

A howling wind flattened the marsh grass fringing the small finger of land that jutted northward into the Baltic. Icy rain blew in gusts against the sides and low, sloping roofs of the long wooden barracks. The eight-foot high double fences and huge rolls of barbed wire between them reflected with a million sudden twinkles the searchlights sweeping back and forth in the unpredictable patterns that the German tower guards predictably used during bad weather.

The fourteen inmates of Room 3 of the northermost barracks settled down to their usual after-supper routine of fun and games. Chappel spread his tools and sheets of tin on the long table in the center of the room. Fenner sat down opposite Chappel and opened his German grammar to the chapter on irregular verbs, and Davidson and Deene rehashed their last mission. The bridge players took their usual places at one end of the table, and the hearts players spread out on the lower level of one of the bunks ranged round the room against the walls.

Davidson went over to the stove in one corner, picked up two coal briquettes, and yanked open the firebox door. He threw the briquettes inside, hastily pulling his hand back from the searing heat, and slammed the door shut.

"I guess we can take this thing down," he said, eyeing the faded sheet of paper thumb-tacked to the wall over the stove. "Through the Door in Forty-Four' doesn't make sense now."

"It didn't make much sense when we put it up a year ago," said Chappel.

"It made no sense at all in August, when Dave and I got here," said Keene.

"We better get out of here this year," said Chappel, tapping a lip along the longer edge of one of his sheets of tin. His voice rose. "This is the eighteenth frying pan I've made here. All I dream about is frying pans. All night I see these goddam sheets of tin, and I tap-tap-tap miles of seams and out thousands of ends off thousands of powered milk cans. It's not right. I should be dreaming of breads not frying pans!"

He stood up, pushing the backs of his knees against the bench, and his voice rose to a mock scream.

"I think I'll go mad, I tell you. MAD!"

"Ok, Chappie, Ohhhhhkayyy," said Davidson. "Save it for Broadway, or at least for the next play we put on here. Try something new and different next time."

Fenner slammed his book down on the table. He stood up, stepped back over the bench, picked up his book and without a word retreated tight-lip-

ped to the confines of his lower bunk. "Home alive in Forty-five?" said Keene.

"What do your German buddies think, Fenner?" said Chappie. Fenner spoke some German, and thus had official sanction from Captain Johnson to trade with the guards for the barracks. He turned away from Chappie, studing his grammar, yet not studying it at all.

"Fenner?" said Kenne

"When do the Germans think the war will be over?"

"They don't confide in me!"

Fenner's roommates never openly expressed to each other the vague feeling of distrust he aroused in them.

The bridge players erupted into a noisy argument over a questionable three-no-trump bid, and Davidson moved over to a vantage point for kibitzing. After watching a few hands, he came back and sat down next to Chappie. The wind rattled the outside shutters, which had long since been closed from the outside by a guard.

"Hey, Fenner, what do you and the Germans talk about," he said. "I mean, besides the price of onions? Do they know what's going on? Do they know anything about the concentration camps?"

"They've never heard about concentration camps. That's a lot of prop-aganda, anyway."

"Propaganda, my butt!" said Davidson. He leaned forward, peered into the deep shadow of Fenner's bunk. "Is that what they say?"

"That's what I say."

"Christ! Don't talk to that idiot," said Keene.

"Who's an idiot!" Fenner burst out of his bunk suddenly. Before the war Keene had been a bookie's helper on the East Side of Chicago and was built like a toy bull.

"I'm sorry, Fenner," said Keene. "You're not an idiot. Go lie down."

Fenner stood there for a moment, glaring at Keene who was calmly inspecting Chappel's work. Then, feeling that he had defended his honor sufficiently, he sat down on the bench next to his bunk and reached for his book. Davidson climbed up to his bunk, over Fenner's, by stepping first on the edge of the lower bunk, then heaving himself up with an obvious grunt. Fenner glared up at him. Fenner spent a lot of time glaring.

"I've told you a thousand times, keep the hell off my bunk!"

"Fenner, just how am I supposed to get up here without using your bunk?"

"I don't care how you do it, just stay off!"

"Sure, Fenner sure. Say, Chappie,

what are you going to do after the War? Maybe you could go into the tinsmith business."

"Very funny, Dave. Very funny."

"How about you, Dave?" said Kenne. "You had a bakeshop in New York, didn't you?"

"Yeah. I had a good business, a good, steady neighborhood-type trade." He could almost smell the fragrance of the pastries, and the bagels.

Fenner snorted, as though questioning the size of Dave's trade, the quality of his cakes, even the weight of his one-pound loaves of bread. There was a lot in that snort, Dave felt, and not having an answer for it troubled him.

The door opened slowly and Parsons walked in. He held the door open.

"Dave, Captain Johnson wants to see you. In his room."

"He wants to see me?" Johnson did not talk much to lowly second Lieutenants, especially if they weren't pilots. "What about?"

"Maybe he's lonesome for you," said Chappie.

"He wants to see you right away," said Parsons, not looking at him.

"I'll try to crowd him into my busy schedule," Dave said from his perch. He landed on the floor beside Fenner with a room-shaking crash, just missing Fenner's left foot. Fenner jerked back, almost falling off the bench, Dave felt much better about not having replied to Fenner's snort.

He walked out of the room and closed the door, and started down the long, drafty hall toward Captain Johnson's room at the front of the barracks. He almost bumped into Feldman coming out of his room. It occurred to him that Feldman was heading for the latrine, but he turned and walked with him.

"What's up?" Feldman asked.

"Does Johnson want to see you, too?"

"Yeah. What's up?"

"I have no idea," Davidson said. He wondered why Parsons had avoided looking at him.

Inside, Captain Johnson stood looking out of the window. Rather, he would have been looking out of the window if the shutters had been open. Davidson and Feldman stood just inside the door, waiting for him to turn around. Finally he did, and took a sheet of paper out of his back pocket, and slowly unfolded it. With the bare overhead bulb lighting the front, Davidson could see through the back of the paper that it contained what appeared to be two columns of names. Johnson looked up from the paper, first at Feldman, then at Davidson. His face had lost its ruddy color. It seemed to Davidson that he had difficulty