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inner office. With no more than a half minute's delay he was taken through the corridor to the major's room. The major nodded to him, glanced at the identification cards, took the license number and make of the truck, and wrote out a pass.

"It is good until eight o'clock tonight." "I shall be back before that. I have this map with me, showing the Roman ruins. Would there be any trouble about that?"

The major looked at it without comment, pasted a label on it and stamped it with a seal. "That is all," he said.

"Thank you." The soldier behind him clicked his heels and saluted. Sloan went out. It had taken less than ten minutes. In his relief Sloan felt a grudging admiration for an efficiency that was without parallel in military or civil administration.

No. 41 Rue de Lescaut flanked the block where he had been a long yesterday ago, at the tobacconist's shop. The two who came out as soon as he stopped were a workman, well on in years, smooth-shaven, and a boy. The boy wore a felt hat, with a design cut in the edges. There was a smudge on his face; the black hair was short and shaved at the neck, the fingernails were stubby and rimmed with dirt.

"LET Jean sit with me," Sloan said. "You may lie in back, Étienne, in the truck. There is burlap for comfort. But do not let the tools rattle."

The man got in front with Sloan, and they drove off toward the south gate. "Did you find the way to the Café Duval?" the man asked.

Sloan glanced at him. Then he understood. The bushy white hair and the mustache were gone, but he remembered the keen face and small bright eyes. He smiled. "Yes—although the directions were poor. How is the tobacco business, Jean?"

"I have had to close the shop," the old man replied sadly. "Alas, I have no tobacco."

"And you can make no more cigarettes."

The old man looked at him. "No, but there are others who make them."

At the Porte de Choisy two soldiers stopped them and examined the pass. A sergeant came out and looked at the two men on the seat. Then he stepped back and looked at the boy who lay stretched on the burlap, indifferent and sullen. There was a moment's low conversation in German.

"Which is Herr Webster?" the sergeant asked.

"I am." "You have the identification cards for these two?"

Sloan gave them to him. "I shall keep the cards. You may collect them when you return."

"We are returning by another way—probably through the Porte de Versailles. We shall need them there."

There was another low conversation. "Very well," the sergeant said. "You

go to his house for the night. There are many spies."

"Yes. You should not stay together." "No. We shall separate as soon as possible. We shall live apart until—well, who knows?"

"No one knows but God." "And what will you do, monsieur?"

"I shall go back. Otherwise those two whose identification cards we have would probably be caught and killed. And the way of escape would be discovered. They would know where you had gone."

"THAT is true. You are brave, monsieur."

"Only a little brave. There has been much bravery this year of a far higher quality."

"And some cowardice." After a long time the professor asked: "Is there any doubt about the aqueduct, monsieur?"

"No. I have been through it. The ends are loosely blocked with dirt, and few know of it. You will have to dig your way out, but that should not be difficult."

About an hour later, they turned off a dirt road through fields and woods, bleak now in November; then onto a track that wound for a mile through small hills and led past a shallow basin of land filled with great blocks of stone, chunks of cement and broken bricks. There were several stone arches, fourteen feet in span, half buried underground and partly concealed by grasses and shrubs. At the far end there was a congestion of rocks piled in front of a rise of land.

"We are here," Sloan said. He drove the truck into some bushes in the basin where it would not be visible from the track above. They climbed out, and Cosette jumped down from the back. "We dig there," Sloan said, pointing toward the rise of land. "That debris conceals the mouth of the aqueduct. In my judgment, the border lies a mile or so beyond. Let us work fast. Jean and I will dig. Étienne, you go above, near the track, and lie hidden. There are patrols all through this country. If anyone comes, let us know."

"Yes, monsieur."

WHILE the old man was getting the tools out of the truck, Sloan and Cosette looked at each other, smiling. "You are the best-looking boy I ever saw," he said.

"I tried to look tough. When I was young, I was angry that my parents did not make me a boy."

"That wouldn't suit me at all." "I've recovered from the idea."

She went up the plateau. The professor and Sloan dug at the top of the debris, using pickaxes to break up the frozen surface of the ground.

"I cleared a passage myself a year and a half ago," Sloan remarked. "But I covered it again thoroughly."

It was nearly an hour before they broke through. Sloan whistled for Cosette while the professor sat down, exhausted, with blistered hands. "I am a little out of practice," he apologized.



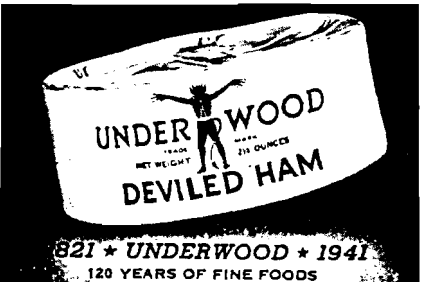
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