

Chapter 2 – Ormaie 9.XI.43 JB-S

Summary

In this chapter, Verity tells us about Maddie and her rise from telephonist to working on the top secret technological marvel of the time: RADAR. The narrative is inspiring and empowering. However, the chapter also begins with a touch of torture. It is difficult to determine if Verity is truly scared or pretending to be scared. The chapter ends with her not looking forward to the cross-examination that follows every confession session.

Analysis

- This chapter starts off seemingly-humorous, but we are forced, once again, to question about where the pretence ends and where the truth begins.
- The pen does not work, and Engel verifies this. However, in order to fix it, Sergeant Thibaut returns with a litre of kerosene.
 - Kerosene makes for an excellent ink thinner, to remove whatever dried ink has clogged the fountain pen.
 - Kerosene is also multi-functional, and often used as a form of torture.
 - Pg 6: “What’s in my future – a tin of kerosene poured down my throat and a match held to my lips?”
 - In response to this, Verity freaks out and “Miss E. had to throw a jug of water in my face to stop my hysterics.”

Pg 31: *“Now she is sitting across the table from me lighting and relighting her cigarette and flicking the matches in my direction to make me jump, but she is laughing as she does it.”*
Do you think Verity is faking her fear? Explain.

- It is so difficult to tell if Verity is truthfully suffering or not, because she is such a strong and bold character that it makes us forget that the torture she undergoes is real. Her pain, her empathy and sympathy for the other prisoners as she listens to them being tortured, her thirst and hunger, the headaches and weaknesses she experiences as her body gets starved - these things are real. We just have no idea when it is real and when it isn't.
 - Perhaps, it is always real. Does her strength make her pain less important?
 - Did you, at any point, not sympathise with Verity because she's clearly strong enough to bear it?

- If you have, reflect on why you thought that way. What does it say about your perspectives? Have your perspectives changed now?
- [ALLUSION] Pg 31: “She was anxious last night because she didn’t think I’d coughed up enough facts to count as a proper little Judas yesterday.
 - Alludes to the betrayal of Jesus by Judas, in exchange of 30 pieces of silver.
 - Judas told the Romans where they could find and arrest Jesus.
 - Likewise, Verity refers to herself as a Judas, once again to convince whoever is reading that she is betraying her country, and that she acknowledges it.
 - However, this is also why the other prisoners despise her – they spit at her, mock her, etc.
 - We can’t help but feel sympathy for Verity, especially if we are re-reading this text.
 - She is so lonely in her fight, keeping up pretences regardless of how difficult it is to do so, whilst being hated on and mocked by everyone else.
 - She cannot give hint to the other prisoners so that they stop mentally torturing her because they might not be able to keep the secret.
 - She maintains the secrecy to the very end, that even after her death, one of the prisoners continue to speak badly of her to Maddie, not knowing what she had done to destroy the Gestapo headquarters in Ormaei.
 - Being a spy is a lonely job that results in one constantly being misunderstood.
 - This allusion, however, supports the **THEME** of Friendship. Maddie understands her. Through to the very end, despite what she’s been told, Maddie believes in Verity. Maddie never abandoned Verity.

Section: The Civil Air Guard (Some Figures)

- Verity continues with the story of how Maddie came to be a pilot, beginning with tinkering engines until war loomed and the Civil Air Guard was formed offering free flight training.
- She also explains how Maddie had a whole year’s worth of flight training, more than could be said of the other male soldiers who joined up, which explains why she was allowed to fly for the government.
- Lastly, it explains the third and final event that cemented Maddie’s determination to fly – *“love, for her island home that she’d seen whole and fragile from the air in the space of an afternoon, from coast to coast, holding its breath in a glass lens of summer and sunlight. All about to be swallowed in nights of flame and blackout. [...] More than anything else, I think, Maddie went to war on behalf of the Holy Island seals.”* (Pg 36-37)
- And so, with the help of Dymyna Wythenshawe, Maddie signs up with the Women’s Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) and became a radio operator.

Why would Maddie join the WAAF to become a radio operator when it has nothing to do with flying?

Section – Some WAAF Trades

- Once again, Oakway airfield is mentioned again, even though it is fake.

Why would Verity repeatedly mention the name of a fake airfield? After all, by lying repeatedly, she brings more attention to it.

Section – Telephonist

- Another mostly pointless section, but Verity did promise every single detail.
- From a narrative-perspective, it makes for a great story as we watch how Maddie, a girl and a civilian, started from the absolute bottom and rose through the ranks to become a pilot. It all starts with the Chief Flight Instructor recognising her, remembering her talents, and bumping her up the ranks to fully-utilise her capabilities.
- One of the **THEMES** of this text is “The Role of Women”. What makes this story unique for the time **SETTING** [*Setting is the time and place (or when and where) of the story.*] is that the heroes of this story are the women.
 - *Themes: A literary theme is the main idea or underlying meaning a writer explores in a novel, short story, or other literary work. The theme of a story can be conveyed using characters, setting, dialogue, plot, or a combination of all of these elements.*
 - Verity, Maddie, Mitraillate, La Cadette, Engel... Even von Linden’s landlady (Pg 410).
 - This text is a celebration of all the women who helped out in some way with the war effort.
 - What makes their efforts even more noteworthy is the fact that they were not allowed to do a lot. It was harder for women to rise up the ranks, to be taken seriously, to be given serious roles.
 - Verity spends a lot of time justifying how Maddie became a pilot. Even the Jamaican gunner who Maddie rescues was shocked to find out that she’s a pilot. Maddie’s journey to becoming a pilot required her to start from the very bottom, as illustrated in this section, regardless of the fact that she had more experience.
 - Pg 40: “Aircraftwoman Brodatt! What are you doing here? You’re a licensed radio operator!”
 - Pg 39: “So early in the war, they hadn’t yet opened up those jobs to women. It didn’t matter that Maddie already had a deal more experience than a lot of boys; there wasn’t a place for her. But she’d already learned Morse code and a bit about radio transmission as part of her training for her pilot’s ‘A’ license.”
 - Even though they were helping with the war effort, they did not get respect because they didn’t have uniforms.
 - Pg 40: “...Maddie’s group didn’t get issued proper uniforms at first. They all wore matching blue cardigans, like Girl Guides...”
 - The writer makes use of **JUXTAPOSITION** to compare “Girl Guides” with “proper uniforms”.

- Juxtaposition: the act or an instance of placing two or more things side by side often to compare or contrast or to create an interesting effect
- By juxtaposing these two things, the writer shows how ridiculous the level of disrespect was, and how unprepared the British government was. They declared war against the Germans without having prepared, whereas the Germans had been preparing for years.
- They only hired women when they realised all the men would have to be on the front and there would be no one left to manage the administrative work.
- It was fortunate that they had that the Phoney War between later 1939 to early 1940. “Nothing much happening. Not in Britain anyway. We were biting our nails, practising. Waiting.” (Pg 40)
 - Pg 41: “Posted! You’re not even any of you in uniform!”
 - This is an insult, although probably unintentional. The chief flight instructor was probably used to seeing military personnel in uniform, and struggled to accept that these women in cardigans were military personnel too.

Section – Radio Operator

- The section begins with yet another illustration of how much experience Maddie has, and how under-utilised she is, all because of her gender.
 - Pg 42: “‘Is it a lake or a reservoir?’ [...] After a short silence, Maddie prompted: ‘A reservoir has got a dam at one end.’”
 - Even without being in the plane, she could give clear directions to the pilots.
 - This was before RADAR was discovered, so her skill is based purely on memory.
 - “How in the name of mud is he going to find Berlin if he can’t find Manchester?”
- We also learn that Maddie can’t swear properly.
 - For all her faults, she is much too polite [**CHARACTERISATION**].
 - “Oh my sainted aunt!” and “How in the name of mud...”
 - These aren’t proper swear words or cusses.

How do you think Maddie feels at this point, and why?

- Later, we find out that this happens many, many times, and she saves them because she’s just that good.
 - Pg 43: “Was it you talked down my lads training in the Wellington bomber this morning? [...] Those boys jolly well owe you their lives. [...] We shouldn’t have let them take off this morning. [...] Singing your praises, those lads were.”

- And because of this, she gets more opportunities: “Made me wonder though; have you any idea what the runway looks like from air? [...] If you’re going to talk people down you’d damn well better know what the forward view from the cockpit of a Wellington bomb looks like in the landing configuration. Fancy a flight in a Wellington?”
- (Wellingtons were in use since 1932, actively used in the war beginning in 1939 all the way to 1942, so it wouldn’t have mattered if Verity shared about them – the Germans would have already known.)

Section – Stooze

- So, Maddie progresses from being a telephonist to a radio operator to a Stooze.
- This section is humorous in tone because Maddie cannot sit and observe. Rather, her pilot training takes over and she starts questioning the pilot, telling him what to do every step of the way.
- The humour quickly ends as Verity shifts to a story about the first time Maddie’s plane was fired on.
 - This is especially surprising as it was a Stooze ride. She’s just there to observe. They don’t go out far enough to encounter the Germans.
 - Pg 47: “In the spring of 1940 our skies were alert, and armed, and uneasy. But they were still safe.”
 - It turns out, they were fired on, by mistake, by their own countrymen in Cattercup (later, we find out from Maddie that Cattercup is a made up name, on pg 393).
- This incident scares Maddie, and she takes comfort in the fact that she will not be flying into Europe.
 - Here, we have [FORESHADOWING]. It’s such a pointless statement to bring up, that Verity must have had a reason, and does. The two of them do end up flying into Europe, on top secret missions. It is also the reason why Verity and Maddie end up stranded in France.

Section – Signals Branch

- Maddie continues to excel, and is offered further opportunities – “How do you fancy further training? [...] It’s a bit secret. Well: very secret. Say yes, and I’ll send you on the course.” (Pg 48)
- Verity exposes another half-truth – the names of people. Obviously, she wouldn’t remember that much detail about Maddie’s own life, so she makes up the names and freely admits to it.
 - This makes her come across as being somewhat trustworthy because it is really too unbelievable that she can remember so many names.
 - She strategically chooses her lies and her truths and her admittances.