

*Downed over
Pluckley*

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Ernst Lange, a twenty four year old HE-111 pilot had been tasked with a night time bombing raid over Ashford, Kent, especially the railyards and nearby railworks in order to disrupt rail traffic around the town and beyond too.

He, his crew and his plane were part of Kampfgeschwader 38, a bomber group consisting of thirty HE-111s that was escorted by a squadron of 109s as they came over Kent.

But the bomber group and its escorts would not go in unopposed, meeting with RAF Hurricanes as they were quickly engaged.

Name: Dietrich "Dieter" Hedrick

Age: 20

Date of Birth: February 5th, 1920

Rank: Hauptgefreiter (E-4)

Bio: Born in Rostock, Germany, Dieter spent much of his childhood working with his father who was a fisherman. Being from the port city, Dieter had met people from the other Baltic states and Scandinavia, giving him a hunger to venture out and know more about the world. His family's financial status had not been hit as badly by the Treaty, as the fish did not care what your country did in a previous war. Dieter's father had served in the Great War but said very little about it, claiming it was only one more mistake. This refusal to talk about the past led Dieter to trying to find answers himself, where his curiosity was a tool used by the Hitler Youth to grow his hungry mind on the teachings of German Supremacy and how the other nations had hurt his Fatherland. Not quite a full-fledged Nazi by the time the war broke out, Dieter did not rebuke the teachings and words of Hitler as he saw nothing but

success coming for their armies. Starting the war as an anti-air gunner in the Luftwaffe, he was transferred to an air wing after the initial success in Poland. He is familiar with his job as a dorsal gunner in the HE-111 by the time of the Battle of Britain, but he is not aware of the fuel shortages that weaken the fighter aircraft screen that should be helping him in defending the bomber.

The skies above their aircraft were clear, a promise sent from above that meant their bombardiers should be able to hit their targets. This was something Dieter held close at heart as he looked through the clear shield surrounding his position. He needed these bombs to land true, to strike a blow against the cruel British people that had been laying waste to the good name of his country for too long. Now, it was time to strike back.

Looking out from his position as the dorsal gunner, Dieter placed his hand on the handle of the MG131 he was tasked with mastering. It was much the same as the one he had used in practice and in Poland, so he was confident in the weapon system. A confidence he carried into his faith in the aircraft he was in as well as the fighters that were tasked with escorting them.

The air lost some of the humidity he had seen gathering and he knew they must have finished the Channel Crossing and were on the over-ground approach. This was proven true as the night sky grew bright with tracers and flashes of flak rounds in the air around them. Smiling as the rounds missed by a hundred meters, Dieter felt the British must be very foolish tonight as he prepared to defend against the planes he knew would be soon accompanying the flak.

Ernst tried to keep his composure, he was used to this by now and even had to deal with flak guns from the ground. "Shit, they just had to come, didn't they?" He muttered and asked. "Anyone hit them yet?" Trying to keep the plane stable as he saw the rest of the bomber group be attacked.

He was focused on getting the plane over to Ashford in order to drop the payload on the intended target. Which were railyards and the railworks too. Even the railway station was to be hit as well.

Dieter could hear his pilot's voice through the headphones of his helmet, but with the sound of the airburst shells and the incoming Hurricanes, he was not sure if he had asked if any of them were hit or if they had scored any hits. Deciding that no news is the best news, he stayed quiet on the radio to let the officers speak in the nose.

Turning the gun to the right hand side, he saw a trio of RAF fighters coming in from high above them. Letting loose in short bursts, he cursed his bad luck as the fighters turned elaborate maneuvers and caused most of his rounds to miss. The last burst before he ducked from the incoming hail of .303 did land on target though, striking the right wing of the center plane. A streak of burning fuel flowed through the air behind the fighter as it passed their bomber.

"We have been hit!" Ernst yelled, right before losing his front gunner and the engines soon lost power. "I can't carry on, we have to bail, now!" Yelling at Dieter as he got out of the pilot seat of the bomber.

"DIETER, COME ON!" He yelled again as he made his way to the escape hatch. WE ARE LOSING POWER!"

Dieter's head whipped up with a smile as he watched the inferno spread to claim the entirety of the Hurricane, marking a confirmed kill in his mind. That was until he smelled the acrid scene of burning paint and steel and turned to see that their plane was engulfed in a similar inferno.

"Fuck! Fuck! Fuck! On my way!" Ripping off his safety belt, he fell out of the dorsal gunner position into the fuselage of the plane. Seeing the waist gunner lying at an awkward angle with his left arm missing above the elbow, Dieter grabbed his parachute and MP40 before meeting Ernst at the hatch. Helping to open it, he dove out of the plane as soon as it was opened, his firearm strapped across his chest and his ripcord in hand.

Ernst leapt out right after Dieter and his heart was racing as he pulled his chord. Seeing the chaos in the air, hearing the sounds of both BMW VI engines and Rolls-Royce Merlin engines along with gunfire too.

His descent to the ground would be arduous as his darted around. "Shit, not like this, why does it have to end like this?!"

A few seconds after leaving the burning wreck, Dieter pulled on his chord with all of his might. He did not want to be surrounded by fire in his descent, but he also did not want to wait too long. Hearing the sound of silk rushing from a canvas interior, he felt the straps then snatch up into his legs and waist. Being pulled to a near stop before falling at a more controlled pace, Dieter tried to look up for any more chutes coming from their burning plane.

He saw Ernst's in the air above him, but nothing but flaming debris emerged from their plane. That was enough to chill him to the bone,

except for the sheer amount of fire he saw in the sky above him. What had once been a vast fleet of bombers on a mission to destroy the British war machine had now turned into a streaking mass of flaming carcasses weaving in and out of each other.

Ernst had a M30 Luftwaffe Drilling, the rest of the bombers made it through but there were numerous losses on their part thanks to the RAF interception. Not many had come down and it looked like it was just him and Dieter.

"Why did it have to be like this?" He asked and knew he would not see his family again if he were to be captured.

The ground was not easily distinguishable at this time of night, but Dieter had to trust the orientation of his legs and the deep darkness below him to not be water. He had heard of men in parachute school falling into water and drowning, a horrible death that he had seen as a child in the Baltic. No, that was not how he would die.

Hard earth met his feet and he quickly went limp as he could, allowing the training to take over as he rolled into the impact to reduce the chances of broken bones. Laying for a moment to let any injuries flare up, he stood slowly and released the straps that held his chute onto him. Looking around, he could not see Ernst, but hoped that the other could hear his whispers. "Ernst! Can you hear me?"

Ernst was caught in a tree and he soon whispered. "Yes, up here." He tried to get down as he tried to keep the M30 on him as well and then he managed to get free of his chute.

The M30 came down with him and he even had a few shotgun shells and even a few rifle rounds on him too.

Hearing the voice in the dark, Dieter unstrapped his MP40 from his chest and started moving towards it. He had a complete compliment of 5 magazines, but that was something he saw as a last resort as it was not enough to fight off all of Britain.

Hearing rustling in the tree and the eventual impact of the other man reaching the ground, Dieter spoke quietly, "Are you injured?"

"Just some bruises." Ernst answered as he looked around too, hoping no one else was on the ground if that was. It only meant civilians, police, Home Guard or military too.

They were not too far from a village named Pluckley too.

Patting himself down again, Dieter winced as he touched over his left side ribs. He hadn't felt anything shifting so he figured it had to only be bruising as well. Returning his grip to the sub machine gun, he looked in the direction of his pilot's voice and stepped towards him in order to orient himself in the darkness. "What now? Try to find a village to see where we are?"

"Yes, that's all we can do but there is no way we can show our faces and be dressed like this." The uniform and pilot gear would surely give them away the moment they walked into Pluckley.

Home Guard and police were also patrolling the area as well, serving as wardens during air raids and Ernst looked around to see if they were safe or not.

At the comment of their dress, Dieter glanced down to see if any of the light tan of his outfit could be seen in the dark yet. The skies

above allowed more of the moonlight to shine through at times and he was able to catch glimpses of color, but nothing to truly give himself away or a true identification. Kneeling down, he dug his left hand into the ground to collect as much dirt as he could before standing and smearing it over his chest. Giving his face a smear of dirt as well, he spoke in a low voice, "We can use the dirt to blend our faces. I do not speak English, but maybe they speak Danish?"

"I don't think so." Ernst English would be very much broken and he added. "I do speak French and I heard they retreated here." He had heard word that French forces also escaped to Britain after the fall of France.

"French is something they **MAY** understand." He hoped someone would. "You can try Danish though." In the distance, footsteps grew louder and louder and they also sounded like more than one person.

At the thought of degrading themselves to speaking French, Dieter spat on the ground before settling his jaw and nodding. He understood the other man's point and would do what was needed to survive, but that did not mean he had to like it.

Listening to the footsteps approaching, Dieter glanced up at the parachute that was still strung up in the tree. Cursing under his breath, he grabbed Ernst's shoulder and pulled him towards him, "The parachute, they can see it. We need to get out of here."

Pulling Ernst with him a step or two before letting go, Dieter lowered into a crouching run and moved as fast as he could while maintaining a semblance of quiet movement. They weren't on a hard-packed roadway, but he knew his footfalls could still carry. After several meters, he stopped and turned towards the tree that

was now nearly 50 meters from them. His smg came up to his shoulder as he tried to see the Englishmen in the distance and through the darkness.

The footsteps came closer and these were Home Guard soldiers. At least five of them and one of them spoke. "It looks like we have some who are downed, let's go and find them, lads."

All of them had old Enfield M1917 rifles and their search soon began in earnest. Ernst watched them as he kept his mouth shut.

Looking over to where he knew his officer was, Dieter kept his mouth shut as well but did grope around in the darkness as well as he could to locate the man's firearm. Whispering as softly as he could, he looked to where he could glean the other's face was, "Is it loaded?"

Looking back to where the five soldiers had started their search, Dieter reasoned that this initial engagement would have to use deadly force. They needed two of those uniforms and the rifles, so now came the question of how to gain them.

"What you do you think?" Ernst mouthed as not to be heard, one of the Home Guard had a torch on them and another called out. "You found anything yet?" The one with the torch called out. "I don't see anyone or anything."

The others searched the bushes. "I can't wait to get back." One muttered as he approached a bush.

Reaching down to his lower back where he kept his Hitler Youth dagger, Dieter pulled it out of its sheathe and held it in a clamp grip with the magazine in the MP40. Looking to Ernst, he shrugged

slightly before mouthing back, "We need to kill them, they will kill us."

Looking to the one with the torch(I'm assuming you mean flashlight as that is how the Brits refer to them), Dieter watched how the light cast shadows before moving into a crouched walk again. The one going closest to the bush had his attention, and he thought he had a fair chance of getting a kill on him without alerting the others.

A gunfight was what Ernst did not want and he soon readied the Drilling. "I really did not want to get in a gunfight, we are outnumbered." He thought to himself.

Two shotgun rounds in the barrel and a rifle round in the third barrel too. Ready to pull the trigger too.

Moving quietly to the other side of the bush, Dieter fought down a flurry of rapid heartbeats and nerves in his gut. He was terrified, and he was not afraid to recognize that. However, he did not know what else to do in this situation. Kill them or be killed, and he had a home to return to.

Slipping into the bush, he stayed as still as he could as the approaching British man poked around with the end of his rifle, obviously trying to see anything. The man with the torch swept his light the other direction and Dieter surged forward. Driving the point of his dagger up and into the man's throat, he released his gun and let the strap catch it while moving his hand over the man's mouth to muffle and sounds.

"That's one down." Ernst muttered and there were four more left who were still searching. He for the life of him could not pull the trigger, not wanting to alert anyone to their location at all.

"No way we can afford to be in a gunfight." He whispered to Dieter and kept his eyes open for more Home Guard troops.

"Ja, not unless I get to the other side of them and can let out a quick burst." Pulling the now dead man back into the bush, Dieter removed the dagger and immediately started to cover the bleeding hole with dirt. He wasn't wanting to save the man, but he didn't want excessive blood to get on the uniform either.

Looking through the lower branches of the bush to see if any others had looked over, he started to strip the dead man of his clothes, "Put these on. They'll notice he is missing and start looking. I'll watch."

Ernst put them on as quickly as he could as he did not want to be spotted by the patrolling Home Guard troops. He managed to get it on and their patrol continued on as they searched the area.

Not too far from the railway line between Ashford and Pluckley as well and a train heading towards the railway station outside of the village was approaching too.

With Ernst out of the obvious gray that was associated with Germany, Dieter felt that his tan would be less noticeable. Watching the men of the Home Guard spread their patrol while hearing the incoming train, he looked to the other and breathed in deeply in preparation to run.

"On three? We run for the rail line and stowaway on board." Looking to Ernst to make sure the other agreed before he ran off alone, Dieter slid his dagger back into its sheathe.

Ernst nodded and she soon was ready to run to the train as it approached. Ready to follow Dieter as he could hear the train approach on the other line as the line was two tracked.

"I'm ready." He whispered and was ready to run to the train too.

Looking to the Home Guard soldiers one last time, Dieter got the feeling that they would soon be noticing their missing member as he heard short words like names being called. They would be long gone before they found their missing man if he had anything to say about it.

Nodding as Ernst whispered his approval, Dieter placed his hand in the other's chest in a fist. Counting up with gentle pushes to the other's chest, when he hit 3, he gripped the fabric of Ernst's shirt and pulled him forward into a low run to match Dieter's.

And Ernst followed, the missing Home Guard soldier would be noticed and the train was pulled by a Southern Railway U class locomotive that was hauling a goods train.

Likely carrying munitions and travelling as carefully as possible as any spark could set off the entire cargo.

Sprinting across the field towards the rail line, Dieter risked standing a little taller to poor on more speed as they got closer. He saw a single flat rail car while the others were all box cars, so he knew the one they had to get to. Letting his MP40 bounce off of his

chest as he ran, he covered the last few feet before leaping as high and hard as he could.

Getting his right leg onto the rail car while grabbing a crate that was strapped down, Dieter glanced quickly to see if anyone was guarding it or possibly manning an AA gun. Seeing no such man, he pulled himself up and onto the rail car before turning around to offer help if Ernst needed it.

Ernst climbed up and he watched the scenery roll by once he was on it. "I wonder where this train is going?" He asked and kept hidden as another train sped right past them.

An electric multiple unit passing by the train they were on and that was heading towards Ashford.

"Your guess is as good as mine. I'm hoping east, because if this is going west, we might be screwed." Chuckling softly to himself as he ducked behind some of the cargo on the rail car, Dieter looked to the other man with a grin. There situation was not actually funny, but he was making an effort to keep his own spirits high rather than dwelling on what could go wrong.

Ernst kept down and the train passed the station as goods wagons were kept in the goods sidings. "I think we should keep our heads down. In case this train stops.."

He kept his head down as now the train approached another village named Headcorn.

"I can agree with that." Lowering himself behind a piece of cargo, Dieter looked up into the sky as the train trundled on in what he could only hope was an eastern direction. How had he been able to

strike the fighter with his bullets only for their own plane to go down? He had practiced for months on tracking planes and moving targets, each time being told he had done a good job and saved his plane. Now, he succeeded in his mark, and yet they still went down? That made no sense.

Instead of going east, it was heading west and Ernst looked up at the sky before looking at Dieter. "I think we are heading west..."

Not knowing that Headcorn station had another terminus named Headcorn Junction which had trains run from Headcorn Junction to a town named Tenterden.

Which then went further down into a little village in East Sussex named Robertsbridge.

Sitting up upon hearing the other man say that, Dieter cursed under his breath before looking at the ground as it passed by. The further inland they went, he figured while they might be around less people, it set them further from home.

"Do you think we could manage jumping off without getting injured? Or do we ride it out and try to find one going east once we get to a station?"

"It depends." Ernst looked ahead and the train was soon approaching Headcorn and was slowing down. "We're slowing down." He commented as he looked back at Dieter.

"If there is a station here, let's hope no one is there."

"At this time of night, I'd say the most we are looking at possibly finding is the watchman." Crouching and looking around to try to get a visual on the lay of the land, Dieter saw a ditch on either side

of the railway. A little further out, it was harder to see due to the darkness, but that would work both ways. Pointing into the darkness, Dieter spoke in a quiet voice, "We could find somewhere to hide and rest until we spot a train heading east. Then we jump on it and hitch a ride to the coast, hopefully."

"Ready to jump?" Ernst was waiting for the train to come to a halt, the train was slowing down as it was approaching a signal. "I think we should do that." He waited for the good opportunity to do it too.

"Ready?" He soon asked and looked at Dieter as well. Making sure he was as ready as he too.

"Yes, let's go. If we wait til it's stopped, the watchman might see us, let's go now." Patting Ernst on the shoulder as an unspoken sign of good luck on another landing without injury, Dieter breathed in deeply before stepping forward and jumping from the train. Tucking his arms and his legs so that nothing landed awkwardly, he held the barrel of his machine gun beside his face to keep it from jarring on a rock or something and breaking his neck. Landing with a thud and feeling his breath knocked out of him, Dieter began rolling away from the train while keeping his head down, ignoring the ache that started to radiate in his left side.

The train stopped at the signal, Ernst jumped down and rolled onto the ground. "Dieter, are you okay? That did not sound good." He sounded concerned and went over to him to check.

In the treeline not too far away was the Kent and East Sussex Railway that branched away from Headcorn.

Coughing a bit before biting on the back of his hand to try to muffle it, Dieter looked towards Ernst as he saw the other moving towards him. Chuckling softly, he stretched and winced before speaking, "I think I cracked a rib. Nothing too bad, just hurts to breathe. Means I'm alive though, right?"

Coughing a bit again before chuckling, Dieter pushed himself up to his knees and checked his weapon to make sure it hadn't been damaged. Happy with his initial assessment, he looked to Ernst and nodded before pushing away from the rail line and looking into the darkness of a wooded field behind them.

Pointing at a clump of trees he could see silhouetted against the sky due to it growing lighter, he nodded before speaking, "We could hide there until a train comes?"

"You may be alive but that crack did not sound healthy." Ernst commented and she soon looked around the area. "I suppose so." He looked into the distance too.

They would be in a field too, in the horizon was RAF Lashenden, an RAF airbase.

"It didn't feel healthy, but as long as nothing hits them, they won't hurt too bad." Chuckling softly before groaning, Dieter brought his MP40 up as he walked towards the trees he had picked out. He saw the base in the far distance, so he reckoned he needed to be on the lookout for any guard patrols as they moved to the trees.

"I didn't like the sound of that crunch." Ernst didn't like the sound of it at all, he walked to the tree line and there was not much traffic on

the Kent and East Sussex Railway at this time of night as the line was quiet.

"Not too many trains here." He soon commented and soon rested by the railway line.

"Shit, neither did I, but nothing we can do til we get back across the Rhine. Better be quick about it." Chuckling softly and walking beside Ernst, Dieter kept his eyes moving about before nodding at the other's comment. Kneeling down in the brush of the thicket of trees, he glanced towards the air base and watched for a moment.

There wasn't a whole lot of movement, and in the lights of the base, he could see several planes either being serviced or put away in their shelters. Waving his arm out to grasp Ernst's forearm, he gestured toward the airfield with his firearm before speaking with a grin, "Think you can fly one of those two-seaters? That, or fly a single seater and strap me beneath like a bomb."

Ernst waded through the field and replied. "We can make our way to the treeline and we should keep our heads down too." He didn't want them to be spotted as he kept on moving through the grass. The village behind them was sleepy and would not see them.

Holding the Drilling by his side as he hoped Dieter would not be too hurt to continue on.

Following behind Ernst as he moved through the grass, Dieter bit his lip to silence any sounds of pain that would come from him as he walked. Keeping his eyes looking about for any threats, he nodded before speaking, "Make it to the treeline and then lay low, I'm assuming. Sounds like a plan to me."

"Surely they cannot search the treeline." Ernst muttered as she soon approached the treeline as he kept down too as he did not want to be spotted in the field by anyone.

Coming closer to the treeline and then sat down by a tree. The railway line saw no traffic right now both in and out of the village.

"We'll just have to give them no reason to do so. If they aren't suspicious, they won't look." Dieter muttered as he moved into the treeline and tried to keep from disturbing any of the plants there. Groaning as he sat down, he closed his eyes and leaned against one of the trees. Breathing out slowly to avoid pain, he glanced over to the other and spoke softly, "I'm buying a fishing boat when we get home."

"I feel like it will be a long journey." Ernst knew the journey would be long and very arduous by sea. "We would be lucky if we make it to the Channel Islands."

Which were occupied by Germany and he added. "At least it is territory of Britain that we occupy."

Hearing those comments, Dieter closed his eyes and leaned back against the tree. His ribs were not actively hurting him when he wasn't moving, but there was definitely a dull ache coming from the wound. Groaning as he shook his head and thought of their predicament, he looked up at the sky and grinned. "You never answered my question. Can you fly one of their planes?"

"That sounds like a tall order, but I could give it a shot." Ernst had never flown a British plane before and he soon added. "I don't even know how they handle."

Only flying German made aircraft, such as the Heinkel 111 that was, which his one was shot down and he soon asked Dieter. "What if we are caught and shot down by the RAF or our own?"

Nodding slowly at the mention of it being a tall order, Dieter leaned back and looked up into the sky. He knew it was impossible, the different planes would have different controls inside and they couldn't really afford a trial flight. Chuckling softly, he shook his head and closed his eyes.

Turning his head back to the other but with his eyes closed, Dieter nodded and exhaled deeply before speaking, "Who knows. We survived one plane crash, maybe we can do it again." Grinning, he shook his head and laughed softly at the ridiculousness of that image in his head.

"Unless that knock on the head gave you that idea, we have yet to determine that." Ernst answered to this and was ready to get some much needed rest as he laid down by some trees. Hoping no one would come along and find them.

Being that chance was still possible as he and Dieter were deep behind enemy lines, hiding from everyone as well.

"It might have thought up a crazy idea or two, but don't worry. They can wait." Chuckling softly, Dieter eased himself back against the tree until he could manage a way to get into his knees. Kneeling and sending one leg forward to act as a brace as he swept a slow aim with his firearm, Dieter looked to Ernst and nodded. "Go ahead and rest up, I'll take first watch. Can't sleep anyways, too much energy."

"Be careful." Ernst cautioned as being spotted was something he did not want at all. Soon getting as much rest as possible by the tree as the bombers made it to their target in Ashford.

Despite the losses they had taken from RAF fighters sent into the air to intercept them.

"No worries, I'm not about to die after making it out of the plane." Dieter would make an effort to not compress his ribs and aggravate them as he watched the area around them. Lowering his MP40 so as not to let the metal glint and attract eyes, he kept his hands ready to pull it up if need be.

"You better hope we are not shot down by our own." Ernst did not want that, but knew a captured RAF plane could be vital for the war effort too.

Which meant engineers could study the aircraft as well.

"Eh, you've already convinced me against taking one of their planes. I don't want to be shot down again over their territory and I would hate to get across the channel just to die. No, let's get to the coast and get to Calais or somewhere in France." Looking over at the other man, Dieter chuckled softly before speaking, "Now, get some rest and sleep or I will."

"Although, capturing one and flying it back to our lines meant that we can hand it to the engineers for them to study it." Especially if it was a bomber or something.

"Heading to France was something we can get to." He soon stated.

"They would even test fly it too."

"If it is a bomber, we have to fly it low to keep from our own thinking that we are coming in for a bombing run. Could also make it harder for anti-air batteries to know we are coming or where we are until it is too late. I can get you some time while we are looking to make sure no one comes to mess with you, but we need rest first." Grinning, he picked at a couple pieces of rice before tossing them towards the other. "Now, go to sleep. Or, I'll rest and you can keep thinking about which plane to take."

"I don't know about the British bombers." Ernst soon stated and he added. "Only their fighters, such as the Hurricane and the Spitfire." He soon went to get some much needed rest.

"You too." He spoke in a very sleepy tone too.

Dieter nodded as the other man mentioned the experience he had with the enemy aircraft, his own mind switching to his experience with the fighter aircraft. A direct hit and flame spewing out of the fuselage, and yet their plane had still gone down. Shaking his head in disappointment at himself, he readjusted in his crouch so that he would stay awake during his watch.

A few hours passed with nothing and he shuffled over to Ernst. Poking the man in the shoulder before placing a finger to his lips, he pointed up before speaking, "Sky is lightening, dawn must be coming soon. It's your turn for watch, but this might let you see the air field. No movement or anything near us, so we should be good."

Setting his machine gun against a tree, Dieter moved and laid down next to it, his eyes staying open for only a moment for a response from Ernst before going to sleep.

Ernst woke up and he looked at Dieter. "That was quick." Soon getting up and was ready to head to the airfield.

"We can't be that far then." He stated and there would be no trains yet on the railway.

Looking at him as he laid on the ground, Dieter chuckled softly before speaking, "That was my watch, now it is your turn while I sleep. Won't be getting much out here." Laying back down, Dieter rested his arm behind his head to act as a pillow as he fell asleep.

Ernst took the Luftwaffe Drilling and soon headed out to stand guard for Dieter. Looking out towards the distance and watched the sun rise in the horizon too.

By now, the bombers had either been shot down or successfully made it back to airbases in either occupied France or Germany itself.

A few hours later, Dieter found himself coughing and waking up from the racking pain in his ribs. Shaking his head as he rolled over onto the less painful side, he bit his cheeks to try to quiet down his sounds of discomfort. Growling deeply as he pushed himself up onto his hands and knees, Dieter looked to the other and then at the planes on the airfield. Standing up slowly, he brought his MP40 up to his side before walking over to Ernst. "What do you see?"

"I see a few planes leaving." Most of which were fighter planes, then Ernst caught sight of a tractor in a field and it looked to be a Fordson tractor.

"Tractor coming." He soon went to hide away, being that it was heading their way and its driver wasn't aware that there were two Luftwaffe pilots around at all.

Lowering into the brush as the tractor trundled on, the driver and operator oblivious, Dieter kept his gun close to him. He had no personal feelings against the British, but he had heard of their atrocities and mistreatment of his kinsmen in the previous war. Not wanting to suffer the same torture they had inflicted his nation to over the past twenty years of poverty, he aimed his smg at the driver. He would not fire unless spotted, but he was not going to wait til then to have the sights aimed on the driver for a quick burst to the chest.

The tractor's driver was not looking for them, he just looked to be ploughing the field and was unarmed as well.

Ernst was watching on from the tree line and looked at the agricultural vehicle as it travelled rather slowly. "I don't think it is looking for us." He mouthed to Dieter.

Dieter nodded slowly, agreeing with what Ernst said. However, he did not lower his aim as he shifted slowly to try to put more brush between him and the farmer. Satisfied her was hidden well, he lowered his firearm and grabbed Ernst's shoulder. Pulling him over slightly, he whispered into his ear, "He will see us here, we are in the middle of his field. We need to move. Rail line or air field?"

Ernst was soon dragged back in and he soon answered. "Looks like we should take a plane, depending if they have bombers stationed there and yet we should be quick if we take one."

He looked in the direction of the airfield and asked Dieter. "Shall we?"

Watching the farmer on his tractor take a lazy turn before driving in such a way that his back would be to them, Dieter nodded. "Let's go, but we need to be fast." Standing and looking to the other, he counted down on his fingers from three to one before pushing out of the brush and breaking into a sprint across the field. It would not be comfortable on his ribs, but the need to live was stronger than the pain.

Ernst followed and didn't ask about how Dieter felt about the pain he was in at all while running as fast as she could in order to reach the airfield. Knowing full well he could run into danger at any minute too.

Head down as he made his way through the field, also having to look up now and then to make sure he and his copilot were not spotted in the air by any flying RAF planes.

Beginning to groan in pain as his pace jostled his upper body and caused his ribs to flex in excruciating ways, Dieter stumbled and fell forward into a ditch between two fields of crops. His air was knocked out of him as soon as he hit the ground, his arms immediately clamping down on his chest as he resisted the urge to scream out in pain. Coughing heavily as his hand scrambled for his sub-machine gun, Dieter tried to push up from the ditch in order to keep pushing their pace through the next field.

Ernst turned around and then looked for Dieter. "Shit, where did he go?" He looked around and then saw him in the ditch. "Come on, take my hand."

Holding his hand out for him to grab hold of.

Coughing as he rolled over in the ditch, Dieter looked up and nodded as he saw Ernst's hand reaching down towards him. Grabbing hold and pulling himself out of the ditch, Dieter's eyes squeezed shut in pain at the stretching in his side. Grunting and hobbling his way for a few feet, Dieter slowed down and stood bending over. Placing a hand on his side, he held the sub-machine gun forward and spoke, "I have my Luger. Go ahead and scout out the field, I'll catch up soon. Take this."

What will happen with your MP40?" Ernst asked, he still had the Luftwaffe Drilling on him and he soon took the Luger as well.

"I can't just leave you there to be found." Especially with an unaware farmer driving a tractor too.

"I'm keeping my Luger on me, I figured you could use the firepower from the MP40. Don't worry though, if we slow down a little I'll be with you." Standing up as he stretched, he groaned softly and shook his head before setting off at a slow jog. It was quicker than a walk but considerably less painful than a full on run.

Ernst looked at the submachine gun and then replied. "You had better not make a noise when we are sneaking around that airfield." He did not want to be captured at all by the personnel who were stationed at the aforementioned airfield.

He kept his head down as he travelled to the airfield on foot.

Dieter glanced down at the gun in his hands and nodded before following behind Ernst. He had no intention of making too much noise, but he also had no intention of being captured or dying without first taking out some RAF personnel.

The airfield had many personnel on site, pilots, officers, engineers and etc. Ernst made it closer and closer as the first thing to be seen was a grass runway.

Looking for hangars that may hold bombers or something.

As they got closer to the airfield, Dieter started to slow down when more and more personnel came into view. Stopping just before the end of the crops as he saw the grass runway, an extension for the asphalt runway, Dieter looked down the length of it to try to see if there were any planes that were active or on the move.

Seeing a few hangars to one side of the runway, he moved to bump Ernst in the arm before speaking, "Seems like those might be too small for the full size bombers that they send over us."

"They probably have at least two engine bombers." Ernst whispered, tractors driving around as they were hauling wagons carrying ammunition for the aircraft.

Even being surrounded by pilots and engineers. The pilots looking ready to take off and or very tired from trying to defend Britain's skies.

"Alright, then let's see how close we can get. We'll pick one and while you are getting it readied, I'll sabotage another one to get their attention. Sound like a plan?" Moving through the crops as best he could Dieter, realized there was a span of 50 meters of open ground surrounding the entire airfield. Groaning as he knew what that meant, he pointed at a pallet filled with boxes of ammunition before counting down from three and sprinting across the open ground towards the pallet.

Ernst nodded and that was a yes but he didn't have experience flying British planes whatsoever and he spoke. "We can't be too far now."

He was soon on the runway now as well.

Running across the open ground to stop at the pallet, Dieter winced and held his ribs for a moment. Looking around them as he knelt down behind the pallet, he pointed to the left, signaling Ernst to check that hangar while he kept watch at the pallet. He was ready to draw the enemy away if need be, making it seem as if he was the only one here.

Ernst made sure that the coast was clear and he soon went to check the hangar for any suitable aircraft to use in the escape from mainland Britain. Finding a Bristol Blenheim bomber too.

Waiting for Dieter to return as to let him know of the bomber being in the hangar as well. Wondering if it could be airworthy and have fuel in it too.

Waiting several moments for Ernst to come back to him and let him know what was inside the hanger, Dieter could see the airmen moving on the airfield, their attention drawn to the opposite end of the runway. Hearing the low hum of incoming aircraft, he stepped away from the pallet in order to look into the sky with more clarity. Seeing a flight of large bombers flying overhead, a few were banking on an approach path. Hearing the sound of engines surrounding them, he sprinted towards the hangar and saw the plane. Nodding slowly, he looked to Ernst and pointed at his ears before pointing up in the air and speaking, "The bombers will mask

us if we start the engines now. It doesn't have to get us far, just to the Channel."

"We are not flying it back to France?" Ernst asked and he looked at Dieter too. Then looking at the plane too as he looked for a way to get aboard it.

"We should board this plane and get it airborne before we are spotted." He soon stated as well.

"I'd love if we could fly it back to Hamburg, but I just mean we only need enough fuel to get out of England. Let's go." Agreeing and looking the plane over, Dieter walked towards the fuselage and around to the front. Working the propellers on the engines quickly to make sure they spun well, he pulled himself up onto the right wing with a soft groan of pain. Letting his MP40 hang from its sling, he looked over the cabin for an obvious door on the side that they could open and get in through.

"We could always go to the Channel Islands, then we can then be sent back to Germany, so as long as we are not shot down by our own side that is." Ernst stated as he got into the cockpit.

"Are they distracted enough?" He hoped Dieter would have distracted the personnel on the airbase.

"Sounds like a plan to me." Watching Ernst climb into the cockpit, Dieter lifted his head to try to listen for the bombers overhead. They were still coming, but the sound was not as loud as he had hoped it would be. Grinning as he looked back to the other man, he leaned into the cockpit and shouted, "You get this thing started, I'll go set the distraction. Just be ready, fast. Learning on the fly."

Jumping down from the wing, he winced at the impact and the shake it gave his ribs. Shaking his head, he ran to the back of the hanger and reached into the crates that he had been hiding behind. Finding a magazine of forty millimeter anti-aircraft rounds, he picked it up and messed with the arming module on the nose of the top round. Setting it to a thirty second timer, he walked into the next hangar and set the magazine down next to a trundle with five bombs on it.

Spinning the wheel on the nose of the round to start the timer, he ran out of the hangar and back to theirs. Climbing into the hangar and slamming the door shut, he screamed, "Twenty seconds! Move or we die too!!"

"I got it!" Ernst turned the engines on, soon they roared into life and he soon taxied the plane onto the runway. "I got this." He made it there and soon picked up speed as the bomber took off.

"Does this thing have a tail gun or something?" He asked as he soon was airborne. "Also, we should have enough fuel for one of the channel islands."

All of those islands were the only British territory the Reich occupied. Being that the British forces abandoned them along with a large contingent of their population evacuating them before the occupation began.

As the plane trundled down the runway, the explosion inside the second hangar could be heard. It ripped the hangar apart and sent the bomber inside catapulting in several directions. Wrecking several fighters that were on standby as well as blocking half the runway, the diversion had worked well. Standing in the cockpit as

Ernst worked the controls, Dieter nodded slowly and gripped the pilot's seat with one hand hard.

As they got into the air, Dieter gave a shout of excitement and clapped Ernst on the shoulder before climbing through the back of the cockpit and into the turret sitting on top of the plane. Turning it around, he checked the ammunition and nodded. Looking back into the cockpit, he gave a thumbs up and shouted, "You get us home, I'll keep us in the air!!"

"On it." Ernst flew over the Kent and East Sussex Railway and then looked for a map as he was flying in the air. Finding one as he was soon reading it in order to keep on course.

Turning the radio off in order to not be contacted by RAF ground crews. Flying as to not be spotted by ground forces as well or other RAF planes too.

Moving the turret around in a slow circle, Dieter oriented himself with the foreign weapons and let his hands move over the machine guns. He had never handled a British firearm, but as he looked it over he shrugged and decided that while worse, it couldn't be that inherently different from the superior German craftsmanship he was used to working.

Even this Blenheim was much different from the Heinkel 111 Ernst was used to piloting and he was trying not to be bothered by it too whilst he kept on flying. Making sure he was not followed by anyone.

"We better not be followed." He mumbled to himself.

Keeping his eyes moving around, Dieter kept his attention on the column of smoke in the distance that was the airfield. He didn't expect a plane from there anytime soon, but he knew that they could just as easily radio in for aid.

Ernst flew over fields and even the odd town and village too before he made his way to the English Channel.

"Looks like we have passed Folkestone." He was glad he didn't fly directly over the coastal town too.

Looking back over his shoulder as he heard the pilot speak, Dieter grinned and called out, "No bogies in the sky, I believe we are going to make it home safe!" Turning his attention back to the gunsights, he scanned the sky in order to try to see if there were any surprises.

"So as long as there are no one following us, we are surely to arrive safely back in our own territory." Ernst wanted this to be the way and he soon continued to fly over the English Channel.

"Where are wanting to go? France or the Channel Islands?"

"Nothing in the skies that I can see, let's take it to France and see if we can learn anything. Fly low and I'll try to get friendly forces on the radio." Scrambling out of the gunner seat, Dieter moved up into the cockpit and got into the navigator's seat. Turning on the radio, he slowly cycled through until he could understand what was being said. When he heard German coming through the headset, he reached forward and patted Ernst on the shoulder excitedly before speaking into the mouthpiece, "Mayday mayday. Requesting permission to land. Mayday mayday."

"France it is then." Back to the nearest Luftwaffe airbase in France Ernst was now flying to and he soon muttered. "I thought it was turned off." He was surprised, he wanted it off during the flight out Britain as not to be contacted by concerned RAF pilots and even ground units too.

Approaching the occupied nation, he flew over and was now bound for the nearest airfield so he could land it.

"I just turned it on, I wanted to try to raise a Luftewaffe air operator. I have one now, and he is directing us to land at an airfield near Amiens. They have cleared a runway for us to ease her down." Looking at the maps with a face of concentration, he chewed his lower lip before looking out of the cockpit to locate where they were. Sighing softly as he was not a navigator and therefore could not figure it out, he shrugged and said in a humored tone, "Fly south I guess."

"Amiens it is." Ernst was now on his way to Amiens as he hoped other Luftwaffe pilots would not attempt to shoot them down after misidentifying the pilots in the plane.

"As long as someone knows, we should be safe." He stated as he flew over the ground and was bound for the aforementioned airfield.

Dieter was busy speaking into the radio, asking the man on the other side to confirm that orders were being sent across the appropriate channels to keep an unnecessary friendly fire incident from occurring. Listening to commands given back to him, he looked to Ernst and voiced them, "The colonel is saying if we shake our

wings, it will signal that we are friendly. If we are a lone plane, they shouldn't try to shoot us."

Ernst listened and he soon shook the wings of the bomber so as to signal that they were friendlies and not hostiles. "That should get their attention." He was sure of it too and added.

"We should be coming down to land soon, is there anything on the runways?"

"The colonel is reporting that the runway has been cleared, we need to use the one furthest to the west. He is saying there are no hangars so there is no worry of an unfamiliar landing." Smiling as he thanked the officer, Dieter walked up into the cockpit and stood beside Ernst. Resting his right hand on the glass shields of the cockpit, he spoke in a low voice, "Thank you, you will be helping us greatly."

"We are coming down to land now, I see the airfield." Ernst lowered the landing gears and slowly lowered the Blenheim down to the ground. "I wonder if we will be in for Iron Crosses for bringing this back?"

He could only wonder, but right now, he had a plane to land and soon he landed it on the runway.

Dieter held onto the backs of the pilot and co-pilot chairs, a smile spreading across his face as he heard the hydraulics of the plane behaving as it lowered the landing gear slowly but surely. Looking down at the airfield as it came into view, he clapped a hand on Ernst's shoulders before looking at the flak batteries that were pointed away from them. One last second of anxiety passed over

him quickly as he saw that the colonel had truly been good to his word.

Looking down at the other man, he brought his hand from the co-pilot's seat and rested it on his busted ribs that were aching as the adrenaline of the escape had worn off. Moving to the seat and buckling up, he braced for the landing before speaking confidently, "We'll get something, that's for damn sure. I don't know of anyone else that had the guts to escape with a plane and bring it back for research."

Looking down at the bombardier seat, his eyes saw the handle of a thermite pistol sticking out beside the computer. Shaking his head, he closed his eyes and sat back in his chair. He called out to the other when the plane was down, "So, how many do you think died at the runway for them to never chase us? How many crosses will that count for on the side of our next bomber?"

"Too many for us to count, I hope our own that didn't come back to this airfield are returned to us." Ernst hoped that the prisoners who were captured by British ground crews were returned safely to Germany.

"Anyway, we have returned to our own territory." He soon went to park the plane as to be ready to get out to greet the personnel of the airfield.

"Well, once I get fixed up, I'll be happy to fly with you again, if you'll have me." Smiling as he waited for the plane to stop, he opened the door and climbed out onto the wing with his hands held high, calling out to the men that entered the hangar, "Come and take a look at

what the cat's brought in. Feast your eyes, and may you find some benefits. But first, I need a doctor."

"I hope to fly with you and a new crew." The rest had likely been captured and the rest of the crew went to take Dieter to the medical bay and one addressed Ernst.

"By God, how did you manage to bring this thing home?" He soon answered. "Took it from an RAF base."

Dieter smiled at Ernst and nodded, his hand extending to take the other man's in a serious handshake. They had lived through a very harrowing experience, one that most men would have likely died in. There were times that Dieter was sure he was going to die, when landing on the ground and breaking his ribs or when he had had to kill that British Home Guard in order to keep their location a secret. He did not want to experience something like this ever again, but he knew that if he had to, he had someone he knew he could trust to get him through it all. Going with the medical team, he put a hand up to wave goodbye to Ernst before he disappeared in the back of an ambulance.

Ernst waved back and spoke. "You make a recovery as much as you can." He knew that there would also be questions and possibly even propaganda pumped out by the reich itself.

He had also shaken his hand too and hoped he would make a speedy recovery too.