

CHAPTER ONE

It was eleven at night, but the port of Bordeaux crackled with life. Refugee kids slumped in humid alleyways, using their mothers' bellies for pillows. Drunken soldiers and marooned sailors scrapped, sang and peed against blacked-out streetlamps. Steamers lined up three abreast at the wharves, waiting for a coal train that showed no sign of arriving soon.

With roads clogged and no diesel for trucks, the dockside was choked with produce while people went hungry less than twenty kilometres away. Meat and veg surrendered to maggots, while recently arrived boats had nowhere to unload and ditched rotting cargo into the sea.

A man and a boy strode along the dock wall, alongside rusting bollards and oranges catching moonlight as

they bobbed in the water between a pair of Indian cargo ships.

‘Will the consulate be open this late?’ Marc Kilgour asked.

Marc was twelve. He was well built, with a scruffy blond tangle down his brow and his shirt clutched over his nose to mask the sickly odour of rotting bananas. The pigskin bag over Marc’s shoulder held everything he owned.

Charles Henderson walked beside him: six feet of wiry muscle and a face that would look better after a night’s sleep and an encounter with a sharp blade. Disguised as peasants, the pair wore corduroy trousers and white shirts damp with sweat. A suitcase strained Henderson’s right arm and the metal objects inside jangled as he grabbed Marc’s collar and yanked him off course.

‘Look where you’re putting your feet!’

Marc looked back and saw that his oversized boot had been saved from a mound of human shit. With a hundred thousand refugees in town it was a common enough sight, but Marc’s stomach still recoiled. A second later he kicked the outstretched leg of a young woman with dead eyes and bandaged toes.

‘Pardon me,’ Marc said, but she didn’t even notice. The woman had drunk herself into a stupor and no one would bat an eye if she turned up dead at sunrise.

Since running away from his orphanage two weeks earlier, Marc had trained himself to block out the

horrible things he saw all around: from mumbling old dears suffering heat stroke to escaped pigs lapping the blood around corpses at the roadside.

The port was under blackout, so Henderson didn't see Marc's sad eyes, but he sensed a shudder in the boy's breathing and pressed a hand against his back.

'What can we do, mate?' Henderson asked soothingly. 'There's millions of them . . . You have to look after number one.'

Marc found comfort in Henderson's hand, which made him think of the parents he'd never known.

'If I get to England, what happens?' Marc asked nervously. He wanted to add, *Can I live with you?* but choked on the words.

They turned away from the dockside, on to a street lined with warehouses. Clumps of refugees from the north sat under corrugated canopies designed to keep goods dry as they were loaded on to trucks. Despite the late hour a half-dozen boys played a rowdy game of football, using cabbages stolen from the wharves.

Henderson ignored Marc's tricky question, instead answering the one he'd asked two minutes earlier.

'The consulate will be closed, but we have nowhere to stay and the office is sure to be inundated by morning. We might be able to find our own way in . . .'

Henderson tailed off as a pair of German planes swept overhead. The lads playing cabbage football made

machine-gun noises and hurled curses over the sea, until their parents yelled at them to cut the racket before it woke younger siblings.

‘I’m French,’ Marc noted seriously. ‘I don’t speak a word of English, so how can you get me a British passport?’

‘We’ll manage,’ Henderson said confidently, as he stopped walking for a moment and switched his heavy case from one arm to the other. ‘After all we’ve been through, you should trust me by now.’

The consulate was only a kilometre from the dockside, but Henderson insisted he knew better than the directions jotted down by an official at the passenger terminal. They traipsed muggy streets where the smell of sewage mixed with sea air, until a friendly-but-sozzled dockworker set them back on the right path.

‘I wonder where Paul and Rosie are,’ Marc said, as they broke into a cobbled square with a crumbling fountain at its centre.

‘They’ll be upriver, close to open sea by now,’ Henderson reckoned, after a glance at his watch. ‘There’s U-boats¹ prowling and the captain will want to reach the English Channel before daylight.’

A courthouse spanned one side of the square, with a domed church opposite and a couple of gendarmes²

¹U-boat – a German submarine.

²Gendarmes – French police officers.

standing watch, their main purpose apparently to stop refugees settling on the church steps. The British consulate stood in a neat terrace of offices, jewellers, pawnbrokers and banks.

One end of this row had suffered structural damage from a bomb meant for the docks. Even in moonlight you could see the dramatically warped façade above a jeweller's shop and broken roof slates swept to a tidy pile at the side.

With low-flying bombers and the German forces expected to reach Bordeaux within the week, the Union Jack flag had tactfully been removed from the consulate, but nothing could be done about the British lions woven into wrought-iron gates padlocked across the front door.

Several of His Majesty's subjects gathered on the front steps, with noticeably better clothing and luggage than the refugees scavenging food along the dockside, but Henderson was wary. The Gestapo³ were still after him and they could easily have spies watching what remained of Bordeaux's British community.

Henderson would stand out amongst the other Brits in his peasant clothing and Marc spoke no English, so rather than join the queue and wait for nine a.m., he led Marc around the rear of the terrace and was pleased to find that it backed on to a sheltered alleyway. The

³Gestapo – German secret police.

bombing had fractured a water pipe beneath the cobbles and their boots swilled through several centimetres of water.

‘Have you still got my torch?’ Henderson whispered, when they reached the rear door of the consulate.

The batteries were weak and the beam faltered as Marc scanned the brickwork. After snatching his torch Henderson squatted down and aimed light through the letterbox.

‘Nobody home,’ he said, as the metal flap snapped shut. ‘No sign of an alarm, no bars at the windows. If I give you a boost, do you reckon you can get yourself through the small window?’

Marc craned his head up as Henderson aimed the torch so that he could see.

‘What about the two cops in the square?’ Marc asked. ‘They’ll hear if the glass goes.’

Henderson shook his head. ‘It’s a sash window; you should be able to force it open with a lever.’

Henderson stepped back out of the puddle and found dry cobbles on which to lay and open his case. Marc noticed shadowy figures passing the end of the alleyway, then jolted at the distinctive click of Henderson loading his pistol.

Marc was delighted that a British agent was going to all this bother on his account. Henderson could have abandoned him at the passenger terminal and sailed

aboard the *Cardiff Bay* with Paul and Rosie. But as well as a soft heart, Henderson had a ruthless streak and the gun made Marc uneasy.

In the three days since Marc first met Henderson in Paris, Henderson had shot or blown up half a dozen Germans and machine-gunned a grovelling Frenchman in his bathtub. If the next figure at the end of the alleyway chose to come and investigate, Marc knew Henderson would kill them without a thought.

Henderson passed over a crowbar before screwing a silencer to the front of his pistol. Marc ran his hand along the oiled bar and glimpsed inside the suitcase: ammunition, a compact machine gun, a zipped pouch in which Marc knew lay gold ingots and a stack of French currency. The clothes and toilet bag seemed like an afterthought, squeezed into the bottom right corner. Marc found it miraculous that Henderson could lift all this, let alone carry it several kilometres through the port.

After fastening leather buckles and tipping the jangling case back on its side, Henderson faced the building and lowered his knee into the puddle. Marc leaned against the wall and stepped up so that his wet boots balanced on Henderson's shoulders.

'Now I'm really glad you didn't tread in that pile of turds,' Henderson noted.

Despite nerves and his precarious position astride

Henderson's shoulders, Marc snorted with laughter.

'Don't make me giggle,' he said firmly, walking his hands up the brickwork as Henderson stood, raising Marc level with the landing window between ground and first floors.

Marc rested his chest against the wall, then took the crowbar from his back pocket.

'You're heavier than you look,' Henderson huffed, as Marc's unsteady boots tore at his skin.

The oak window frame was rotting and Henderson felt a shower of flaking paint as Marc dug the forked tongue of the crowbar under the frame and pushed as hard as he dared. The catch locking the two sliding panes together was strong, but the two screws holding it in place lifted easily from the dried-out wood.

'Gotcha,' Marc whispered triumphantly, as he threw the window open.

To Henderson's relief, Marc's weight shifted as the boy pulled himself through the window. He crashed down on to plush carpet inside, narrowly avoiding a vase and a knock-out encounter with the banister.

Beeswax and old varnish filled Marc's nose as he hurried downstairs. The building was small, but its pretensions were grand and paintings of wiggled men and naval battles lined the short flight of steps down to the back door.

Henderson grabbed his suitcase as Marc pulled across

two heavy bolts and opened the back door. Beyond the stairwell the ground floor comprised a single large room. They moved amongst desks and cabinets, separated from the waiting area at the opposite end by an ebony countertop and spiralled gold rails.

Marc was fascinated by the tools of bureaucracy: typewriters, rubber stamps, carbon papers and hole punches.

‘So they keep blank passports here?’ Marc asked, as he stared at the banks of wooden drawers along one wall.

‘If they haven’t run out,’ Henderson said, as he slammed his heavy case on a desktop, tilting a stack of envelopes on to the parquet floor. ‘But we can’t make a passport without a photograph.’

Henderson pulled a leather wallet out of his case. The miniature photographic kit comprised a matchbox-sized pinhole camera, tiny vials of photographic chemicals and sheets of photographic paper large enough to produce the kind of pictures used in identity documents.

‘Go stand under the wall clock,’ Henderson said, as he worked with the tiny camera, inserting a small rectangle of photographic paper.

Henderson looked up and saw a peculiar mix of apprehension and emotion on Marc’s face.

‘Nobody ever took my photograph before,’ he admitted.

Henderson looked surprised. ‘Not at the school or the orphanage?’

Marc shook his head.

‘We’ve got very little light,’ Henderson explained, as he propped the camera on a stack of ledgers. ‘So I need you to stay *absolutely* still and keep your eyes open.’

Marc stood rigid for twenty seconds, then rushed forwards on Henderson’s signal.

‘When can I see it?’ he asked, as he blinked his stinging eyes repeatedly.

‘I have a developing kit,’ Henderson explained. ‘There must be a kitchen somewhere. I need you to find me three saucers and some warm water.’

As Marc raced upstairs to find the kitchen, Henderson began looking around the offices for blank passports. He discovered an entire drawer full of them, along with a wooden cigar box containing all the necessary stamps and, most helpfully, a crumpled blue manual detailing the correct procedure for dealing with a consular passport application.

One of the telephones rang, but Henderson ignored it and began shaking his photographic chemicals, ready for when Marc came back with the water.

A second phone thrummed as Marc came downstairs with three saucers and a tobacco tin filled with hot tap water. Henderson found the ringing irritating, but with France in chaos it didn’t surprise him that the consular phones would ring through the night.

‘I need absolute darkness to develop the photograph,’

Henderson explained, as he spread out the three saucers and dipped a fragile glass thermometer in the hot water. 'Get the lights.'

Once the office lights were out and the blinds at the rear adjusted to shield the moonlight, Henderson gathered his saucers of chemicals in tight formation, leaned forwards over the desk and flipped the jacket he'd been carrying in his suitcase over his head, protecting his equipment from any remaining light.

Marc watched as Henderson fidgeted mysteriously beneath the jacket and the sweet smell of developing fluid filled the air. He stripped the rectangle of photographic paper from the camera and counted the ticks of his watch to ensure it spent the correct time in the developing fluid.

Marc had no idea how long it would be before Henderson emerged with the developed photograph. He thought of asking, but didn't want to affect Henderson's concentration.

'Have you ever made a cup of tea, Marc?' Henderson asked, once he'd moved the sliver of paper from the developer into the bleaching solution.

'Sorry . . .' Marc said weakly. 'I've never even drunk it.'

'You're a blank canvas, Marc Kilgour,' Henderson laughed. 'You go upstairs, put a kettle on the stove and I'll show you how to make a proper English cuppa while your picture dries.'

‘What’s a cuppa?’ Marc asked, liking the word, even if he wasn’t sure what it meant.

Henderson trembled with laughter beneath the jacket.

He didn’t laugh for long, though. Both phones had stopped ringing, but it became clear from a loud scuffling sound that something was happening on the steps out front.

‘Those gendarmes must have heard us breaking in,’ Marc said anxiously, as the metal gates over the front door whined for a shot of oil. ‘I bet it was them on the phone.’

Henderson remained calm. ‘Ignore your emotions and use your brain,’ he said firmly as he pulled his head out from beneath the jacket. ‘The police don’t phone up and ask burglars if they’d be kind enough to leave and the Germans certainly wouldn’t tip us off with a fracas on the doorstep. I just need half a minute now to fix the image. Go up to the front window and tell me what you see.’

Marc vaulted the counter and dodged two lines of chairs in the waiting room, then peeked through a tiny crack in the velvet curtains. A white Jaguar sports car had parked up on the cobbles and an anxious crowd hassled its female driver as she unlocked the gates.

‘Guessing it’s someone who works here,’ Marc hissed. ‘She’s got keys and everyone in the queue’s giving her stress.’

Marc could hear what was being said, but it was all in English so he didn't have a clue.

'I have urgent consular business,' the woman yelled. 'You all need to come back in the morning. We're open normal office hours. Nine to five and noon on Saturday.'

Marc ducked behind chairs as the woman squeezed through the front door and told the people outside to mind their fingers before banging it shut.

As soon as she flicked on the lights she saw Henderson. He'd finished developing Marc's photograph and stood behind the counter with his arms out wide to make it clear that he was no threat.

'I'm sorry to startle you like this, Madame. The name's Henderson. Charles Henderson.'

Marc studied the woman from his position crouching behind the chairs. She was in her twenties, and nearly six feet tall. She wore the white blouse and pleated skirt of an office girl, but sculpted black hair and an elegant gold watch gave the impression that she lived off somewhat more than an office girl's salary.

'Charles Henderson,' the woman said knowingly. 'I decoded a transcript from London. Quite a few people are looking for you. Of course, if you're *really* Henderson, you'll know his code word.'

'Seraphim,' Henderson answered, as the woman placed her bag on the countertop then kicked on a wooden panel and ducked under. Marc's eyebrows shot

up as he sighted the tops of her stockings.

‘I do beg your pardon, but young Marc here needs a passport. We did a bit of damage to your landing window but it’s easily fixed . . .’

‘Forgive me,’ the woman said, making a quick glance back at Marc before cutting Henderson dead with a raised hand. ‘My name is Maxine Clere, clerical assistant to the consul. Please make use of our facilities . . . It looks like you’ve found the blank passports already. I know your work is important, but I have to make immediate contact with London on the scrambled telephone. We’ve lost the *Cardiff Bay* on the River Garonne, less than thirty kilometres out of Bordeaux – and many are dead.’

CHAPTER TWO

A quarter-hour after it had sunk, all that remained of the *Cardiff Bay* were two chunks of superstructure floating mid-river and an oily film on the water which burned the eyes of passengers making the desperate swim to shore. Fishing boats and motor launches were still picking people out of the water, but they were reluctant to use much light lest it draw back German bombers.

It was low tide and a broad mud flank was exposed along the southern embankment of the River Garonne. Thirteen-year-old Rosie Clarke was a strong swimmer and one of the first to reach the shore under her own power. The embankment mud sucked off her sandals and she fell on her face, taking a mouthful of evil brown water that combined with breathlessness to cause a coughing fit.

PT Bivott grabbed her sleeve. She'd met him on the three-hundred-metre swim to shore and got her first look at his body as he slid fingers into her armpits and hauled her up with a squelch.

Like many fifteen year olds, PT had a man's height but not the physique that went with it. His French was perfect but came with an American twist. Dark hair designed to be combed back dangled to his bottom lip.

'Keep calm, Rosie,' PT said, pulling her close and squeezing tight. Rosie's muscles burned and freezing mud slid down her dress, but all she could think about was her brother and she screamed out for him.

'Paul!'

Her voice wavered. Strong to start and then collapsing into sobs with her head buried in PT's life vest.

'If he's as tough as his sister he'll do fine,' PT said encouragingly, as his free hand swept hair up over his head. He'd worked hard on trying to say the right thing, but he hadn't.

'Paul's only eleven,' Rosie sniffed. 'He can barely manage a width in a pool, and that current's . . .'

'Don't cry,' PT said, tightening his grip before letting go abruptly.

The sudden break-off upset Rosie until she saw that PT had gone after a man wading up the embankment with two small boys latched on his back. As the lads slid off, their red-faced father clutched his stomach and

gasped for breath. Blood streaked his chest where tiny nails had dug in.

As PT helped the father stay upright, light shone from a motorcycle headlamp on the riverbank. Rosie squinted into the beam and saw outlines of local men coming to help, while others walked victims up the beach.

‘Get the boys,’ PT ordered, squelching past with the gasping man’s arm draped around his back.

Rosie was shattered and found it tough to stay upright. She lacked blood in her head and had mud past her ankles, but the boys were only up to her waist and the smallest was stuck fast and bawling for his mum.

‘Come on, mate,’ Rosie said, forcing a friendly tone as she grabbed the youngest. His sodden pyjamas and hopeful blue eyes gave her purpose as slippery fingers locked around her neck.

The older boy spoke in English as she hauled him towards dry land. ‘Have you seen my mummy?’

‘There are lots of beaches,’ Rosie answered, as mud squirted up between her toes. She considered explaining how the currents would make people come ashore in different places, but she was breathless and doubted he’d understand. ‘You’ll find her in the morning,’ she answered finally.

‘She can’t swim though,’ the boy said urgently. ‘She might die.’

Rosie was struggling, but PT had an even harder time

with their father, who was much heavier than PT and suffering with asthma. Eventually two men in fishing waders stretched him across an old door, enabling PT to carry the older boy for the final stretch to the river bank.

Local men snatched the boys and guided them up a slippery ramp used to launch boats when the tide was in. The little three year old squealed and demanded to stay with Rosie, but she hadn't the energy to comfort him and found herself being pulled up the ramp by the leathery hands of an old fisherman.

People in towns had become numb to refugees and suffering, but the *Cardiff Bay* victims were lucky enough to wash up near a community of farmers and fishermen. It was their first taste of war, beyond the rumble of bombs hitting the port several kilometres east.

As a nurse attended the asthmatic father, PT and Rosie followed muddy footprints to a vaulted warehouse where trawlermen stored equipment and gutted their catch before taking it to market in Bordeaux.

The building stank of fish guts trapped in the open drains and the hosed water was bitter cold. Once the worst of the mud was gone, Rosie and PT sat outside by a hurriedly built fire. Local women rushed between their homes and the quayside bringing coffee, towels and blankets.

Rosie sat in the gravel by the fire, with her life jacket

as a seat. She was very conscious of everything showing through a wet summer dress. She caught her breath while an enamel mug warmed fingers that stung with numbness. PT squatted alongside and their bodies touched through wet clothes. Circumstances were desperate and Rosie craved this intimacy, even though they were strangers.

‘Can I take your names?’ a man asked from behind. The well-fed priest had pin-prick eyes behind thick glasses. He licked the tip of his pencil before impatiently drumming it on his spiral-bound notebook.

‘That’s my business,’ PT said peevishly.

Priests expected deference, and Rosie was both shocked and impressed by PT’s lack of respect. The priest raised one eyebrow before explaining patiently.

‘I’m taking all the names and where you come from. People are coming ashore at spots all along the river and on the opposite bank too. We’re listing names and telephoning from the parochial houses so that people can find one another.’

‘There’s nobody gonna be looking for my name,’ PT growled. ‘But thanks all the same.’

Rosie had no idea why PT was keen to hide his identity, but the Gestapo were after Henderson, Paul, Marc and herself so she didn’t want her name on any lists either. The trouble was, she wanted Paul to be able to find her and had to think fast.

‘Valentine Favre,’ Rosie said. ‘Thirteen years old.’

If Paul saw the list he’d surely recognise his sister’s age and late mother’s maiden name and work out what she’d done. The Nazis would be unlikely to make the same connection.

‘Were your parents aboard?’ the priest asked, as he looked down his list for any other Favres.

‘Just my kid brother, Michael,’ she said, giving Paul’s second name. ‘He’s eleven.’

As the priest headed away a stooped Englishwoman queuing for coffee tapped Rosie on the back. ‘Excuse me,’ she said, her voice barely more than a croak. ‘I couldn’t help overhearing. I was on a lifeboat and we pulled a boy aboard. Ten or eleven. He looked somewhat like you, but rather slimmer.’

‘That’s him!’ Rosie smiled, bouncing up so fast that she splashed hot coffee over PT. ‘Where was this? Did he seem OK?’

The woman sucked her lips into her mouth, and Rosie near burst with anxiety as she realised it was going to be bad news. ‘He looked poorly,’ the woman said. ‘He was bloody. After coming aboard he vomited and passed out.’

It wasn’t a perfect answer, but not Rosie’s worst fear either.

‘But he’s alive?’ she said hopefully. ‘Do you know where he is?’

‘We landed on the embankment on the other side of the harbour. If you walk back behind the warehouse and past the shop on the corner, there’s a slipway heading down to the water.’

Rosie glanced down at PT, unsure about the depth of their bond. ‘Are you coming with me?’

‘I’ve no idea if he’s still there,’ the elderly woman interrupted, before PT got a chance to answer. ‘They might have taken him to a doctor or something by now.’

Rosie had been re-energised by hope. She stepped around the bodies by the fire and followed directions, belting behind the warehouse and turning by the shop.

She found her bare soles slapping on a stone path, the Garonne on one side and a windswept field on the other. The path led down to an embankment – much smaller than the one where she’d washed up across the harbour – and a jetty used for fishing. Another barefoot runner closed in. She glanced back and was pleased to recognise PT, but didn’t slow down until she reached a group of local women holding candles over a body writhing on the ground.

Rosie feared the worst, but there was a horrific moan that clearly came from a woman. As she closed up Rosie saw that she was pregnant, clutching her swollen belly and with blood streaked down her thighs.

‘Is that the doctor?’ a local woman shouted

desperately, as Rosie came to a breathless stop.

She didn't need to answer, because by this time PT was in plain sight and clearly too young.

'I can see you're busy,' Rosie gasped apologetically. 'But I think my brother came up here on a lifeboat. Skinny kid, eleven years old. Someone told me he was passed out.'

The pregnant woman screamed again as a bloody finger showed Rosie the way.

'On the jetty. A man named Gaston is looking after him.'

PT ran on ahead. The stone path ended and he jumped off a ledge into a splash of lapping water, with silt underfoot and two empty lifeboats bobbing a few metres offshore.

'Mind your step,' PT warned, as his hand traced the crumbling sea wall leading to the jetty. 'I don't know how deep this gets.'

The water stayed below their knees and the only danger came on the slippery steps leading up the side of the fishing jetty.

'Paul!' Rosie shouted with joy, as she reached the wooden decking and sighted her brother sat against a rotten post at the base of the jetty.

Gaston was a skinny old man who'd been giving Paul sips of water. Rosie hurried across, but she went stiff when she got close enough to see details.

Paul's left eye was open, but the right was swollen over. A vortex had sucked him deep underwater as the *Cardiff Bay* went down. When his life vest pulled him back to the surface he'd smashed into razor-sharp barnacles on a section of the ship's hull.

He'd been lucky enough not to get dragged down under the metal, but the barnacles left cuts that started on his right cheek then stopped around his chin. Shallower wounds began in the middle of his chest and ran down to his bellybutton. The lower portion of his right arm was set at a twisted angle and clearly broken.

Shock and a badly swollen cheek left Paul's face expressionless, but he raised the fingers of his left hand and quietly mouthed, '*Rosie.*'

'Are you the sister?' Gaston asked.

Rosie nodded. 'Is anyone on the way? A nurse? A doctor?'

'There is only me. I worked in an army hospital during the last war,' Gaston explained. 'I have a few supplies at my house. I can clean his cuts and set his arm, but my back is bad, I can't carry him.'

The normal thing would be to telephone for an ambulance or find the local doctor, but with German bombings, millions of refugees and many medical staff having fled further south, Rosie realised that the frail army medic was Paul's best chance.

'What about that woman down there?' PT asked.

‘She’s miscarrying. Judging by the blood, she could die.’

Gaston nodded ruefully. ‘Wounds and broken bones I’ve dealt with. What do I know of a woman’s problems?’

Rosie looked back at PT, slightly irritated. She wanted her brother attended to, even if the woman’s plight *was* more threatening. ‘Can you lift him?’ she asked.

Paul made a dull groan as PT scooped him up off the wooden jetty. Gaston moved as fast as old legs allowed, leading the way through an overgrown field to a line of sagging cottages.

Paul was laid out on a dining table while Gaston’s wife boiled water and found an old medic’s pouch filled with yellowing bandages and dried-out creams that apparently dated from the last war. Rosie tucked a cushion under her brother’s head and stroked his hand, calming his nerves and telling him that everything would be OK.

Others in the area knew Gaston had been a medic. Half a dozen injured passengers had reached the village and people began knocking at the front door asking for advice. Near eighty years old and deaf in one ear, the old man quickly grew stressed.

‘I’m just one man,’ Gaston shouted to his wife. ‘Tell them when the boy is done I’ll look at someone else.’

The elderly medic worked methodically. An electric bulb hung over the dining table, but two flickering gas lanterns were brought in to supplement it. Paul had been

lifted between the lifeboat and the jetty, so at least his wounds were free of mud, but Gaston swabbed Paul's cheek with a solution of hot salt water before painting on iodine, which stung even worse.

Rosie tried not to cry as her brother sobbed in pain. Considering that Paul screamed the house down if he got shampoo in his eyes she thought he was being quite brave. But the cuts on his face filled with blood as soon as they were clean.

Gaston scratched his stubbly chin and made a decision. 'It needs stitching or he'll bleed to death.'

His wife produced a tumbler of warmed brandy, sweetened with syrup, and helped Paul to swallow it. The alcohol numbed Paul slightly before the retired medic put in five neat stitches with sterilised button thread and a sewing needle. The booze was some help, but PT had to clamp Paul's knees against the table to stop him from kicking out.

After another sweetened brandy, which left Paul thoroughly drunk, the old man moved in to set his arm. Paul trembled as he sat in a dining chair, gas lamps flickering, the handle of a wooden spoon between his teeth to prevent him biting through his tongue when the pain hit.

The bony old medic made him rest the broken arm flat against the tabletop, then prodded the swelling to feel the direction of the break.

‘Been some years since I last did this,’ Gaston confessed, glugging brandy out of the bottle for courage as Rosie tightened her grip on Paul’s shoulder. PT and Gaston’s wife stood by, fingers tense and brows dripping sweat.

Paul wailed as Gaston thumped his palm downwards. After running his fingers over the arm and satisfying himself that the bone was straight, Gaston wound some bandage around the break. They had no plaster so he improvised, splinting the arm with lengths of garden cane.

The finished tangle of sticks and tightly-wound bandages was unorthodox, but would give Paul’s arm a decent chance of healing. Paul sniffed drunkenly as Rosie took him out of the kitchen and settled him on an armchair in the living room. Gaston’s wife raised his legs on to a foot stool and after a wipe of his brow with a cool flannel Paul seemed content to lean on the arm and fall asleep.

‘You’re so kind,’ Rosie said, appreciating that Paul had been lucky to receive Gaston’s swift attention. By the time Paul had settled, the old man had drained his brandy and gone to the door to see if he could help someone else.

Rosie headed outside to use the toilet and found PT standing by the back door, in a great hurry to disguise something by tucking it back under his shirt. Then PT dropped an object on the ground and the teenagers

almost banged heads as they crouched simultaneously to pick it up.

Rosie felt wet paper in her hands and by the time she'd straightened up she'd realised it was currency. There wasn't much moonlight and only a little lamplight leaked from Gaston's kitchen, but she recognised the wad of American bills before PT snatched them out of her hands.

'They'll dry off, won't they?' was all she could think to say, after a brief but awkward silence.

Rosie was nervous because she'd clearly seen something she wasn't supposed to. Was PT going to run off, swing at her, or what? The one thing she didn't expect was for PT to lean forwards and kiss her on the lips.

'You're beautiful,' PT said.

Rosie froze like a post. She'd never kissed a boy before and, while she didn't kiss back, she didn't shove him away either. When PT gave Rosie space her words came out like a flood.

'You!' she gasped. 'What's all that money? No wonder you didn't want to give your name to that priest. What did you do, mug some refugee? Rob a bank? And don't tell me that I'm beautiful and kiss me like that. Give me some warning or something! And what kind of name is PT? It's not even a name, it's just initials. Those were twenty-dollar bills. That's almost five pounds, each one,

and you've got stacks and stacks! I mean, who on earth are you and why are you going around kissing me?'

PT smiled. 'Because you're beautiful.'

'Don't keep saying that,' Rosie said, though PT was tall and a couple of years older than her and probably rather elegant when he didn't have mud in his hair, so she was actually flattered.

'I *could* tell you who I really am,' PT smirked, as he drew his finger across his throat and made a choking sound. 'But then I'd have to kill you.'