



SEPTEMBER 1940. WINSTON CHURCHILL  
TAKES THE BIGGEST GAMBLE OF THE WAR.  
HE ORDERS ENGLAND'S GOLD RESERVES TO  
BE SENT TO CANADA. IF NAZI U-BOATS  
INTERCEPT THE CONVOY, GREAT BRITAIN  
WILL NOT SURVIVE.

JACK NELSON WAS A DEVOUT MORMON AND HELD MANY  
LEADERSHIP POSITIONS IN THE LDS CHURCH. HE WAS  
EDITOR OF BYU'S 'THE DAILY UNIVERSE' IN 1962.

JARON SUMMERS IS A FAILED MORMON. HE WAS EDITOR  
OF 'THE DAILY UNIVERSE' IN 1967.

THEY WERE THE BEST OF FRIENDS.

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JARON SUMMERS JACK NELSON GOLDEN TIDE



written by  
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# CHAPTER ONE

CHARLIE TAGGART'S EYES opened as the spiders retreated from his mind and the young American realized he was awake and alive ... *maybe*, just *maybe*, he and his friends could save the world.

*Maybe, maybe, maybe.*

Reality brought the zonked-out 16-year-old into the moment and he sat up in his bunk. Brain fog cleared and Charlie realized it was September 1940.

The world was at war.

He was aboard a British warship, the Emerald. The vessel was seventy-two hours into an eleven-day North Atlantic crossing—a crossing confounded by torrential rain and waves that swamped and buried the vessel's bridge. As though Mad Monarchs of the sea had banded together to sink the very ship Charlie was on.

Charlie's assignment was to protect the ship's precious gold cargo and thus provide Britain a chance for victory against the Nazi war machine. Today that gold would be worth 30 trillion dollars.

If anyone aboard the Emerald suspected the teenager was anything but an inept cabin boy, he, Charlie (as well as the sinister spiders in his mind that thank heavens were fleeing) would be clamped in irons and tossed into the brig. Or thrown overboard. Shark bait. What a dreadful conclusion to a life that had hardly begun.

Gray dawn oozed through the porthole into the cramped and *ripe* cabin where five others usually slept. The cabin's odor reminded Charlie of rotting cough syrup.

One bunk was empty. Charlie remembered the occupant as an affable sailor. First encounters could be wrong. Dead wrong, especially during a world war. It was a challenge for the young American to wrap his head around the concept that he, along with the rest of the planet, were caught in a global conflict that could mean the end of civilization.

He forced himself to concentrate, and that drove his fear away for a heartbeat as he studied an unmade bed where a sailor had slept. That didn't make sense—the crew, unless there was a panic drill, always left their bunks neatly made before starting their day.

Charlie assumed the missing sailor was on duty. Had to be. Why had the man left his bed in a jumble? Something was wrong.

The last of the spiders in Charlie's head dissolved into tiny starbursts.

This moment was the chance for Charlie to decode a message to the German U-boats that now hunted the vessel he was on. The previous night he had intercepted the transmission but there had been too much activity on the Emerald to safely decode the message.

He slid out of his bunk, made his bed quickly, opened his locker, and dug through his kit.

No crypto machine.

Charlie felt his pocket. Thank heavens! His fingers closed around the other gadget he had smuggled on board. It could change the world. *Maybe, maybe, maybe.*

Someone had taken his crypto machine—who? No time to think about that.

Charlie had to maintain his cover—moments later, out of breath, he served breakfast to Sir Basil Cadogan, the Governor of the Bank of England, in quarters outfitted in oak paneling and chandeliers for one of England's most elite.

Sir Basil considered Charlie as though he were a new species of teenager. "I've seen you before," said England's most influential banker.

"I don't think so, Sir,"

"Can't place you. Don't suppose it matters," said Sir Basil. He forked fluffy mashed potatoes into his mouth.

"Are you a Londoner?" Chadwick asked from a darkened corner of the cabin. As Director of Security for the Bank of England, Chadwick missed little, his ever-moving eyes drinking in every motion and object.

"Yes, Sir," Charlie replied. For a fellow who did not like to lie, Charlie was living the lie of his life.

“Strange accent,” said Chadwick.

“I’ve lived all over the place.”

“You sound like an American trying to speak Cockney,” Chadwick said, from behind hooded eyes, eyes that reminded Charlie of a coiled cobra. At least the cobra was not a spider, but that could change at any moment.

A silver fork fell to the steel deck, tumbling from the manicured fingers of the Governor of The Bank of England.

The fork made a tinkling sound, a tiny echo that reminded Charlie of the spiders in his head.

Sir Basil seemed to have received a revelation. Charlie wondered what it might be. He didn’t have to wait long.

“Good Lord!” Sir Basil said, “You’re what’s-his-name—you tricked our family—made them believe you were a relative! You’re the spy. The one MI5 chased.”

Chadwick leapt up, knocking over plates that shattered on the deck. He pulled a pistol from a shoulder holster, aimed its snout at Charlie. “Hands up!”

Charlie obeyed.

Winston Churchill, himself, had warned the young man he might run into trouble. Their encounter or the memory of it seemed to make Charlie calmer. “Please, Mr. Chadwick,” Charlie said, keeping his voice level and as non-threatening as possible. “If I could talk to you privately ....”

With his weapon trained on the kid who had been serving meals and fetching pots of tea for them for the last three days, Chadwick snapped, “Shut up.

“Sir Basil, please find the Master-at-Arms. Give him my regards and tell him I’ve captured a German spy.”

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Chadwick kept Charlie at gunpoint until Sir Basil returned with a warrant officer and a leading hand—burly, no-nonsense men who glared at Charlie as if he were the most dangerous creature on earth.

“Mr. Chadwick,” Charlie tried again, “If you check my kit by my bunk, you’ll find a pouch with my credentials.”

“I know his cabin,” said the warrant officer.

“Get his kit,” Chadwick said, then glowered at Charlie. “Keep your hands flat on the table, Boy,” he added. “Or I’ll shoot you dead.”

“German spies are aboard, they’ve planted a bomb,” said Charlie.

“A bomb, ‘eh?” Chadwick’s words dripped sarcasm.

“To disable the ship. It could explode at any minute. I’m sure they’ve sent messages pinpointing our location to the Nazi Wolf Packs, which are closing in on us at this instant.”

“Messages?” scoffed Chadwick.

“In my pocket, Sir,” Charlie said. “Let me show them to you—”

“Freeze! Or I will send you to your maker.”

Charlie did not blink, did not move. “I beg you, let me speak to the captain.”

“The Krauts trained you well, Boy.” Chadwick sipped the last of his tea, using it as punctuation instead of a drink, as proper Englishmen often did in bizarre circumstances. “You’re in for a marine court martial—followed by a swift execution.”

The warrant officer and leading hand returned with Charlie’s papers.

“There’re documents as the prisoner claimed,” said the warrant officer. He handed the credentials to Chadwick.

The latter scanned them and said, “Signed by the Director of Intelligence *and* the Prime Minister.” Chadwick’s tiny mouth twisted into a grimace since any fool could sense the absurdness of the boy’s explanation.

The warrant officer coughed. “There’s also these items, Sir,” he said, “which puts the lid on the matter if you don’t mind me saying.” The warrant officer placed Charlie’s crypto machine and code book on the table.

The machine was a replica of a Nazi crypto machine. It resembled an old-fashioned typewriter and featured four rotors—which meant it was a *Kriegsmarine* model, used in the submarine fleet.

“Where’d you get that?” asked Sir Basil.

“I built it. Someone took it and the code book during the night, so I couldn’t decode the message I was able to intercept....”

“You think I believe that?” Chadwick asked.

“You must. Whoever took and then returned my code book and the *Kriegsmarine* is your traitor. Find him before his bomb blows us to smithereens!”

The warrant officer blurted out, “What bomb?”

“Your job is to answer my questions, not quiz me about matters you know nothing about,” said Chadwick.

“Has the captain been informed, Sir?”

“Certainly not. It’s all fabrication in any case ....”

But the warrant officer lived by naval rules and was undeterred. “We must tell the captain immediately.”

The lower-ranked sailor’s demand would have elicited a tongue lashing from Chadwick under normal conditions. But this was war. Chadwick blinked. “Then do so. Leave your colleague here.”

The warrant officer sprinted off.

*Maybe, maybe, maybe*, screamed through Charlie’s mind again as he visualized the huge ship exploding.

He sized up the leading hand in the doorway, legs apart, hands behind his back. Muscle and obedience, not overburdened with wit.

The mighty ship rolled abruptly, knocking the leading hand to the steel deck. He managed to stand, attempting a brave smile, dabbling at a gash in his forehead with a white handkerchief.

“Mr. Chadwick,” Charlie said. “The Nazis won’t scuttle us if they can avoid it. They’re after our cargo. It’s your job to stop that from happening. Ask this man,” Charlie



indicated the leading hand, “to key in the message that is in my left pocket and write down the letters that light.”

Chadwick nodded. The leading hand dug into Charlie’s pocket and found the message. Drops of blood fell from his cut brow onto the steel deck. He paid no attention to his recent wound as the vessel continued to thrash about in the wild seas.

Following Charlie’s instructions, the leading hand, his sight partially obscured by his own blood, switched on the machine, adjusted the rotors, and entered the encrypted message. As the decrypted keys lit up, the leading hand copied each letter on a sheet of paper, then handed the decoded message to Chadwick.

“It’s in German,” Chadwick said.

Charlie said, “Let me see.”

“You realize,” Chadwick said, “that if you can read German, it confirms you’re a spy.”

“I read and speak German fluently,” Charlie said, “I work for British Naval Intelligence.”

Chadwick pushed the message across the table so Charlie could read it.

ING BATTLE GROUP K. ORCA CALLING BATTLE GROUP K. APPROX  
POSITION AT 1800 HRS 55° 12.2 N 31° 29.5 W STEERING 253° SPEED 22 KTS  
EXPECTED STOP 0930 HRS SUNDAY TWO DESTROYER ESCORTS HEIL HITLER

“What time is it?” Charlie asked.

Chadwick checked his watch. “Coming up at ten past nine o’clock.”

“We have 20 minutes to find and defuse the bomb.”

“Nonsense!”

“Could be 19 minutes,” said Charlie. His brain spiders were off spinning webs somewhere. Charlie prayed the creatures would not hatch more of their frightful species. He sensed the prayer would go unanswered.

Charlie was relieved to see that the leading hand had found another handkerchief and was finally attending to his wound. The British were tough and resourceful and brave and they would give the Nazis their best. Charlie again vowed to do everything within his power to help .... but he feared that his efforts would fall short against the terrible war machine Hitler had created for the impending invasion of London.



## Chapter 2

CAPTAIN FRANCIS CUT an impressive figure and knew it, savored it, dressed for it, right down to a Prussian blue silk square scarf with his monogrammed initials in tiny white letters. A broad-shouldered man in his fifties, sporting a trim grey beard, he contemplated those gathered in the ship's cramped Operations Room beneath the bridge.

Although the seas became wilder by the second, Francis paid no attention to the way the vessel pitched. Talk about sea legs. The captain always seemed balanced to counter any unexpected wave while nearby him sailors tumbled to the deck. He liked to flash them a friendly wink as they pulled themselves to a standing position.

Charlie stood between the warrant officer and the leading hand.

Sir Basil and Chadwick sat at a chart table. Chadwick's pistol was back in its shoulder holster. Thankfully.

Captain Francis finished speaking German to Charlie and then said in English to the others, "Our Kraut-savvy lad here failed to send his message last night. When he was discovered this morning, thanks to Sir Basil and Mr. Chadwick, he invented some ridiculous story about Mr. Pettibone and one of our radio operators. Simple as that."

Charlie willed the spiders, re-creeping back into his mind, to go away. Deep down he realized they were probably phantoms of his imagination. The result of the bizarre circumstances that had brought him to England. No one on the warship was ready for that story.

The captain continued: "Young Charlie suggests we reduce speed, and or change course—that's not going to happen—such a diversion would waste precious time ...."

The captain may have seemed sure of himself, but the commander of the vessel was trying to figure out how an enemy spy, especially one so young as Charlie, could sneak aboard The Emerald and end up as a cabin boy for the Governor of the Bank of England. *Probably more saboteurs on the ship.* The last thing the captain needed to project was fear. Fear could destroy a ship faster than a half dozen torpedoes.

“I agree with you, Sir,” Lieutenant Conroy said. “As for accessing the radio room—that would be quite difficult. We have a man there at all times.” The lieutenant idolized the captain and had the commander’s back. The captain regarded the lieutenant as the best *aide-de-camp* in the navy with superb leadership abilities, even ‘though he was a bit of a brown noser.

“Lieutenant Conroy is right, Sir,” another ship’s officer added. “The radio room is never left unoccupied. Jenkins was on duty last night at the time the prisoner claims the message was sent. He’s loyal to The Crown and I’m sure he’ll confirm that what we’re hearing is a pack of lies from this teenager.”

“What I find puzzling,” Captain Francis said, with another penetrating glance at Charlie, “is why you would claim that Mr. Pettibone, of all people, is a spy.”

“Hear, hear,” said Sir Basil.

To explain Pettibone, Charlie realized he would have to reveal facts about his arrival to England that could not be verified, that could not be proven and would compound his dilemma.

At first glance, Pettibone was a snob who worked at being an aristocrat. There was no question that the man was a financial genius, yet there was something about the middle-aged executive that said phony. Like Charlie, Pettibone was not who he pretended to be.

“Pettibone has proven himself again and again,” said the captain. “I’m sure that the Bank of England conducted a rigorous background check on the man before they hired him”

“We did,” said Sir Basil.

A woman’s voice could be heard from the passageway outside the Operations Room, followed by urgent knocks.

Upon a nod from the captain, the warrant officer opened the door and two teenagers burst in. One, an attractive girl of 16 or 17. The other a boy of about her age.

She spoke to Charlie. “Pettibone’s not in his cabin.”

“... we saw him by the steering gear compartment,” said the boy who had come in with the rather high-strung girl.” He was with the sailor you bunk with.”

Charlie said, “Davy. He probably searched my kit when I came aboard.”

“Now, look here,” the captain said, letting his annoyance show, “what do you lot think you’re doing? Playing detectives, following my passengers?”

“We’re trying to save the ship!” yelled the girl, close to hysterical.

“Calm down, both of you!” ordered the captain. “Who are you, Miss?”

“Your ship is in danger!” she screamed.

“Sorry, Captain,” said Sir Basil. “This young lady is a guest in my home. I deeply apologize for her behavior. Her name is Molly.”

“And who’s this miscreant with her?” asked the captain. “Another houseguest?”

“In a way,” said Basil. “My son, Alex. My deepest apologies.”

“I can vouch for them,” said Charlie.

“That certainly puts my mind at rest,” said the captain. “We have no time for this nonsense.”

Charlie said: “How many times and in how many languages do I have to use to convince you that there’s a bomb, probably set to wreck the steering gear. Any minute now.”

“Captain,” said Sir Basil, “I’m so sorry. I don’t know how this fellow has done it, but he’s involved these young people and made them believe in his nonsense.” Sir Basil glared at his son. “Alex, I’m ashamed that you’ve fallen for this Charlie Taggart’s lies a second time—and Molly, I despair of you. What will your mother think?”

“Father, your life and your career are at stake,” Alex said. “You and you alone will be blamed for losing the gold and perhaps losing the war itself. Listen to Charlie, find Pettibone, and initiate a search of the ship! There’s a bomb onboard. Probably set to damage the steering gear.”

“My dear boy,” Sir Basil said. “What good would it do to damage the steering? This is a Royal Navy ship—they can make repairs....”

“Exactly,” said Charlie. “And give the Nazi subs time to arrive.”

“Where’s Pettibone?” the girl demanded. “Why are you ignoring what we’re telling you instead of finding and questioning Pettibone? He’s the culprit.”

“Sir Basil,” the captain said. “Where is Mr. Pettibone?”

“I’m afraid I don’t know,” Sir Basil said. “Now that the sea is calmer, perhaps he’s up on deck getting some fresh air. I daresay we could all use some—”

A far-off crump sent a dull vibration rippling through the deck. “What was that?” Chadwick asked.

“It sounded like an explosion,” Sir Basil said. “Not a torpedo? Surely not.”

“Helm reporting loss of steering, Sir. Repeat that. Steering is lost,” said a sailor over the voice-pipe.

“What time is it?” the captain asked, staring directly at Charlie.

“Zero-Nine-Thirty hours, sir, “ Conroy replied. “I think we’ve lost steering.”

The captain leaned towards the voice-pipe. “Stop both engines,” he ordered. “Now!”

Minutes later the massive engines of the Emerald grew silent. Under the slosh of the waves, Charlie could hear the *thud* of his heart.

## Chapter 3

THE WORK PARTY in the Steering Gear Compartment, hunched over what seemed to be acres of steel, used oxy-acetylene torches to slice away twisted and broken linkages and rods.

Another eight men in the bowels of the ship—opened hatchways and panels, crawled through inspection pits, unbolted and re-bolted cover-plates to determine if the explosion and the violent disconnection of the steering gear had caused unseen damage. So far so good.

A repair crew of twelve stood by with the Chief Engineer, ready to re-assemble the gear once parts were cannibalized or fabricated. That's what happens when you're thousands of miles from the nearest hardware store.

The Emerald lay becalmed, rising and falling on the heavy swell. The captain had called the crew to Battle Stations. Lookouts scanned the sea for a submarine periscope, or the deadly trail of a torpedo.

Bofors guns, usually elevated skywards, were aimed at the surface of the water. Men, wearing bulky and itchy life-preservers that they prayed would not be necessary, waited at their stations. Minutes passed. On a good day a sailor might last ten minutes in the North Atlantic. On this day the freezing water would kill him in seconds.

On the Emerald there was no sound, save the surge and dip of the ocean, the slap of icy water against the hull, and the frantic hammering of the repair crews.

The men remained at their stations, jaws tense, eyes watchful, praying that their escorts, the Jupiter and the Kipling, would be enough to repel any approaching enemy.

The two destroyers lay on either side of the Emerald, positioned to prevent a broadside torpedo attack on the cruiser. Their ASDIC sonar systems sent echoes out into the depths, seeking pings from the hulls of lurking submarines, while onboard the Emerald, the Huff Duff radio direction finder monitored enemy transmissions.

"What's bothering you, Charles? Molly asked. "You've been awfully quiet."

"Leave him alone, Molly," Alex said. "How would you feel if you'd been accused of being a German spy? Quite apart from the fact that we were treated like a bunch of school brats—"

“I agree,” Molly finished for him. “The thing is, it’s no good keeping us locked up in this stupid place when we could be out helping find Pettibone.” She looked around the small wardroom where they’d been confined since the explosion. “What if we’re torpedoed? Will someone remember to come and let us out?”

“Don’t worry, Duchess,” said a voice and their friend, Smudge, opened the door and came in. Smudge was short, skinny, and beamed with a wide smile on his freckled face.

“Smudge!” said Charlie, “how’d you know we were in here?”

“Us Londoners know how to survive,” said Stan as he entered the room. Stan was a taller boy, who seemed rather frail but was anything but.

Molly hugged both of them.

“We’re free,” said Alex. “Now what? Let’s get out of here.”

“I don’t know,” said Molly. “If we break out, it’ll only make everyone mad. They’ve got enough to think about with making the repair and getting us underway again.”

Everyone looked at Charlie for his direction.

“I’ve been thinking that we might have another problem,” said the young American.

“Besides torpedoes?” asked Alex.

“Yeah. The Nazis have planned this operation down to the last detail. They’ve got at least three, maybe more, agents on board. They’ve supplied a timebomb to take out the steering. Let’s say the Nazi Wolfpack is too far away and only one or two submarines get here while we’re still making repairs. The destroyers could take them both out. That leaves no guarantee that the Nazis can get the gold off the Emerald.”

“And if they can’t get the gold ....” mused Molly.

“They don’t want us to have it,” Stan said.

“Cripes, Charlie. They’ll sink us,” said Molly.

“If their submarines fail—what then?” asked Charlie.

“If we manage to fight off the subs,” Smudge said. “They’ll sink the ship.”

“That’s right,” Charlie said. “There’ll be another bomb—something powerful enough to blast a hole in the hull. Too big and heavy to bring on board in a suitcase, or a kit bag—”

“But not too big to fit into a crate that’s supposed to be holding gold ingots,” Alex said.

Molly said, “In the very place that nobody is allowed to enter or would think of looking. In the hold with the gold shipment.”

“My thoughts exactly, Duchess,” Charlie said.

“Blimey,” Smudge said, “I’m glad we all managed to work it out for you, Charlie.”



For the next half hour, the five teenagers discussed ways of preventing Pettibone and his accomplices from carrying out further sabotage.

“The problem is any attempt to break into the hold will make them detonate the bomb,” said Molly.

“Exactly,” said Charlie.

“Pettibone is an opportunist. He obviously thinks Germany will win the war and he wants to be on the winning side,” said Smudge.

“The agents—and remember, both Jenkins and Jones seem to be ordinary British seamen—must be doing it, at least in part for money,” said Molly.

“You two make quite a team,” Stan said. “There’s a lot of blokes who’d sell out their country for a couple of gold bars and free passage on a Jerry sub to South America.”

“How’d they think they’d get away with it in the first place?” Alex wondered.

Charlie shut the door. He placed his finger to his lips for silence, then signaled for the others in the room to draw near. He spoke quietly. “We share a secret. You know things about me that almost no one else in England does. Let’s just say for now that I saw a Nazi propaganda film about something that has not happened yet ... after the



Nazis boarded this ship, which they will do soon, they gathered the Emerald's crew on deck and held them at gunpoint with machine guns. The traitors were taken off by submarine or a Nazi freighter that showed up."

"With a gold bar under each arm," Stan said.

"I doubt the spies on this ship are on a suicide mission," Molly said. "They're safe in the hold until the Nazis board—but if it comes to the crunch—"

"Probably they'll set a timer on the bomb and they'll come out," said Charlie. "Won't be noticed in the confusion, and they'll hop into a lifeboat when nobody's looking."

They stopped talking when Sir Basil entered.

"How'd you kids get this door open?" he asked and set down a basket of fruit. The teenagers helped themselves.

"Thank you, Father," Alex said, "all is forgiven?"

"Alex, you terrify me," Sir Basil said. I was worried sick about you."

"Has our esteemed Captain finally decided that Charles and the rest of us are not spies," Molly said, "but are the only ones who've done anything concrete to stop disaster?"

"The captain is confused, Molly," Sir Basil said.

"Do you and Mr. Chadwick accept that Charles was put in place on this ship at the express instructions of Mr. Churchill?"

"Now, now, Molly," Sir Basil said. "You must understand that we had no way of knowing—"

"Do you, or do you not, Sir Basil?"

The girl had moxie and Charlie was amazed at how she leapt to his defense. Maybe she liked him as much as he liked her. Well, he could dream, couldn't he?

Sir Basil sighed. "Yes, my dear. I think I do."

"Good," Molly said, standing up. "In that case, Charles needs to speak to the captain."

Sir Basil was taken aback. “Now, look here all of you. I only came to check up on you, perhaps organize some tea and food. I think we should allow the captain and crew to do their jobs without any further—”

“Father, please take Charles to see the captain,” Alex said.

Sir Basil looked at Alex’s stern face, and then at the others. They stared back, silent. Charlie waited while Sir Basil made his decision.

“Come with me, Charles,” he said.

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This time, the captain and the officers in the Operations Room listened to Charlie with more attention. When Charlie outlined what he believed Pettibone and his agents intended to do, there was a murmur of concern among the officers and the captain grew grim. He tugged at his beard.

“Mr. Conroy,” he said. “Do we have anyone on board who can defuse explosive?”

“Not specifically trained, Sir, no,” Conroy replied. “I could give it a try. I took a class like that at Oxford.”

The captain looked at *his aide-de-camp*. “Maybe it would be better if we go in there and get them before they can start their timer. If they have a timer.

“But on the other hand, the longer they sit there, the more they will lose their edge—making an assault more likely to succeed. Agreed?”

“Sir,” said Charlie, “We could buy more time if I were to send a message to the Nazi U-boats.”

“What kind of message?”

“One that gives them a false position. The only problem is, I don’t know the frequency they operate on.”

“Oh, but that’s easy,” Conroy said. “We know the frequencies they most often use. We only have to send the message to those and we’re sure to hit the mark.” Conroy

turned to Captain Francis. “Giving them a position, say, a hundred and fifty miles north east would be believable and allows us perhaps another 10 hours.”

“Can the steering be fixed in that time?” Sir Basil asked.

“The Chief Engineer thinks we can be underway in less than six hours,” the captain said. He nodded at Charlie. “It’s a good idea, young man,” he said. “You have my authority to proceed.”

“Aye, but not mine,” came a heavy Scottish accent from behind them. Charlie turned to see Gunn in the doorway. He held a pistol in his hand. Behind him stood two seamen, also armed.

“Who the devil are you?” Captain Francis said.

“Sir,” gulped Conroy, “I believe this is Petty Officer Gunn. He’s a cook, Sir.”

“A cook?” the captain glared at Gunn. “Stand down, man. How dare you come in here with a weapon.”

Gunn ignored the captain. “You can’t do it, pal,” he said to Charlie. “I’m taking possession of the coding machine.”

“So. You are a Nazi spy,” Sir Basil said with venom. “I hope you feel proud of yourself.”

“Guilty as charged. I’m a spy,” Gunn grinned. “But not for the side you think, Sir Basil.” With his free hand, Gunn flipped out a leather wallet and tossed it across the room. Conroy caught it.

“I’m British Naval Intelligence.”

“Dash it all, Sir,” Conroy said, studying Gunn’s identity card. “He’s Naval Intelligence all right—attached to T-Force no less. And he’s not a petty officer—he’s a lieutenant.”

“Then, please explain, Lieutenant,” the captain said, “why you have entered my Operations Room.”

“To stop anyone from giving the game away, Sir,” Gunn said, and holstered his pistol. “Orders from the director himself. If Charlie transmits a message that sends the Nazi submarines to an empty stretch of ocean, the Germans will realize it’s been a trick. They’ll guess we’ve broken their codes and we cannot have that.”

“But ... but, “ Sir Basil spluttered, “our cargo is far more important than the possibility of the Germans finding out we know their codes. If the gold is taken, or we’re sunk, then our ability to carry on the war is lost.”

“It wasn’t my decision, Sir,” Gunn said. “My orders are to keep an eye on things, help if necessary, but stop anyone using the crypto machine for anything other than decoding messages the enemy sends.”

“He has a point,” said Charlie.

Gunn considered Charlie. “I want you to start leveling with me, young man.”

“About what, Sir?” asked Charlie.

“You appear to have more information about this war than the Admiralty. How could that be?”

“I’ve made some lucky guesses,” said Charlie.

Gunn frowned.

“Captain,” Sir Basil said. “At sea, you are in complete command. You can disregard Gunn’s orders and allow Charles to transmit.”

“I would be countermanding the Admiralty, Sir Basil,” the captain said.

“But if you don’t do everything in your power to prevent an attack, you’re ignoring the prime minister’s directive,” Sir Basil said. “Surely that—”

Sir Basil’s words trailed off as a klaxon sounded, a piercing shriek followed by whistles.

“Clear the lower decks!” the captain ordered, and led the way out, followed by Conroy and the others.

“What’s happening?” Sir Basil asked.

“Everyone up top,” Gunn said. “We’re under attack.”

## Chapter 4

CHARLIE REACHED the upper deck as Jupiter and Kipling converged about 500 yards off the Emerald.

The young American watched them launch depth charges, black canisters that packed powerful punches.

“Our lads have found a bloody U-boat, Charlie,” said Gunn. “When those depth charges explode, the shock waves’ll hit this vessel and Pettibone and his men won’t hear us coming.”

As if to underscore Gunn’s warning, the Emerald shuddered as the first compression wave rocked the vessel.

Charlie grabbed a railing to keep his balance.

“We have to get you and your friends to a safe place,” Gunn said to Charlie. “Churchill has orders that your survival is paramount.”

“Please keep my friends safe. I should stay with you,” said Charlie.

“Are you insane?”

“Churchill told you that you must do as I ask. Anything I ask.”

More depth charges exploded with low rumbling force and sea water blossomed upwards between the two destroyers.

Charlie stared hard at Gunn.

Gunn gave a hand signal to three of his men who moved the other four teenagers below deck.

He beckoned to two seamen, armed with pistols, “Follow us, lads!” he yelled over his shoulder. One of the sailors looked to be about 70 pounds overweight. The other looked like a basketball player.

At a run, Gunn led them through passageways and then down precarious ladders, arriving at a bulkhead door to the gold hold—guarded by several of Gunn’s men.

“They’ve dogged this access door on the other side ... we can’t open it,” one of Gunn’s men said.

Gunn swore.

Charlie glanced up at an inspection panel about ten feet above the deck.

“I think that panel opens into a duct that probably connect to the hold where the gold is.”

“Go back to your quarters,” said Gunn.

“I’ve seen the blueprints for this vessel. I have a pretty good memory.”

“Sure. We’ll hoist you up, then all you have to do is wiggle through that access panel, wait until the a depth charges explodes, wait until the compression waves hits, drop down—easy as pie—”

“I’m game,” said Charlie.

“Ever kill a person, Charlie?”

Charlie swallowed, said nothing.

“Of course, you haven’t. I said, they’ve got the dogs locked on their side. You’re not helping. You’re a liability, Kid.”

Charlie realized that Gunn had a point.

“My men know how to kill and when we get that hold open, they’re going to charge in. There will be blood and guts that you will never tell your grandchildren about. Hesitate and you die. You don’t’ even have a gun.”

Charlie fought the fear building inside his every fiber— “Give me one,” he said.

“No.”

“Remember what your prime minister said.”

“We don’t want you plugging yourself. Isn’t that the expression your cowboys use?”

“Yeah—but—”

The fat sailor said, “Sir, from what I recall that’s a pretty narrow duct to wiggle through. The kid might be the only one who can make it.”

“Get your tunic off, Charlie!” And he swore again.

They smeared petroleum jelly on Charlie’s shoulder. It was cold but before he could react, strong hands grabbed Charlie and lifted him up.

He stood on several wide shoulders and grabbed the handle to open the panel. It squeaked as he moved it. Then swung it open. So far so good. Open the door and run. Simple.

The fat sailor was right. A full-grown man would have found it impossible to squeeze through. That ruled out the basketball player and the fat guy.

And Gunn was right, Charlie didn’t know if he could kill anyone.

Charlie peered into the ceiling duct. Then twisted sideways as the men below pushed on his feet. The inside of the duct smelled of dead air.

Charlie felt like a corkscrew or like he was being made into sausage, but the petroleum jelly was slippery, and his right shoulder popped through, then he pulled himself toward the interior of the hold, feeling his hips scrape against steel—his left shoulder sprung free.

Charlie took a breath. He felt naked and helpless, and it was impossible for him to turn and reach for Gunn’s weapon.

The young American’s eyes adjusted to low light. Directly below him was a gap between stacked boxes. Beyond the boxes and further down the hold gold crates seemed to stretch into infinity.

Charlie saw a crossbeam above him. He grabbed it with one hand. He managed a better grip but now there was no way he could reach back for Gunn’s sidearm.

At that most inopportune instant Jenkins appeared between the crates. Charlie prayed Jenkins would keep looking down.

A series of deep booms hammered the hull. Charlie eased himself the rest of the way through the hatch, his other hand found a second crossbeam.

He dangled above the hold’s deck, with its precarious drop. At least ten feet to the deck ... the ship rolled unpredictably. Timing. That was the key. Land the wrong way and he’d break a leg or crack his skull open.

He heard a depth charge explode.



More thudding blows sounded against the hull—and Charlie let go, landing on both feet, as light as he could, remembering to keep his knees bent.

Safe. He was safe.

A gunshot, then its echo and pain racked his body and Charlie knew he was going to die.

He was shot. His life flashed through his mind ... an antique black and white movie ... a thousand jumbled images cascaded through his brain.

The spiders were back—then gone.

Charlie wondered if he were dead. *Maybe, maybe, maybe.*

*Woooosh.* He felt his life slipping from his body. He felt himself ... *evaporating.*

*Then he was in New York. Charlie saw himself, another Charlie. The person he was or had been and the person he saw melded into the same person.*

Starbursts. The spiders appeared and faded.

Charlie forgot about England and Churchill. Forgot about World War Two.

His mind refocused as he sensed that somewhere in him there was another ...Charlie. How could that be?

Charlie had blended with someone or something who was a different version of himself. *They* were now watching a parade with a shared body which was becoming one body. Charlie was alive. Maybe he had been dead but now he was quite alive. And the two Charlie's were scumbling into one entity. Fusing? Maybe.

Nazis were everywhere. There was a program in his hand of the events that were happening around him. It was all familiar to him. The date on the program said April 20, 2015.

Charlie sensed, or maybe remembered, April 20 was a special day in this time of his life. A day of parades and celebrations to mark the anniversary of Adolf Hitler's birth. This was where Charlie had been before he ended up in the past in the war, meeting Churchill.

Charlie was at a parade in New York. According to the program in his hand, if Hitler had lived, he would have been one hundred and twenty-six years old on this

bright Spring morning. The dictator's memory and his work lived on in America where thousands thronged the streets to watch the parade Charlie now found himself in.

The young American realized that there were many New Yorkers watching the spectacle of the massed tanks, rocket launchers, and huge missile trucks that passed endlessly before them.

They waved, almost heartily at the ranks of goose-stepping soldiers and gave the stiff-armed Nazi salute to the generals and party leaders who passed in gleaming limousines. The two teenagers even smiled and cheered for the children of the America Youth who skipped by, garlanded in flowers ... each one bearing the familiar red and white armband with its black swastika, the emblem of the Party.

But anyone with half a brain could tell that the spectators mostly resented and hated the forced Nazi parade.

Charlie had to be careful. He knew there were those who would report any "anti-social" behavior to the feared secret police—the Gestapo. Every war and time had its traitors.

Another cheer went up, as above their heads the crowd saw the twin Führers appear on the huge video screens suspended high above the intersection of West 54th and 6th Avenue.

Charlie did not have to look at the program any longer, he remembered ... he was back home in America and the Nazis were in charge. New York was just the way he had left it when he took his first journey in a strange machine.

He was home now. And what was home? All he had to do was look around. All his memories returned.

Since Hitler's death in 1984 at the grand old age of 95, Hitler's sons, Erich and Johann, had ruled the Third Reich. It was a vast territory stretching from the west coast of what used to be the United States, across the Atlantic to Europe, and eastwards to the border with the Japanese territories of the former Soviet Union.

Charlie watched the twin Führers wave and smile on the video screens.

Beside him, his friend Andy chuckled. Andy, thoughtful and serious. With a balance of skepticism and hope.

From the first day they had met, Charlie sensed he could trust Andy. They were lifelong friends. All these things flooded back into Charlie's mind.

Andy kept smiling and seemed to have no clue what had just happened.

Could Andy have come to the parade with the Charlie of 2015 and then could the Charlie of 1940 been shot and then merged with the older Charlie?

There had been a pinch and then terrible pain in Charlie's chest when someone shot him in the ship's hold. There was no pain now. He felt totally intact. "No worries. I wasn't plugged, at least if I was I'm not now," he said.

Andy laughed but was curious about Charlie; his friend seemed to be different than he had been ten minutes earlier. "Why are you talking like a cowboy, Tex?" He laughed.

"It's not a laughing matter," Charlie said.

"Sure it is. The way you're talking all of a sudden and the expression on your face."

"What about my expression?" asked Charlie.

"I dunno, you seem jumpy. Probably nothing."

Charlie glanced around uneasily. "Sssh, don't let anyone hear you ...."

"Relax, Charlie," Andy said, "who could hear anything above this noise anyway?" There was something different about Charlie but Andy didn't dwell on it.

The snarl and roar of passing military vehicles was replaced by martial music as an S.S. Marching Band came swaggering down 6th Avenue, trumpets blaring, drums thumping like a gigantic heartbeat, and cymbals crashing. Behind them marched the black-uniformed ranks of the S.S.1st Division *Liebstandarte Adolf Hitler*, the most famous regiment in history.

As every American schoolchild knew, these were the same battalions that had overrun Moscow in 1943, removed the Communists from power, and installed surviving members of the Romanov family to the Russian Czardom. The same regiment that, in the winter of 1940, had been the spearhead that landed on the English shores, overcoming all resistance, and placing Nazi sympathizers King Edward and his consort, Queen Wallis, back onto the English throne.

A hush swept over the crowd for a moment. All that could be heard was the colossal stamp of leather jackboots in perfect synchronization. Then, so low it was almost as if they were flying between the Manhattan skyscrapers, came a formation of Heinkel supersonic fighter jets—red, white and black smoke streaming from the edges of

their wings in a fantail of patriotic color. The noise was immense and the spectators gasped and then cheered, thousands of citizens raising their arms in the Party salute and shouting “Heil Hitler!”

Charlie watched a man and a woman pushing through the crowd. The man was burly, clean-shaven and wearing a grey suit a size too small for him. The woman was blonde, her hair tied back severely. She too wore a suit, under a knee-length leather coat. Both she and the man pushed people aside roughly, without apology, their eyes fixed towards the rear of the crowd.

Charlie knew at once that they were Gestapo. He saw that an elderly woman had clambered up on the statue in the middle of Pettibone Plaza—the statue of Henry Pettibone himself, the financial genius who had rescued the economies of the failing Western democracies for the Nazi conquerors back in the 1950s.

Charlie tapped Andy’s arm and got his attention. “Look,” he said.

“Leave it alone, Charlie,” Andy said, after a quick glance.

“Maybe all she wants is a better view?”

Andy said, “Look away. Don’t forget the cameras. They’re watching everything.”

But Charlie was already following the Gestapo agents through the crowd and Andy tagged along.

The old woman had hung on to the statue’s outstretched arm. She was likely a vagrant of some sort. Her clothes were filthy and torn, her hair a matted rat’s nest. He’d heard of “street people” but he’d never seen one. It was against the law to dress improperly or to be without a home.

The old woman shouted in a thin, tremulous voice: “USA! USA! Down with the dirty Nazis! USA!”

People pivoted in her direction, the old woman screaming, “USA! USA!”

The Gestapo agents broke into a run, bodychecking people aside. The female agent grabbed the old lady’s ankles and yanked her down. The spectators, seemingly driven by fear, pivoted away. Corn stalks bending in a changing wind.

Charlie watched the Gestapo man kick the old woman, then yank her up by her hair. The old woman screamed, and the agent punched her in the mouth.

A black Mercedes police van appeared, driving across Pettibone Plaza, blue lights flashing. The two Gestapo agents dragged the barely conscious old woman away. Both her shoes came off.

An officer jumped out of the van and held open the rear doors. The Gestapo agents tossed the old lady inside. The doors slammed shut, and the van moved off.

It had taken two minutes.

“Where do you think she’ll end up?” Andy asked in an undertone.

“Nowhere good,” Charlie replied. “The way I heard it they’ve got camps in Kanada for ‘anti-social elements.’”

A black and red Messerschmitt surveillance helicopter weaved into sight, coming through the skyscraper canyons. It hovered over Pettibone Plaza for a moment.

The boys made their way out of the Plaza, leaving the crowds behind. Charlie walked deep in thought. Andy kept glancing at him, and finally said, “Did what happen back there upset you that much?”

“We have do something,” Charlie said. He wondered if he had been killed in the past and now he was alive. Time travel. It made little sense. Maybe he had not been killed but it sure felt like it when he landed in the gold room.

Andy interrupted Charlie’s thoughts. “Do what? Climb a statue? Yell slogans for a country that doesn’t exist anymore? Get arrested and sent to a camp for re-education?”

“Do you remember the ‘Sons of Liberty?’” asked Charlie.

“The ‘Sons of Liberty’ was a joke, Charlie. Something we played at when we were kids. It wasn’t serious.”

“But it could be.”

“You’re acting strange, Dude.”

“We shouldn’t just talk; we should act. I want to get everyone together. Tonight. I’m not joking, Andy. Can you do it? Can you get everyone to come for nine o’clock?”

“No cells, no texts, right?”

“Right.”

“Okay, Charlie,” Andy said. “Just don’t get us all arrested or killed. Promise?”

“Promise,” said Charlie. He remembered traveling from the world he was in now back to World War Two.

When that happened the Charlie of Nazi rule in America and the Charlie of World War Two became two different people. Then there was a shipment of gold in World War II to where he had been shot and maybe died. But here he was alive. And he had not used the time machine to return to 2015.

There seemed to be only one explanation. Death or a kind of death had transported him to 2015. He was not sure who or what he was. He felt like he belonged in 2015. He understood it. He would go with the flow. He realized he knew the way home.

At the same time, Charlie felt like an actor in a play that knew what was going to happen before it did. After all, he had already lived the life he was in ....

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Please contact [jaronbs@gmail.com](mailto:jaronbs@gmail.com) for a complete review copy of **Golden Tide**.