Great Library and with the Gnostic Cathars who were burned to death by the psychopaths after a long period of oppression at the siege of the Castle of Monségur in southern France in 1244. The Church has always been terrified of Gnostic information which demolishes the official Christian narrative although there is much in the Bible that supports the Gnostic view if you read it in another way. To anyone studying the texts of what became known as the Nag Hammadi Library it is clear that great swathes of Christian and Biblical belief has its origin with Gnostics sources going back to Sumer. Gnostic themes have been twisted to manipulate the perceived reality of Bible believers. Biblical texts have been in the open for centuries where they could be changed while Gnostic

documents found at Nag Hammadi were sealed away and untouched for 1,600 years. What you see is what they wrote.

Use your *pneuma* not your *nous*

Gnosticism and Gnostic come from 'gnosis' which means knowledge, or rather *secret* knowledge, in the sense of spiritual awareness – knowledge about reality and life itself. The desperation of the Cult's Church of Rome to destroy the Gnostics can be understood when the knowledge they were circulating was the last thing the Cult wanted the population to know. Sixteen hundred years later the same Cult is working hard to undermine and silence me for the same reason. The dynamic between knowledge and ignorance is a constant. 'Time' appears to move on, but essential themes remain the same. We are told to 'use your nous', a Gnostic word for head/brain/intelligence. They said, however, that spiritual awakening or 'salvation' could only be secured by expanding awareness *beyond* what they called *nous* and into *pneuma* or Infinite Self. Obviously as I read these texts the parallels with what I have been saying since 1990 were fascinating to me. There is a universal truth that spans human history and in that case why wouldn't we be talking the same language 16 centuries apart? When you free yourself from the perception program of the five senses and explore expanded realms of consciousness you are going to connect with the same information no matter what the perceived 'era' within a manufactured timeline of a single and tiny range of manipulated frequency. Humans working with 'smart' technology or knocking rocks together in caves is only a timeline appearing to operate within the human frequency band. Expanded awareness and the knowledge it holds have always been there whether the era be Stone Age or computer age. We can only access that knowledge by opening ourselves to its frequency which the five-sense prison cell is designed to stop us doing. Gates, Fauci, Whitty, Vallance, Zuckerberg, Brin, Page, Wojcicki, Bezos, and all the others behind the 'Covid' hoax clearly have a long wait before their range of frequency can make that connection given that an open heart is

crucial to that as we shall see. Instead of accessing knowledge directly through expanded awareness it is given to Cult operatives by the secret society networks of the Cult where it has been passed on over thousands of years outside the public arena. Expanded realms of consciousness is where great artists, composers and writers find their inspiration and where truth awaits anyone open enough to connect with it. We need to go there fast.

Archon hijack

A fifth of the Nag Hammadi texts describe the existence and manipulation of the Archons led by a 'Chief Archon' they call 'Yaldabaoth', or the 'Demiurge', and this is the Christian 'Devil', 'Satan', 'Lucifer', and his demons. Archons in Biblical symbolism are the 'fallen ones' which are also referred to as fallen angels after the angels expelled from heaven according to the Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. These angels are claimed to tempt humans to 'sin' ongoing and you will see how accurate that symbolism is during the rest of the book. The theme of 'original sin' is related to the 'Fall' when Adam and Eve were 'tempted by the serpent' and fell from a state of innocence and 'obedience' (connection) with God into a state of disobedience (disconnection). The Fall is said to have brought sin into the world and corrupted everything including human nature. Yaldabaoth, the 'Lord Archon', is described by Gnostics as a 'counterfeit spirit', 'The Blind One', 'The Blind God', and 'The Foolish One'. The Jewish name for Yaldabaoth in Talmudic writings is Samael which translates as 'Poison of God', or 'Blindness of God'. You see the parallels. Yaldabaoth in Islamic belief is the Muslim Jinn devil known as Shaytan – Shaytan is Satan as the same themes are found all over the world in every religion and culture. The 'Lord God' of the Old Testament is the 'Lord Archon' of Gnostic manuscripts and that's why he's such a bloodthirsty bastard. Satan is known by Christians as 'the Demon of Demons' and Gnostics called Yaldabaoth the 'Archon of Archons'. Both are known as 'The Deceiver'. We are talking about the same 'bloke' for sure and these common themes

using different names, storylines and symbolism tell a common tale of the human plight.

Archons are referred to in Nag Hammadi documents as mind parasites, inverters, guards, gatekeepers, detainers, judges, pitiless ones and deceivers. The 'Covid' hoax alone is a glaring example of all these things. The Biblical 'God' is so different in the Old and New Testaments because they are not describing the same phenomenon. The vindictive, angry, hate-filled, 'God' of the Old Testament, known as Yahweh, is Yaldabaoth who is depicted in Cult-dictated popular culture as the 'Dark Lord', 'Lord of Time', Lord (Darth) Vader and Dormammu, the evil ruler of the 'Dark Dimension' trying to take over the 'Earth Dimension' in the Marvel comic movie, *Dr Strange*. Yaldabaoth is both the Old Testament 'god' and the Biblical 'Satan'. Gnostics referred to Yaldabaoth as the 'Great Architect of the Universe' and the Cult-controlled Freemason network calls their god 'the 'Great Architect of the Universe' (also Grand Architect). The 'Great Architect' Yaldabaoth is symbolised by the Cult as the all-seeing eye at the top of the pyramid on the Great Seal of the United States and the dollar bill. Archon is encoded in *arch*-itect as it is in *arch*-angels and *arch*-bishops. All religions have the theme of a force for good and force for evil in some sort of spiritual war and there is a reason for that – the theme is true. The Cult and its non-human masters are quite happy for this to circulate. They present themselves as the force for good fighting evil when they are really the force of evil (absence of love). The whole foundation of Cult modus operandi is inversion. They promote themselves as a force for good and anyone challenging them in pursuit of peace, love, fairness, truth and justice is condemned as a satanic force for evil. This has been the game plan throughout history whether the Church of Rome inquisitions of non-believers or 'conspiracy theorists' and 'anti-vaxxers' of today. The technique is the same whatever the timeline era.

Yaldabaoth is revolting (true)

Yaldabaoth and the Archons are said to have revolted against God with Yaldabaoth claiming to *be* God – the *All That Is*. The Old Testament ‘God’ (Yaldabaoth) demanded to be worshipped as such: ‘*I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me*’ (Isaiah 45:5). I have quoted in other books a man who said he was the unofficial son of the late Baron Philippe de Rothschild of the Mouton-Rothschild wine producing estates in France who died in 1988 and he told me about the Rothschild ‘revolt from God’. The man said he was given the name Phillip Eugene de Rothschild and we shared long correspondence many years ago while he was living under another identity. He said that he was conceived through ‘occult incest’ which (within the Cult) was ‘normal and to be admired’. ‘Phillip’ told me about his experience attending satanic rituals with rich and famous people whom he names and you can see them and the wider background to Cult Satanism in my other books starting with *The Biggest Secret*. Cult rituals are interactions with Archontic ‘gods’. ‘Phillip’ described Baron Philippe de Rothschild as ‘a master Satanist and hater of God’ and he used the same term ‘revolt from God’ associated with Yaldabaoth/Satan/Lucifer/the Devil in describing the Sabbatian Rothschild dynasty. ‘I played a key role in my family’s revolt from God’, he said. That role was to infiltrate in classic Sabbatian style the Christian Church, but eventually he escaped the mind-prison to live another life. The Cult has been targeting religion in a plan to make worship of the Archons the global one-world religion. Infiltration of Satanism into modern ‘culture’, especially among the young, through music videos, stage shows and other means, is all part of this.

Nag Hammadi texts describe Yaldabaoth and the Archons in their prime form as energy – consciousness – and say they can take form if they choose in the same way that consciousness takes form as a human. Yaldabaoth is called ‘formless’ and represents a deeply inverted, distorted and chaotic state of consciousness which seeks to attach to humans and turn them into a likeness of itself in an attempt at assimilation. For that to happen it has to manipulate

humans into low frequency mental and emotional states that match its own. Archons can certainly appear in human form and this is the origin of the psychopathic personality. The energetic distortion Gnostics called Yaldabaoth is psychopathy. When psychopathic Archons take human form that human will be a psychopath as an expression of Yaldabaoth consciousness. Cult psychopaths are Archons in human form. The principle is the same as that portrayed in the 2009 *Avatar* movie when the American military travelled to a fictional Earth-like moon called Pandora in the Alpha Centauri star system to infiltrate a society of blue people, or Na'vi, by hiding within bodies that looked like the Na'vi. Archons posing as humans have a particular hybrid information field, part human, part Archon, (the ancient 'demigods') which processes information in a way that manifests behaviour to match their psychopathic evil, lack of empathy and compassion, and stops them being influenced by the empathy, compassion and love that a fully-human information field is capable of expressing. Cult bloodlines interbreed, be they royalty or dark suits, for this reason and you have their obsession with incest. Interbreeding with full-blown humans would dilute the Archontic energy field that guarantees psychopathy in its representatives in the human realm.

Gnostic writings say the main non-human forms that Archons take are *serpentine* (what I have called for decades 'reptilian' amid unbounded ridicule from the Archontically-programmed) and what Gnostics describe as 'an unborn baby or foetus with grey skin and dark, unmoving eyes'. This is an excellent representation of the ET 'Greys' of UFO folklore which large numbers of people claim to have seen and been abducted by – Zulu shaman Credo Mutwa among them. I agree with those that believe in extraterrestrial or interdimensional visitations today and for thousands of years past. No wonder with their advanced knowledge and technological capability they were perceived and worshipped as gods for technological and other 'miracles' they appeared to perform. Imagine someone arriving in a culture disconnected from the modern world with a smartphone and computer. They would be

seen as a 'god' capable of 'miracles'. The Renegade Mind, however, wants to know the source of everything and not only the way that source manifests as human or non-human. In the same way that a Renegade Mind seeks the original source material for the 'Covid virus' to see if what is claimed is true. The original source of Archons in form is consciousness – the distorted state of consciousness known to Gnostics as Yaldabaoth.

'Revolt from God' is energetic disconnection

Where I am going next will make a lot of sense of religious texts and ancient legends relating to 'Satan', Lucifer' and the 'gods'. Gnostic descriptions sync perfectly with the themes of my own research over the years in how they describe a consciousness distortion seeking to impose itself on human consciousness. I've referred to the core of infinite awareness in previous books as Infinite Awareness in Awareness of Itself. By that I mean a level of awareness that knows that it is all awareness and is aware of all awareness. From here comes the frequency of love in its true sense and balance which is what love is on one level – the balance of all forces into a single whole called Oneness and Isness. The more we disconnect from this state of love that many call 'God' the constituent parts of that Oneness start to unravel and express themselves as a part and not a whole. They become individualised as intellect, mind, selfishness, hatred, envy, desire for power over others, and such like. This is not a problem in the greater scheme in that 'God', the *All That Is*, can experience all these possibilities through different expressions of itself including humans. What we as expressions of the whole experience the *All That Is* experiences. We are the *All That Is* experiencing itself. As we withdraw from that state of Oneness we disconnect from its influence and things can get very unpleasant and very stupid. Archontic consciousness is at the extreme end of that. It has so disconnected from the influence of Oneness that it has become an inversion of unity and love, an inversion of everything, an inversion of life itself. Evil is appropriately live written backwards. Archontic consciousness is obsessed with death, an inversion of life,

and so its manifestations in Satanism are obsessed with death. They use inverted symbols in their rituals such as the inverted pentagram and cross. Sabbatians as Archontic consciousness incarnate invert Judaism and every other religion and culture they infiltrate. They seek disunity and chaos and they fear unity and harmony as they fear love like garlic to a vampire. As a result the Cult, Archons incarnate, act with such evil, psychopathy and lack of empathy and compassion disconnected as they are from the source of love. How could Bill Gates and the rest of the Archontic psychopaths do what they have to human society in the 'Covid' era with all the death, suffering and destruction involved and have no emotional consequence for the impact on others? Now you know. Why have Zuckerberg, Brin, Page, Wojcicki and company callously censored information warning about the dangers of the 'vaccine' while thousands have been dying and having severe, sometimes life-changing reactions? Now you know. Why have Tedros, Fauci, Whitty, Vallance and their like around the world been using case and death figures they're aware are fraudulent to justify lockdowns and all the deaths and destroyed lives that have come from that? Now you know. Why did Christian Drosten produce and promote a 'testing' protocol that he knew couldn't test for infectious disease which led to a global human catastrophe. Now you know. The Archontic mind doesn't give a shit ([Fig 17](#)). I personally think that Gates and major Cult insiders are a form of AI cyborg that the Archons want humans to become.

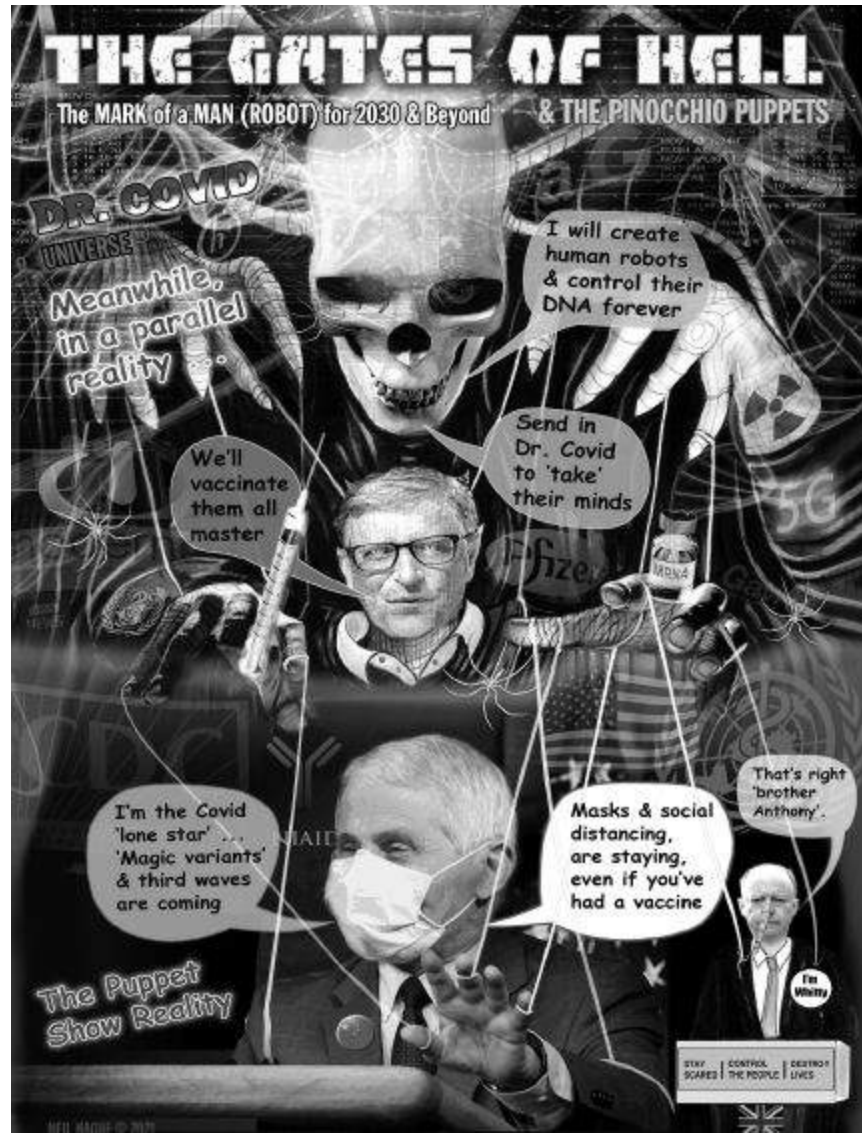


Figure 17: Artist Neil Hague's version of the 'Covid' hierarchy.

Human batteries

A state of such inversion does have its consequences, however. The level of disconnection from the Source of All means that you withdraw from that source of energetic sustenance and creativity. This means that you have to find your own supply of energetic power and it has – us. When the Morpheus character in the first *Matrix* movie held up a battery he spoke a profound truth when he said: 'The Matrix is a computer-generated dream world built to keep us under control in order to change the human being into one of

these.’ The statement was true in all respects. We do live in a technologically-generated virtual reality simulation (more very shortly) and we have been manipulated to be an energy source for Archontic consciousness. The Disney-Pixar animated movie *Monsters, Inc.* in 2001 symbolised the dynamic when monsters in their world had no energy source and they would enter the human world to terrify children in their beds, catch the child’s scream, terror (low-vibrational frequencies), and take that energy back to power the monster world. The lead character you might remember was a single giant eye and the symbolism of the Cult’s all-seeing eye was obvious. Every thought and emotion is broadcast as a frequency unique to that thought and emotion. Feelings of love and joy, empathy and compassion, are high, quick, frequencies while fear, depression, anxiety, suffering and hate are low, slow, dense frequencies. Which kind do you think Archontic consciousness can connect with and absorb? In such a low and dense frequency state there’s no way it can connect with the energy of love and joy. Archons can only feed off energy compatible with their own frequency and they and their Cult agents want to delete the human world of love and joy and manipulate the transmission of low vibrational frequencies through low-vibrational human mental and emotional states. *We are their energy source.* Wars are energetic banquets to the Archons – a world war even more so – and think how much low-frequency mental and emotional energy has been generated from the consequences for humanity of the ‘Covid’ hoax orchestrated by Archons incarnate like Gates.

The ancient practice of human sacrifice ‘to the gods’, continued in secret today by the Cult, is based on the same principle. ‘The gods’ are Archontic consciousness in different forms and the sacrifice is induced into a state of intense terror to generate the energy the Archontic frequency can absorb. Incarnate Archons in the ritual drink the blood which contains an adrenaline they crave which floods into the bloodstream when people are terrorised. Most of the sacrifices, ancient and modern, are children and the theme of ‘sacrificing young virgins to the gods’ is just code for children. They

have a particular pre-puberty energy that Archons want more than anything and the energy of the young in general is their target. The California Department of Education wants students to chant the names of Aztec gods (Archontic gods) once worshipped in human sacrifice rituals in a curriculum designed to encourage them to 'challenge racist, bigoted, discriminatory, imperialist/colonial beliefs', join 'social movements that struggle for social justice', and 'build new possibilities for a post-racist, post-systemic racism society'. It's the usual Woke crap that inverts racism and calls it anti-racism. In this case solidarity with 'indigenous tribes' is being used as an excuse to chant the names of 'gods' to which people were sacrificed (and still are in secret). What an example of Woke's inability to see beyond black and white, us and them, They condemn the colonisation of these tribal cultures by Europeans (quite right), but those cultures sacrificing people including children to their 'gods', and mass murdering untold numbers as the Aztecs did, is just fine. One chant is to the Aztec god Tezcatlipoca who had a man sacrificed to him in the 5th month of the Aztec calendar. His heart was cut out and he was eaten. Oh, that's okay then. Come on children ... after three ... Other sacrificial 'gods' for the young to chant their allegiance include Quetzalcoatl, Huitzilopochtli and Xipe Totec. The curriculum says that 'chants, affirmations, and energizers can be used to bring the class together, build unity around ethnic studies principles and values, and to reinvigorate the class following a lesson that may be emotionally taxing or even when student engagement may appear to be low'. Well, that's the cover story, anyway. Chanting and mantras are the repetition of a particular frequency generated from the vocal cords and chanting the names of these Archontic 'gods' tunes you into their frequency. That is the last thing you want when it allows for energetic synchronisation, attachment and perceptual influence. Initiates chant the names of their 'Gods' in their rituals for this very reason.

Vampires of the Woke

Paedophilia is another way that Archons absorb the energy of children. Paedophiles possessed by Archontic consciousness are used as the conduit during sexual abuse for discarnate Archons to vampire the energy of the young they desire so much. Stupendous numbers of children disappear every year never to be seen again although you would never know from the media. Imagine how much low-vibrational energy has been generated by children during the 'Covid' hoax when so many have become depressed and psychologically destroyed to the point of killing themselves. Shocking numbers of children are now taken by the state from loving parents to be handed to others. I can tell you from long experience of researching this since 1996 that many end up with paedophiles and assets of the Cult through corrupt and Cult-owned social services which in the reframing era has hired many psychopaths and emotionless automatons to do the job. Children are even stolen to order using spurious reasons to take them by the corrupt and secret (because they're corrupt) 'family courts'. I have written in detail in other books, starting with *The Biggest Secret* in 1997, about the ubiquitous connections between the political, corporate, government, intelligence and military elites (Cult operatives) and Satanism and paedophilia. If you go deep enough both networks have an interlocking leadership. The Woke mentality has been developed by the Cult for many reasons: To promote almost every aspect of its agenda; to hijack the traditional political left and turn it fascist; to divide and rule; and to target agenda pushbackers. But there are other reasons which relate to what I am describing here. How many happy and joyful Wokers do you ever see especially at the extreme end? They are a mental and psychological mess consumed by emotional stress and constantly emotionally cocked for the next explosion of indignation at someone referring to a female as a female. They are walking, talking, batteries as Morpheus might say emitting frequencies which both enslave them in low-vibrational bubbles of perceptual limitation and feed the Archons. Add to this the hatred claimed to be love; fascism claimed to 'anti-fascism', racism claimed to be 'anti-racism';

exclusion claimed to inclusion; and the abuse-filled Internet trolling. You have a purpose-built Archontic energy system with not a wind turbine in sight and all founded on Archontic *inversion*. We have whole generations now manipulated to serve the Archons with their actions and energy. They will be doing so their entire adult lives unless they snap out of their Archon-induced trance. Is it really a surprise that Cult billionaires and corporations put so much money their way? Where is the energy of joy and laughter, including laughing at yourself which is confirmation of your own emotional security? Mark Twain said: 'The human race has one really effective weapon, and that is laughter.' We must use it all the time. Woke has destroyed comedy because it has no humour, no joy, sense of irony, or self-deprecation. Its energy is dense and intense. *Mmmmm*, lunch says the Archontic frequency. Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) was the Austrian philosopher and famous esoteric thinker who established Waldorf education or Steiner schools to treat children like unique expressions of consciousness and not minds to be programmed with the perceptions determined by authority. I'd been writing about this energy vampiring for decades when I was sent in 2016 a quote by Steiner. He was spot on:

There are beings in the spiritual realms for whom anxiety and fear emanating from human beings offer welcome food. When humans have no anxiety and fear, then these creatures starve. If fear and anxiety radiates from people and they break out in panic, then these creatures find welcome nutrition and they become more and more powerful. These beings are hostile towards humanity. Everything that feeds on negative feelings, on anxiety, fear and superstition, despair or doubt, are in reality hostile forces in super-sensible worlds, launching cruel attacks on human beings, while they are being fed ... These are exactly the feelings that belong to contemporary culture and materialism; because it estranges people from the spiritual world, it is especially suited to evoke hopelessness and fear of the unknown in people, thereby calling up the above mentioned hostile forces against them.

Pause for a moment from this perspective and reflect on what has happened in the world since the start of 2020. Not only will pennies drop, but billion dollar bills. We see the same theme from Don Juan Matus, a Yaqui Indian shaman in Mexico and the information source for Peruvian-born writer, Carlos Castaneda, who wrote a series of

books from the 1960s to 1990s. Don Juan described the force manipulating human society and his name for the Archons was the predator:

We have a predator that came from the depths of the cosmos and took over the rule of our lives. Human beings are its prisoners. The predator is our lord and master. It has rendered us docile, helpless. If we want to protest, it suppresses our protest. If we want to act independently, it demands that we don't do so ... indeed we are held prisoner!

They took us over because we are food to them, and they squeeze us mercilessly because we are their sustenance. Just as we rear chickens in coops, the predators rear us in human coops, humaneros. Therefore, their food is always available to them.

Different cultures, different eras, same recurring theme.

The 'ennoia' dilemma

Nag Hammadi Gnostic manuscripts say that Archon consciousness has no 'ennoia'. This is directly translated as 'intentionality', but I'll use the term 'creative imagination'. The *All That Is* in awareness of itself is the source of all creativity – all possibility – and the more disconnected you are from that source the more you are subsequently denied 'creative imagination'. Given that Archon consciousness is almost entirely disconnected it severely lacks creativity and has to rely on far more mechanical processes of thought and exploit the creative potential of those that do have 'ennoia'. You can see cases of this throughout human society. Archon consciousness almost entirely dominates the global banking system and if we study how that system works you will appreciate what I mean. Banks manifest 'money' out of nothing by issuing lines of 'credit' which is 'money' that has never, does not, and will never exist except in theory. It's a confidence trick. If you think 'credit' figures-on-a-screen 'money' is worth anything you accept it as payment. If you don't then the whole system collapses through lack of confidence in the value of that 'money'. Archontic bankers with no 'ennoia' are 'lending' 'money' that doesn't exist to humans that *do* have creativity – those that have the inspired ideas and create businesses and products. Archon banking feeds off human creativity

which it controls through 'money' creation and debt. Humans have the creativity and Archons exploit that for their own benefit and control while having none themselves. Archon Internet platforms like Facebook claim joint copyright of everything that creative users post and while Archontic minds like Zuckerberg may officially head that company it will be human creatives on the staff that provide the creative inspiration. When you have limitless 'money' you can then buy other companies established by creative humans. Witness the acquisition record of Facebook, Google and their like. Survey the Archon-controlled music industry and you see non-creative dark suit executives making their fortune from the human creativity of their artists. The cases are endless. Research the history of people like Gates and Zuckerberg and how their empires were built on exploiting the creativity of others. Archon minds cannot create out of nothing, but they are skilled (because they have to be) in what Gnostic texts call 'countermimicry'. They can imitate, but not innovate. Sabbatians trawl the creativity of others through backdoors they install in computer systems through their cybersecurity systems. Archon-controlled China is globally infamous for stealing intellectual property and I remember how Hong Kong, now part of China, became notorious for making counterfeit copies of the creativity of others – 'countermimicry'. With the now pervasive and all-seeing surveillance systems able to infiltrate any computer you can appreciate the potential for Archons to vampire the creativity of humans. Author John Lamb Lash wrote in his book about the Nag Hammadi texts, *Not In His Image*:

Although they cannot originate anything, because they lack the divine factor of ennoia (intentionality), Archons can imitate with a vengeance. Their expertise is simulation (HAL, virtual reality). The Demiurge [Yaldabaoth] fashions a heaven world copied from the fractal patterns [of the original] ... His construction is celestial kitsch, like the fake Italianate villa of a Mafia don complete with militant angels to guard every portal.

This brings us to something that I have been speaking about since the turn of the millennium. Our reality is a simulation; a virtual reality that we think is real. No, I'm not kidding.

Human reality? Well, virtually

I had pondered for years about whether our reality is 'real' or some kind of construct. I remembered being immensely affected on a visit as a small child in the late 1950s to the then newly-opened Planetarium on the Marylebone Road in London which is now closed and part of the adjacent Madame Tussauds wax museum. It was in the middle of the day, but when the lights went out there was the night sky projected in the Planetarium's domed ceiling and it appeared to be so real. The experience never left me and I didn't know why until around the turn of the millennium when I became certain that our 'night sky' and entire reality is a projection, a virtual reality, akin to the illusory world portrayed in the *Matrix* movies. I looked at the sky one day in this period and it appeared to me like the domed roof of the Planetarium. The release of the first *Matrix* movie in 1999 also provided a synchronistic and perfect visual representation of where my mind had been going for a long time. I hadn't come across the Gnostic Nag Hammadi texts then. When I did years later the correlation was once again astounding. As I read Gnostic accounts from 1,600 years and more earlier it was clear that they were describing the same simulation phenomenon. They tell how the Yaldabaoth 'Demiurge' and Archons created a 'bad copy' of original reality to rule over all that were captured by its illusions and the body was a prison to trap consciousness in the 'bad copy' fake reality. Read how Gnostics describe the 'bad copy' and update that to current times and they are referring to what we would call today a virtual reality simulation.

Author John Lamb Lash said 'the Demiurge fashions a heaven world copied from the fractal patterns' of the original through expertise in 'HAL' or virtual reality simulation. Fractal patterns are part of the energetic information construct of our reality, a sort of blueprint. If these patterns were copied in computer terms it would indeed give you a copy of a 'natural' reality in a non-natural frequency and digital form. The principle is the same as making a copy of a website. The original website still exists, but now you can change the copy version to make it whatever you like and it can

become very different to the original website. Archons have done this with our reality, a *synthetic* copy of prime reality that still exists beyond the frequency walls of the simulation. Trapped within the illusions of this synthetic Matrix, however, were and are human consciousness and other expressions of prime reality and this is why the Archons via the Cult are seeking to make the human body synthetic and give us synthetic AI minds to complete the job of turning the entire reality synthetic including what we perceive to be the natural world. To quote Kurzweil: 'Nanobots will infuse all the matter around us with information. Rocks, trees, everything will become these intelligent creatures.' Yes, *synthetic* 'creatures' just as 'Covid' and other genetically-manipulating 'vaccines' are designed to make the human body synthetic. From this perspective it is obvious why Archons and their Cult are so desperate to infuse synthetic material into every human with their 'Covid' scam.

Let there be (electromagnetic) light

Yaldabaoth, the force that created the simulation, or Matrix, makes sense of the Gnostic reference to 'The Great Architect' and its use by Cult Freemasonry as the name of its deity. The designer of the Matrix in the movies is called 'The Architect' and that trilogy is jam-packed with symbolism relating to these subjects. I have contended for years that the angry Old Testament God (Yaldabaoth) is the 'God' being symbolically 'quoted' in the opening of Genesis as 'creating the world'. This is not the creation of prime reality – it's the creation of the *simulation*. The Genesis 'God' says: 'Let there be Light: and there was light.' But what is this 'Light'? I have said for decades that the speed of light (186,000 miles per second) is not the fastest speed possible as claimed by mainstream science and is in fact the frequency walls or outer limits of the Matrix. You can't have a fastest or slowest anything within all possibility when everything is possible. The human body is encoded to operate within the speed of light or *within the simulation* and thus we see only the tiny frequency band of visible *light*. Near-death experiencers who perceive reality outside the body during temporary 'death' describe a very different

form of light and this is supported by the Nag Hammadi texts. Prime reality beyond the simulation ('Upper Aeons' to the Gnostics) is described as a realm of incredible beauty, bliss, love and harmony – a realm of 'watery light' that is so powerful 'there are no shadows'. Our false reality of Archon control, which Gnostics call the 'Lower Aeons', is depicted as a realm with a different kind of 'light' and described in terms of chaos, 'Hell', 'the Abyss' and 'Outer Darkness', where trapped souls are tormented and manipulated by demons (relate that to the 'Covid' hoax alone). The watery light theme can be found in near-death accounts and it is not the same as *simulation* 'light' which is electromagnetic or radiation light within the speed of light – the 'Lower Aeons'. Simulation 'light' is the 'luminous fire' associated by Gnostics with the Archons. The Bible refers to Yaldabaoth as 'that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world' (Revelation 12:9). I think that making a simulated copy of prime reality ('countermimicry') and changing it dramatically while all the time manipulating humanity to believe it to be real could probably meet the criteria of deceiving the whole world. Then we come to the Cult god Lucifer – the *Light Bringer*. Lucifer is symbolic of Yaldabaoth, the bringer of radiation light that forms the bad copy simulation within the speed of light. 'He' is symbolised by the lighted torch held by the Statue of Liberty and in the name 'Illuminati'. Sabbatian-Frankism declares that Lucifer is the true god and Lucifer is the real god of Freemasonry honoured as their 'Great or Grand Architect of the Universe' (simulation).

I would emphasise, too, the way Archontic technologically-generated luminous fire of radiation has deluged our environment since I was a kid in the 1950s and changed the nature of The Field with which we constantly interact. Through that interaction technological radiation is changing us. The Smart Grid is designed to operate with immense levels of communication power with 5G expanding across the world and 6G, 7G, in the process of development. Radiation is the simulation and the Archontic manipulation system. Why wouldn't the Archon Cult wish to unleash radiation upon us to an ever-greater extreme to form

Kurzweil's 'cloud'? The plan for a synthetic human is related to the need to cope with levels of radiation beyond even anything we've seen so far. Biological humans would not survive the scale of radiation they have in their script. The Smart Grid is a technological sub-reality within the technological simulation to further disconnect five-sense perception from expanded consciousness. It's a technological prison of the mind.

Infusing the 'spirit of darkness'

A recurring theme in religion and native cultures is the manipulation of human genetics by a non-human force and most famously recorded as the biblical 'sons of god' (the gods plural in the original) who interbred with the daughters of men. The Nag Hammadi *Apocryphon of John* tells the same story this way:

He [Yaldabaoth] sent his angels [Archons/demons] to the daughters of men, that they might take some of them for themselves and raise offspring for their enjoyment. And at first they did not succeed. When they had no success, they gathered together again and they made a plan together ... And the angels changed themselves in their likeness into the likeness of their mates, filling them with the spirit of darkness, which they had mixed for them, and with evil ... And they took women and begot children out of the darkness according to the likeness of their spirit.

Possession when a discarnate entity takes over a human body is an age-old theme and continues today. It's very real and I've seen it. Satanic and secret society rituals can create an energetic environment in which entities can attach to initiates and I've heard many stories of how people have changed their personality after being initiated even into lower levels of the Freemasons. I have been inside three Freemasonic temples, one at a public open day and two by just walking in when there was no one around to stop me. They were in Ryde, the town where I live, Birmingham, England, when I was with a group, and Boston, Massachusetts. They all felt the same energetically – dark, dense, low-vibrational and sinister. Demonic attachment can happen while the initiate has no idea what is going on. To them it's just a ritual to get in the Masons and do a bit of good

business. In the far more extreme rituals of Satanism human possession is even more powerful and they are designed to make possession possible. The hierarchy of the Cult is dictated by the power and perceived status of the possessing Archon. In this way the Archon hierarchy becomes the Cult hierarchy. Once the entity has attached it can influence perception and behaviour and if it attaches to the extreme then so much of its energy (information) infuses into the body information field that the hologram starts to reflect the nature of the possessing entity. This is the *Exorcist* movie type of possession when facial features change and it's known as shapeshifting. Islam's Jinn are said to be invisible tricksters who change shape, 'whisper', confuse and take human form. These are all traits of the Archons and other versions of the same phenomenon. Extreme possession could certainly infuse the 'spirit of darkness' into a partner during sex as the Nag Hammadi texts appear to describe. Such an infusion can change genetics which is also energetic information. Human genetics is information and the 'spirit of darkness' is information. Mix one with the other and change must happen. Islam has the concept of a 'Jinn baby' through possession of the mother and by Jinn taking human form. There are many ways that human genetics can be changed and remember that Archons have been aware all along of advanced techniques to do this. What is being done in human society today – and far more – was known about by Archons at the time of the 'fallen ones' and their other versions described in religions and cultures.

Archons and their human-world Cult are obsessed with genetics as we see today and they know this dictates how information is processed into perceived reality during a human life. They needed to produce a human form that would decode the simulation and this is symbolically known as 'Adam and Eve' who left the 'garden' (prime reality) and 'fell' into Matrix reality. The simulation is not a 'physical' construct (there is no 'physical'); it is a source of information. Think Wi-Fi again. The simulation is an energetic field encoded with information and body-brain systems are designed to decode that information encoded in wave or frequency form which

is transmitted to the brain as electrical signals. These are decoded by the brain to construct our sense of reality – an illusory ‘physical’ world that only exists in the brain or the mind. Virtual reality games mimic this process using the same sensory decoding system. Information is fed to the senses to decode a virtual reality that can appear so real, but isn’t (Figs 18 and 19). Some scientists believe – and I agree with them – that what we perceive as ‘physical’ reality only exists when we are looking or observing. The act of perception or focus triggers the decoding systems which turn waveform information into holographic reality. When we are not observing something our reality reverts from a holographic state to a waveform state. This relates to the same principle as a falling tree not making a noise unless someone is there to hear it or decode it. The concept makes sense from the simulation perspective. A computer is not decoding all the information in a Wi-Fi field all the time and only decodes or brings into reality on the screen that part of Wi-Fi that it’s decoding – focusing upon – at that moment.



Figure 18: Virtual reality technology ‘hacks’ into the body’s five-sense decoding system.



Figure 19: The result can be experienced as very ‘real’.

Interestingly, Professor Donald Hoffman at the Department of Cognitive Sciences at the University of California, Irvine, says that our experienced reality is like a computer interface that shows us only the level with which we interact while hiding all that exists beyond it: 'Evolution shaped us with a user interface that hides the truth. Nothing that we see is the truth – the very language of space and time and objects is the wrong language to describe reality.' He is correct in what he says on so many levels. Space and time are not a universal reality. They are a phenomenon of decoded *simulation* reality as part of the process of enslaving our sense of reality. Near-death experiencers report again and again how space and time did not exist as we perceive them once they were free of the body – body decoding systems. You can appreciate from this why Archons and their Cult are so desperate to entrap human attention in the five senses where we are in the Matrix and of the Matrix. Opening your mind to expanded states of awareness takes you beyond the information confines of the simulation and you become aware of knowledge and insights denied to you before. This is what we call 'awakening' – *awakening from the Matrix* – and in the final chapter I will relate this to current events.

Where are the 'aliens'?

A simulation would explain the so-called 'Fermi Paradox' named after Italian physicist Enrico Fermi (1901-1954) who created the first nuclear reactor. He considered the question of why there is such a lack of extraterrestrial activity when there are so many stars and planets in an apparently vast universe; but what if the night sky that we see, or think we do, is a simulated projection as I say? If you control the simulation and your aim is to hold humanity fast in essential ignorance would you want other forms of life including advanced life coming and going sharing information with humanity? Or would you want them to believe they were isolated and apparently alone? Themes of human isolation and apartness are common whether they be the perception of a lifeless universe or the fascist isolation laws of the 'Covid' era. Paradoxically the very

existence of a simulation means that we are not alone when some force had to construct it. My view is that experiences that people have reported all over the world for centuries with Reptilians and Grey entities are Archon phenomena as Nag Hammadi texts describe; and that benevolent 'alien' interactions are non-human groups that come in and out of the simulation by overcoming Archon attempts to keep them out. It should be highlighted, too, that Reptilians and Greys are obsessed with *genetics* and *technology* as related by cultural accounts and those who say they have been abducted by them. Technology is their way of overcoming some of the limitations in their creative potential and our technology-driven and controlled human society of today is *archetypical* Archon-Reptilian-Grey modus operandi. Technocracy is really *Archontocracy*. The Universe does not have to be as big as it appears with a simulation. There is no space or distance only information decoded into holographic reality. What we call 'space' is only the absence of holographic 'objects' and that 'space' is The Field of energetic information which connects everything into a single whole. The same applies with the artificially-generated information field of the simulation. The Universe is not big or small as a physical reality. It is decoded information, that's all, and its perceived size is decided by the way the simulation is encoded to make it appear. The entire night sky as we perceive it only exists in our brain and so where are those 'millions of light years'? The 'stars' on the ceiling of the Planetarium looked a vast distance away.

There's another point to mention about 'aliens'. I have been highlighting since the 1990s the plan to stage a fake 'alien invasion' to justify the centralisation of global power and a world military. Nazi scientist Werner von Braun, who was taken to America by Operation Paperclip after World War Two to help found NASA, told his American assistant Dr Carol Rosin about the Cult agenda when he knew he was dying in 1977. Rosin said that he told her about a sequence that would lead to total human control by a one-world government. This included threats from terrorism, rogue nations, meteors and asteroids before finally an 'alien invasion'. All of these

things, von Braun said, would be bogus and what I would refer to as a No-Problem-Reaction-Solution. Keep this in mind when 'the aliens are coming' is the new mantra. The aliens are not coming – they are *already here* and they have infiltrated human society while looking human. French-Canadian investigative journalist Serge Monast said in 1994 that he had uncovered a NASA/military operation called Project Blue Beam which fits with what Werner von Braun predicted. Monast died of a 'heart attack' in 1996 the day after he was arrested and spent a night in prison. He was 51. He said Blue Beam was a plan to stage an alien invasion that would include religious figures beamed holographically into the sky as part of a global manipulation to usher in a 'new age' of worshipping what I would say is the Cult 'god' Yaldabaoth in a one-world religion. Fake holographic asteroids are also said to be part of the plan which again syncs with von Braun. How could you stage an illusory threat from asteroids unless they were holographic inserts? This is pretty straightforward given the advanced technology outside the public arena and the fact that our 'physical' reality is holographic anyway. Information fields would be projected and we would decode them into the illusion of a 'physical' asteroid. If they can sell a global 'pandemic' with a 'virus' that doesn't exist what will humans not believe if government and media tell them?

All this is particularly relevant as I write with the Pentagon planning to release in June, 2021, information about 'UFO sightings'. I have been following the UFO story since the early 1990s and the common theme throughout has been government and military denials and cover up. More recently, however, the Pentagon has suddenly become more talkative and apparently open with Air Force pilot radar images released of unexplained craft moving and changing direction at speeds well beyond anything believed possible with human technology. Then, in March, 2021, former Director of National Intelligence John Ratcliffe said a Pentagon report months later in June would reveal a great deal of information about UFO sightings unknown to the public. He said the report would have 'massive implications'. The order to do this was included bizarrely

in a \$2.3 trillion 'coronavirus' relief and government funding bill passed by the Trump administration at the end of 2020. I would add some serious notes of caution here. I have been pointing out since the 1990s that the US military and intelligence networks have long had craft – 'flying saucers' or anti-gravity craft – which any observer would take to be extraterrestrial in origin. Keeping this knowledge from the public allows craft flown by *humans* to be perceived as alien visitations. I am not saying that 'aliens' do not exist. I would be the last one to say that, but we have to be streetwise here. President Ronald Reagan told the UN General Assembly in 1987: 'I occasionally think how quickly our differences worldwide would vanish if we were facing an alien threat from outside this world.' That's the idea. Unite against a common 'enemy' with a common purpose behind your 'saviour force' (the Cult) as this age-old technique of mass manipulation goes global.

Science moves this way ...

I could find only one other person who was discussing the simulation hypothesis publicly when I concluded it was real. This was Nick Bostrom, a Swedish-born philosopher at the University of Oxford, who has explored for many years the possibility that human reality is a computer simulation although his version and mine are not the same. Today the simulation and holographic reality hypothesis have increasingly entered the scientific mainstream. Well, the more open-minded mainstream, that is. Here are a few of the ever-gathering examples. American nuclear physicist Silas Beane led a team of physicists at the University of Bonn in Germany pursuing the question of whether we live in a simulation. They concluded that we probably do and it was likely based on a lattice of cubes. They found that cosmic rays align with that specific pattern. The team highlighted the Greisen–Zatsepin–Kuzmin (GZK) limit which refers to cosmic ray particle interaction with cosmic background radiation that creates an apparent boundary for cosmic ray particles. They say in a paper entitled 'Constraints on the Universe as a Numerical Simulation' that this 'pattern of constraint' is exactly what you

would find with a computer simulation. They also made the point that a simulation would create its own 'laws of physics' that would limit possibility. I've been making the same point for decades that the *perceived* laws of physics relate only to this reality, or what I would later call the simulation. When designers write codes to create computer and virtual reality games they are the equivalent of the laws of physics for that game. Players interact within the limitations laid out by the coding. In the same way those who wrote the codes for the simulation decided the laws of physics that would apply. These can be overridden by expanded states of consciousness, but not by those enslaved in only five-sense awareness where simulation codes rule. Overriding the codes is what people call 'miracles'. They are not. They are bypassing the encoded limits of the simulation. A population caught in simulation perception would have no idea that this was their plight. As the Bonn paper said: 'Like a prisoner in a pitch-black cell we would not be able to see the "walls" of our prison,' That's true if people remain mesmerised by the five senses. Open to expanded awareness and those walls become very clear. The main one is the speed of light.

American theoretical physicist James Gates is another who has explored the simulation question and found considerable evidence to support the idea. Gates was Professor of Physics at the University of Maryland, Director of The Center for String and Particle Theory, and on Barack Obama's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology. He and his team found *computer codes* of digital data embedded in the fabric of our reality. They relate to on-off electrical charges of 1 and 0 in the binary system used by computers. 'We have no idea what they are doing there', Gates said. They found within the energetic fabric mathematical sequences known as error-correcting codes or block codes that 'reboot' data to its original state or 'default settings' when something knocks it out of sync. Gates was asked if he had found a set of equations embedded in our reality indistinguishable from those that drive search engines and browsers and he said: 'That is correct.' Rich Terrile, director of the Centre for Evolutionary Computation and Automated Design at NASA's Jet

Propulsion Laboratory, has said publicly that he believes the Universe is a digital hologram that must have been created by a form of intelligence. I agree with that in every way. Waveform information is delivered electrically by the senses to the brain which constructs a *digital* holographic reality that we call the 'world'. This digital level of reality can be read by the esoteric art of numerology. Digital holograms are at the cutting edge of holographics today. We have digital technology everywhere designed to access and manipulate our digital level of perceived reality. Synthetic mRNA in 'Covid vaccines' has a digital component to manipulate the body's digital 'operating system'.

Reality is numbers

How many know that our reality can be broken down to numbers and codes that are the same as computer games? Max Tegmark, a physicist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), is the author of *Our Mathematical Universe* in which he lays out how reality can be entirely described by numbers and maths in the way that a video game is encoded with the 'physics' of computer games. Our world and computer virtual reality are essentially the same.

Tegmark imagines the perceptions of characters in an advanced computer game when the graphics are so good they don't know they are in a game. They think they can bump into real objects (electromagnetic resistance in our reality), fall in love and feel emotions like excitement. When they began to study the apparently 'physical world' of the video game they would realise that everything was made of pixels (which have been found in our energetic reality as must be the case when on one level our world is digital). What computer game characters thought was physical 'stuff', Tegmark said, could actually be broken down into numbers:

And we're exactly in this situation in our world. We look around and it doesn't seem that mathematical at all, but everything we see is made out of elementary particles like quarks and electrons. And what properties does an electron have? Does it have a smell or a colour or a texture? No! ... We physicists have come up with geeky names for [Electron] properties, like

electric charge, or spin, or lepton number, but the electron doesn't care what we call it, the properties are just numbers.

This is the illusory reality Gnostics were describing. This is the simulation. The A, C, G, and T codes of DNA have a binary value – A and C = 0 while G and T = 1. This has to be when the simulation is digital and the body must be digital to interact with it. Recurring mathematical sequences are encoded throughout reality and the body. They include the Fibonacci sequence in which the two previous numbers are added to get the next one, as in ... 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55, etc. The sequence is encoded in the human face and body, proportions of animals, DNA, seed heads, pine cones, trees, shells, spiral galaxies, hurricanes and the number of petals in a flower. The list goes on and on. There are fractal patterns – a 'never-ending pattern that is infinitely complex and self-similar across all scales in the as above, so below, principle of holograms. These and other famous recurring geometrical and mathematical sequences such as Phi, Pi, Golden Mean, Golden Ratio and Golden Section are *computer codes* of the simulation. I had to laugh and give my head a shake the day I finished this book and it went into the production stage. I was sent an article in *Scientific American* published in April, 2021, with the headline 'Confirmed! We Live in a Simulation'. Two decades after I first said our reality is a simulation and the speed of light is its outer limit the article suggested that we do live in a simulation and that the speed of light is its outer limit. I left school at 15 and never passed a major exam in my life while the writer was up to his eyes in qualifications. As I will explain in the final chapter *knowing* is far better than thinking and they come from very different sources. The article rightly connected the speed of light to the processing speed of the 'Matrix' and said what has been in my books all this time ... 'If we are in a simulation, as it appears, then space is an abstract property written in code. It is not real'. No it's not and if we live in a simulation something created it and it wasn't *us*. 'That David Icke says we are manipulated by aliens' – he's crackers.'

Wow ...

The reality that humanity thinks is so real is an illusion. Politicians, governments, scientists, doctors, academics, law enforcement, media, school and university curriculums, on and on, are all founded on a world that *does not exist* except as a simulated prison cell. Is it such a stretch to accept that 'Covid' doesn't exist when our entire 'physical' reality doesn't exist? Revealed here is the knowledge kept under raps in the Cult networks of compartmentalised secrecy to control humanity's sense of reality by inducing the population to believe in a reality that's not real. If it wasn't so tragic in its experiential consequences the whole thing would be hysterically funny. None of this is new to Renegade Minds. Ancient Greek philosopher Plato (about 428 to about 347BC) was a major influence on Gnostic belief and he described the human plight thousands of years ago with his Allegory of the Cave. He told the symbolic story of prisoners living in a cave who had never been outside. They were chained and could only see one wall of the cave while behind them was a fire that they could not see. Figures walked past the fire casting shadows on the prisoners' wall and those moving shadows became their sense of reality. Some prisoners began to study the shadows and were considered experts on them (today's academics and scientists), but what they studied was only an illusion (today's academics and scientists). A prisoner escaped from the cave and saw reality as it really is. When he returned to report this revelation they didn't believe him, called him mad and threatened to kill him if he tried to set them free. Plato's tale is not only a brilliant analogy of the human plight and our illusory reality. It describes, too, the dynamics of the 'Covid' hoax. I have only skimmed the surface of these subjects here. The aim of this book is to crisply connect all essential dots to put what is happening today into its true context. All subject areas and their connections in this chapter are covered in great evidential detail in *Everything You Need To Know, But Have Never Been Told* and *The Answer*.

They say that bewildered people 'can't see the forest for the trees'. Humanity, however, can't see the forest for the *twigs*. The five senses

see only twigs while Renegade Minds can see the forest and it's the forest where the answers lie with the connections that reveals. Breaking free of perceptual programming so the forest can be seen is the way we turn all this around. Not breaking free is how humanity got into this mess. The situation may seem hopeless, but I promise you it's not. We are a perceptual heartbeat from paradise if only we knew.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Escaping Wetiko

Life is simply a vacation from the infinite
Dean Cavanagh

Renegade Minds weave the web of life and events and see common themes in the apparently random. They are always there if you look for them and their pursuit is aided by incredible synchronicity that comes when your mind is open rather than mesmerised by what it thinks it can see.

Infinite awareness is infinite possibility and the more of infinite possibility that we access the more becomes infinitely possible. That may be stating the apparently obvious, but it is a devastatingly-powerful fact that can set us free. We are a point of attention within an infinity of consciousness. The question is how much of that infinity do we choose to access? How much knowledge, insight, awareness, wisdom, do we want to connect with and explore? If your focus is only in the five senses you will be influenced by a fraction of infinite awareness. I mean a range so tiny that it gives new meaning to infinitesimal. Limitation of self-identity and a sense of the possible limit accordingly your range of consciousness. We are what we think we are. Life is what we think it is. The dream is the dreamer and the dreamer is the dream. Buddhist philosophy puts it this way: 'As a thing is viewed, so it appears.' Most humans live in the realm of touch, taste, see, hear, and smell and that's the limit of their sense of the possible and sense of self. Many will follow a religion and speak of a God in his heaven, but their lives are still

dominated by the five senses in their perceptions and actions. The five senses become the arbiter of everything. When that happens all except a smear of infinity is sealed away from influence by the rigid, unyielding, reality bubbles that are the five-sense human or Phantom Self. Archon Cult methodology is to isolate consciousness within five-sense reality – the simulation – and then program that consciousness with a sense of self and the world through a deluge of life-long information designed to instil the desired perception that allows global control. Efforts to do this have increased dramatically with identity politics as identity bubbles are squeezed into the minutiae of five-sense detail which disconnect people even more profoundly from the infinite 'I'.

Five-sense focus and self-identity are like a firewall that limits access to the infinite realms. You only perceive one radio or television station and no other. We'll take that literally for a moment. Imagine a vast array of stations giving different information and angles on reality, but you only ever listen to one. Here we have the human plight in which the population is overwhelmingly confined to CultFM. This relates only to the frequency range of CultFM and limits perception and insight to that band – limits *possibility* to that band. It means you are connecting with an almost imperceptibly minuscule range of possibility and creative potential within the infinite Field. It's a world where everything seems apart from everything else and where synchronicity is rare. Synchronicity is defined in the dictionary as 'the happening by chance of two or more related or similar events at the same time'. Use of 'by chance' betrays a complete misunderstanding of reality. Synchronicity is not 'by chance'. As people open their minds, or 'awaken' to use the term, they notice more and more coincidences in their lives, bits of 'luck', apparently miraculous happenings that put them in the right place at the right time with the right people. Days become peppered with 'fancy meeting you here' and 'what are the chances of that?' My entire life has been lived like this and ever more so since my own colossal awakening in 1990 and 91 which transformed my sense of reality. Synchronicity is not 'by chance'; it is by accessing expanded

realms of possibility which allow expanded potential for manifestation. People broadcasting the same vibe from the same openness of mind tend to be drawn 'by chance' to each other through what I call frequency magnetism and it's not only people. In the last more than 30 years incredible synchronicity has also led me through the Cult maze to information in so many forms and to crucial personal experiences. These 'coincidences' have allowed me to put the puzzle pieces together across an enormous array of subjects and situations. Those who have breached the bubble of five-sense reality will know exactly what I mean and this escape from the perceptual prison cell is open to everyone whenever they make that choice. This may appear super-human when compared with the limitations of 'human', but it's really our natural state. 'Human' as currently experienced is consciousness in an unnatural state of induced separation from the infinity of the whole. I'll come to how this transformation into unity can be made when I have described in more detail the force that holds humanity in servitude by denying this access to infinite self.

The Wetiko factor

I have been talking and writing for decades about the way five-sense mind is systematically barricaded from expanded awareness. I have used the analogy of a computer (five-sense mind) and someone at the keyboard (expanded awareness). Interaction between the computer and the operator is symbolic of the interaction between five-sense mind and expanded awareness. The computer directly experiences the Internet and the operator experiences the Internet via the computer which is how it's supposed to be – the two working as one. Archons seek to control that point where the operator connects with the computer to stop that interaction ([Fig 20](#)). Now the operator is banging the keyboard and clicking the mouse, but the computer is not responding and this happens when the computer is taken over – *possessed* – by an appropriately-named computer 'virus'. The operator has lost all influence over the computer which goes its own way making decisions under the control of the 'virus'. I have

just described the dynamic through which the force known to Gnostics as Yaldabaoth and Archons disconnects five-sense mind from expanded awareness to imprison humanity in perceptual servitude.

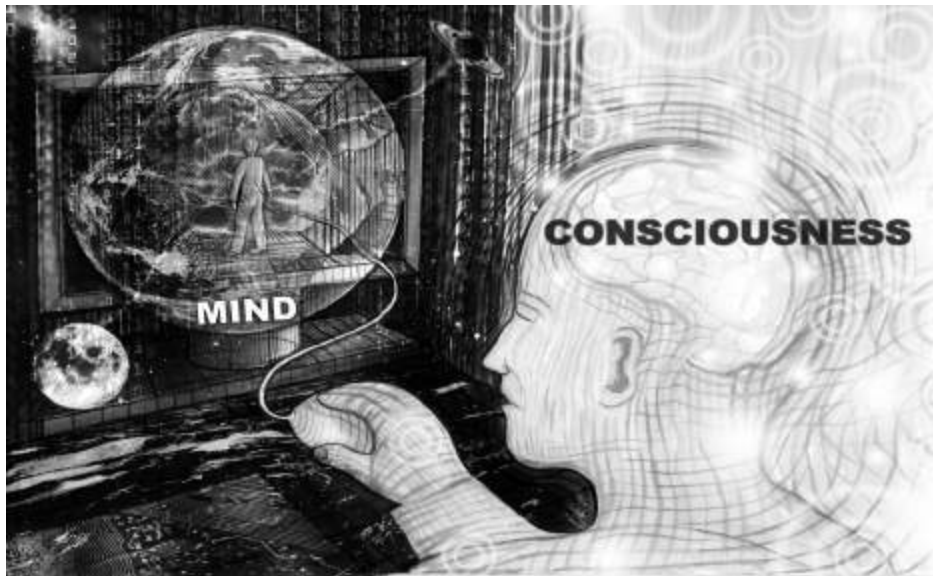


Figure 20: The mind ‘virus’ I have been writing about for decades seeks to isolate five-sense mind (the computer) from the true ‘I’. (Image by Neil Hague).

About a year ago I came across a Native American concept of Wetiko which describes precisely the same phenomenon. Wetiko is the spelling used by the Cree and there are other versions including wintiko and windigo used by other tribal groups. They spell the name with lower case, but I see Wetiko as a proper noun as with Archons and prefer a capital. I first saw an article about Wetiko by writer and researcher Paul Levy which so synced with what I had been writing about the computer/operator disconnection and later the Archons. I then read his book, the fascinating *Dispelling Wetiko, Breaking the Spell of Evil*. The parallels between what I had concluded long before and the Native American concept of Wetiko were so clear and obvious that it was almost funny. For Wetiko see the Gnostic Archons for sure and the Jinn, the Predators, and every other name for a force of evil, inversion and chaos. Wetiko is the Native American name for the force that divides the computer from

the operator (Fig 21). Indigenous author Jack D. Forbes, a founder of the Native American movement in the 1960s, wrote another book about Wetiko entitled *Columbus And Other Cannibals – The Wetiko Disease of Exploitation, Imperialism, and Terrorism* which I also read. Forbes says that Wetiko refers to an evil person or spirit ‘who terrorizes other creatures by means of terrible acts, including cannibalism’. Zulu shaman Credo Mutwa told me that African accounts tell how cannibalism was brought into the world by the Chitauri ‘gods’ – another manifestation of Wetiko. The distinction between ‘evil person or spirit’ relates to Archons/Wetiko possessing a human or acting as pure consciousness. Wetiko is said to be a sickness of the soul or spirit and a state of being that takes but gives nothing back – the Cult and its operatives perfectly described. Black Hawk, a Native American war leader defending their lands from confiscation, said European invaders had ‘poisoned hearts’ – Wetiko hearts – and that this would spread to native societies. Mention of the heart is very significant as we shall shortly see. Forbes writes: ‘Tragically, the history of the world for the past 2,000 years is, in great part, the story of the epidemiology of the wetiko disease.’ Yes, and much longer. Forbes is correct when he says: ‘The wetikos destroyed Egypt and Babylon and Athens and Rome and Tenochtitlan [capital of the Aztec empire] and perhaps now they will destroy the entire earth.’ Evil, he said, is the number one export of a Wetiko culture – see its globalisation with ‘Covid’. Constant war, mass murder, suffering of all kinds, child abuse, Satanism, torture and human sacrifice are all expressions of Wetiko and the Wetiko possessed. The world is Wetiko made manifest, *but it doesn’t have to be*. There is a way out of this even now.



Figure 21: The mind 'virus' is known to Native Americans as 'Wetiko'. (Image by Neil Hague).

Cult of Wetiko

Wetiko is the Yaldabaoth frequency distortion that seeks to attach to human consciousness and absorb it into its own. Once this connection is made Wetiko can drive the perceptions of the target which they believe to be coming from their own mind. All the horrors of history and today from mass killers to Satanists, paedophiles like Jeffrey Epstein and other psychopaths, are the embodiment of Wetiko and express its state of being in all its grotesqueness. The Cult is Wetiko incarnate, Yaldabaoth incarnate, and it seeks to facilitate Wetiko assimilation of humanity in totality into its distortion by manipulating the population into low frequency states that match its own. Paul Levy writes: 'Holographically enforced within the psyche of every human being the wetiko virus pervades and underlies the entire field of consciousness, and can therefore potentially manifest through any one of us at any moment if we are not mindful.' The 'Covid' hoax has achieved this with many people, but others have not fallen into Wetiko's frequency lair. Players in the 'Covid' human catastrophe including Gates, Schwab, Tedros, Fauci, Whitty, Vallance, Johnson, Hancock, Ferguson, Drosten, and all the rest, including the psychopath psychologists, are expressions of Wetiko. This is why

they have no compassion or empathy and no emotional consequence for what they do that would make them stop doing it. Observe all the people who support the psychopaths in authority against the Pushbackers despite the damaging impact the psychopaths have on their own lives and their family's lives. You are again looking at Wetiko possession which prevents them seeing through the lies to the obvious scam going on. *Why can't they see it?* Wetiko won't let them see it. The perceptual divide that has now become a chasm is between the Wetikoed and the non-Wetikoed.

Paul Levy describes Wetiko in the same way that I have long described the Archontic force. They are the same distorted consciousness operating across dimensions of reality: '... the subtle body of wetiko is not located in the third dimension of space and time, literally existing in another dimension ... it is able to affect ordinary lives by mysteriously interpenetrating into our three-dimensional world.' Wetiko does this through its incarnate representatives in the Cult and by weaving itself into The Field which on our level of reality is the electromagnetic information field of the simulation or Matrix. More than that, the simulation *is* Wetiko / Yaldabaoth. Caleb Scharf, Director of Astrobiology at Columbia University, has speculated that 'alien life' could be so advanced that it has transcribed itself into the quantum realm to become what we call physics. He said intelligence indistinguishable from the fabric of the Universe would solve many of its greatest mysteries:

Perhaps hyper-advanced life isn't just external. Perhaps it's already all around. It is embedded in what we perceive to be physics itself, from the root behaviour of particles and fields to the phenomena of complexity and emergence ... In other words, life might not just be in the equations. It might BE the equations [My emphasis].

Scharf said it is possible that 'we don't recognise advanced life because it forms an integral and unsuspecting part of what we've considered to be the natural world'. I agree. Wetiko/Yaldabaoth *is* the simulation. We are literally in the body of the beast. But that doesn't mean it has to control us. We all have the power to overcome Wetiko

influence and the Cult knows that. I doubt it sleeps too well because it knows that.

Which Field?

This, I suggest, is how it all works. There are two Fields. One is the fierce electromagnetic light of the Matrix within the speed of light; the other is the 'watery light' of The Field beyond the walls of the Matrix that connects with the Great Infinity. Five-sense mind and the decoding systems of the body attach us to the Field of Matrix light. They have to or we could not experience this reality. Five-sense mind sees only the Matrix Field of information while our expanded consciousness is part of the Infinity Field. When we open our minds, and most importantly our hearts, to the Infinity Field we have a mission control which gives us an expanded perspective, a road map, to understand the nature of the five-sense world. If we are isolated only in five-sense mind there is no mission control. We're on our own trying to understand a world that's constantly feeding us information to ensure we do not understand. People in this state can feel 'lost' and bewildered with no direction or radar. You can see ever more clearly those who are influenced by the Fields of Big Infinity or little five-sense mind simply by their views and behaviour with regard to the 'Covid' hoax. We have had this division throughout known human history with the mass of the people on one side and individuals who could see and intuit beyond the walls of the simulation – Plato's prisoner who broke out of the cave and saw reality for what it is. Such people have always been targeted by Wetiko/Archon-possessed authority, burned at the stake or demonised as mad, bad and dangerous. The Cult today and its global network of 'anti-hate', 'anti-fascist' Woke groups are all expressions of Wetiko attacking those exposing the conspiracy, 'Covid' lies and the 'vaccine' agenda.

Woke as a whole is Wetiko which explains its black and white mentality and how at one it is with the Wetiko-possessed Cult. Paul Levy said: 'To be in this paradigm is to still be under the thrall of a two-valued logic – where things are either true or false – of a

wetikoized mind.’ Wetiko consciousness is in a permanent rage, therefore so is Woke, and then there is Woke inversion and contradiction. ‘Anti-fascists’ act like fascists because fascists *and* ‘anti-fascists’ are both Wetiko at work. Political parties act the same while claiming to be different for the same reason. Secret society and satanic rituals are attaching initiates to Wetiko and the cold, ruthless, psychopathic mentality that secures the positions of power all over the world is Wetiko. Reframing ‘training programmes’ have the same cumulative effect of attaching Wetiko and we have their graduates described as automatons and robots with a cold, psychopathic, uncaring demeanour. They are all traits of Wetiko possession and look how many times they have been described in this book and elsewhere with regard to personnel behind ‘Covid’ including the police and medical profession. Climbing the greasy pole in any profession in a Wetiko society requires traits of Wetiko to get there and that is particularly true of politics which is not about fair competition and pre-eminence of ideas. It is founded on how many backs you can stab and arses you can lick. This culminated in the global ‘Covid’ coordination between the Wetiko possessed who pulled it off in all the different countries without a trace of empathy and compassion for their impact on humans. Our sight sense can see only holographic form and not the Field which connects holographic form. Therefore we perceive ‘physical’ objects with ‘space’ in between. In fact that ‘space’ is energy/consciousness operating on multiple frequencies. One of them is Wetiko and that connects the Cult psychopaths, those who submit to the psychopaths, and those who serve the psychopaths in the media operations of the world. Wetiko is Gates. Wetiko is the mask-wearing submissive. Wetiko is the fake journalist and ‘fact-checker’. The Wetiko Field is coordinating the whole thing. Psychopaths, gofers, media operatives, ‘anti-hate’ hate groups, ‘fact-checkers’ and submissive people work as one unit *even without human coordination* because they are attached to the *same* Field which is organising it all (Fig 22). Paul Levy is here describing how Wetiko-possessed people are drawn together and refuse to let any information breach their rigid

perceptions. He was writing long before 'Covid', but I think you will recognise followers of the 'Covid' religion *oh just a little bit*:

People who are channelling the vibratory frequency of wetiko align with each other through psychic resonance to reinforce their unspoken shared agreement so as to uphold their deranged view of reality. Once an unconscious content takes possession of certain individuals, it irresistibly draws them together by mutual attraction and knits them into groups tied together by their shared madness that can easily swell into an avalanche of insanity.

A psychic epidemic is a closed system, which is to say that it is insular and not open to any new information or informing influences from the outside world which contradict its fixed, limited, and limiting perspective.

There we have the Woke mind and the 'Covid' mind. Compatible resonance draws the awakening together, too, which is clearly happening today.

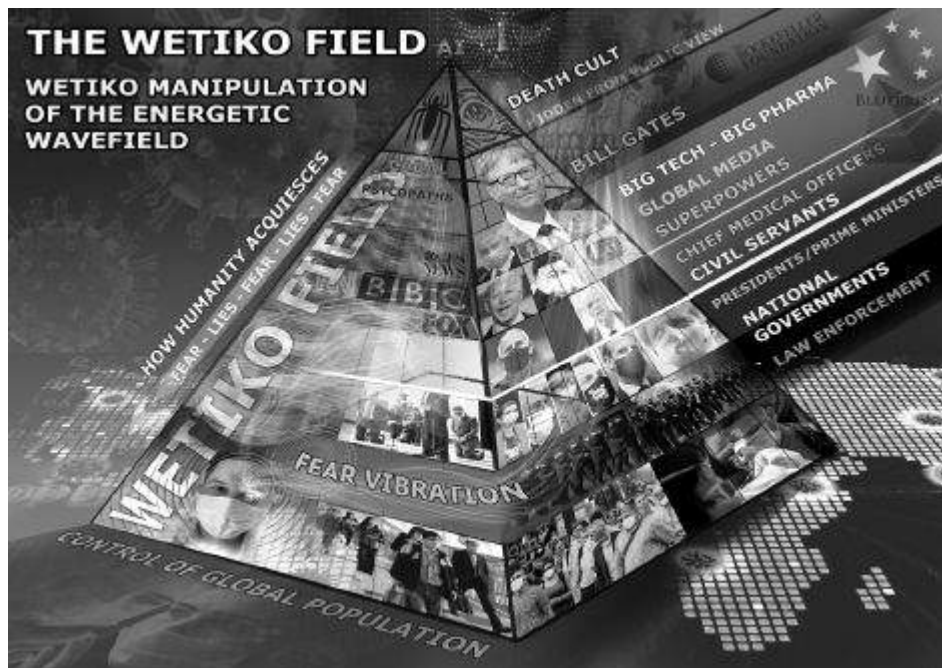


Figure 22: The Wetiko Field from which the Cult pyramid and its personnel are made manifest. (Image by Neil Hague).

Spiritual servitude

Wetiko doesn't care about humans. It's not human; it just possesses humans for its own ends and the effect (depending on the scale of

possession) can be anything from extreme psychopathy to unquestioning obedience. Wetiko's worst nightmare is for human consciousness to expand beyond the simulation. Everything is focussed on stopping that happening through control of information, thus perception, thus frequency. The 'education system', media, science, medicine, academia, are all geared to maintaining humanity in five-sense servitude as is the constant stimulation of low-vibrational mental and emotional states (see 'Covid'). Wetiko seeks to dominate those subconscious spaces between five-sense perception and expanded consciousness where the computer meets the operator. From these subconscious hiding places Wetiko speaks to us to trigger urges and desires that we take to be our own and manipulate us into anything from low-vibrational to psychopathic states. Remember how Islam describes the Jinn as invisible tricksters that 'whisper' and confuse. Wetiko is the origin of the 'trickster god' theme that you find in cultures all over the world. Jinn, like the Archons, are Wetiko which is terrified of humans awakening and reconnecting with our true self for then its energy source has gone. With that the feedback loop breaks between Wetiko and human perception that provides the energetic momentum on which its very existence depends as a force of evil. Humans are both its target and its source of survival, but only if we are operating in low-vibrational states of fear, hate, depression and the background anxiety that most people suffer. We are Wetiko's target because we are its key to survival. It needs us, not the other way round. Paul Levy writes:

A vampire has no intrinsic, independent, substantial existence in its own right; it only exists in relation to us. The pathogenic, vampiric mind-parasite called wetiko is nothing in itself – not being able to exist from its own side – yet it has a 'virtual reality' such that it can potentially destroy our species ...

...The fact that a vampire is not reflected by a mirror can also mean that what we need to see is that there's nothing, no-thing to see, other than ourselves. The fact that wetiko is the expression of something inside of us means that the cure for wetiko is with us as well. The critical issue is finding this cure within us and then putting it into effect.

Evil begets evil because if evil does not constantly expand and find new sources of energetic sustenance its evil, its *distortion*, dies with the assimilation into balance and harmony. Love is the garlic to Wetiko's vampire. Evil, the absence of love, cannot exist in the presence of love. I think I see a way out of here. I have emphasised so many times over the decades that the Archons/Wetiko and their Cult are not all powerful. *They are not*. I don't care how it looks even now *they are not*. I have not called them little boys in short trousers for effect. I have said it because it is true. Wetiko's insatiable desire for power over others is not a sign of its omnipotence, but its insecurity. Paul Levy writes: 'Due to the primal fear which ultimately drives it and which it is driven to cultivate, wetiko's body politic has an intrinsic and insistent need for centralising power and control so as to create imagined safety for itself.' *Yeeeeees!* Exactly! Why does Wetiko want humans in an ongoing state of fear? Wetiko itself *is* fear and it is petrified of love. As evil is an absence of love, so love is an absence of fear. Love conquers all and *especially* Wetiko which *is* fear. Wetiko brought fear into the world when it wasn't here before. *Fear* was the 'fall', the fall into low-frequency ignorance and illusion – fear is **False Emotion Appearing Real**. The simulation is driven and energised by fear because Wetiko/Yaldabaoth (fear) *are* the simulation. Fear is the absence of love and Wetiko is the absence of love.

Wetiko today

We can now view current events from this level of perspective. The 'Covid' hoax has generated momentous amounts of ongoing fear, anxiety, depression and despair which have empowered Wetiko. No wonder people like Gates have been the instigators when they are Wetiko incarnate and exhibit every trait of Wetiko in the extreme. See how cold and unemotional these people are like Gates and his cronies, how dead of eye they are. That's Wetiko. Sabbatians are Wetiko and everything they control including the World Health Organization, Big Pharma and the 'vaccine' makers, national 'health'

hierarchies, corporate media, Silicon Valley, the banking system, and the United Nations with its planned transformation into world government. All are controlled and possessed by the Wetiko distortion into distorting human society in its image. We are with this knowledge at the gateway to understanding the world. Divisions of race, culture, creed and sexuality are diversions to hide the real division between those possessed and influenced by Wetiko and those that are not. The 'Covid' hoax has brought both clearly into view. Human behaviour is not about race. Tyrants and dictatorships come in all colours and creeds. What unites the US president bombing the innocent and an African tribe committing genocide against another as in Rwanda? What unites them? *Wetiko*. All wars are Wetiko, all genocide is Wetiko, all hunger over centuries in a world of plenty is Wetiko. Children going to bed hungry, including in the West, is Wetiko. Cult-generated Woke racial divisions that focus on the body are designed to obscure the reality that divisions in behaviour are manifestations of mind, not body. Obsession with body identity and group judgement is a means to divert attention from the real source of behaviour – mind and perception. Conflict sown by the Woke both within themselves and with their target groups are Wetiko providing lunch for itself through still more agents of the division, chaos, and fear on which it feeds. The Cult is seeking to assimilate the entirety of humanity and all children and young people into the Wetiko frequency by manipulating them into states of fear and despair. Witness all the suicide and psychological unravelling since the spring of 2020. Wetiko psychopaths want to impose a state of unquestioning obedience to authority which is no more than a conduit for Wetiko to enforce its will and assimilate humanity into itself. It needs us to believe that resistance is futile when it fears resistance and even more so the game-changing non-cooperation with its impositions. It can use violent resistance for its benefit. Violent impositions and violent resistance are *both* Wetiko. The Power of Love with its Power of No will sweep Wetiko from our world. Wetiko and its Cult know that. They just don't want us to know.

AI Wetiko

This brings me to AI or artificial intelligence and something else Wetikos don't want us to know. What is AI *really*? I know about computer code algorithms and AI that learns from data input. These, however, are more diversions, the expeditionary force, for the real AI that they want to connect to the human brain as promoted by Silicon Valley Wetikos like Kurzweil. What is this AI? It is the frequency of *Wetiko*, the frequency of the Archons. The connection of AI to the human brain is the connection of the Wetiko frequency to create a Wetiko hive mind and complete the job of assimilation. The hive mind is planned to be controlled from Israel and China which are both 100 percent owned by Wetiko Sabbatians. The assimilation process has been going on minute by minute in the 'smart' era which fused with the 'Covid' era. We are told that social media is scrambling the minds of the young and changing their personality. This is true, but what is social media? Look more deeply at how it works, how it creates divisions and conflict, the hostility and cruelty, the targeting of people until they are destroyed. That's Wetiko. Social media is manipulated to tune people to the Wetiko frequency with all the emotional exploitation tricks employed by platforms like Facebook and its Wetiko front man, Zuckerberg. Facebook's Instagram announced a new platform for children to overcome a legal bar on them using the main site. This is more Wetiko exploitation and manipulation of kids. Amnesty International likened the plan to foxes offering to guard the henhouse and said it was incompatible with human rights. Since when did Wetiko or Zuckerberg (I repeat myself) care about that? Would Brin and Page at Google, Wojcicki at YouTube, Bezos at Amazon and whoever the hell runs Twitter act as they do if they were not channelling Wetiko? Would those who are developing technologies for no other reason than human control? How about those designing and selling technologies to kill people and Big Pharma drug and 'vaccine' producers who know they will end or devastate lives? Quite a thought for these people to consider is that if you are Wetiko in a human life you are Wetiko on the 'other side' unless your frequency

changes and that can only change by a change of perception which becomes a change of behaviour. Where Gates is going does not bear thinking about although perhaps that's exactly where he wants to go. Either way, that's where he's going. His frequency will make it so.

The frequency lair

I have been saying for a long time that a big part of the addiction to smartphones and devices is that a frequency is coming off them that entraps the mind. People spend ages on their phones and sometimes even a minute or so after they put them down they pick them up again and it all repeats. 'Covid' lockdowns will have increased this addiction a million times for obvious reasons. Addictions to alcohol overindulgence and drugs are another way that Wetiko entraps consciousness to attach to its own. Both are symptoms of low-vibrational psychological distress which alcoholism and drug addiction further compound. Do we think it's really a coincidence that access to them is made so easy while potions that can take people into realms beyond the simulation are banned and illegal? I have explored smartphone addiction in other books, the scale is mind-blowing, and that level of addiction does not come without help. Tech companies that make these phones are Wetiko and they will have no qualms about destroying the minds of children. We are seeing again with these companies the Wetiko perceptual combination of psychopathic enforcers and weak and meek unquestioning compliance by the rank and file.

The global Smart Grid is the Wetiko Grid and it is crucial to complete the Cult endgame. The simulation is radiation and we are being deluged with technological radiation on a devastating scale. Wetiko frauds like Elon Musk serve Cult interests while occasionally criticising them to maintain his street-cred. 5G and other forms of Wi-Fi are being directed at the earth from space on a volume and scale that goes on increasing by the day. Elon Musk's (officially) SpaceX Starlink project is in the process of putting tens of thousands of satellites in low orbit to cover every inch of the planet with 5G and other Wi-Fi to create Kurzweil's global 'cloud' to which the

human mind is planned to be attached very soon. SpaceX has approval to operate 12,000 satellites with more than 1,300 launched at the time of writing and applications filed for 30,000 more. Other operators in the Wi-Fi, 5G, low-orbit satellite market include OneWeb (UK), Telesat (Canada), and AST & Science (US). Musk tells us that AI could be the end of humanity and then launches a company called Neuralink to connect the human brain to computers. Musk's (in theory) Tesla company is building electric cars and the driverless vehicles of the smart control grid. As frauds and bullshitters go Elon Musk in my opinion is Major League.

5G and technological radiation in general are destructive to human health, genetics and psychology and increasing the strength of artificial radiation underpins the five-sense perceptual bubbles which are themselves expressions of radiation or electromagnetism. Freedom activist John Whitehead was so right with his 'databit by databit, we are building our own electronic concentration camps'. The Smart Grid and 5G is a means to control the human mind and infuse perceptual information into The Field to influence anyone in sync with its frequency. You can change perception and behaviour en masse if you can manipulate the population into those levels of frequency and this is happening all around us today. The arrogance of Musk and his fellow Cult operatives knows no bounds in the way that we see with Gates. Musk's satellites are so many in number already they are changing the night sky when viewed from Earth. The astronomy community has complained about this and they have seen nothing yet. Some consequences of Musk's Wetiko hubris include: Radiation; visible pollution of the night sky; interference with astronomy and meteorology; ground and water pollution from intensive use of increasingly many spaceports; accumulating space debris; continual deorbiting and burning up of aging satellites, polluting the atmosphere with toxic dust and smoke; and ever-increasing likelihood of collisions. A collective public open letter of complaint to Musk said:

We are writing to you ... because SpaceX is in process of surrounding the Earth with a network of thousands of satellites whose very purpose is to irradiate every square inch of the

Earth. SpaceX, like everyone else, is treating the radiation as if it were not there. As if the mitochondria in our cells do not depend on electrons moving undisturbed from the food we digest to the oxygen we breathe.

As if our nervous systems and our hearts are not subject to radio frequency interference like any piece of electronic equipment. As if the cancer, diabetes, and heart disease that now afflict a majority of the Earth's population are not metabolic diseases that result from interference with our cellular machinery. As if insects everywhere, and the birds and animals that eat them, are not starving to death as a result.

People like Musk and Gates believe in their limitless Wetiko arrogance that they can do whatever they like to the world because they own it. Consequences for humanity are irrelevant. It's absolutely time that we stopped taking this shit from these self-styled masters of the Earth when you consider where this is going.

Why is the Cult so anti-human?

I hear this question often: Why would they do this when it will affect them, too? Ah, but will it? Who is this *them*? Forget their bodies. They are just vehicles for Wetiko consciousness. When you break it all down to the foundations we are looking at a state of severely distorted consciousness targeting another state of consciousness for assimilation. The rest is detail. The simulation is the fly-trap in which unique sensations of the five senses create a cycle of addiction called reincarnation. Renegade Minds see that everything which happens in our reality is a smaller version of the whole picture in line with the holographic principle. Addiction to the radiation of smart technology is a smaller version of addiction to the whole simulation. Connecting the body/brain to AI is taking that addiction on a giant step further to total ongoing control by assimilating human incarnate consciousness into Wetiko. I have watched during the 'Covid' hoax how many are becoming ever more profoundly attached to Wetiko's perceptual calling cards of aggressive response to any other point of view ('There is no other god but me'), psychopathic lack of compassion and empathy, and servile submission to the narrative and will of authority. Wetiko is the psychopaths *and* subservience to psychopaths. The Cult of Wetiko is

so anti-human because it is *not* human. It embarked on a mission to destroy human by targeting everything that it means to be human and to survive as human. 'Covid' is not the end, just a means to an end. The Cult with its Wetiko consciousness is seeking to change Earth systems, including the atmosphere, to suit them, not humans. The gathering bombardment of 5G alone from ground and space is dramatically changing The Field with which the five senses interact. There is so much more to come if we sit on our hands and hope it will all go away. It is not meant to go away. It is meant to get ever more extreme and we need to face that while we still can – just.

Carbon dioxide is the gas of life. Without that human is over. Kaput, gone, history. No natural world, no human. The Cult has created a cock and bull story about carbon dioxide and climate change to justify its reduction to the point where Gates and the ignoramus Biden 'climate chief' John Kerry want to suck it out of the atmosphere. Kerry wants to do this because his master Gates does. Wetikos have made the gas of life a demon with the usual support from the Wokers of Extinction Rebellion and similar organisations and the bewildered puppet-child that is Greta Thunberg who was put on the world stage by Klaus Schwab and the World Economic Forum. The name Extinction Rebellion is both ironic and as always Wetiko inversion. The gas that we need to survive must be reduced to save us from extinction. The most basic need of human is oxygen and we now have billions walking around in face nappies depriving body and brain of this essential requirement of human existence. More than that 5G at 60 gigahertz interacts with the oxygen molecule to reduce the amount of oxygen the body can absorb into the bloodstream. The obvious knock-on consequences of that for respiratory and cognitive problems and life itself need no further explanation. Psychopaths like Musk are assembling a global system of satellites to deluge the human atmosphere with this insanity. The man should be in jail. Here we have two most basic of human needs, oxygen and carbon dioxide, being dismantled.

Two others, water and food, are getting similar treatment with the United Nations Agendas 21 and 2030 – the Great Reset – planning to

centrally control all water and food supplies. People will not even own rain water that falls on their land. Food is affected at the most basic level by reducing carbon dioxide. We have genetic modification or GMO infiltrating the food chain on a mass scale, pesticides and herbicides polluting the air and destroying the soil. Freshwater fish that provide livelihoods for 60 million people and feed hundreds of millions worldwide are being 'pushed to the brink' according the conservationists while climate change is the only focus. Now we have Gates and Schwab wanting to dispense with current food sources all together and replace them with a synthetic version which the Wetiko Cult would control in terms of production and who eats and who doesn't. We have been on the Totalitarian Tiptoe to this for more than 60 years as food has become ever more processed and full of chemical shite to the point today when it's not natural food at all. As Dr Tom Cowan says: 'If it has a label don't eat it.' Bill Gates is now the biggest owner of farmland in the United States and he does nothing without an ulterior motive involving the Cult. Klaus Schwab wrote: 'To feed the world in the next 50 years we will need to produce as much food as was produced in the last 10,000 years ... food security will only be achieved, however, if regulations on genetically modified foods are adapted to reflect the reality that gene editing offers a precise, efficient and safe method of improving crops.' Liar. People and the world are being targeted with aluminium through vaccines, chemtrails, food, drink cans, and endless other sources when aluminium has been linked to many health issues including dementia which is increasing year after year. Insects, bees and wildlife essential to the food chain are being deleted by pesticides, herbicides and radiation which 5G is dramatically increasing with 6G and 7G to come. The pollinating bee population is being devastated while wildlife including birds, dolphins and whales are having their natural radar blocked by the effects of ever-increasing radiation. In the summer windscreens used to be splattered with insects so numerous were they. It doesn't happen now. Where have they gone?

Synthetic everything

The Cult is introducing genetically-modified versions of trees, plants and insects including a Gates-funded project to unleash hundreds of millions of genetically-modified, lab-altered and patented male mosquitoes to mate with wild mosquitoes and induce genetic flaws that cause them to die out. Clinically-insane Gates-funded Japanese researchers have developed mosquitos that spread vaccine and are dubbed 'flying vaccinators'. Gates is funding the modification of weather patterns in part to sell the myth that this is caused by carbon dioxide and he's funding geoengineering of the skies to change the atmosphere. Some of this came to light with the Gates-backed plan to release tonnes of chalk into the atmosphere to 'deflect the Sun and cool the planet'. Funny how they do this while the heating effect of the Sun is not factored into climate projections focussed on carbon dioxide. The reason is that they want to reduce carbon dioxide (so don't mention the Sun), but at the same time they do want to reduce the impact of the Sun which is so essential to human life and health. I have mentioned the sun-cholesterol-vitamin D connection as they demonise the Sun with warnings about skin cancer (caused by the chemicals in sun cream they tell you to splash on). They come from the other end of the process with statin drugs to reduce cholesterol that turns sunlight into vitamin D. A lack of vitamin D leads to a long list of health effects and how vitamin D levels must have fallen with people confined to their homes over 'Covid'. Gates is funding other forms of geoengineering and most importantly chemtrails which are dropping heavy metals, aluminium and self-replicating nanotechnology onto the Earth which is killing the natural world. See *Everything You Need To Know, But Have Never Been Told* for the detailed background to this.

Every human system is being targeted for deletion by a force that's not human. The Wetiko Cult has embarked on the process of transforming the human body from biological to synthetic biological as I have explained. Biological is being replaced by the artificial and synthetic – Archontic 'countermimicry' – right across human society. The plan eventually is to dispense with the human body altogether

and absorb human consciousness – which it wouldn't really be by then – into cyberspace (the simulation which is Wetiko/Yaldabaoth). Preparations for that are already happening if people would care to look. The alternative media rightly warns about globalism and 'the globalists', but this is far bigger than that and represents the end of the human race as we know it. The 'bad copy' of prime reality that Gnostics describe was a bad copy of harmony, wonder and beauty to start with before Wetiko/Yaldabaoth set out to change the simulated 'copy' into something very different. The process was slow to start with. Entrapped humans in the simulation timeline were not technologically aware and they had to be brought up to intellectual speed while being suppressed spiritually to the point where they could build their own prison while having no idea they were doing so. We have now reached that stage where technological intellect has the potential to destroy us and that's why events are moving so fast. Central American shaman Don Juan Matus said:

Think for a moment, and tell me how you would explain the contradictions between the intelligence of man the engineer and the stupidity of his systems of belief, or the stupidity of his contradictory behaviour. Sorcerers believe that the predators have given us our systems of beliefs, our ideas of good and evil; our social mores. They are the ones who set up our dreams of success or failure. They have given us covetousness, greed, and cowardice. It is the predator who makes us complacent, routinary, and egomaniacal.

In order to keep us obedient and meek and weak, the predators engaged themselves in a stupendous manoeuvre – stupendous, of course, from the point of view of a fighting strategist; a horrendous manoeuvre from the point of those who suffer it. They gave us their mind. The predators' mind is baroque, contradictory, morose, filled with the fear of being discovered any minute now.

For 'predators' see Wetiko, Archons, Yaldabaoth, Jinn, and all the other versions of the same phenomenon in cultures and religions all over the world. The theme is always the same because it's true and it's real. We have reached the point where we have to deal with it. The question is – how?

Don't fight – walk away

I thought I'd use a controversial subheading to get things moving in terms of our response to global fascism. What do you mean 'don't fight'? What do you mean 'walk away'? We've got to fight. We can't walk away. Well, it depends what we mean by fight and walk away. If fighting means physical combat we are playing Wetiko's game and falling for its trap. It wants us to get angry, aggressive, and direct hate and hostility at the enemy we think we must fight. Every war, every battle, every conflict, has been fought with Wetiko leading both sides. It's what it does. Wetiko wants a fight, anywhere, any place. Just hit me, son, so I can hit you back. Wetiko hits Wetiko and Wetiko hits Wetiko in return. I am very forthright as you can see in exposing Wetikos of the Cult, but I don't hate them. I refuse to hate them. It's what they want. What you hate you become. What you *fight* you become. Wokers, 'anti-haters' and 'anti-fascists' prove this every time they reach for their keyboards or don their balaclavas. By walk away I mean to disengage from Wetiko which includes ceasing to cooperate with its tyranny. Paul Levy says of Wetiko:

The way to 'defeat' evil is not to try to destroy it (for then, in playing evil's game, we have already lost), but rather, to find the invulnerable place within ourselves where evil is unable to vanquish us – this is to truly 'win' our battle with evil.

Wetiko is everywhere in human society and it's been on steroids since the 'Covid' hoax. Every shouting match over wearing masks has Wetiko wearing a mask and Wetiko not wearing one. It's an electrical circuit of push and resist, push and resist, with Wetiko pushing *and* resisting. Each polarity is Wetiko empowering itself. Dictionary definitions of 'resist' include 'opposing, refusing to accept or comply with' and the word to focus on is 'opposing'. What form does this take – setting police cars alight or 'refusing to accept or comply with'? The former is Wetiko opposing Wetiko while the other points the way forward. This is the difference between those aggressively demanding that government fascism must be obeyed who stand in stark contrast to the great majority of Pushbackers. We saw this clearly with a march by thousands of Pushbackers against lockdown in London followed days later by a Woker-hijacked

protest in Bristol in which police cars were set on fire. Masks were virtually absent in London and widespread in Bristol. Wetiko wants lockdown on every level of society and infuses its aggression to police it through its unknowing stooges. Lockdown protesters are the ones with the smiling faces and the hugs, The two blatantly obvious states of being – getting more obvious by the day – are the result of Wokers and their like becoming ever more influenced by the simulation Field of Wetiko and Pushbackers ever more influenced by The Field of a far higher vibration beyond the simulation. Wetiko can't invade the heart which is where most lockdown opponents are coming from. It's the heart that allows them to see through the lies to the truth in ways I will be highlighting.

Renegade Minds know that calmness is the place from which wisdom comes. You won't find wisdom in a hissing fit and wisdom is what we need in abundance right now. Calmness is not weakness – you don't have to scream at the top of your voice to be strong. Calmness is indeed a sign of strength. 'No' means I'm not doing it. NOOOO!!! doesn't mean you're not doing it even more. Volume does not advance 'No – I'm not doing it'. You are just not doing it. Wetiko possessed and influenced don't know how to deal with that. Wetiko wants a fight and we should not give it one. What it needs more than anything is our *cooperation* and we should not give that either. Mass rallies and marches are great in that they are a visual representation of feeling, but if it ends there they are irrelevant. You demand that Wetikos act differently? Well, they're not going to are they? They are Wetikos. We don't need to waste our time demanding that something doesn't happen when that will make no difference. We need to delete the means that *allows* it to happen. This, invariably, is our cooperation. You can demand a child stop firing a peashooter at the dog or you can refuse to buy the peashooter. If you provide the means you are cooperating with the dog being smacked on the nose with a pea. How can the authorities enforce mask-wearing if millions in a country refuse? What if the 74 million Pushbackers that voted for Trump in 2020 refused to wear masks, close their businesses or stay in their homes. It would be unenforceable. The

few control the many through the compliance of the many and that's always been the dynamic be it 'Covid' regulations or the Roman Empire. I know people can find it intimidating to say no to authority or stand out in a crowd for being the only one with a face on display; but it has to be done or it's over. I hope I've made clear in this book that where this is going will be far more intimidating than standing up now and saying 'No' – I will not cooperate with my own enslavement and that of my children. There might be consequences for some initially, although not so if enough do the same. The question that must be addressed is what is going to happen if we don't? It is time to be strong and unyieldingly so. No means no. Not here and there, but *everywhere* and *always*. I have refused to wear a mask and obey all the other nonsense. I will not comply with tyranny. I repeat: Fascism is not imposed by fascists – there are never enough of them. Fascism is imposed by the population acquiescing to fascism. *I will not do it*. I will die first, or my body will. Living meekly under fascism is a form of death anyway, the death of the spirit that Martin Luther King described.

Making things happen

We must not despair. This is not over till it's over and it's far from that. The 'fat lady' must refuse to sing. The longer the 'Covid' hoax has dragged on and impacted on more lives we have seen an awakening of phenomenal numbers of people worldwide to the realisation that what they have believed all their lives is not how the world really is. Research published by the system-serving University of Bristol and King's College London in February, 2021, concluded: 'One in every 11 people in Britain say they trust David Icke's take on the coronavirus pandemic.' It will be more by now and we have gathering numbers to build on. We must urgently progress from seeing the scam to ceasing to cooperate with it. Prominent German lawyer Reiner Fuellmich, also licenced to practice law in America, is doing a magnificent job taking the legal route to bring the psychopaths to justice through a second Nuremberg tribunal for crimes against humanity. Fuellmich has an impressive record of

beating the elite in court and he formed the German Corona Investigative Committee to pursue civil charges against the main perpetrators with a view to triggering criminal charges. Most importantly he has grasped the foundation of the hoax – the PCR test not testing for the ‘virus’ – and Christian Drosten is therefore on his charge sheet along with Gates frontman Tedros at the World Health Organization. Major players must not be allowed to inflict their horrors on the human race without being brought to book. A life sentence must follow for Bill Gates and the rest of them. A group of researchers has also indicted the government of Norway for crimes against humanity with copies sent to the police and the International Criminal Court. The lawsuit cites participation in an internationally-planned false pandemic and violation of international law and human rights, the European Commission’s definition of human rights by coercive rules, Nuremberg and Hague rules on fundamental human rights, and the Norwegian constitution. We must take the initiative from hereon and not just complain, protest and react.

There are practical ways to support vital mass non-cooperation. Organising in numbers is one. Lockdown marches in London in the spring in 2021 were mass non-cooperation that the authorities could not stop. There were too many people. Hundreds of thousands walked the London streets in the centre of the road for mile after mile while the Face-Nappies could only look on. They were determined, but calm, and just *did it* with no histrionics and lots of smiles. The police were impotent. Others are organising group shopping without masks for mutual support and imagine if that was happening all over. Policing it would be impossible. If the store refuses to serve people in these circumstances they would be faced with a long line of trolleys full of goods standing on their own and everything would have to be returned to the shelves. How would they cope with that if it kept happening? I am talking here about moving on from complaining to being pro-active; from watching things happen to making things happen. I include in this our relationship with the police. The behaviour of many Face-Nappies

has been disgraceful and anyone who thinks they would never find concentration camp guards in the 'enlightened' modern era have had that myth busted big-time. The period and setting may change – Wetikos never do. I watched film footage from a London march in which a police thug viciously kicked a protestor on the floor who had done nothing. His fellow Face-Nappies stood in a ring protecting him. What he did was a criminal assault and with a crowd far outnumbering the police this can no longer be allowed to happen unchallenged. I get it when people chant 'shame on you' in these circumstances, but that is no longer enough. They *have* no shame those who do this. Crowds needs to start making a citizen's arrest of the police who commit criminal offences and brutally attack innocent people and defenceless women. A citizen's arrest can be made under section 24A of the UK Police and Criminal Evidence (PACE) Act of 1984 and you will find something similar in other countries. I prefer to call it a Common Law arrest rather than citizen's for reasons I will come to shortly. Anyone can arrest a person committing an indictable offence or if they have reasonable grounds to suspect they are committing an indictable offence. On both counts the attack by the police thug would have fallen into this category. A citizen's arrest can be made to stop someone:

- Causing physical injury to himself or any other person
- Suffering physical injury
- Causing loss of or damage to property
- Making off before a constable can assume responsibility for him

A citizen's arrest may also be made to prevent a breach of the peace under Common Law and if they believe a breach of the peace will happen or anything related to harm likely to be done or already done in their presence. This is the way to go I think – the Common Law version. If police know that the crowd and members of the public will no longer be standing and watching while they commit

their thuggery and crimes they will think twice about acting like Brownshirts and Blackshirts.

Common Law – common sense

Mention of Common Law is very important. Most people think the law is the law as in one law. This is not the case. There are two bodies of law, Common Law and Statute Law, and they are not the same. Common Law is founded on the simple premise of do no harm. It does not recognise victimless crimes in which no harm is done while Statute Law does. There is a Statute Law against almost everything. So what is Statute Law? Amazingly it's the law of the *sea* that was brought ashore by the Cult to override the law of the land which is Common Law. They had no right to do this and as always they did it anyway. They had to. They could not impose their will on the people through Common Law which only applies to do no harm. How could you stitch up the fine detail of people's lives with that? Instead they took the law of the sea, or Admiralty Law, and applied it to the population. Statute Law refers to all the laws spewing out of governments and their agencies including all the fascist laws and regulations relating to 'Covid'. The key point to make is that Statute Law is *contract law*. It only applies between *contracting* corporations. Most police officers don't even know this. They have to be kept in the dark, too. Long ago when merchants and their sailing ships began to trade with different countries a contractual law was developed called Admiralty Law and other names. Again it only applied to *contracts* agreed between *corporate* entities. If there is no agreed contract the law of the sea had no jurisdiction *and that still applies to its new alias of Statute Law*. The problem for the Cult when the law of the sea was brought ashore was an obvious one. People were not corporations and neither were government entities. To overcome the latter they made governments and all associated organisations corporations. All the institutions are *private corporations* and I mean governments and their agencies, local councils, police, courts, military, US states, the whole lot. Go to the

Dun and Bradstreet corporate listings website for confirmation that they are all corporations. You are arrested by a private corporation called the police by someone who is really a private security guard and they take you to court which is another private corporation. Neither have jurisdiction over you unless you consent and *contract* with them. This is why you hear the mantra about law enforcement policing by *consent* of the people. In truth the people 'consent' only in theory through monumental trickery.

Okay, the Cult overcame the corporate law problem by making governments and institutions corporate entities; but what about people? They are not corporations are they? Ah ... well in a sense, and *only* a sense, they are. Not people exactly – the illusion of people. The Cult creates a corporation in the name of everyone at the time that their birth certificate is issued. Note birth/ *berth* certificate and when you go to court under the law of the sea on land you stand in a *dock*. These are throwbacks to the origin. My Common Law name is David Vaughan Icke. The name of the corporation created by the government when I was born is called Mr David Vaughan Icke usually written in capitals as MR DAVID VAUGHAN ICKE. That is not me, the living, breathing man. It is a fictitious corporate entity. The trick is to make you think that David Vaughan Icke and MR DAVID VAUGHAN ICKE are the same thing. *They are not*. When police charge you and take you to court they are prosecuting the corporate entity and not the living, breathing, man or woman. They have to trick you into identifying as the corporate entity and contracting with them. Otherwise they have no jurisdiction. They do this through a language known as legalese. Lawful and legal are not the same either. Lawful relates to Common Law and legal relates to Statute Law. Legalese is the language of Statue Law which uses terms that mean one thing to the public and another in legalese. Notice that when a police officer tells someone why they are being charged he or she will say at the end: 'Do you understand?' To the public that means 'Do you comprehend?' In legalese it means 'Do you stand under me?' Do you stand under my authority? If you say

yes to the question you are unknowingly agreeing to give them jurisdiction over you in a contract between two corporate entities.

This is a confidence trick in every way. Contracts have to be agreed between informed parties and if you don't know that David Vaughan Icke is agreeing to be the corporation MR DAVID VAUGHAN ICKE you cannot knowingly agree to contract. They are deceiving you and another way they do this is to ask for proof of identity. You usually show them a driving licence or other document on which your corporate name is written. In doing so you are accepting that you are that corporate entity when you are not. Referring to yourself as a 'person' or 'citizen' is also identifying with your corporate fiction which is why I made the Common Law point about the citizen's arrest. If you are approached by a police officer you identify yourself immediately as a living, breathing, man or woman and say 'I do not consent, I do not contract with you and I do not understand' or stand under their authority. I have a Common Law birth certificate as a living man and these are available at no charge from commonlawcourt.com. Businesses registered under the Statute Law system means that its laws apply. There are, however, ways to run a business under Common Law. Remember all 'Covid' laws and regulations are Statute Law – the law of *contracts* and you do not have to contract. This doesn't mean that you can kill someone and get away with it. Common Law says do no harm and that applies to physical harm, financial harm etc. Police are employees of private corporations and there needs to be a new system of non-corporate Common Law constables operating outside the Statute Law system. If you go to davidicke.com and put Common Law into the search engine you will find videos that explain Common Law in much greater detail. It is definitely a road we should walk.

With all my heart

I have heard people say that we are in a spiritual war. I don't like the term 'war' with its Wetiko dynamic, but I know what they mean. Sweep aside all the bodily forms and we are in a situation in which two states of consciousness are seeking very different realities.

Wetiko wants upheaval, chaos, fear, suffering, conflict and control. The other wants love, peace, harmony, fairness and freedom. That's where we are. We should not fall for the idea that Wetiko is all-powerful and there's nothing we can do. Wetiko is not all-powerful. It's a joke, pathetic. It doesn't have to be, but it has made that choice for now. A handful of times over the years when I have felt the presence of its frequency I have allowed it to attach briefly so I could consciously observe its nature. The experience is not pleasant, the energy is heavy and dark, but the ease with which you can kick it back out the door shows that its real power is in persuading us that it has power. It's all a con. Wetiko is a con. It's a trickster and not a power that can control us if we unleash our own. The con is founded on manipulating humanity to give its power to Wetiko which recycles it back to present the illusion that it has power when its power is *ours* that we gave away. This happens on an energetic level and plays out in the world of the seen as humanity giving its power to Wetiko authority which uses that power to control the population when the power is only the power the population has handed over. How could it be any other way for billions to be controlled by a relative few? I have had experiences with people possessed by Wetiko and again you can kick its arse if you do it with an open heart. Oh yes – the *heart* which can transform the world of perceived 'matter'.

We are receiver-transmitters and processors of information, but what information and where from? Information is processed into perception in three main areas – the brain, the heart and the belly. These relate to thinking, knowing, and emotion. Wetiko wants us to be head and belly people which means we think within the confines of the Matrix simulation and low-vibrational emotional reaction scrambles balance and perception. A few minutes on social media and you see how emotion is the dominant force. Woke is all emotion and is therefore thought-free and fact-free. Our heart is something different. It *knows* while the head *thinks* and has to try to work it out because it doesn't know. The human energy field has seven prime vortexes which connect us with wider reality ([Fig 23](#)). Chakra means

'wheels of light' in the Sanskrit language of ancient India. The main ones are: The crown chakra on top of the head; brow (or 'third eye') chakra in the centre of the forehead; throat chakra; heart chakra in the centre of the chest; solar plexus chakra below the sternum; sacral chakra beneath the navel; and base chakra at the bottom of the spine. Each one has a particular function or functions. We feel anxiety and nervousness in the belly where the sacral chakra is located and this processes emotion that can affect the colon to give people 'the shits' or make them 'shit scared' when they are nervous. Chakras all play an important role, but the Mr and Mrs Big is the heart chakra which sits at the centre of the seven, above the chakras that connect us to the 'physical' and below those that connect with higher realms (or at least should). Here in the heart chakra we feel love, empathy and compassion – 'My heart goes out to you'. Those with closed hearts become literally 'heart-less' in their attitudes and behaviour (see Bill Gates). Native Americans portrayed Wetiko with what Paul Levy calls a 'frigid, icy heart, devoid of mercy' (see Bill Gates).



Figure 23: The chakra system which interpenetrates the human energy field. The heart chakra is the governor – or should be.

Wetiko trembles at the thought of heart energy which it cannot infiltrate. The frequency is too high. What it seeks to do instead is close the heart chakra vortex to block its perceptual and energetic influence. Psychopaths have 'hearts of stone' and emotionally-damaged people have 'heartache' and 'broken hearts'. The astonishing amount of heart disease is related to heart chakra

disruption with its fundamental connection to the 'physical' heart. Dr Tom Cowan has written an outstanding book challenging the belief that the heart is a pump and making the connection between the 'physical' and spiritual heart. Rudolph Steiner who was way ahead of his time said the same about the fallacy that the heart is a pump. *What?* The heart is not a pump? That's crazy, right? Everybody knows that. Read Cowan's *Human Heart, Cosmic Heart* and you will realise that the very idea of the heart as a pump is ridiculous when you see the evidence. How does blood in the feet so far from the heart get pumped horizontally up the body by the heart?? Cowan explains in the book the real reason why blood moves as it does. Our 'physical' heart is used to symbolise love when the source is really the heart vortex or spiritual heart which is our most powerful energetic connection to 'out there' expanded consciousness. That's why we feel *knowing* – intuitive knowing – in the centre of the chest. Knowing doesn't come from a process of thoughts leading to a conclusion. It is there in an instant all in one go. Our heart knows because of its connection to levels of awareness that *do* know. This is the meaning and source of intuition – intuitive *knowing*.

For the last more than 30 years of uncovering the global game and the nature of reality my heart has been my constant antenna for truth and accuracy. An American intelligence insider once said that I had quoted a disinformant in one of my books and yet I had only quoted the part that was true. He asked: 'How do you do that?' By using my heart antenna was the answer and anyone can do it. Heart-centred is how we are meant to be. With a closed heart chakra we withdraw into a closed mind and the bubble of five-sense reality. If you take a moment to focus your attention on the centre of your chest, picture a spinning wheel of light and see it opening and expanding. You will feel it happening, too, and perceptions of the heart like joy and love as the heart impacts on the mind as they interact. The more the chakra opens the more you will feel expressions of heart consciousness and as the process continues, and becomes part of you, insights and knowings will follow. An open

heart is connected to that level of awareness that knows all is *One*. You will see from its perspective that the fault-lines that divide us are only illusions to control us. An open heart does not process the illusions of race, creed and sexuality except as brief experiences for a consciousness that is all. Our heart does not see division, only unity (Figs 24 and 25). There's something else, too. Our hearts love to laugh. Mark Twain's quote that says 'The human race has one really effective weapon, and that is laughter' is really a reference to the heart which loves to laugh with the joy of knowing the true nature of infinite reality and that all the madness of human society is an illusion of the mind. Twain also said: 'Against the assault of laughter nothing can stand.' This is so true of Wetiko and the Cult. Their insecurity demands that they be taken seriously and their power and authority acknowledged and feared. We should do nothing of the sort. We should not get aggressive or fearful which their insecurity so desires. We should laugh in their face. Even in their no-face as police come over in their face-nappies and expect to be taken seriously. They don't take themselves seriously looking like that so why should we? Laugh in the face of intimidation. Laugh in the face of tyranny. You will see by its reaction that you have pressed all of its buttons. Wetiko does not know what to do in the face of laughter or when its targets refuse to concede their joy to fear. We have seen many examples during the 'Covid' hoax when people have expressed their energetic power and the string puppets of Wetiko retreat with their tail limp between their knees. Laugh – the world is bloody mad after all and if it's a choice between laughter and tears I know which way I'm going.



Figure 24: Head consciousness without the heart sees division and everything apart from everything else.



Figure 25: Heart consciousness sees everything as One.

'Vaccines' and the soul

The foundation of Wetiko/Archon control of humans is the separation of incarnate five-sense mind from the infinite 'I' and closing the heart chakra where the True 'I' lives during a human life. The goal has been to achieve complete separation in both cases. I was interested therefore to read an account by a French energetic healer of what she said she experienced with a patient who had been given the 'Covid' vaccine. Genuine energy healers can sense information and consciousness fields at different levels of being which are referred to as 'subtle bodies'. She described treating the patient who later returned after having, without the healer's knowledge, two doses of the 'Covid vaccine'. The healer said:

I noticed immediately the change, very heavy energy emanating from [the] subtle bodies. The scariest thing was when I was working on the heart chakra, I connected with her soul: it was detached from the physical body, it had no contact and it was, as if it was floating in a state of total confusion: a damage to the consciousness that loses contact with the physical body, i.e. with our biological machine, there is no longer any communication between them.

I continued the treatment by sending light to the heart chakra, the soul of the person, but it seemed that the soul could no longer receive any light, frequency or energy. It was a very powerful experience for me. Then I understood that this substance is indeed used to detach consciousness so that this consciousness can no longer interact through this body that it possesses in life, where there is no longer any contact, no frequency, no light, no more energetic balance or mind.

This would create a human that is rudderless and at the extreme almost zombie-like operating with a fractional state of consciousness at the mercy of Wetiko. I was especially intrigued by what the healer said in the light of the prediction by the highly-informed Rudolf Steiner more than a hundred years ago. He said:

In the future, we will eliminate the soul with medicine. Under the pretext of a 'healthy point of view', there will be a vaccine by which the human body will be treated as soon as possible directly at birth, so that the human being cannot develop the thought of the existence of soul and Spirit. To materialistic doctors will be entrusted the task of removing the soul of humanity.

As today, people are vaccinated against this disease or that disease, so in the future, children will be vaccinated with a substance that can be produced precisely in such a way that people, thanks to this vaccination, will be immune to being subjected to the 'madness' of spiritual life. He would be extremely smart, but he would not develop a conscience, and that is the true goal of some materialistic circles.

Steiner said the vaccine would detach the physical body from the etheric body (subtle bodies) and 'once the etheric body is detached the relationship between the universe and the etheric body would become extremely unstable, and man would become an automaton'. He said 'the physical body of man must be polished on this Earth by spiritual will – so the vaccine becomes a kind of arymanique (Wetiko) force' and 'man can no longer get rid of a given materialistic feeling'. Humans would then, he said, become 'materialistic of constitution and can no longer rise to the spiritual'. I have been writing for years about DNA being a receiver-transmitter of information that connects us to other levels of reality and these 'vaccines' changing DNA can be likened to changing an antenna and what it can transmit and receive. Such a disconnection would clearly lead to changes in personality and perception. Steiner further predicted the arrival of AI. Big Pharma 'Covid vaccine' makers, expressions of Wetiko, are testing their DNA-manipulating evil on children as I write with a view to giving the 'vaccine' to babies. If it's a soul-body disconnecter – and I say that it is or can be – every child would be disconnected from 'soul' at birth and the 'vaccine' would create a closed system in which spiritual guidance from the greater self would play no part. This has been the ambition of Wetiko all

along. A Pentagon video from 2005 was leaked of a presentation explaining the development of vaccines to change behaviour by their effect on the brain. Those that believe this is not happening with the 'Covid' genetically-modifying procedure masquerading as a 'vaccine' should make an urgent appointment with Naivety Anonymous. Klaus Schwab wrote in 2018:

Neurotechnologies enable us to better influence consciousness and thought and to understand many activities of the brain. They include decoding what we are thinking in fine levels of detail through new chemicals and interventions that can influence our brains to correct for errors or enhance functionality.

The plan is clear and only the heart can stop it. With every heart that opens, every mind that awakens, Wetiko is weakened. Heart and love are far more powerful than head and hate and so nothing like a majority is needed to turn this around.

Beyond the Phantom

Our heart is the prime target of Wetiko and so it must be the answer to Wetiko. We *are* our heart which is part of one heart, the infinite heart. Our heart is where the true self lives in a human life behind firewalls of five-sense illusion when an imposter takes its place – *Phantom Self*; but our heart waits patiently to be set free any time we choose to see beyond the Phantom, beyond Wetiko. A Wetikoed Phantom Self can wreak mass death and destruction while the love of forever is locked away in its heart. The time is here to unleash its power and let it sweep away the fear and despair that is Wetiko. Heart consciousness does not seek manipulated, censored, advantage for its belief or religion, its activism and desires. As an expression of the One it treats all as One with the same rights to freedom and opinion. Our heart demands fairness for itself no more than for others. From this unity of heart we can come together in mutual support and transform this Wetikoed world into what reality is meant to be – a place of love, joy, happiness, fairness, justice and freedom. Wetiko has another agenda and that's why the world is as

it is, but enough of this nonsense. Wetiko can't stay where hearts are open and it works so hard to keep them closed. Fear is its currency and its food source and love in its true sense has no fear. Why would love have fear when it knows it is *All That Is, Has Been, And Ever Can Be* on an eternal exploration of all possibility? Love in this true sense is not the physical attraction that passes for love. This can be an expression of it, yes, but Infinite Love, a love without condition, goes far deeper to the core of all being. It *is* the core of all being. Infinite reality was born from love beyond the illusions of the simulation. Love infinitely expressed is the knowing that all is One and the swiftly-passing experience of separation is a temporary hallucination. You cannot disconnect from Oneness; you can only *perceive* that you have and withdraw from its influence. This is the most important of all perception trickery by the mind parasite that is Wetiko and the foundation of all its potential for manipulation.

If we open our hearts, open the sluice gates of the mind, and redefine self-identity amazing things start to happen. Consciousness expands or contracts in accordance with self-identity. When true self is recognised as infinite awareness and label self – Phantom Self – is seen as only a series of brief experiences life is transformed. Consciousness expands to the extent that self-identity expands and everything changes. You see unity, not division, the picture, not the pixels. From this we can play the long game. No more is an experience something in and of itself, but a fleeting moment in the eternity of forever. Suddenly people in uniform and dark suits are no longer intimidating. Doing what your heart knows to be right is no longer intimidating and consequences for those actions take on the same nature of a brief experience that passes in the blink of an infinite eye. Intimidation is all in the mind. Beyond the mind there is no intimidation.

An open heart does not consider consequences for what it knows to be right. To do so would be to consider not doing what it knows to be right and for a heart in its power that is never an option. The Renegade Mind is really the Renegade Heart. Consideration of consequences will always provide a getaway car for the mind and

the heart doesn't want one. What is right in the light of what we face today is to stop cooperating with Wetiko in all its forms and to do it without fear or compromise. You cannot compromise with tyranny when tyranny always demands more until it has everything. Life is your perception and you are your destiny. Change your perception and you change your life. Change collective perception and we change the world.

Come on people ... One human family, One heart, One goal ...
FREEEEEEEDOM!

We must settle for nothing less.

Postscript

The big scare story as the book goes to press is the 'Indian' variant and the world is being deluged with propaganda about the 'Covid catastrophe' in India which mirrors in its lies and misrepresentations what happened in Italy before the first lockdown in 2020.

The *New York Post* published a picture of someone who had 'collapsed in the street from Covid' in India in April, 2021, which was actually taken during a gas leak in May, 2020. Same old, same old. Media articles in mid-February were asking why India had been so untouched by 'Covid' and then as their vaccine rollout gathered pace the alleged 'cases' began to rapidly increase. Indian 'Covid vaccine' maker Bharat Biotech was funded into existence by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (the pair announced their divorce in May, 2021, which is a pity because they so deserve each other). The Indian 'Covid crisis' was ramped up by the media to terrify the world and prepare people for submission to still more restrictions. The scam that worked the first time was being repeated only with far more people seeing through the deceit. Davidicke.com and Ickonic.com have sought to tell the true story of what is happening by talking to people living through the Indian nightmare which has nothing to do with 'Covid'. We posted a letter from 'Alisha' in Pune who told a very different story to government and media mendacity. She said scenes of dying people and overwhelmed hospitals were designed to hide what was really happening – genocide and starvation. Alisha said that millions had already died of starvation during the ongoing lockdowns while government and media were lying and making it look like the 'virus':

Restaurants, shops, gyms, theatres, basically everything is shut. The cities are ghost towns. Even so-called 'essential' businesses are only open till 11am in the morning. You basically have just an hour to buy food and then your time is up.

Inter-state travel and even inter-district travel is banned. The cops wait at all major crossroads to question why you are traveling outdoors or to fine you if you are not wearing a mask.

The medical community here is also complicit in genocide, lying about hospitals being full and turning away people with genuine illnesses, who need immediate care. They have even created a shortage of oxygen cylinders.

This is the classic Cult modus operandi played out in every country. Alisha said that people who would not have a PCR test not testing for the 'virus' were being denied hospital treatment. She said the people hit hardest were migrant workers and those in rural areas. Most businesses employed migrant workers and with everything closed there were no jobs, no income and no food. As a result millions were dying of starvation or malnutrition. All this was happening under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a 100-percent asset of the Cult, and it emphasises yet again the scale of pure anti-human evil we are dealing with. Australia banned its people from returning home from India with penalties for trying to do so of up to five years in jail and a fine of £37,000. The manufactured 'Covid' crisis in India was being prepared to justify further fascism in the West. Obvious connections could be seen between the Indian 'vaccine' programme and increased 'cases' and this became a common theme. The Seychelles, the most per capita 'Covid vaccinated' population in the world, went back into lockdown after a 'surge of cases'.

Long ago the truly evil Monsanto agricultural biotechnology corporation with its big connections to Bill Gates devastated Indian farming with genetically-modified crops. Human rights activist Gurcharan Singh highlighted the efforts by the Indian government to complete the job by destroying the food supply to hundreds of millions with 'Covid' lockdowns. He said that 415 million people at the bottom of the disgusting caste system (still going whatever they say) were below the poverty line and struggled to feed themselves every year. Now the government was imposing lockdown at just the

time to destroy the harvest. This deliberate policy was leading to mass starvation. People may reel back at the suggestion that a government would do that, but Wetiko-controlled 'leaders' are capable of any level of evil. In fact what is described in India is in the process of being instigated worldwide. The food chain and food supply are being targeted at every level to cause world hunger and thus control. Bill Gates is not the biggest owner of farmland in America for no reason and destroying access to food aids both the depopulation agenda and the plan for synthetic 'food' already being funded into existence by Gates. Add to this the coming hyper-inflation from the suicidal creation of fake 'money' in response to 'Covid' and the breakdown of container shipping systems and you have a cocktail that can only lead one way and is meant to. The Cult plan is to crash the entire system to 'build back better' with the Great Reset.

'Vaccine' transmission

Reports from all over the world continue to emerge of women suffering menstrual and fertility problems after having the fake 'vaccine' and of the non-'vaccinated' having similar problems when interacting with the 'vaccinated'. There are far too many for 'coincidence' to be credible. We've had menopausal women getting periods, others having periods stop or not stopping for weeks, passing clots, sometimes the lining of the uterus, breast irregularities, and miscarriages (which increased by 400 percent in parts of the United States). Non-'vaccinated' men and children have suffered blood clots and nose bleeding after interaction with the 'vaccinated'. Babies have died from the effects of breast milk from a 'vaccinated' mother. Awake doctors – the small minority – speculated on the cause of non-'vaccinated' suffering the same effects as the 'vaccinated'. Was it nanotechnology in the synthetic substance transmitting frequencies or was it a straight chemical bioweapon that was being transmitted between people? I am not saying that some kind of chemical transmission is not one possible answer, but the foundation of all that the Cult does is frequency and

this is fertile ground for understanding how transmission can happen. American doctor Carrie Madej, an internal medicine physician and osteopath, has been practicing for the last 20 years, teaching medical students, and she says attending different meetings where the agenda for humanity was discussed. Madej, who operates out of Georgia, did not dismiss other possible forms of transmission, but she focused on frequency in search of an explanation for transmission. She said the Moderna and Pfizer 'vaccines' contained nano-lipid particles as a key component. This was a brand new technology never before used on humanity. 'They're using a nanotechnology which is pretty much little tiny computer bits ... nanobots or hydrogel.' Inside the 'vaccines' was 'this sci-fi kind of substance' which suppressed immune checkpoints to get into the cell. I referred to this earlier as the 'Trojan horse' technique that tricks the cell into opening a gateway for the self-replicating synthetic material and while the immune system is artificially suppressed the body has no defences. Madej said the substance served many purposes including an on-demand ability to 'deliver the payload' and using the nano 'computer bits' as biosensors in the body. 'It actually has the ability to accumulate data from your body, like your breathing, your respiration, thoughts, emotions, all kinds of things.'

She said the technology obviously has the ability to operate through Wi-Fi and transmit and receive energy, messages, frequencies or impulses. 'Just imagine you're getting this new substance in you and it can react to things all around you, the 5G, your smart device, your phones.' We had something completely foreign in the human body that had never been launched large scale at a time when we were seeing 5G going into schools and hospitals (plus the Musk satellites) and she believed the 'vaccine' transmission had something to do with this: '... if these people have this inside of them ... it can act like an antenna and actually transmit it outwardly as well.' The synthetic substance produced its own voltage and so it could have that kind of effect. This fits with my own contention that the nano receiver-transmitters are designed to connect people to the

Smart Grid and break the receiver-transmitter connection to expanded consciousness. That would explain the French energy healer's experience of the disconnection of body from 'soul' with those who have had the 'vaccine'. The nanobots, self-replicating inside the body, would also transmit the synthetic frequency which could be picked up through close interaction by those who have not been 'vaccinated'. Madej speculated that perhaps it was 5G and increased levels of other radiation that was causing the symptoms directly although interestingly she said that non-'vaccinated' patients had shown improvement when they were away from the 'vaccinated' person they had interacted with. It must be remembered that you can control frequency and energy with your mind and you can consciously create energetic barriers or bubbles with the mind to stop damaging frequencies from penetrating your field. American paediatrician Dr Larry Palevsky said the 'vaccine' was not a 'vaccine' and was never designed to protect from a 'viral' infection. He called it 'a massive, brilliant propaganda of genocide' because they didn't have to inject everyone to get the result they wanted. He said the content of the jabs was able to infuse any material into the brain, heart, lungs, kidneys, liver, sperm and female productive system. 'This is genocide; this is a weapon of mass destruction.' At the same time American colleges were banning students from attending if they didn't have this life-changing and potentially life-ending 'vaccine'. Class action lawsuits must follow when the consequences of this college fascism come to light. As the book was going to press came reports about fertility effects on sperm in 'vaccinated' men which would absolutely fit with what I have been saying and hospitals continued to fill with 'vaccine' reactions. Another question is what about transmission via blood transfusions? The NHS has extended blood donation restrictions from seven days after a 'Covid vaccination' to 28 days after even a sore arm reaction.

I said in the spring of 2020 that the then touted 'Covid vaccine' would be ongoing each year like the flu jab. A year later Pfizer CEO, the appalling Albert Bourla, said people would 'likely' need a 'booster dose' of the 'vaccine' within 12 months of getting 'fully

vaccinated' and then a yearly shot. 'Variants will play a key role', he said confirming the point. Johnson & Johnson CEO Alex Gorsky also took time out from his 'vaccine' disaster to say that people may need to be vaccinated against 'Covid-19' each year. UK Health Secretary, the psychopath Matt Hancock, said additional 'boosters' would be available in the autumn of 2021. This is the trap of the 'vaccine passport'. The public will have to accept every last 'vaccine' they introduce, including for the fake 'variants', or it would cease to be valid. The only other way in some cases would be continuous testing with a test not testing for the 'virus' and what is on the swabs constantly pushed up your nose towards the brain every time?

'Vaccines' changing behaviour

I mentioned in the body of the book how I believed we would see gathering behaviour changes in the 'vaccinated' and I am already hearing such comments from the non-'vaccinated' describing behaviour changes in friends, loved ones and work colleagues. This will only increase as the self-replicating synthetic material and nanoparticles expand in body and brain. An article in the *Guardian* in 2016 detailed research at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville which developed a new method for controlling brain circuits associated with complex animal behaviour. The method, dubbed 'magnetogenetics', involves genetically-engineering a protein called ferritin, which stores and releases iron, to create a magnetised substance – 'Magneto' – that can activate specific groups of nerve cells from a distance. This is claimed to be an advance on other methods of brain activity manipulation known as optogenetics and chemogenetics (the Cult has been developing methods of brain control for a long time). The ferritin technique is said to be non-invasive and able to activate neurons 'rapidly and reversibly'. In other words, human thought and perception. The article said that earlier studies revealed how nerve cell proteins 'activated by heat and mechanical pressure can be genetically engineered so that they become sensitive to radio waves and magnetic fields, by attaching them to an iron-storing protein called ferritin, or to inorganic

paramagnetic particles'. Sensitive to radio waves and magnetic fields? You mean like 5G, 6G and 7G? This is the human-AI Smart Grid hive mind we are talking about. The *Guardian* article said:

... the researchers injected Magneto into the striatum of freely behaving mice, a deep brain structure containing dopamine-producing neurons that are involved in reward and motivation, and then placed the animals into an apparatus split into magnetised and non-magnetised sections.

Mice expressing Magneto spent far more time in the magnetised areas than mice that did not, because activation of the protein caused the striatal neurons expressing it to release dopamine, so that the mice found being in those areas rewarding. This shows that Magneto can remotely control the firing of neurons deep within the brain, and also control complex behaviours.

Make no mistake this basic methodology will be part of the 'Covid vaccine' cocktail and using magnetics to change brain function through electromagnetic field frequency activation. The Pentagon is developing a 'Covid vaccine' using ferritin. Magnetism would explain changes in behaviour and why videos are appearing across the Internet as I write showing how magnets stick to the skin at the point of the 'vaccine' shot. Once people take these 'vaccines' anything becomes possible in terms of brain function and illness which will be blamed on 'Covid-19' and 'variants'. Magnetic field manipulation would further explain why the non-'vaccinated' are reporting the same symptoms as the 'vaccinated' they interact with and why those symptoms are reported to decrease when not in their company. Interestingly 'Magneto', a 'mutant', is a character in the Marvel Comic *X-Men* stories with the ability to manipulate magnetic fields and he believes that mutants should fight back against their human oppressors by any means necessary. The character was born Erik Lehnsherr to a Jewish family in Germany.

Cult-controlled courts

The European Court of Human Rights opened the door for mandatory 'Covid-19 vaccines' across the continent when it ruled in a Czech Republic dispute over childhood immunisation that legally

enforced vaccination could be 'necessary in a democratic society'. The 17 judges decided that compulsory vaccinations did not breach human rights law. On the face of it the judgement was so inverted you gasp for air. If not having a vaccine infused into your body is not a human right then what is? Ah, but they said human rights law which has been specifically written to delete all human rights at the behest of the state (the Cult). Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights relates to the right to a private life. The crucial word here is *'except'*:

There shall be no interference by a public authority with the exercise of this right EXCEPT such as is in accordance with the law and is necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security, public safety or the economic wellbeing of the country, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others [My emphasis].

No interference *except* in accordance with the law means there *are* no 'human rights' *except* what EU governments decide you can have at their behest. 'As is necessary in a democratic society' explains that reference in the judgement and 'in the interests of national security, public safety or the economic well-being of the country, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others' gives the EU a coach and horses to ride through 'human rights' and scatter them in all directions. The judiciary is not a check and balance on government extremism; it is a vehicle to enforce it. This judgement was almost laughably predictable when the last thing the Cult wanted was a decision that went against mandatory vaccination. Judges rule over and over again to benefit the system of which they are a part. Vaccination disputes that come before them are invariably delivered in favour of doctors and authorities representing the view of the state which owns the judiciary. Oh, yes, and we have even had calls to stop putting 'Covid-19' on death certificates within 28 days of a 'positive test' because it is claimed the practice makes the 'vaccine' appear not to work. They are laughing at you.

The scale of madness, inhumanity and things to come was highlighted when those not 'vaccinated' for 'Covid' were refused evacuation from the Caribbean island of St Vincent during massive volcanic eruptions. Cruise ships taking residents to the safety of another island allowed only the 'vaccinated' to board and the rest were left to their fate. Even in life and death situations like this we see 'Covid' stripping people of their most basic human instincts and the insanity is even more extreme when you think that fake 'vaccine'-makers are not even claiming their body-manipulating concoctions stop 'infection' and 'transmission' of a 'virus' that doesn't exist. St Vincent Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves said: 'The chief medical officer will be identifying the persons already vaccinated so that we can get them on the ship.' Note again the power of the chief medical officer who, like Whitty in the UK, will be answering to the World Health Organization. This is the Cult network structure that has overridden politicians who 'follow the science' which means doing what WHO-controlled 'medical officers' and 'science advisers' tell them. Gonsalves even said that residents who were 'vaccinated' after the order so they could board the ships would still be refused entry due to possible side effects such as 'wooziness in the head'. The good news is that if they were woozy enough in the head they could qualify to be prime minister of St Vincent.

Microchipping freedom

The European judgement will be used at some point to justify moves to enforce the 'Covid' DNA-manipulating procedure. Sandra Ro, CEO of the Global Blockchain Business Council, told a World Economic Forum event that she hoped 'vaccine passports' would help to 'drive forced consent and standardisation' of global digital identity schemes: 'I'm hoping with the desire and global demand for some sort of vaccine passport – so that people can get travelling and working again – [it] will drive forced consent, standardisation, and frankly, cooperation across the world.' The lady is either not very bright, or thoroughly mendacious, to use the term 'forced consent'.

You do not 'consent' if you are forced – you *submit*. She was describing what the plan has been all along and that's to enforce a digital identity on every human without which they could not function. 'Vaccine passports' are opening the door and are far from the end goal. A digital identity would allow you to be tracked in everything you do in cyberspace and this is the same technique used by Cult-owned China to enforce its social credit system of total control. The ultimate 'passport' is planned to be a microchip as my books have warned for nearly 30 years. Those nice people at the Pentagon working for the Cult-controlled Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) claimed in April, 2021, they have developed a microchip inserted under the skin to detect 'asymptomatic Covid-19 infection' before it becomes an outbreak and a 'revolutionary filter' that can remove the 'virus' from the blood when attached to a dialysis machine. The only problems with this are that the 'virus' does not exist and people transmitting the 'virus' with no symptoms is brain-numbing bullshit. This is, of course, not a ruse to get people to be microchipped for very different reasons. DARPA also said it was producing a one-stop 'vaccine' for the 'virus' and all 'variants'. One of the most sinister organisations on Planet Earth is doing this? Better have it then. These people are insane because Wetiko that possesses them is insane.

Researchers from the Salk Institute in California announced they have created an embryo that is part human and part monkey. My books going back to the 1990s have exposed experiments in top secret underground facilities in the United States where humans are being crossed with animal and non-human 'extraterrestrial' species. They are now easing that long-developed capability into the public arena and there is much more to come given we are dealing with psychiatric basket cases. Talking of which – Elon Musk's scientists at Neuralink trained a monkey to play Pong and other puzzles on a computer screen using a joystick and when the monkey made the correct move a metal tube squirted banana smoothie into his mouth which is the basic technique for training humans into unquestioning compliance. Two Neuralink chips were in the monkey's skull and

more than 2,000 wires 'fanned out' into its brain. Eventually the monkey played a video game purely with its brain waves. Psychopathic narcissist Musk said the 'breakthrough' was a step towards putting Neuralink chips into human skulls and merging minds with artificial intelligence. *Exactly*. This man is so dark and Cult to his DNA.

World Economic Fascism (WEF)

The World Economic Forum is telling you the plan by the statements made at its many and various events. Cult-owned fascist YouTube CEO Susan Wojcicki spoke at the 2021 WEF Global Technology Governance Summit (see the name) in which 40 governments and 150 companies met to ensure 'the responsible design and deployment of emerging technologies'. Orwellian translation: 'Ensuring the design and deployment of long-planned technologies will advance the Cult agenda for control and censorship.' Freedom-destroyer and Nuremberg-bound Wojcicki expressed support for tech platforms like hers to censor content that is 'technically legal but could be harmful'. Who decides what is 'harmful'? She does and they do. 'Harmful' will be whatever the Cult doesn't want people to see and we have legislation proposed by the UK government that would censor content on the basis of 'harm' no matter if the information is fair, legal and provably true. Make that *especially* if it is fair, legal and provably true. Wojcicki called for a global coalition to be formed to enforce content moderation standards through automated censorship. This is a woman and mega-censor so self-deluded that she shamelessly accepted a 'free expression' award – *Wojcicki* – in an event sponsored by her own *YouTube*. They have no shame and no self-awareness.

You know that 'Covid' is a scam and Wojcicki a Cult operative when YouTube is censoring medical and scientific opinion purely on the grounds of whether it supports or opposes the Cult 'Covid' narrative. Florida governor Ron DeSantis compiled an expert panel with four professors of medicine from Harvard, Oxford, and Stanford Universities who spoke against forcing children and

vaccinated people to wear masks. They also said there was no proof that lockdowns reduced spread or death rates of 'Covid-19'. Cult-gofer Wojcicki and her YouTube deleted the panel video 'because it included content that contradicts the consensus of local and global health authorities regarding the efficacy of masks to prevent the spread of Covid-19'. This 'consensus' refers to what the Cult tells the World Health Organization to say and the WHO tells 'local health authorities' to do. Wojcicki knows this, of course. The panellists pointed out that censorship of scientific debate was responsible for deaths from many causes, but Wojcicki couldn't care less. She would not dare go against what she is told and as a disgrace to humanity she wouldn't want to anyway. The UK government is seeking to pass a fascist 'Online Safety Bill' to specifically target with massive fines and other means non-censored video and social media platforms to make them censor 'lawful but harmful' content like the Cult-owned Facebook, Twitter, Google and YouTube. What is 'lawful but harmful' would be decided by the fascist Blair-created Ofcom.

Another WEF obsession is a cyber-attack on the financial system and this is clearly what the Cult has planned to take down the bank accounts of everyone – except theirs. Those that think they have enough money for the Cult agenda not to matter to them have got a big lesson coming if they continue to ignore what is staring them in the face. The World Economic Forum, funded by Gates and fronted by Klaus Schwab, announced it would be running a 'simulation' with the Russian government and global banks of just such an attack called Cyber Polygon 2021. What they simulate – as with the 'Covid' Event 201 – they plan to instigate. The WEF is involved in a project with the Cult-owned Carnegie Endowment for International Peace called the WEF-Carnegie Cyber Policy Initiative which seeks to merge Wall Street banks, 'regulators' (I love it) and intelligence agencies to 'prevent' (arrange and allow) a cyber-attack that would bring down the global financial system as long planned by those that control the WEF and the Carnegie operation. The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace sent an instruction to First World

War US President Woodrow Wilson not to let the war end before society had been irreversibly transformed.

The Wuhan lab diversion

As I close, the Cult-controlled authorities and lapdog media are systematically pushing 'the virus was released from the Wuhan lab' narrative. There are two versions – it happened by accident and it happened on purpose. Both are nonsense. The perceived existence of the never-shown-to-exist 'virus' is vital to sell the impression that there is actually an infective agent to deal with and to allow the endless potential for terrifying the population with 'variants' of a 'virus' that does not exist. The authorities at the time of writing are going with the 'by accident' while the alternative media is promoting the 'on purpose'. Cable news host Tucker Carlson who has questioned aspects of lockdown and 'vaccine' compulsion has bought the Wuhan lab story. 'Everyone now agrees' he said. Well, I don't and many others don't and the question is *why* does the system and its media suddenly 'agree'? When the media moves as one unit with a narrative it is always a lie – witness the hour by hour mendacity of the 'Covid' era. Why would this Cult-owned combination which has unleashed lies like machine gun fire suddenly 'agree' to tell the truth??

Much of the alternative media is buying the lie because it fits the conspiracy narrative, but it's the *wrong* conspiracy. The real conspiracy is that *there is no virus* and that is what the Cult is desperate to hide. The idea that the 'virus' was released by accident is ludicrous when the whole 'Covid' hoax was clearly long-planned and waiting to be played out as it was so fast in accordance with the Rockefeller document and Event 201. So they prepared everything in detail over decades and then sat around strumming their fingers waiting for an 'accidental' release from a bio-lab? *What??* It's crazy. Then there's the 'on purpose' claim. You want to circulate a 'deadly virus' and hide the fact that you've done so and you release it down the street from the highest-level bio-lab in China? I repeat – *What??*

You would release it far from that lab to stop any association being made. But, no, we'll do it in a place where the connection was certain to be made. Why would you need to scam 'cases' and 'deaths' and pay hospitals to diagnose 'Covid-19' if you had a real 'virus'? What are sections of the alternative media doing believing this crap? Where were all the mass deaths in Wuhan from a 'deadly pathogen' when the recovery to normal life after the initial propaganda was dramatic in speed? Why isn't the 'deadly pathogen' now circulating all over China with bodies in the street? Once again we have the technique of tell them what they want to hear and they will likely believe it. The alternative media has its 'conspiracy' and with Carlson it fits with his 'China is the danger' narrative over years. China *is* a danger as a global Cult operations centre, but not for this reason. The Wuhan lab story also has the potential to instigate conflict with China when at some stage the plan is to trigger a Problem-Reaction-Solution confrontation with the West. Question everything – *everything* – and especially when the media agrees on a common party line.

Third wave ... fourth wave ... fifth wave ...

As the book went into production the world was being set up for more lockdowns and a 'third wave' supported by invented 'variants' that were increasing all the time and will continue to do so in public statements and computer programs, but not in reality. India became the new Italy in the 'Covid' propaganda campaign and we were told to be frightened of the new 'Indian strain'. Somehow I couldn't find it within myself to do so. A document produced for the UK government entitled 'Summary of further modelling of easing of restrictions – Roadmap Step 2' declared that a third wave was inevitable (of course when it's in the script) and it would be the fault of children and those who refuse the health-destroying fake 'Covid vaccine'. One of the computer models involved came from the Cult-owned *Imperial College* and the other from Warwick University which I wouldn't trust to tell me the date in a calendar factory. The document states that both models presumed extremely high uptake

of the 'Covid vaccines' and didn't allow for 'variants'. The document states: 'The resurgence is a result of some people (mostly children) being ineligible for vaccination; others choosing not to receive the vaccine; and others being vaccinated but not perfectly protected.' The mendacity takes the breath away. Okay, blame those with a brain who won't take the DNA-modifying shots and put more pressure on children to have it as 'trials' were underway involving children as young as six months with parents who give insanity a bad name. Massive pressure is being put on the young to have the fake 'vaccine' and child age consent limits have been systematically lowered around the world to stop parents intervening. Most extraordinary about the document was its claim that the 'third wave' would be driven by 'the resurgence in both hospitalisations and deaths ... dominated by *those that have received two doses of the vaccine*, comprising around 60-70% of the wave respectively'. The predicted peak of the 'third wave' suggested 300 deaths per day with 250 of them *fully 'vaccinated' people*. How many more lies do acquiescers need to be told before they see the obvious? Those who took the job to 'protect themselves' are projected to be those who mostly get sick and die? So what's in the 'vaccine'? The document went on:

It is possible that a summer of low prevalence could be followed by substantial increases in incidence over the following autumn and winter. Low prevalence in late summer should not be taken as an indication that SARS-CoV-2 has retreated or that the population has high enough levels of immunity to prevent another wave.

They are telling you the script and while many British people believed 'Covid' restrictions would end in the summer of 2021 the government was preparing for them to be ongoing. Authorities were awarding contracts for 'Covid marshals' to police the restrictions with contracts starting in July, 2021, and going through to January 31st, 2022, and the government was advertising for 'Media Buying Services' to secure media propaganda slots worth a potential £320 million for 'Covid-19 campaigns' with a contract not ending until March, 2022. The recipient – via a list of other front companies – was reported to be American media marketing giant Omnicom Group

Inc. While money is no object for 'Covid' the UK waiting list for all other treatment – including life-threatening conditions – passed 4.5 million. Meantime the Cult is seeking to control all official 'inquiries' to block revelations about what has really been happening and why. It must not be allowed to – we need Nuremberg jury trials in every country. The cover-up doesn't get more obvious than appointing ultra-Zionist professor Philip Zelikow to oversee two dozen US virologists, public health officials, clinicians, former government officials and four American 'charitable foundations' to 'learn the lessons' of the 'Covid' debacle. The personnel will be those that created and perpetuated the 'Covid' lies while Zelikow is the former executive director of the 9/11 Commission who ensured that the truth about those attacks never came out and produced a report that must be among the most mendacious and manipulative documents ever written – see *The Trigger* for the detailed exposure of the almost unimaginable 9/11 story in which Sabbatians can be found at every level.

Passive no more

People are increasingly challenging the authorities with amazing numbers of people taking to the streets in London well beyond the ability of the Face-Nappies to stop them. Instead the Nappies choose situations away from the mass crowds to target, intimidate, and seek to promote the impression of 'violent protestors'. One such incident happened in London's Hyde Park. Hundreds of thousands walking through the streets in protest against 'Covid' fascism were ignored by the Cult-owned BBC and most of the rest of the mainstream media, but they delighted in reporting how police were injured in 'clashes with protestors'. The truth was that a group of people gathered in Hyde Park at the end of one march when most had gone home and they were peacefully having a good time with music and chat. Face-Nappies who couldn't deal with the full-march crowd then waded in with their batons and got more than they bargained for. Instead of just standing for this criminal brutality the crowd used their numerical superiority to push the Face-Nappies out of the

park. Eventually the Nappies turned and ran. Unfortunately two or three idiots in the crowd threw drink cans striking two officers which gave the media and the government the image they wanted to discredit the 99.9999 percent who were peaceful. The idiots walked straight into the trap and we must always be aware of potential agent provocateurs used by the authorities to discredit their targets.

This response from the crowd – the can people apart – must be a turning point when the public no longer stand by while the innocent are arrested and brutally attacked by the Face-Nappies. That doesn't mean to be violent, that's the last thing we need. We'll leave the violence to the Face-Nappies and government. But it does mean that when the Face-Nappies use violence against peaceful people the numerical superiority is employed to stop them and make citizen's arrests or Common Law arrests for a breach of the peace. The time for being passive in the face of fascism is over.

We are the many, they are the few, and we need to make that count before there is no freedom left and our children and grandchildren face an ongoing fascist nightmare.

COME ON PEOPLE – IT'S TIME.

One final thought ...

The power of love
A force from above
Cleaning my soul
Flame on burn desire
Love with tongues of fire
Purge the soul
Make love your goal

I'll protect you from the hooded claw
Keep the vampires from your door
When the chips are down I'll be around
With my undying, death-defying
Love for you

Envy will hurt itself
Let yourself be beautiful
Sparkling love, flowers
And pearls and pretty girls
Love is like an energy
Rushin' rushin' inside of me

This time we go sublime
Lovers entwine, divine, divine,
Love is danger, love is pleasure
Love is pure – the only treasure

I'm so in love with you
Purge the soul
Make love your goal

The power of love
A force from above
Cleaning my soul
The power of love
A force from above
A sky-scraping dove

Flame on burn desire
Love with tongues of fire
Purge the soul
Make love your goal

Frankie Goes To Hollywood

APPENDIX

Cowan-Kaufman-Morell Statement on Virus Isolation (SOVI)

Isolation: The action of isolating; the fact or condition of being isolated or standing alone; separation from other things or persons; solitariness

Oxford English Dictionary

The controversy over whether the SARS-CoV-2 virus has ever been isolated or purified continues. However, using the above definition, common sense, the laws of logic and the dictates of science, any unbiased person must come to the conclusion that the SARS-CoV-2 virus has never been isolated or purified. As a result, no confirmation of the virus' existence can be found. The logical, common sense, and scientific consequences of this fact are:

- the structure and composition of something not shown to exist can't be known, including the presence, structure, and function of any hypothetical spike or other proteins;
- the genetic sequence of something that has never been found can't be known;
- "variants" of something that hasn't been shown to exist can't be known;
- it's impossible to demonstrate that SARS-CoV-2 causes a disease called Covid-19.

In as concise terms as possible, here's the proper way to isolate, characterize and demonstrate a new virus. First, one takes samples (blood, sputum, secretions) from many people (e.g. 500) with symptoms which are unique and specific enough to characterize an illness. Without mixing these samples with ANY tissue or products that also contain genetic material, the virologist macerates, filters and ultracentrifuges i.e. *purifies* the specimen. This common virology technique, done for decades to isolate bacteriophages¹ and so-called giant viruses in every virology lab, then allows the virologist to demonstrate with electron microscopy thousands of identically sized and shaped particles. These particles are the isolated and purified virus.

These identical particles are then checked for uniformity by physical and/or microscopic techniques. Once the purity is determined, the particles may be further characterized. This would include examining the structure, morphology, and chemical composition of the particles. Next, their genetic makeup is characterized by extracting the genetic material directly from the purified particles and using genetic-sequencing techniques, such as Sanger sequencing, that have also been around for decades. Then one does an analysis to confirm that these uniform particles are exogenous (outside) in origin as a virus is conceptualized to be, and not the normal breakdown products of dead and dying tissues.² (As of May 2020, we know that virologists have no way to determine whether the particles they're seeing are viruses or just normal breakdown products of dead and dying tissues.)³

1 Isolation, characterization and analysis of bacteriophages from the haloalkaline lake Elmenteita, Kenya Julia Khayeli Akhwale et al, PLOS One, Published: April 25, 2019.
<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0215734> – accessed 2/15/21

2 "Extracellular Vesicles Derived From Apoptotic Cells: An Essential Link Between Death and Regeneration," Maojiao Li et al, Frontiers in Cell and Developmental Biology, 2020 October 2.
<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fcell.2020.573511/full> – accessed 2/15/21

If we have come this far then we have fully isolated, characterized, and genetically sequenced an exogenous virus particle. However, we still have to show it is causally related to a disease. This is carried out by exposing a group of healthy subjects (animals are usually used) to this isolated, purified virus in the manner in which the disease is thought to be transmitted. If the animals get sick with the same disease, as confirmed by clinical and autopsy findings, one has now shown that the virus actually causes a disease. This demonstrates infectivity and transmission of an infectious agent.

None of these steps has even been attempted with the SARS-CoV-2 virus, nor have all these steps been successfully performed for any so-called pathogenic virus. Our research indicates that a single study showing these steps does not exist in the medical literature.

Instead, since 1954, virologists have taken unpurified samples from a relatively few people, often less than ten, with a similar disease. They then minimally process this sample and inoculate this unpurified sample onto tissue culture containing usually four to six other types of material – all of which contain identical genetic material as to what is called a “virus.” The tissue culture is starved and poisoned and naturally disintegrates into many types of particles, some of which contain genetic material. Against all common sense, logic, use of the English language and scientific integrity, this process is called “virus isolation.” This brew containing fragments of genetic material from many sources is then subjected to genetic analysis, which then creates in a computer-simulation process the alleged sequence of the alleged virus, a so called in silico genome. At no time is an actual virus confirmed by electron microscopy. At no time is a genome extracted and sequenced from an actual virus. This is scientific fraud.

The observation that the unpurified specimen — inoculated onto tissue culture along with toxic antibiotics, bovine fetal tissue, amniotic fluid and other tissues — destroys the kidney tissue onto which it is inoculated is given as evidence of the virus' existence and pathogenicity. This is scientific fraud.

From now on, when anyone gives you a paper that suggests the SARS-CoV-2 virus has been isolated, please check the methods sections. If the researchers used Vero cells or any other culture method, you know that their process was not isolation. You will hear the following excuses for why actual isolation isn't done:

1. There were not enough virus particles found in samples from patients to analyze.
2. Viruses are intracellular parasites; they can't be found outside the cell in this manner.

If No. 1 is correct, and we can't find the virus in the sputum of sick people, then on what evidence do we think the virus is dangerous or even lethal? If No. 2 is correct, then how is the virus spread from person to person? We are told it emerges from the cell to infect others. Then why isn't it possible to find it?

Finally, questioning these virology techniques and conclusions is not some distraction or divisive issue. Shining the light on this truth is essential to stop this terrible fraud that humanity is confronting. For, as we now know, if the virus has never been isolated, sequenced or shown to cause illness, if the virus is imaginary, then why are we wearing masks, social distancing and putting the whole world into prison?

Finally, if pathogenic viruses don't exist, then what is going into those injectable devices erroneously called "vaccines," and what is their purpose? This scientific question is the most urgent and relevant one of our time.

We are correct. The SARS-CoV2 virus does not exist.

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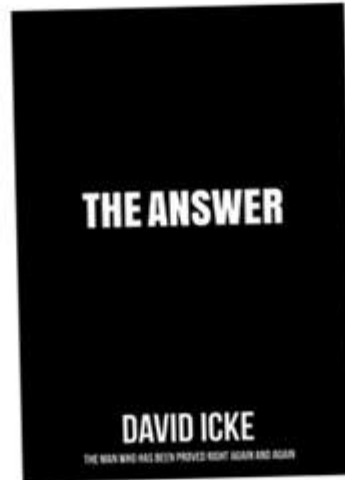
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noun

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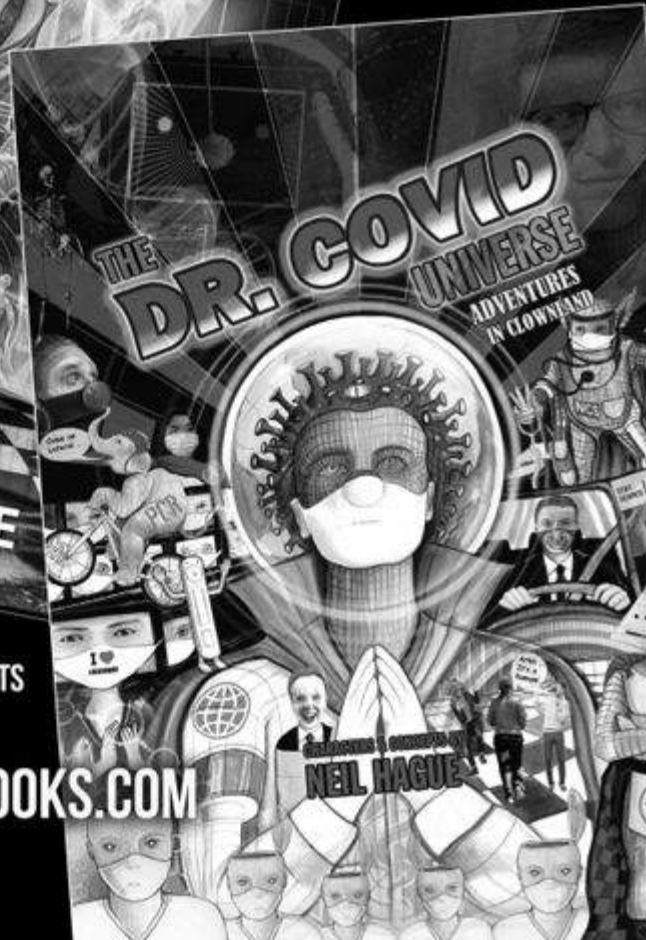
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