

## A Telephone Call

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by [HannahandHoney](#)

Biggles inhaled deeply on his cigarette and eyed von Stalhein thoughtfully. He and his coarse Russian companions had been easier to catch this time, putting up hardly any resistance. Now Erich sat staring into space, smoke coiling up from his cigarette in his customary amber holder. They all sat round a table, Algy on his left, von Stalhein and his two acquaintances opposite them. No-one had spoken in a while; Biggles was waiting for Ginger to come back with the plane.

Suddenly the shrill ringing of the telephone cut through Biggles' thoughts. He got up and made his way into the small room across the hallway where a writing table, a chair and the only telephone in the house sat.

'Hello?' he said into the mouth-piece. 'Major Bigglesworth speaking.'

There was a slight hesitation at the other end of the line, then a voice cut through. 'Is Hauptmann von Stalhein there?' The language used was German, but what surprised Biggles was the sound of the voice. It could have only belonged to a boy of around ten years of age.

'Yes, he is' Biggles replied in the same language. 'Is this some sort of prank?'

'Nein, nein.' The slightly trembling voice assured him. 'Please, it is urgent.'

'Alright. Wait a minute, don't ring off.' He placed the telephone receiver on the table and returned across the hallway. 'von Stalhein. It's for you.'

Von Stalhein, looking a little surprised, followed Biggles out and picked up the telephone. 'A little privacy, perhaps?' he said pointedly.

Biggles glanced at the window, too small to get through, nodded and stepped into the hallway to wait. He could hear the buzz of von Stalheins voice within, but made no attempt to eavesdrop. Sooner than he expected, von Stalhein stepped out to join him.

'I need to go back to Germany,' was all he said.

Biggles raised incredulous eyebrows. 'You think I'm just going to let you do that?'

'That was my nephew.' Von Stalheins voice was pitched low and expressionless. 'His mother, my sister, is sick and getting worse. The boy has no idea what to do.'

Biggles looked hard at von Stalheins face. 'I have no plane,' was all he said.

'Hebblethwaite will be back soon enough.' As if to prove Erich's point, the buzz of a low-flying plane engine became clear to Biggles' ear.

Biggles tilted his head and looked von Stalhein in the eye. 'How do I know this is not a trap?'

'Bigglesworth, please.' Von Stalhein protested. 'Do you really think I would as go as far as to bring my family into this, just to escape your clutches?'

Biggles sighed and looked down at the gun in his hand. He chewed on his bottom lip, and then suddenly made up his mind. 'I will... but I'm only landing on this side of the curtain. And only if you will give me your word not to play any monkey tricks once on the plane.'

'I give you my word.' Von Stalhein said immediately. 'Upon my honour as a German officer.'

Biggles smiled. 'That'll do.' He poked his head around the door of the dining room and spoke to Algy. 'I going out for a time. Lock these gentlemen...' he jerked his head towards the Russians '... up, to be on the safe side.'

'Where's von Stalhein?' Algy queried.

'With me.' Biggles popped his head back around the door again.

'With you...' Algy incredulous voice floated around the doorpost.

'I'll explain later...' Biggles replied as he headed down the corridor, motioning von Stalhein to come with him.

'You will not explain later.' Von Stalhein muttered. 'You will not utter this to anyone.'

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The flight was uneventful and mainly silent. Biggles brought the plane down in a field near the border between West and East Germany, and turned to von Stalhein, who was preparing to get out the plane.

But before Biggles could speak von Stalhein did. 'Thank you.' He said simply. 'I hope to repay you someday.'

'All the repayment I need, Erich, is for you to come on this side of the curtain.' As he spoke, Biggles placed his hand over von Stalheins. Von Stalhein stopped exiting the plane, and Biggles saw his throat moving in the moonlight when he swallowed. Von Stalhein slowly turned his head and looked up at Biggles with two deep blue pools of hate, envy and longing, framed by fiercely swooping black lashes and haughty cheekbones. Biggles raised his hand and traced one slightly trembling finger up one of von Stalheins cheekbones. Von Stalhein blinked slowly, and his eyelashes brushed Biggles' finger.

'I'm serious.' Biggles said quietly. As if the words broke a spell, von Stalhein jerked away. His eyes turned ice cold, and as hard as sapphires. 'Never.' He hissed. He slid out of the plane and limped away into the enveloping darkness.

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