



CHAPTER 7

OSS X-2 Operations Headquarters London, England

Morse sat drumming his fingers on the oak table as the SIGSALY encoding system buzzed and crackled in its efforts to synchronize with Los Angeles, California.

Finally the sounds cleared. "Hello, Chief Wetmore. Chandler Morse here. How are you?"

From 5,456 miles to his west came the reply, "Swell, Chandler, just swell. We've had a little excitement out here."

"Excitement? What could possibly excite an old salt like you, Chief?"

"Not much usually, my English friend. But this is good enough to raise a twitter. Somebody tried to get to our favorite gizmo."

"Somebody tried to nip off with Orion's Eye? Need I ask ... Were they successful?"

"Nope, bungled this one too ... but it got a little hairy."

"Well, well, I think that explains the flurry of ULTRA intercepts we've had coded in the Lorenz Cipher. Those German High Command blokes are in a tizzy. Himmler's headquarters and Goering's mob at the Luftwaffe High Command are trading some rather nasty insults. It seems Goering has given orders directly to Nicolaus in Mexico. Herr

Himmler is furious! It's quite jolly to watch them twist each other's knickers, don't you think?"

"Yah, knickers ... Hey, Chandler, any word on a location for our boy Otto Hauptmann?"

"Oh, Yes. Sorry, that's why I called you. We seem to have lost him, old chap."

"Lost him? What the hell do you mean, lost him?"

"Well, our Commander Dillon reported that Otto just dropped out of sight in Chile."

"Is Dillon on the hunt?"

"I'm sure he is. But you must remember, Chief, Dillon's only working for us on the side. He can't really press a search with anyone else in Naval Intelligence just yet."

"Okay, okay ... I've got it. We'll make the report from here and keep our sources mum. Good work, Chandler. Anything else?"

"That's it, Mr. Wetmore. Give my regards to the major. Oh, one more thing. We have an ULTRA intercept of a message from *Kriegsmarine* Headquarters to a submarine at sea. It mentioned Himmler and our Project. Decoding's not complete but it shouldn't be long. I'll let you know if it's anything interesting. Cheerio for now, old chap. London out."

**Air Defense Wing Headquarters
Los Angeles, California
Same Time**

Mead parked the Plymouth a block south of the eight story stone building that served as headquarters for all air defense operations on the southwest coast.

Civilian volunteers and military personnel scurried in and out of the large revolving doors that faced South Flower Street. They manned the labyrinth of offices and the rooftop observation posts twenty-four hours a day.

Mead only wanted a look around. He knew that the attack had not penetrated to Orion's Eye and he didn't want to disclose his role beyond the few who knew of his interest in it. Passing through the revolving door, he entered the elevator, indicating 5 with a spread of his fingers to the uniformed operator.

The scissoring safety gate slid shut and the cage lurched up as he thought, *Bonfoey can't be here yet. If it is him ... has he got friends?*

The car lurched to a stop and the gate opened. Mead exited, looking up and down the corridor where the 1st Fighter Control Squadron had set up its training and test operation. A uniformed Los Angeles policeman slouched against the wall near an office door about twenty feet away.

Mead approached him. "Good morning, Officer. May I go in?"

The policeman responded, "Sorry, sir, they're still talking with that guard in there." He slowly straightened up and shrugged his shoulders. "Gonna be awhile, I reckon."

"Is he with the LAPD or Military Police?"

"Both, Major."

"Thank you, Officer."

Mead turned down the hall toward a sign that announced *HQ 1st Fighter Control Squadron*. Entering through the frosted glass door he responded to the duty sergeant's call for

attention, "At ease ... as you were. Sergeant, I need a phone."

"Right this way, sir."

Led into a small office with a bare desk, a typewriter and the telephone, his first call went to Chief Wetmore. "Any background stuff on Bonfoey, Chief?"

Wetmore's replied in the negative. No one seemed to have a record of the captain. At least not that he could find yet.

"Okay, keep digging, Chief."

With just a second's delay, he added, "Oh, Chief, has B—?"

But the call was already disconnected.

Retrieving a crumbled note from his tunic pocket he dialed the number it contained. "General Nielsen, please ... Major Mead calling."

Nielsen came on the phone, "Mead, what in hell's going on? Nobody's telling me shit!"

"Not much, General. I'm here at the 1st Fighter HQ. They're still talking with the guard. Nothing's missing. Looks like they botched it up, but these people are serious. Damn it, this could have been deadly. But I'm not sure your soldiers realize it's a try at stealing Orion's Eye. What I'm hearing is that they think it's some kind of two-bit robbery attempt. By the way, General, is Bonfoey still out there at March Field?"

"Far as I know, Mead. I just put out a call for him to get over to my office."

"General, I don't want anyone else to know my connection to this thing. Just you and Lieutenant Gibbons. Okay?"

"Whatever you say, son. Makes sense to me. God damn it, boy ... keep me posted!"

Mead hung up the black phone, idly straightening its stiff cord as he pondered events. *Things are happening, but I'll be damned if I can find anything to act on. Just keep on watching until we get this thing out to sea.*

**4230 Mayfield Place
Los Angeles, California**

Elma Gochais sat on the oak wood floor with her two boys. The toddler, Bobby, squirmed in a walker seat, trying gamely to reach the wooden toy train that three-year-old Tommy maneuvered around deftly with his left hand. His withered right hand trailed behind, but never seemed to get in the way of whatever he wanted to do.

Elma's father, Harvey Palmer, sat on the sofa, perched on the edge of the cushion with his hands in his lap. He said, "The hospital bill will all be paid by the Shriners, but we still don't know about the doctor's bill." He pursed his lips as he always did when he was thinking.

Her mother called from the kitchen where she busily cleaned up the lunch dishes, "Elma, have you heard from Donny?"

"No, mother. I expected a call by now from San Francisco."

Reatha Palmer said, "Doesn't he know we have to take care of Tommy's situation?" She slammed a handful of silverware onto the wooden counter.

Elma replied, "Yes, mother, of course."

She knew no other answer would suffice. "Thanks for your help, dad. I know Donny will be happy to hear all this too."

Tommy fended off one more attempt by his little brother, moving the wooden train just out of reach.

“You too little for train.”

OSS Safe House Los Angeles, California.

The long black hood of the 1940 Packard convertible nosed in by the curb and stopped.

The four women in the car stared in awe at the beautiful Spanish style house and its manicured grounds.

Jo broke the silence. “Betty, are you sure you want to go in alone?”

“Are you kidding? That’s the only way I’m going in. Besides, you’ve got to get your father’s car back to him.”

“If this is your friend’s house, Miss Betty, I’ve got just one question for you ... does he have a brother?”

Giggling sentiments echoed from the back seat riders. Betty Jean Williamson opened the car door. She hesitated a moment before stepping out. “Down, girls. I’ll let you know. Jo, thanks so much for the ride. You’re a dear.”

“Should I wait?”

“No, I’ll be fine.”

As the car drove away, the slender, honey-blond haired woman walked slowly toward the house. Her tired face, a beautiful face even now, showed little emotion. But inside churned a confused mix of trepidation and anxious anticipation. *I feel like a damn schoolgirl. Straighten up, BJ ... he’s just an old friend.*

The rap of the large wrought iron knocker seemed to echo. The door slowly opened and the face of a Spanish woman appeared around its massive carved edge. "Si, Senorita, may I help you?"

"Yes, I'm here to see Mr. Amos Mead. He gave me this address."

"He is not here."

A man's voice boomed from inside the house, "Who's there, Constantia?"

"It is a senorita asking for Señor Mead."

A large hand took hold of the door well above the Spanish woman's head and opened it enough to see the petite visitor. "I've got it, Constantia. You may go. You must be BJ ... come in!"

The man pulled the door to full open and gestured the way into the large living room. "My name is Harmon Wetmore. With a flourish, he added, "At your service, ma'am ... Amos got called away on urgent business right after he talked to you."

BJ quickly said, "Oh, I can come back another time."

"Nonsense, you come right in. He'll be along. Can I get you some coffee?"

Her anxiety melted away. "That would be nice, Mr. Wetmore."

"Not 'Mr.', ma'am ... Call me Chief ... as in U.S. Navy."

"Okay, Chief ... My husband was ... I mean is in the Navy. He's a fighter pilot."

She took the cup of coffee and added a bit of cream from the pitcher offered. She stirred and gazed into the browning swirl. "He's been shot down. Somewhere in the Solomon Islands, I

believe. My dad thinks it might have been Bougainville, but he doesn't really know. We haven't heard anymore."

Her voice trailed off as the rollercoaster effects of working all night, getting an exciting call from a dear old friend, finding him not at home, then feeling strangely welcome and safe with this grizzled Navy Chief bore down on her.

"I'm sorry to hear that. It must be tough ... not knowing and all."

"It surely is, Chief. But working at the aircraft plant and making a lot of friends with the girls there has helped. A lot of their guys are overseas. My folks back in Vermont have been real sweet. They keep in regular touch. That's how I found out about Amos being in Los Angeles. My Dad and Mr. Mead are great friends, you know."

She shifted in her chair, finally sipping the cooling coffee. "I'm babbling, Chief. You must have things to do. I'm sorry to be such a bother."

"You're nothing of the sort, ma'am. It's a pleasure to make your acquaintance. I can sure see why Amos is taken with you ... 'course that's none of my business."

BJ smiled into her coffee cup. *Amos taken with me? It's been a long time, but —*

Wetmore laughed. "I'm talking too much! You got plans, BJ? Like keepin' on working at the plant?"

"I don't really know, Chief. I've been thinking about going back to Vermont. My folks would really like that. It's hard to keep my mind clear, waiting for word and all."

"Ma'am, I'm going out on a limb here, but I've had an idea brewing and I think this is the time

to act on it. Please, will you excuse me while I make a phone call.”

“Of course, Chief.”

Wetmore freshened her coffee and stepped out of the room. Betty Jean could hear his muffled voice on the phone, but paid no attention. She started when the Spanish lady moved through the room and on into the kitchen. *I'm getting jumpy, too tired.*

Wetmore stepped back into the room. He wore a conspiratorial smile. “Okay, Mrs. Williamson, er, B J ... I'm sorry. It's okay to call you B J?”

He didn't wait for a reply. “I've been talking with General David Barrows ... he's the big boss around here ... about needing somebody to take over running this house. I'm no innkeeper and that's a fact. He's good with the idea. So I just called him with a candidate. I've gotta ask you. B.J., would you be interested in the job?”

“My goodness, Chief, I don't know—”

“Please, just think about it. I'm sorry this is so sudden ... but doggonit sometimes you just got to act. You can meet with the general tomorrow and get all the details ... and he'll get a look at you. No guarantees, B.J., but it looks good. Before you say no, think about it. You'll be a darn sight closer to information from the Pacific.”

The conversation continued as B.J. warmed to the idea. Chief Wetmore could be charming in his own gruff way and B.J. saw the sense of trusting him.

Wetmore closed. “We're going to get you home, young lady. I don't know how long Amos is going to be and you need to make whatever

arrangements you need to meet with General Barrows.”

“Thank you, Chief. I am really tired. Where do I go tomorrow?”

“I’ll give you the address. It’s not far from here. Let’s get you home. I’ll drive.”

Puerto Montt, Chile

Latitude 41°28’ S - Longitude 72°56’ W

Same Time

The *Lati Air* flight from San Carlos de Bariloche, Argentina, taxied up to the lean-to building that served as an air terminal for Puerto Montt.

The messenger blended in with the other deplaning passengers, until Reinhard Gehlan spotted the briefcase secured to his wrist.

He approached the man and said quietly, “*Usted está buscando a un amigo?* (You are looking for a friend?)

The man responded, “Pardon me?”

Gehlan switched to German. “*Sie suchen einen Freund?*” (You are looking for a friend?)

“Oh, ja.”

“His name is Otto?”

“Ja.”

“Come with me. My name is Gehlan ... Reinhard Gehlan. I am his associate.”

The messenger recognized the name and followed Gehlan to the waiting Mercedes Benz. The short drive wound down toward the town. The car stopped in front of a small brick house that overlooked Canal Tenglo. Gehlan climbed out of the car and motioned the messenger to follow

him into the house where a wood-fired stove warmed a comfortable room and held off the bitter Patagonian cold. Something cooking, and a table set for two, reminded the visitor that a hot meal is but a distant memory.

The only indication that the house is an active branch of the Nazi SS is the military radio set up in the corner. On the wall were a map of the Chilean coast and a large scale sea chart of the Pacific Ocean.

Gehlan said, "Sit down, my friend. We shall eat, and then you can tell me what you've brought."

"But, sir, my message is for Herr Hauptmann."

"Herr Hauptmann is not here. He has moved down the coast to prepare for his rendezvous. I cannot say more as I'm sure you understand."

"I understand full well, Herr Gehlan. And you must understand that my superior is Johannes Becker in Argentina and that he has sent me with information that impacts Herr Hauptmann's mission. We are in contact with Berlin ... but Herr Becker thought it too dangerous to transmit the message to you here in Chile. Others are listening."

"You have not told me your name. I suspect you are more than a messenger."

"Ah, I have heard that your observation skills are well honed, Herr Gehlan. My name is Ludwig von Bohlen. I escaped from Brazil with Albrecht Engels when the Americans convinced that government that we are spies ... Imagine that. Also, as you have guessed, I am well versed in Hauptmann's mission."

“Well, Herr von Bohlen, since we have satisfied our suspicions let us get down to business. My housekeeper prepared this fine stew which we must not let go to waste. We can eat and talk.”

The steaming bowls were joined by chunks of freshly baked bread. There was no talk for a few moments.

Gehlan sipped a fresh glass of schnapps and set it on the table. He broke the quiet, “Ludwig, you said that others are listening. What did you mean?”

“Berlin, Reinhard, Berlin. There is more fighting between Goering and Himmler than on the Russian front. Each of them thinks that obtaining this new American technology will turn the tide of war around ... and make them the darling of der Fuhrer. Goering has gone quite mad in my opinion. I trust I’m safe in saying that aloud in this place.”

“Of course, Ludwig. In our business we must be pragmatic ... not stupid.”

Herr von Bohlen dipped a crust of bread into the remnants of his stew and savored the dripping morsel. He looked up and said, “Stupid is a good word for the game George Nicolaus is playing in Mexico. He sided with Goering and is now trying to steal this Orion’s Eye for him.” He paused a moment, then added, “Is Hauptmann aware of all this dangerous foolishness?”

Gehlan answered, “Otto may or may not know, my friend. But for sure he does not care. He has his own reasons for defeating the Americans. He seeks revenge for his father.

Orion's Eye is the mission that gives him his opportunity ... Himmler and Goering be damned."

"We all have our reasons don't we, Reinhard? When do you expect Hauptmann to return? I must pass along a warning to him."

"A warning? I do not expect him to return. He is meeting his submarine—and possibly his fate."

Gehlan rose and began to clear the table. "What is your warning?"

Ludwig von Bohlen reached for his briefcase, turned a key in the lock and retrieved a photograph. He handed it to Gehlan and said, "This is HMS *Achilles* ... a New Zealand Destroyer. She has been tracking the U-835. She patrols these waters, careful to not violate any neutrality protocols with Chile or Peru. We believe she awaits his submarine off this coast."

Gehlan shook his head and laughed. "You underestimate Herr Hauptmann. Why do you think he moved down the coast for his rendezvous? Hauptmann has been tracking *Achilles* for a week. Maybe we should warn the New Zealanders that they are in danger of receiving a torpedo for their troubles. May I pour a schnapps for you, Ludwig? You've had a long day."

"Danke. I would like some schnapps. It will have more value than my message, it seems."

The Mouth of Aisén Fjord

Latitude 45°24' S - Longitude 72°42' W

4 Km from Puerto Aisén, Chile

The U-835 arrived off Puerto Montt on schedule. The pre-arranged radio communication

from Otto Hauptmann produced a warning about the New Zealand ship, and he relayed his change of plans to the *Kapitän*.

Hauptmann's sail from Puerto Montt to the mouth of the Aisén Fjord had been as smooth as these waters allowed. His hired fishing sloop is manned by a Chilean crew, descendants of Germans émigrés and loyal to the Third Reich.

Skillfully they sailed one kilometer up the entrance to the fjord, then seeing no other boats they tacked about and returned to the rendezvous line arriving at the agreed time.

At the same time the U-835 arrived underwater, spotted the sailing vessel through their raised periscope, and moved in its direction. Hauptmann sighted the periscope off the starboard bow of his small sloop. At the same time he spotted a Chilean trawler headed in from the open sea and coolly ordered the captain of his sloop to lay on a westerly course, favorable to the offshore breeze that blew cold from the mountains.

Ernst Kalbruener, *Kapitän* (captain) of the *Kriegsmarine* submarine U-835, watched through his periscope as the sloop that he believed to be his target took up the westerly course, swinging the mainsail outboard to catch the offshore wind. It bore down on his periscope and passed a few yards to the north. As they passed the periscope to seaward Hauptmann immediately showed a small red flag, keeping it behind the sail so that the trawler could not see it.

Per instructions to confirm their identity the sloop dipped its main sail three times.

Fifty yards away toward the shore the U-835 broke the surface, appearing where only moments before had been vacant sea. Pacific blue water poured from her partially surfaced superstructure as the two vessels closed. At the precise time agreed upon, Hauptmann sprang aboard and entered the opened hatch on the side of the conning tower.

The U-835 slipped below the waves, never seen by the trawler, and set a course north by west.

The *Eye of the Hunter* had become the prey.

