

# Chapter 1 – Ormaie 8.XI.43 JB-S

## Summary

This is the beginning of the two weeks that Verity is given to share as much information as possible about the British War Effort with the Gestapo. From the get-go, we realise that she has absolutely no intention of sticking to the expected format of listing things down, like where the British airfields are, what type of planes they use, etc. Rather, she adopts a style that combines conversation, narrative and streams of consciousness all into one. The result is a seemingly pointless, almost mad, babble about whatever comes to mind.

She explains about how she came about making this deal and what the terms of the deal are, her fate as a captured spy and how she even got caught, and in a bid to share what little she knows about aircraft types and locations of British airfields, she introduces Maddie Brodatt, her best friend.

## Analysis

- The chapter begins with Verity establishing how defeated she is.
  - Pg 3: “I AM A COWARD”
  - Pg 3: “After the ridiculous deal I made with SS\_Hauptsturmführer von Linden, I know I am a coward. And I am going to give you anything you ask, everything I can remember. Absolutely *Every Last Detail*.
    - She is being facetious (treating serious issues with deliberately inappropriate humour; cheeky). She literally does this until the day she finishes writing, putting in all sorts of unnecessary detail to waste time, making Engel’s translation work more difficult and longer-lasting.
  - Pg 3: She asked for stupid things like getting her clothes back in exchange for the radio codes, instead of less torture, more food, etc. that normal prisoners would ask for.
    - She explains that “the warmth and dignity of my flannel skirt and woolly jumper are worth far more to me now than patriotism or integrity.” (Pg 4)
    - In doing so, it makes her come across as foolish and weak.

Why does Verity start this confession by establishing how cowardly and foolish she is? What are her motives?

- Verity explains, thoroughly, the circumstances that led to her coming up with this deal.

- That she had a total of 11 sets of radio code and she sold each for a piece of clothing. (Pg 4 to 5)
  - She goes on to elaborate about how von Linden gives back her clothes “from the *outside in*, so I have to go through the torment of undressing in front of everybody every time another item is given back to me.”
  - She also points out that “He’s the only one who doesn’t watch...”

Why do you think von Linden returns Verity’s clothes in such a manner whereby she has to strip completely every time?

Why does von Linden never watch?

- Verity exchanges 10 of the 11 sets of code for clothes, but saves the last set for a supply of ink and paper. In exchange, “All I have to do is cough up everything I can remember about the British War Effort.”
  - This is quite an unfair deal.
  - In exchange for the last set of code, Verity buys ink, paper and time. That’s a fair exchange.
  - What is unfair is how she doesn’t actually get to choose how she uses that ink, paper and time. No, she has to use the ink, paper and time, that she paid for with code, to write about the British War Effort.
- **[ALLUSION]** In describing herself and von Linden, Verity alludes to Peter Pan.
  - In fact, she uses the Peter Pan allusion frequently throughout her confession, referring to her mother as Mrs Darling who leaves the window open, waiting for the day that her children will return to her.
  - Peter Pan, the story, is also known as “The Boy Who Wouldn’t Grow Up”. This is a fitting description of Verity.
    - Peter Pan refuses to grow up – he is boastful and careless, and wants to remain a child so that he can play all day. He is also fearlessly cocky when it comes to putting himself in danger.
    - Like Peter Pan, Verity is cheeky and puts herself in all sorts of dangerous situations, pretending to be one of her brave ancestors. And like Peter Pan, she knows she will never grow up, because as a captured spy, it is her fate to die.
      - Pg 6: “You’ll shoot me at the end no matter what I do, because that’s what you do to enemy agents. [...] if you don’t shoot me and I ever make it home, I’ll be tried and shot as a collaborator anyway.”



- By describing each form of torture so vividly, she forces us, the reader, to experience a taste of the horror that awaits her. She makes use of **GUSTATORY IMAGERY**, **TACTILE IMAGERY** and **VISUAL IMAGERY** to paint a clear picture for us.
- In a way, the writer is also educating her readers, helping us to understand just how frightened Verity is and how the other captured spies were tormented and abused.

“This is the easiest.” What is? What is Verity choosing?

- “Fräulein Engel will confirm that I burst out laughing when I read that.” – Pg 7
  - Verity finds herself laughing at the absurdity that the Gestapo thinks she’s well-aware of all the details of the British War Effort.
  - No proper spy would know all the details of anything. That’s how secrets are kept.
  - [**FORESHADOWING**] This is also a hint that whatever she’ll be writing about over the next two weeks is a whole lot of nonsense because she knows very little.
    - Definition: a warning or indication of a future event.
    - This is also the writer’s first big hint to us that Verity is not truly being treasonous in anyway, and that we should have faith in our **PROTAGONIST**.
    - Protagonist: the leading character or one of the major characters in a play, film, novel, etc.
- From this point on, Verity shares the story of who Maddie is, how Maddie became involved in the war, how the two of them met and became best friends, and how it came to be that the two of them flew into France together.
  - Her storytelling style alternates between the actual story and what happens to her in the Ormaei Gestapo Headquarters.
  - In writing this way, we learn a few things about Verity:
    - Verity is a person with a vivid imagination, with which she loves to play pretend. It is why she’s so good at her job as Eva Seiler, why she was so calm in giving instructions to the lost German pilot, etc.
      - She loves playing pretend and she is good at making up stories.
      - Pg 7-8: “I am in the Special Operations Executive because I can speak French and German and am good at making up stories...”
    - She peppers her writing with various attempts at convincing von Linden that she is telling the truth as best as she can.
      - For example, explaining why she was so easily caught: because she is terrible with directions, and anything related.
        - This then goes on to explain why she doesn’t necessarily know a lot about the airfields and where they are located.
        - (“...and there is no point in me trying to direct you to Locations of Any Airfields Anywhere. Not without someone giving me the coordinates.” Pg 8)

- By misdirecting and telling her story about her friendship with Maddie, it helps her to buy time – she convinces von Linden that whilst she might not know anything, perhaps he might be able to glean some useful information from what she knows about Maddie, since Maddie is a pilot for the Air Transport Auxiliary.
- Now, they know that Maddie is a pilot, that this much is truth, because they caught Verity with Maddie’s ID. So they are more likely to buy the story and all of its details.
- Verity needs to buy time. The more time she has, the more likely she is to get more information about the Ormaei Gestapo Headquarters and complete her mission: to blow it up. So, the longer she drags the story out, giving as much detail as possible, the more likely it is for her to find opportunities.
  - And she does, by talking to Georgia Penn, when they walk her out to the courtyard to execute Marie, when they make her work in the kitchen. Every single one of these distractions was an opportunity for Verity to learn a bit more about the comings and goings of the headquarters, thereby allowing her to formulate a plan.

### Section: Aircraft Types

- In this section, we learn the following about Maddie:
  - That she is a wizard with engineering and tinkering with engines, thanks to her grandfather.
  - That her first encounter with an aircraft was the Puss Moth, one of which crash landed in front of her and she saved the life of the pilot.
  - In doing so, she forms an acquaintance with Dympna Wythenshawe, a very important connection that results in her military career when the war began.
- It also justifies the likelihood that Maddie truly was a pilot and that Verity knows what she is talking about.
  - Even in Part 2, when Maddie meets the Jamaican gunner, her would not believe that she’s a pilot.
  - At the time when the story is set, there were very few women pilots. The only known women pilots were the “Nachthexen”, which is the German nickname for the all-female military aviators of the 588<sup>th</sup> Night Bomber Regiment of the Soviet Air Forces. They were fantastic, but an anomaly.
- Just as her code name is Verity, she does put in as much truth as she can.
  - After all, this is the best way to hide lies.
  - However, when she does tell the truth, she does so with information that is of no consequence.
  - In this section, she gives the names of two types of planes: the Puss Moth and the Lysander.
    - She came flying in on a Lysander, which they found and took photos of, so there’s no point lying about it. In fact, telling the truth about it helps her to maintain the verity of her story and keeps them believing her.

- The Puss Moth is a three-seater private aircraft, and was designed and built between 1929 to 1933. It has no fighting capabilities, and was considered old by the time World War 2 happened. So, sharing about this is inconsequential as well.
- Aside from the above, this section mostly explains the first incident that plants the idea of becoming a woman pilot in Maddie's mind.
  - Pg 18: "But she flew it first. She had to be able to fly it in order to land it (or crash it). The leap seemed logical to Maddie. I've never crashed my motorbike, she thought. I could fly an aeroplane."

### Section: Some British Support for Anti-Semitism

- Nothing of importance, except that it further explains about the second event that cements Maddie's determination to become a pilot.
  - Pg 24: "Maddie thought to herself, thinking about aeroplanes: Just you wait you idiot Fascists. I am going to get me a bigger toy than this bike."

### Section: Location of British Airfields

- Now that Verity has told so many truths to convince von Linden to believe her, she begins with some lies.
- Catton Park Aerodrome and Oakway do not exist.
  - Pg 393: "Names names names. How does she do it? Cattercup – Stratfield – SWINLEY??? ....She makes it sound like she is so cut up to be giving them this information, and it's all just bumph out of her head. She never told them ANYTHING. I don't think she's given them the right name of any airfield in the whole of Britain except Maidsend and Buscot, which of course were where she was stationed... It's all so close to truth, and so glib..."
- Pg 29 – "I am getting a bit wobbly because no one has let me eat or drink since yesterday and I have been writing for nine hours. So now I am going to risk tossing this pencil across the table and have a good howl"
  - This chapter ends without a fullstop which suggests that she did throw her pencil across the table abruptly.
  - However, to howl out of hunger and exhaustion is not like Verity. This is a girl who, despite her fears and potential suffering, goes out into the fray to do what needs to be done without complaining.
  - What's happening here is that she has to behave like a weak prisoner so as to make the Germans believe that she is broken. If she remains stoic, they will have less reason to believe that her "confession" is truthful.
  - However, she is just doing what she's good at – playing pretend.
  - It also tells us that on top of being really Intelligent and Brave (any misbehaviour will be met with some form of punishment), she is very Cheeky as well. There are so many ways to portray weakness and she had to choose the most annoying option.
    - This is later further supported in her description of Queenie.
      - Pg 67: "The fey Queenie, Maddie Knew, was given to fits of madness such as stealing malt whiskey from the RAF officers' mess, and Maddie was sure that anyone bold

enough to impersonate an enemy radio operator on the spur of the moment was entirely capable of mocking someone who burst into tears every time she heard a gun fired.”

- The result is that it is quite difficult, at times, to be certain if Queenie is pretending/lying or not.

### Additional Information

- Pg 3: Verity commences by stating a “fact”: “I AM A COWARD” [CHARACTERISATION]
  - We know, on hindsight, that this is true. She is a coward. She has a list of ten things that she is afraid of, she is absolutely terrified of kerosene and running out of time. She is afraid of what they’ll do with her once she becomes a proper *Nacht und Nabel* prisoner. Many things scare her.
  - However, this also tells us that she is courageous.
    - “Courage is doing what you’re afraid to do. There can be no courage unless you are scared.” -Eddie Rickenbacker
  - We know that she is afraid, and the torture that she undergoes is horrific. Nevertheless, we know that on hindsight, this entire secret-sharing process is not treasonous at all, and that she gives them false information.
  - Despite her fears, she persists to give information to the resistance movement to complete her mission.
- Pg 5-6: Verity describes the Bordeaux Castle Hotel and provides a very subtle clue.
  - “I would not have believed a French hotel could become so forbiddingly bleak if I had not seen the barred shutters and padlocked doors with my own eyes.”
  - A very subtle clue but it does inform any resistance members that attempting to sneak in via the windows or doors is pointless, and that they would have to find another way in.
    - Verity has no way of knowing if she might ever be able to complete the operation but she definitely plans to, be it on her own or via the help of resistance members.
- On hindsight, we realise that Verity gave them 10 sets of code (out of eleven) because of the photographs that they showed her.
  - In part 2, Maddie shares about how the resistance loaded up eleven old wireless radio sets into the Lysander that Maddie piloted, and then destroyed it so that it look like a crash rather than a planned landing.
    - Pg 281-282 “Turns out they had quite a lot of equipment they wanted to get rid of, in addition to the damning corpse – half a dozen useless wireless sets they’d stripped for parts, plus a couple of obsolete ones nobody wanted any more...”
    - “Eleven wireless sets. It is a joke because it is so unlikely we would send eleven sets at once. Each set is linked to its operator, and each operator is equipped with distinct code and crystals and frequencies. It will puzzle the Germans when they examine the wreckage.”
  - [CHARACTERISATION] This tells us how intelligently quick-witted Verity is. She was flying into France under the guise of being a wireless operator. When she saw the

photos, she realised that she had to perfect opportunity to keep up the pretence and never reveals that she is Eva Seiler.

- By coming up with 10 poems and 10 sets of code to decrypt, she maintains the pretence.
- i.e. it was a stroke of luck that she noticed the wireless sets in the picture of the burnt up Lysander. It also made her realise that the resistance were working on the ground and she could, perhaps, rely on them to try to find her and pass whatever information she has on to them.