

A Time To Every Purpose

By
Ian Andrew

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Cover Illustration: Ryan Maton

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20:15 Sunday, May 17, 2020 – London

She stood on the Mall opposite the entrance to Horse Guards and gazed along the flag-lined boulevard towards the Palace. A soft spring breeze gently billowed and caressed its way down the two parallel lines of red, white and black. The folds of the nearest flag shook out and the Swastika unfurled against the turquoise blue of a London sky.

She looked away from the symbol of the Reich as the ForeFone buzzed on her arm. The unknown number icon flashed on the screen but she reached up to her earpiece and clicked the connect toggle anyway.

“Leigh Wilson, hello.”

“Doctor Wilson, it’s Heinrich Steinmann, I’m so sorry to disturb you on your weekend.” The language was English, the accent clipped, precise and stereotypical of an Oxbridge education. Yet just in his vowels there was the trace of mid-Germanic origins. Leigh’s senses sharpened. Mid-Germanic yet educated at the best universities in England normally indicated a particular type of Party operative. That alone would have made her cautious but the fact that she didn’t know who Heinrich Steinmann was added to her sense of foreboding. Her mobile number was not in any directory listing due to her status as a Senior Government Science Officer yet here was this stranger calling her.

Leigh responded cautiously, "Guten Tag Herr Steinmann, Wie geht es Ihnen?"

"Thank you Doctor Wilson but English will be fine and yes, I'm fine too, thank you for asking. I was wondering where you were at present?"

"I'm sorry, but would you mind telling me who you are before I tell you where I am?"

"Ah, my apologies, I forgot. You've been on leave. I'm Major Lohse's replacement."

"His replacement? I didn't know he was leaving."

There was a momentary pause and when Steinmann spoke again his accent had softened, subtly. "No. That's right. It was rather sudden. A family emergency in the Homeland. It would appear his eldest boy was involved in some... mmm, unpleasantness, at the Munich Institute. We do all trust the Major will return to duty swiftly but," he paused a beat before continuing, "as you can imagine, it will depend on the outcome of enquiries. Yes?"

"Yes, I see," and she did, clearly. Although she had no idea what the unpleasantness referred to was, it didn't matter. A Major in the Reich Security Directorate did not, could not, have members of their family being anything less than model citizens. Depending on what young Lohse had gotten himself into, Lohse senior was facing a halt to his career, perhaps a demotion or two or... She didn't finish the thought. "So is it Major Steinmann?" Leigh asked.

"Well, no. Formally I suppose I am Colonel Steinmann of the Allgemeine-SS, Special Investigations and Security Directorate. But please call me Heinrich, we shall be working together after all and I find formality, so, um, formal." Heinrich laughed lightly at his own humour.

Leigh felt a stab of adrenaline in her stomach. Her breathing had quickened and she could feel sweat running down the back of her neck. The temperature was a seasonal fifteen degrees Celsius, the normal average for London in May, yet her whole body convulsed in small shakes more associated with a freezing winter wind. She struggled for control of her

voice.

“Oh!” She was high by an octave. She covered her mouth and coughed. Her mind screamed at her to get a grip on herself. She coughed again. “Excuse me Heinrich, my apologies. So, what can I do for you?” She knew he would have expected his title to get a reaction and she was annoyed at herself for allowing it to show so obviously. She imagined him smiling at her discomfort as he spoke again.

“As I said, I was just wondering where you were?” He asked plainly and without offering any explanation as to why he wished to know.

“In the Mall, opposite Horse Guards, I was going for a walk,” she answered quickly. Her mind shouted so loudly to calm down she almost flinched from the noise in her head. “Why do you ask?” she managed to say a little slower and a lot more calmly than she felt.

“Excellent, I’m so pleased to have caught you nearby. My apologies for interrupting your walk, but I was wondering if you could come into work? Just for a short while. We have a little query with regard to the experiment Professor Faber has left running and I’m afraid he isn’t available. I realise my request is terribly inconvenient on a Sunday evening but I would appreciate your input.” Heinrich spoke in such a non-confrontational, pleasant and charming way that anyone with no knowledge of his professional specialisation would have felt flattered to be asked.

Leigh knew it was all just for effect. She knew from his title exactly what Heinrich Steinmann was and no one, not even the Chiefs of Staff of the Reich forces, would have turned down his ‘request’ for ‘input’.

“Of course,” she heard herself say. “I can be there in half an hour.”

“Oh no, please. Please allow me to have a car pick you up. Just stay where you are and we’ll save you the walk. I’ll see you shortly Doctor Wilson.”

The call had already disconnected but she distractedly pressed the end call button on the wireless earpiece. Continu-

ing to stare at the Fone's blank screen, she played out the scenarios in her head. There was nowhere to run to and nothing to do but wait for the car. If they had finally caught up to her then the best she could hope for was a swift processing. At worst, if they thought she had information on others, then her next seventy-two hours would not be so pleasant. She reached inside the concealed double-lined pocket in her light jacket and fingered the small gelatine capsule that nestled there. She would wait for the car. It wouldn't take long to figure out what was going to happen.

If they travelled east to her work in the Todt Laboratories then maybe things were not as bad as she feared. Although there was a newly built detention facility in the compound she would know straight away if they headed for it. She would stay alert to the possibilities that Colonel Steinmann was playing a game with her, but she would wait. But if they took her north-west to the Harrow Holding Centre, then there would be nothing to wait for.

Leigh smiled. For her thirty-five years of life she had worked her way through the system, gained academic honours and achieved a senior government role. She was a leading scientist on the most far-reaching scientific experiment ever undertaken in the eighty years of the Greater Germanic Reich, or arguably in the whole history of humanity. She had run a good race. If it ended now, well that was what God intended. If not, she would continue her work to undo everything; in His name.

2

It was a 1930s built, three-bedroom, detached property. Solid, reliable and updated to include what were once luxuries but were now essentials for a man of his social position. Thomas Dunhill reflected on the amount of effort he had expended to fit-in where he shouldn't be.

The solar-panel central heating, water management system, triple-glazing and multipoint recycling did at least make him feel he was contributing to the environment. Aside from the energy improvements, he had also overseen the construction of an en-suite bathroom, a state-of-the-art kitchen and an extension into the large rear garden for the domestic help. Finally, he had designed and installed a stunning audio-visual entertainment system. The furniture and décor that dressed the property reflected money and excellent taste. The former quite common but the latter, sadly, in short supply in the leafy suburbs of North London.

His house was situated near to the end of a quiet, tree-lined street that was home to a few doctors, a pharmacist, some military officers, a professional singer and a scattering of City business types. The predominant cars in the driveways were high-end BMW, Porsche or Mercedes fleet cars. The majority of residents were native English, like Thomas, but there were one or two Homelanders in the bigger houses at the far end of the road. A Dutch family lived next door but one and the singer, who lived opposite, was originally from Paris. The

traffic was never heavy as the road was not a cut-through from anywhere to anywhere.

Thomas did love his street and how, at this time of the year, the muted squeals of pleasure from playing children would accompany the sun as it dipped into the serrated hues of a yellow, orange and red setting. The domesticity of the suburb given exotic overtones by an evening chorus of shrieking Swifts, fresh in from their migratory flights from Sub-Saharan Africa.

But Thomas couldn't hear any of those sounds tonight. Nor could he see the setting sun. His lounge room was cloistered by heavy curtains across the bay windows to his back and the only illumination came from a soft glow uplighter in the corner of the room. The designer furniture had been moved against the walls and he stood in the central cleared area with five others.

All six stood in a loose circle facing toward a small table that had been covered with a white linen cloth. To his left were Amanda and Terrance. To his right, Liza and Ben. Opposite him at the far side of the table and in front of the entrance door to the lounge, was Christine. He had been friends with these six since their university days in Newcastle. They had lived apart from each other, they had lived in the same house as each other, they had loved and fallen out and made up, but throughout all their friendship remained.

He had watched Amanda and Terrance as their university fling grew into a love that was solid and strong. Eventually they became husband and wife. Liza and Ben also grew together and while they hadn't married, they had lived with each other for almost seven years. Thomas and Christine remained just good friends, as they always had. Every time he saw her his mental clock of missed opportunities clicked up by another one. So many clicks he didn't even sigh inwardly anymore. He smiled at Christine and then looked down to the table that stood in the middle of the six friends.

On it stood a single item.

A small porcelain statue, standing fifteen centimetres tall. A perfect circle mounted on a small, pyramid base. Within the circle six finely twisted strands of porcelain formed six spokes radiating into a smaller circle at the centre. The wheel had been in Thomas's family since the 17th Century. Created by a master craftsman in the North of England, it represented the last physical link Thomas had with his heritage. He had changed his family name, his personal history, he had forsworn in public any connection to the family he had loved and respected. He had broken any links that could have traced him back to the people he came from. Yet he had kept his belief inside and he had kept the wheel. Safe and protected. The way he felt when, in private with trusted friends, he professed his true self.

Christine led them as if prompted by Thomas's thoughts. She raised her hands in a welcoming gesture and spoke in a soft and gentle rhythm.

“Dear friends, in the presence of God, amidst this circle and in our own company let us profess our beliefs.”

Bowing their heads, the six, in hushed and reverent tones, began to speak the sacred words that had sustained mankind for almost two thousand years. Beliefs that had grown and adapted as each new Messenger of God was revealed through the centuries.

“We believe in One True God, Creator of all that is seen and unseen. We believe in the Holy messengers, led by the First Prophet, Abraham, who taught us the word. We believe in the Holy Prophet, Jesus, who was heralded as the one Messiah, embraced by all the peoples of Earth. He banished discord and united the world in peace. We believe in the Last Prophet, who made us stronger. We believe in the realisation of Moksha, in the way of the light through Buddha and in the unifying force of harmony within the universe.”

They raised their heads to look at the person opposite them in the circle. Thomas looked into Christine's eyes and as always, was amazed by how truly beautiful she was. He smiled

as he began, with the others, to profess the central tenets.

“We believe that blessed are the peacemakers, who shall be called children of God. We promise to love one another as we would be loved and to turn the other cheek to aggressors. We look for forgiveness and await the world to come.”

They paused in harmony, bowed their heads and reflected on their own acts since the last time they had met. At no set moment one of them would feel the urge to speak and recount the good and the bad that had influenced their life in the intervening time.

Thomas looked to Ben. Since last they had gathered Ben and Liza had discovered they were to become parents. Liza was due in six to seven months. Thomas thought a winter solstice baby would be a fine thing. He watched as Ben raised his bowed head and began to speak.

But Thomas did not hear him.

The shaped-charge explosive that had been placed around the bay window detonated with a force that took all sound away.

Simultaneously the front door to Thomas’s house was blown off its hinges, the back door was smashed in by a leaden entry ram and all power was cut, taking away what little light had been in the lounge room. In a smooth, well-practised and much used manoeuvre, the black-clad Kommando moved into the house. Three soldiers entered directly into the lounge room through the remnants of the shattered window and shredded curtains. Each man trained the laser sighting of their Heckler & Koch machine pistols onto the head of their designated target.

Four more Kommando entered through what was left of the front door frame. One covered the hallway and bottom of the stairs while the rest moved swiftly into the lounge room through the door opposite the bay window. They also trained their weapons on their designated targets. The four Kommando personnel who entered through the back door cleared the rest

of the house in little more than a minute. It was swift, professional and brutal.

The six targets were not expected to put up any resistance. Even if they hadn't been guided by their beliefs, the friends could not have resisted. In the shock wave caused by the initial explosions Thomas had his eardrums ruptured. He had instinctively crouched at the noise but had stayed up on his feet. Peering through the dust and the swirling black shapes around him, he could see Ben lying on the floor. A piece of window frame had smashed into his friend's face and he lay bloodied beside the debris. Thomas looked left and right and saw the rest of his friends crouching, like he was. Frightened, shocked, cowed. Except Christine.

Christine stood tall, looking down at him. In the faint blue-black light of dusk filtering in through the obliterated window he saw a smile on her lips. He tilted his head in query and looked at the woman he had loved for the last fifteen years. She looked back at him and then down at the table. He followed her gaze but stopped as he saw the stain of red spreading across her shirt. What looked like a finely crafted crystal spear jutted out of her right breast. He couldn't understand what he was looking at. He frowned and looked back at Christine's face. She gazed into his eyes and then he saw her lips move.

"I love you Thomas."

He watched as she began to fall but saw nothing else as his world plunged into black. He felt the hood's fabric around his face just as his hands were yanked behind his back and tight restraints jolted onto his wrists. He was pushed, pulled, lifted and then forcibly thrown down. He braced for a hard surface but felt the soft yield of a lawn. He lay still and tried to hear through deafened ears. Had he been able to see he would have been amazed.

The quiet suburban street was transformed from its norm. Three detachments of Special Forces had sealed off both ends of the road. They had, quietly and with their normal efficiency, moved all the other residents out of their houses. The cordon

had been secured before the commander, Johan Lowther, gave the 'Go' order. He now stood and listened to the radio chatter from his Kommandos. A small, charred tear of curtain fabric fluttered silently down, twisted in the air and landed gently on Lowther's lapel. He reached up and, with a delicate touch, dusted off his pristine uniform. The blackened remnant fell away and revealed again his subdued-pattern, double lightning strike insignia.

"Building clear. Tango-Three unconscious from flying debris, Tango-Four is dead from a glass shard. Looks like one of the detonator cords on the window slipped and blew in the bottom left of the frame. Other targets secured and on way out now, your orders?"

SS-Major Lowther raised his right hand to the throat mic he wore and acknowledged the report.

"Good work and don't worry about the det cord, it saves us transporting six of them. I don't want to waste time lifting unconscious bodies, just finish it here. Leave the corpses, torch the house. Escort the others to the transport. Liaise with the Fire Department so it's only this piece of shit that is razed. The good citizens of Stanmore might object otherwise. I want you all up and out of here within the half hour. See you back in Northwood. Oh, and Carl, remember to post the sign." Lowther keyed off his mic and turned on his heel towards his transport. He was very satisfied and knew that his senior operators could look after the rest of the night's necessities without him hovering over them.

SS-Sergeant-Major Carl Schern looked down at the slumped figure of Ben Stevens. He moved the sight of his HK-MP19 so that the small red dot of the laser illuminated onto Ben's brow and pulled the trigger twice. He then nodded to his remaining squad members to carry out the rest of their orders. The main power switch was tripped back on so they could work with more haste. It also allowed his men to see what was worth 'saving' from the house before they set it on fire.

The kerosene cans were emptied throughout the upper and lower floors and once done the final squad members made

their way out. Carl stopped and checked by radio that all his men were clear. He took a last look around and was about to leave when he saw the table in the middle of the lounge room. Its white cloth was soiled by dust and debris and Tango-Four's blood. But sitting upright on it, unharmed in any way, was the six-spoke wheel. He walked over to the table, picked the statue up and shook his head. He was slightly incredulous that something so fine and delicate and obviously very old could survive the violence that had been visited upon this place. Somewhere deep in his psyche he knew there was a larger significance to the symbolism but he ignored it. He looked again at the statue and momentarily thought about pocketing it. He smiled as he remembered this little flimsy statue carried a death sentence for anyone found possessing it. The spoils of war were not that important. He dropped it on the floor between the two bodies and crushed it underfoot.

Less than twenty minutes after the initial blast, the street was cleared of Special Forces, the remaining prisoners were being transported to the Harrow Holding Centre, the Fire Department were monitoring the blazing house and a sign had been posted on the front lawn:

**This property has been identified
as a gathering place for the
Turner Religious Sect.**

**Its use is outlawed by order of the
Reich High Command.**

**All citizens are forbidden to congregate
in its vicinity on
Pain of Death.**

It was the same wording that had been in use since the beginning of the Reich. It was the same wording that had been posted throughout the world from the German Southern African Colonies to the west coast of the German States of

America and to the east coast of Germanic Russia. The High Command boasted of two things; the sun never set on the Reich and the Reich never stopped in its hunt of Turners.