

(Name of Project)

by
(Name of First Writer)

(Based on, If Any)

Revisions by
(Names of Subsequent Writers,
in Order of Work Performed)

Current Revisions by
(Current Writer, date)

Name (of company, if applicable)
Address
Phone Number

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE ROAD. DAY

A white van careens down a dirty road. It's wheels SLAM into the wet ground, sending mud hurling into the air.

INT. VAN

A 30 year old man wrestles with the wheel. His face is rugged, unshaven and his hair is cropped in a military style. His eyes betray his tiredness, but his body seems strong and determined.

The van bounces on increasingly unsteady ground.

Up ahead, a dense forest nears at speed.

EXT. FOREST.

Unseen from the road, a man watches the van pass through binoculars. He is dressed in what appear to be farmers clothes, but his equipment is military issue. He signals a partner who raises a walkie talkie to his lips.

SOLDIER

Potential hostile approaching
from the West. Repeat potential
hostile approaching from the
West.

INT. VAN

The van continues through the gloom of the forest. There is a clearing ahead. Small cottages mark what appears to be a small farming community of some kind.

Farming equipment is dotted around the copse. Wagons sit in open view.

The van pulls to a stop in the centre of the clearing.

Two farmers appear in front of the van.

INT. WAGON.

Two soldiers in full combat regalia point their SA 80's at the driver of the van.

EXT. FOREST.

The driver of the van is framed in the sight of a sniper rifle. A gloved finger eases the safety catch on the rifle.

EXT. CLEARING.

One of the farmers moves round to the drivers side window.

FARMER
Can I help you sir?

The driver responds.

CAPTAIN STEVENS
Captain Stevens. Royal Marines.

The farmer looks across at a wagon. From behind, we can see a listening device in his ear.

A voice can be heard through his ear phone.

VOICE
Identification and visual imaging
checks out.

The farmer nods.

FARMER
Lieutenant Crosby. Come

The farmer ushers the car towards a barn.

INT. BARN

The car rolls into position under the covering and almost immediately the door of the barn comes down, casting the scene into darkness.

The farmer opens the car door and leads Stevens through a door at the far end. It leads into what appears to be a normal, rural cottage.

INT. COTTAGE

They walk through the kitchen. Two more men in what appear to be farmers uniforms sit at a table drinking tea. One of them slips his hand under the table.

A rifle is taped to the underside of it. His hand slips around it.

FARMER
At ease soldier

The soldier removes his hand from the gun and watches as the two entrants cross the room to a door in the corner.

It appears to be an ordinary wooden door. There is a small peephole in the centre of it.

The farmer puts his eye up against it.

CLICK. A Red laser beam scans his eyes.

The sound of some kind of mechanical process. The door is open. The farmer pulls it open with some considerable effort. We can see that the door, despite looking like a normal door from the outside, is unusually thick. It's some kind of blast door.

INT. BASEMENT.

Streaky orange light illuminates the staircase. The farmer leads Stevens down the stairs.

A passage leads to a heavy door. A guard stands just outside. He wears a Red Beret.

The two approach.

RED BERET

Wait here.

CAPTAIN STEVENS

We don't have the time.

Stevens pushes past the guard, who looks at the farmer. The farmer nods his assent and follows Stevens into the room.

INT. COMMAND CENTRE

Four people sit in the room. Two high ranking soldier, who sit in front of a computer monitor, an elderly gentleman with a regal air and a woman who sits with her back to us at the far end of the room. She turns. It is her Her Majesty, the Queen of England.

Stevens bows deeply.

CAPTAIN STEVENS

Your Majesty. I regret to inform you that as of 09:00 hours this morning, London has fallen.

The regal man looks flabbergasted.

LORD HOWEY

London? Fallen? Preposterous. The capital of great Britain will never fall.

CAPTAIN STEVENS

Russian and Chinese forces have taken control. We have been ordered to evacuate dignitaries immediately.

LORD HOWEY

Evacuate? We don't evacuate. We fight to the last man.

CAPTAIN STEVENS

That's the spirit Sir. I shall be returning to the front line once I have completed my mission. I am glad that I shall have some company.

LORD HOWEY

Well I'd love to of course but my duty is with the Queen

The Queen speaks gently but with elegant authority.

QUEEN

I shan't be going Captain.

CAPTAIN STEVENS

Your Majesty. Far be it from me to question

The Queen holds up her hand to silence him

QUEEN

The Monarch of England can not desert her country.

CAPTAIN STEVENS

Mum. England has fallen. We will fight for as long as we can, but we can't win. Our only hope is that we can get keep the idea of Britain alive. You will be escorted to America where you can become a figurehead for our cause, where you can keep up Political pressure so that one day our country can be restored. You're no good to us here. Not now.

The Queen looks at the soldier intently. After a time, she nods.

QUEEN

How did it come to this Captain?

CAPTAIN STEVENS

I wish I knew your Majesty. We leave in two hours, the journey will last a day, bring only what is essential and wear Civilian clothing.

He bows and leaves.

EXT. FARMHOUSE.

Captain Stevens sits in his white van. He notices a couple of lackeys dressed as farmers carrying some bags in his wing mirror. He exits the vehicle.

He opens the back of the van and the lackeys start to pack in the bags. There are seven of them. The Queen and Lord Howey appear from out of the farmhouse.

CAPTAIN STEVENS

Your carriage awaits my liege.

He indicates the van with his arms

LORD HOWEY

Is this some sort of a joke?

CAPTAIN STEVENS

I'm afraid we're out of limousines my Lord. Get in.

EXT. CANAL. NIGHT

A bitterly cold evening, rain falls noisily onto the water. A narrow boat sits in it's mooring

The van pulls up. Captain Stevens exits and opens the door for his passengers. He leads them down to the boat.

A Group of six people are huddled together, waiting to enter the vehicle. Mr and Mrs Sweet and Stonefall, two very wealthy looking couples and two further gentlemen.

A man of around 50, with curiously bushy hair, addresses the Queen.

ARCHBISHOP

Your Majesty

QUEEN

Archbishop? Is that you? You look rather odd in civilian clothes.

ARCHBISHOP

In disguise mum, but I haven't
abandoned my holy garb in its
entirety.

He removes a large cross from beneath a thick jumper.

The other members of the group look at each other in
astonishment mixed with pride that the Queen herself is
amongst them.

CAPTAIN STEVENS

Why don't you get in the boat?
It's shelter at least.

The group look as though this had not occurred to them and
follow his advice, climbing into the craft.

INT. NARROW BOAT. NIGHT

The Queen and Lord Howey enter first and retreat to the far
end on the boat, sitting side by side. The Stonefalls sit
opposite them. The Sweets sit facing each other, next in
line and then comes the two Gentleman; The Archbishop of
Canterbury and Benjamin Bisset.

Captain Stevens ducks into the narrow boat. He walks
between the seats.

CAPTAIN STEVENS

Your passports. We have given
each of you new identities. It is
imperative that you memorise them
on your journey.

He hands them out to the group.

CAPTAIN STEVENS (CONT'D)

Your Majesty. Lord Howey. Mr and
Mrs Stonefall, Mr and Mrs Sweet,
Archbishop, Benjamin Bisset.

He still has one in his hand.

CAPTAIN STEVENS (CONT'D)

You will be travelling to a local
Inn under Russian control we have
arranged for your safe passage.
From there you will be taken to
the Coast where US Forces will
extradite you to America.

LORD HOWEY

Have you gone quite mad? You're giving us straight to the Russians? Is this what passes for military intelligence?

CAPTAIN STEVENS

Our window of opportunity is slight. The Russian Commander has been paid enough to turn a blind eye. Not so much as to become suspicious. If you have a better idea I'd be glad to hear it.

Lord Howey remains silent.

A new face appears in the doorway, a young woman. Dark skinned and beautiful. She has two magnificent dark eyes, fringed with thick, heavy lashes, her mouth is full, ripe, kissable and furnished with the tiniest of white teeth.

Mrs Sweet looks shocked. She whispers to her husband.

MRS SWEET

What's that hussy doing here?

ALBERT SWEET

Umm?

He doesn't know who she is.

MRS SWEET

She's the tart that was screwing that Minister. She's a prostitute.

Miss Ball overhears. She casts such a challenging, bold look at her neighbors that a sudden silence fell on the company, and all lower their eyes, with the exception of Albert Sweet who watches her with interest.

She takes her seat near the door.

CAPTAIN STEVENS

Miss Ball.

He hands her the final passport. He turns to face the crowd.

CAPTAIN STEVENS (CONT'D)

I bid you all Good Luck and pray that you will be safe on your journey

QUEEN

Will you not be coming with us Captain?

CAPTAIN STEVENS

No mum. I shall return to die
with my men.

He bows and leaves, closing the door on his way out.

EXT. CANAL. DAY

The driver unties the moorings on the dock and climbs into his box at the front of the vehicle.

The vehicle moves off slowly, at a snail's pace.

INT. NARROW BOAT. DAY.

Within the coach the passengers eye one another curiously in the dim light.

The Sweets slumber next to each other. Albert Sweet is undersized, potbellied and has a florid face with grayish whiskers. His wife, tall, strong, determined, with a loud voice and decided manner apparent in the way she sleeps in so straight a manner.

Beside them, dignified in bearing, sat John Stonefall. He is clearly affluent and holds himself as men of importance do.

Madame Stonefall is much younger than her husband. Pretty, slender, graceful, she sits next her husband, curled up in furs, and gazes mournfully at the sorry interior of the coach.

Her neighbors, the Lord and the Queen.

Lord Howey addresses a large bearded man at the far end, near the door.

LORD HOWEY

Benjamin Bisset. The terror of
all respectable people. You know,
we used to whisper your name to
our children to scare them at
night.

He laughs.

JOHN STONEFALL

I'm surprised you're leaving. I
would have thought that you'd
enjoy the Russian invasion.
Haven't you spent your life
campaigning for a Revolution?
What's happened?

(MORE)

JOHN STONEFALL (CONT'D)

Have you finally squandered the last of your families money in your socialist dives?

Lord Howey, John Stonefall and Mr Sweet all laugh.

BISSET

Ah, the easy Brotherhood that money brings eh? How is the arms trade these days? You know, whilst you were no doubt busy shipping weapons to the Russians, some of us were busy organising our Towns defences.

LORD HOWEY

I notice you didn't stay to fight.

BISSET

Some of us fight with our minds and our words good sir.

He takes out a flask of rum.

BISSET (CONT'D)

To your health gentlemen.

INT. NARROW BOAT. DAY. LATER

The Queen stifles a yawn in a most dignified manner, others follow her example, yawns being contagious. Each in turn, according to his character, breeding and social position, yawns either quietly or noisily, placing his or her hand before the gaping void whence issued breath condensed into vapor.

All faces are pale and drawn.

ALBERT SWEET

I'd give a thousand pounds for a leg of ham.

His wife prods him as if to admonish him for his wastefulness.

LORD HOWEY

As a matter of fact, I don't feel well, Why did I not think of bringing provisions?

MADAME STONEFALL

I never thought to myself, I presumed that we would stop on the way.

Bisset brings out a bottle of rum, which he offers to his neighbors. They all coldly refuse, except Sweet, who takes a sip, and returns the bottle with thanks.

ALBERT SWEET

That's good stuff; it warms one up, and cheats the appetite.

He laughs merrily.

ALBERT SWEET (CONT'D)

Maybe we should do as the sailors do and eat the fattest of the passengers

This inadvertent reference to the Queen visibly shocks the more respectable members of the boat, although Bisset smiles. The Archbishop says a silent prayer.

EXT. CANAL. DAY

The boat moves slowly along the waterway.

INT. NARROW BOAT. DAY.

The companions have moved. Some of them snooze.

Miss Ball stoops and draws from underneath the seat a large basket.

She extracts a small earthenware plate and a drinking cup, then a dish containing a whole chicken cut into joints. The basket contains other things: pies, fruit, dainties of all sorts. The necks of four bottles protruded from among the food. She takes a chicken wing, and begins to eat it daintily.

All looks are directed toward her. The scorn of the ladies for this disreputable female grows positively ferocious. If looks could kill.

But Albert Sweet's gaze is fixed greedily on the dish of chicken.

ALBERT SWEET

Well, this lady had more forethought than the rest of us. Some people think of everything.

She looks at him.

MISS BALL

Would you like some, sir? It is hard to go on fasting all day.

He bows.

ALBERT SWEET

I couldn't say no; I cannot hold
out another minute. All is fair
in war time, is it not, madame?

He looks round at the group.

ALBERT SWEET (CONT'D)

At times like this it's pleasant
to meet with obliging people.

He spreads a newspaper over his knees to avoid soiling his
trousers and helps himself to a chicken leg.

Miss Ball invites the Archbishop to partake of her food. He
accepts the offer unhesitatingly. Bisset also accepts.

Mouths open and shut, ferociously masticating and devouring
the food. Sweet, in his corner, was hard at work. He urges
his wife to accept.

ALBERT SWEET (CONT'D)

Get some

MADAME STONEFALL

I'm fine thank you.

ALBERT SWEET

Go on.

She shakes her head. Then seems to change her mind.

MRS SWEET

Well, maybe just a little

ALBERT SWEET

My dear lady, might I take some
for my wife?

MISS BALL

Of course

She holds out the dish. Sweet takes some chicken legs.

Miss Ball opens a bottle of claret wine. There is only one
glass, but it is passed round and each person wipes it and
consumes a little. Bisset, raises to his own lips that part
of the rim which was still moist from those of his fair
neighbor, Miss Ball.

The Queen, Lord Howey and Madame Stonefall do not partake
of the food; Though their eyes betray their appetite, they
are too proud to ask.

Madame Stonefall suddenly heaves a sigh and her face falls forward in a faint.

JOHN STONEFALL

Help me please! Something's wrong
with my wife.

The Archbishop scurries forward and raises the patient's head, placing the glass to her lips, and made her swallow a few drops of wine. The pretty invalid moves, opens her eyes, smiles.

MADAME STONEFALL

I'm alright. Just a little light
headed.

The Archbishop fills the glass of wine and hands it to Madame Stonefall.

ARCHBISHOP

It's just hunger

Mis Ball, blushing and embarrassed, stammers, looking at the four passengers who were still fasting

MISS BALL

If I might offer you ladies and
gentlemen--

She stops short, fearing a snub.

ALBERT SWEET

Come, come, ladies, don't stand
on ceremony, for goodness' sake!

In times like this we are all brothers and sisters and need to help each other. For all we know we might not even be stopping at a house tonight.

They hesitate.

But the Lord settles the question. He turns toward the girl, and in his most distinguished manner says

LORD HOWEY

We accept gratefully, madame

The basket is emptied of pate de foie gras, a lark pie, a piece of smoked ham, pears, gingerbread, fancy cakes, and a cup full of pickled gherkins and onions.

The party starts to eat.

LORD HOWEY (CONT'D)

How, if I may be so bold, did you
come to be here?

MISS BALL
I wanted to stay. But that was
before David...

LORD HOWEY
David Bancroft? The minister?
(Beat)
I read the papers.

Miss Ball looks deeply embarrassed

MISS BALL
...He told his aide to ensure
that I got out of the country
safely. I was there when he was
killed. The Russians were gunning
everyone down, they came out of
nowhere. David got hit in the
side. I tried to save him...

Her voice tails off.

MISS BALL (CONT'D)
...I shot one of the bastards.
I'd shoot every last one of the
bastards if I could.

She looks like she is going to cry, but her strength
prevents it.

There is a respectful silence. Broken by Bisset who
applauds. His enthusiasm is infectious and all the company
congratulate her.

BISSET
Bravo. If others in this country
had been as patriotic we might
not have been in this mess. It's
a shame that your boyfriend and
his Government didn't have their
eye on the ball, but I can't
fault you spirit.

MISS BALL
David was a great man. He
campaigns for years to increase
spending on the military. It was
the likes of you and your sort
that brought us to this.

Bisset is unmoved by this tirade and smiles a superior,
contemptuous smile.

LORD HOWEY
Let's calm down shall we. I think
all sincere opinions should be
respected.

EXT. CANAL. NIGHT

The driver lighted his lanterns. They cast a bright gleam on a cloud of vapor which hovered over the waterway

Tiny lights glimmer ahead. A small country town. The boat stops before an Inn.

INT. NARROW BOAT. NIGHT

The sound of soldiers boots marching and harsh, indeterminate Russian voices.

The party sit up in consternation.

The coach door opens.

Although the coach has come to a standstill, no one dares get out. The driver appears, holding in his hand one of his lanterns, which casts a sudden glow on the interior of the coach, lighting up the double row of startled faces, mouths agape, and eyes wide open in surprise and terror.

Beside the driver stands in the full light a Russian officer, a tall young man, fair and slender, tightly encased in his uniform, his flat shiny cap, tilted to one side of his head.

He speaks in broken English

RUSSIAN SOLDIER
Kindly get down, ladies and gentlemen.

EXT. CANAL SIDE. NIGHT

The Archbishop was the first to obey. Next appeared the Stonefalls, followed by Lord Howey and the Queen, after whom came Albert Sweet, pushing his larger and better half before him.

ALBERT SWEET
Good-day, sir

Miss Ball and Benjamin Bisset, though near the door, are the last to alight. The stout girl tries to control herself and appear calm; the democrat strokes his long russet beard with a somewhat trembling hand.

RUSSIAN SOLDIER
Follow me.

INT. KITCHEN

They enter the spacious kitchen of the inn.

RUSSIAN SOLDIER
Your passports please.

The Russian inspects them all minutely, comparing their appearance with the written particulars.

Each of the party looks nervous.

RUSSIAN SOLDIER (CONT'D)
Alright. The Innkeeper will take care of you.

He turns and leaves, leaving them alone in their new surroundings.

The group move through into....

INT. DINING ROOM.

A large table stands in front of them. They move to sit down. The innkeeper appears. A large, asthmatic individual, wheezing, coughing, and clearing his throat. PETER SMITH.

PETER SMITH
Miss Elizabeth Ball

MISS BALL
That's me

PETER SMITH
The Russian officer wishes to speak to you immediately.

MISS BALL
To me?

PETER SMITH
Yes; if you are Miss Elizabeth Ball.

MISS BALL
I'm not going.

The company move restlessly; The Lord approaches her.

LORD HOWEY
You are wrong, madame, your refusal may bring trouble not only on yourself but also on all of us. It never pays to resist those in authority.
(MORE)

LORD HOWEY (CONT'D)

Your compliance with this request cannot possibly be fraught with any danger; it has probably been made because some formality or other was forgotten.

Miss Ball looks at the assembled party. All add their voices of agreement to that of the Lord.

MISS BALL

I am doing it for your sakes, remember that!

QUEEN

And we are grateful to you.

She leaves the room.

JOHN STONEFALL

I can't help but think it would have been better if one of us had been called for instead. Whatever it is.

MADAME STONEFALL

Agreed.

MRS SWEET

She'll probably gets us all killed.

The Lord looks sideways at the Queen.

LORD HOWEY

We can be grateful at least that he didn't ask for you.

Miss Ball reappears breathing hard, crimson with indignation.

LORD HOWEY (CONT'D)

What has happened? Please, I think we have a right to know.

MISS BALL

No; it's got has nothing to do with you.

They take their places round a high soup tureen. There is a large canteen of cider on the table. The Sweets and the Archbishop help themselves. The others order wine from a waiter; Bisset demands beer. He gazes at it as he inclines his glass and then raises it to a position between the lamp and his eye that he might judge of its colour. As he drinks, his great beard, which matches the colour of his favorite beverage, seems to tremble with affection.

Mr and Mrs Smith, the Innkeepers, dine at the end of the table. The man, wheezing like a broken-down locomotive doesn't speak.

His wife, in her ignorance, addresses the Queen.

MRS SMITH

These Russians do nothing but eat meatballs and pork, and then pork and meatballs. They've cost us a fortune. And don't imagine for a moment that they are clean! And if only you saw them drilling. They all group in a field, then they do nothing but march backward and forward.! Poor people have to feed and keep them, only so they may learn how to kill! When I see them wearing themselves out marching about from morning till night, I say to myself: When there are people who make discoveries what are of use to people, why do others take so much trouble to do harm? Really, now, isn't it a terrible thing to kill people, whether they are Russians, or English, or Poles, or French? If we revenge ourselves on any one who injures us we do wrong, and are punished for it; but when our sons are shot down like animals, that is all right, and decorations are given to the man who kills the most.

Bisset raises his voice

BISSET

War is a barbarous proceeding when we attack a peaceful neighbor, but it is a sacred duty when undertaken in defence of one's country.

MRS SMITH

Yes; it's another matter when one acts in self-defence; but it'd be better to kill all the kings and politicians seeing that they make war just to amuse themselves. That's what i think anyway.

Bisset's eyes kindle and he laughs gleefully.

BISSET

Bravo!

JOHN STONEFALL

I have a great respect for the military and their leaders, but I must say, your words make me think that perhaps armies could be used more profitably at times. If you can just imagine the wealth which might accrue to a country by the employment of so many idle hands now maintained at a great expense, of so much unproductive force, if they were employed in great industrial enterprises.

Albert Sweet talks to the innkeeper.

ALBERT SWEET

You say the troops are costing you money? Are you providing the food and drink free of charge?

PETER SMITH

They give us some money to pay for the booze, but it doesn't go far.

ALBERT SWEET

We're heading to America. I'm wondering if we could perhaps organise to ship some wine over, in the kind of quantities an army could use we both might profit by it. Anyway, we'll talk about it later.

Albert Sweet puts some food in his mouth. As he lowers his fork to the table, it makes a CLUNK...

INT. INN. DINING ROOM. LATER

...Mr and Mrs Smith tidy up the dirty and blow out the candles for the night.

INT. THE SWEETS BEDROOM

The Sweets are getting ready for bed. Albert hears someone walking in the corridor, he heads over to his bedroom door.

MRS SWEET

What are you doing? Come to bed.

ALBERT SWEET

Shh. I'm keeping on eye out.

Sweet looks through the crack of his open room door...

INT. UPSTAIRS CORRIDOR.

...at Miss Ball in a dressing-gown of blue cashmere trimmed with white lace. She holds a candle in her hand. Bisset, in his shirt-sleeves, follows her. They speak in low, inaudible tones. Miss Ball stoutly denies him admission to her room.

BISSET

What difference does it make to you?

She seems indignant

MISS BALL

I don't behave that way with everyone, despite what you might have heard. Besides, in this place it would be shameful.

BISSET

Why?

MISS BALL

Why? There are Russians in the house! Perhaps even in the very next room!

Bisset hesitates for a second and then turns back towards his own room. Sweet quickly and silently pulls his own door to.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. KITCHEN. DAY

John Stonefall looks out of the window at the narrow boat, which sits unattended on the canal. There is no sign of the Driver. He looks at a rather expensive looking watch on his wrist.

JOHN STONEFALL

It's almost half past 8 I don't see any sign of the driver.

INT. INN.

Lord Howey speaks to a Russian orderly. He is accompanied by John Stonefall and Albert Sweet

LORD HOWEY
I want to see your Officer.

RUSSIAN ORDERLY
I shall ask.

INT. KITCHEN. LATER

The men are drinking coffee. The orderly comes to fetch them.

RUSSIAN ORDERLY
The Commander will see you now.

Sweet, Stonefall and the Lord make a mover together.

JOHN STONEFALL
Are you coming with us?

The question is targeted at Bisset, who remains seated at the fireplace.

BISSET
I will have nothing whatsoever to do with the Russians.

He downs the last drop of his beer.

BISSET (CONT'D)
Waiter! Another beer please.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY.

The three men go upstairs, and are ushered into the best room in the inn, where the officer receives them lolling at his ease in an armchair, his feet on the mantelpiece, smoking a cigarette, and enveloped in a gorgeous dressing-gown.

He neither rises, greets them, nor even glances in their direction.

After the lapse of a few moments he says in his halting English, thick with his Russian tongue

CORPS COMMANDER ANDROPOV

What do you want?

LORD HOWEY
We wish to start on our journey

ANDROPOV
No.

LORD HOWEY

May I ask the reason of your refusal?

ANDROPOV

Because I don't choose.

LORD HOWEY

I would respectfully call your attention, to the fact that your general in command gave us a permit to proceed ; and I do not think we have done anything to deserve this harshness at your hands.

ANDROPOV

I don't choose, that's all. You may go.

The three men bow and retire from the room and head to the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN

Albert Sweet speaks in a low voice.

ALBERT SWEET

Do you think he knows who we are? Perhaps he is going to keep us as hostages. For ransom. Can you imagine how much money he could get? That's it you know, he's found us out.

LORD HOWEY

You could be right. We should do what we can to look like we don't have money.

He takes off his expensive watch and puts it in his pocket.

LORD HOWEY (CONT'D)

We don't want some Russian taking what's ours.

ALBERT SWEET

My God, you're right. We'll have to hide what we have. It's bad enough leaving the country, leaving it broke...

He leaves the thought to linger.

INT. INN. DINING ROOM.

A lamp burns brightly on the table. The company is gathered round the table playing cards.

The Lord shuffles and deals. The players collect their cards. Bisset notices a wink between Albert Sweet and his wife and Alberts dropped hands so she can see his cards. They're cheating.

The Innkeeper appears

PETER SMITH

The Russian officer sends to ask Miss Ball if she has changed her mind yet.

She stands still. Then, turning crimson with anger, she gasps

MISS BALL

Tell that Russian, that I won't consent--you understand?--never, never, never!

The fat innkeeper leaves the room. Miss Ball is surrounded by her companions begging her all at once to reveal the mystery of her visit to the officer.

MADAME STONEFALL

What does he want from you.

MRS SWEET

Yes tell us please

MISS BALL

What does he want? He wants to fuck me. That's what he wants.

General indignation. Bisset slams his jug down on the table. A loud outcry arises against this soldier. All are furious.

BISSET

The bastard. The God damn bastard.

MADAME STONEFALL

The absolute cheek of the man.

LORD HOWEY

These people are barbarians. That's what we are dealing with here. Barbarians.

MRS SWEET
It's unthinkable.

ALBERT SWEET
I'm sure I speak for everyone
when I say we will support you.
Whatever happens.

There is a general consent amongst the crowd. Mr Sweet reaches for a bottle of wine and pour a glass.

MISS BALL
If you don't mind. I think I'll
go to bed.

She leaves.

INN. DINING ROOM. LATER

The ladies have gone to bed; and the men, having lighted their pipes, are playing a game of poker.

Bisset throws down his hand and gets up to look out of the window. In the moonlight we can see the quiet light town and the gentle trees of the countryside. It looks beautiful.

BISSET
This is it I suppose. The end of
England. None of this is ours any
more. I've spent my life fighting
for this country. We should go in
there now and slit that bastards
throat. Fight our way out.

ALbert Sweet laughs scornfully.

ALBERT SWEET
I'd suggest you keep that idea to
yourself. You never know the girl
might have changed her mind. She
might be with him right now so
we've all got a nice surprise in
the morning.

BISSET
How can you say such a thing?

ALBERT SWEET
It's what she does isn't it? All
I'm saying is that she could have
done it tonight and none of us
would ever have to know. She
could just tell the Commander to
release us as though he's changed
his mind. Why not?

BISSET
Why not indeed?

He stares out into the night.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. KITCHEN

A clock on the wall strikes twelve. The party sit around in various states of boredom.

LORD HOWEY
I think perhaps it might be good
for us to go for a walk. Does
anyone care to join me?

The little party set out, leaving behind only Bisset, who preferred to sit over the fire.

The cold, almost freezes the noses and ears of the pedestrians, their feet begin to pain them so that each step was a penance, and when they reach the open country it looked so mournful and depressing that they all hastily retraced their steps, with bodies benumbed and hearts heavy.

The four women walk in front, and the three men follow a little in their rear.

ALBERT SWEET
I wonder how long that trollop is
going to keep us waiting in this
Godforsaken place.

LORD HOWEY
We cannot expect so painful a
sacrifice from any woman I
suppose. Whatever her..history.
The first move must come from
herself.

ALBERT SWEET
Supposing we escape on foot?

The Lord shrugs

LORD HOWEY
We would be pursued at once,
overtaken in ten minutes, and
brought back as prisoners at the
mercy of the soldiery. Probably
killed.

This was true enough; they became silent.

At the end of the street, Andropov appears. His tall, wasp-like, uniformed figure is outlined against the horizon, and he walks, knees apart, with that motion peculiar to soldiers.

He bows as he passes the ladies, then glances scornfully at the men.

Miss Ball flushes and the three married women look unutterably humiliated.

MRS SWEET

Thinks he owns the place

MADAME STONEFALL

Regrettably, he and his sort appear to. Not bad looking in his own way though I suppose. He cuts a figure at least. Shame he's not English. He'd make a fine English Officer.

Her look lingers after his receding figure.

MADAME STONEFALL (CONT'D)

Well I suppose we should head back.

EXT. INN.

The moon moves across the sky. Another day passes.

INT. INN. DINING ROOM.

The companions sit in their familiar seats. There is an irritable mood in the air. The group look at each other as they eat their food in silence.

Miss Ball wipes her mouth with a napkin and quietly gets up to leave.

As soon as she has gone, the rest of the company look at one another and the draw their chairs together. Albert Sweet speaks in conspiratorial tones.

ALBERT SWEET

I've been thinking. The only reason we're still here is that the Officer wants that woman.

The crowd nod in expectation.

ALBERT SWEET (CONT'D)
 Well. Why don't we ask the
 Commander to retain her and let
 the rest of us go on our way?

The statement is considered thoughtfully by all parties.
 They consent.

ALBERT SWEET (CONT'D)
 Mr Smith.

He beckons the Innkeeper to him and whispers the
 instructions into his ear. The Innkeeper nods in assent. He
 leaves the room.

INT. CORRIDOR.

The Innkeeper knocks on a door leading off the hallway. The
 deep voice of the Russian Commander can be heard

ANDROPOV
 Yes.

Smith enters.

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 2E0JTUPARURNRLWRAL OA DEF SOFEULTE DTSFAASCRAPTON.1\PAIN2
 A6041FS25042\ALNG18001NSRSID12602518 THE COMMANDER SITS AT
 A LARGE DESK READING A JOURNAL OF SOME DESCRIPTION.

PETER SMITH
 Begging your pardon Sir. I have a
 request from our guests.

ANDROPOV
 Well?

PETER SMITH
 They wonder whether it would be
 possible for you to free them to
 go and...

ANDROPOV
 ..and merely keep the girl? No.
 This will not be. The party shall
 remain until my single condition
 is complied with.

PETER SMITH
 Very good Sir.

He bows absurdly and departs.

INT. INN. DINING ROOM.

Mrs Sweet's temperament breaks.

MRS SWEET

We're not going to die of old age here! It's that woman's trade to sleep with men; I don't see that she has any right to refuse one more than another. And now that it is a question of getting us out of a difficulty she puts on virtuous airs! For my part, I think this officer has behaved very well. Why, there were three others of us, any one of whom he would undoubtedly have preferred. But no, he contents himself with the girl who is common property. He respects married women. Just think. He is master here. He had only to say: 'I wish it! and he might have taken us by force, with the help of his soldiers.

The two other women shudder;

The men draw near.

ALBERT SWEET

We should tie her up and give her to the bloody Officer ourselves.

LORD HOWEY

I think a more tactful response might be in order. We must attempt to persuade her, subtly of course that it is of paramount importance that she succumbs.

The crowd all nod their assent. Only Bisset remains apart from the rest, taking no share in the plot.

MADAME STONEFALL

I don't understand it at all, I think, in her place, I would be less inclined to refuse him than another.

So absorbed is the attention of all that Miss Ball's entrance is almost unnoticed. But Lord Howey sees her

LORD HOWEY

Hush

The others look up. They stop talking, and a vague embarrassment prevents them for a few moments from addressing her.

LORD HOWEY (CONT'D)

We were just having a rather interesting conversation about history. You know what they say, those that do not know the past are doomed to repeat the mistakes in the future and all that.

Albert Sweet, stands and draws out a chair for her to sit upon.

LORD HOWEY (CONT'D)

I was just educating them on how our present situation bears such a striking resemblance to so many great travails in the past. I was saying that in times such as these, it is often the women who make the better solidiers. Isn't that right?

The crowd nod enthusiastically, though they don't know what he's talking about.

LORD HOWEY (CONT'D)

Yes, I was saying that if you look at the past you'll see that many nations armies have fallen and that it is often left to the women to battle the conquerors all by themselves, using whatever means they have. Look at Cleopatra for instance. She was an extraordinary woman. Her allure is legendary as you no doubt know and she managed to reduce the Roman Generals to little more than slaves with the use of her charms.

JOHN STONEFALL

The French resistance was the same.

A waiter arrives to serve soup

LORD HOWEY

Quite. Men may best other men in matters of combat, but they have no defence to a woman prepared to make a sacrifice of her own body.

If I'm not mistaken Hannibal was undone at Capua in similar manner. The matrons of Rome seduced all his lieutenants and all his mercenaries....

The owner of the Inn reappears.

PETER SMITH

The Russian officer sends to ask
if Miss Ball has changed her
mind.

The crowd look with expectation at Miss Ball who answers indignantly.

MISS BALL

No

There is an almost imperceptible moment of consternation on the faces of the assembled party.

MADAME STONEFALL

And where does the church stand
on the matter?

The Archbishop clears his throat nervously

ARCHBISHOP

Well, if we were to look at the lives of the Saints, we would find many instances where acts were committed which would be crimes in our eyes, but the Church readily pardons such deeds when they are accomplished for the glory of God or the good of mankind. Abraham sacrificed his own son in the name of God. Indeed I cannot say I would hesitate to kill both my own father and mother if I were to receive a divine order to that effect. Nothing could displease our Lord, provided the motive were praiseworthy.

JOHN STONEFALL

The end justifies the means?

ARCHBISHOP

Yes. Undoubtedly. God accepts all methods, and pardons the act when the motive is pure. Of that I am quite sure.

Miss Ball looks deep in thought. She stands up and walks away.

MISS BALL
If you'll excuse me

INT. CORRIDOR.

The Lord follows after her and takes Miss Ball's arm, and walks with her.

He talks to her in that familiar, paternal, slightly contemptuous tone which men of his class adopt in speaking to women like her.

LORD HOWEY
My Dear Child. Do you prefer to leave us here, exposed like yourself to all the violence which would follow on a repulse of the Russian troops, rather than consent to surrender yourself, as you have done so many times in your life?"

The girl did not reply. She is shocked.

LORD HOWEY (CONT'D)
I realize how difficult a decision this is for you and were it possible to expose myself to such fraught dangers I would gladly do so. But you must understand how much rests on your shoulders. The very future of our country is at stake. Every day that we spend here makes it more likely that we will be found out. I cannot force your decision, but you will gain the gratitude not only of myself and of the party but of the whole country.

And you know, my dear, he could boast then of having made a conquest of a pretty girl such as he won't often find in his own country.

Miss Ball makes no answer. The Lord rejoins the party, leaving Miss Ball in quiet contemplation.

INT. MISS BALL'S ROOM. NIGHT

Miss Ball sits on the end of her bed, looking out into the night sky. She stands and leaves the room.

INT. INN. NIGHT

The dinner hour; The companions are at the table. All except Miss Ball.

MRS SWEET
Do you think...? You know.

Her husband shrugs.

MADAME STONEFALL
We can but hope.

The Innkeeper enters, bringing some food. He speaks to Lord Howey

PETER SMITH
Miss Ball won't be coming. She's not feeling so well.

The Lord drew near the innkeeper

LORD HOWEY
Is it all right?

The Innkeeper nods. The Lord turns and nods slightly to his companions who are straining to hear the conversation, whilst trying to maintain their propriety. A great sigh of relief goes up. Every face is lighted with joy.

ALBERT SWEET
Champagne all round if there's any to be found in this place.

Mrs Sweet looks dismayed at his outburst. Her mood darkens further as the Innkeeper returns with four bottles on a tray.

The champagne is poured. The companions chink glasses and laugh merrily amongst themselves.

Albert Sweet, in his element, rises to his feet, holding aloft a glass of champagne.

ALBERT SWEET (CONT'D)
To our deliverance!

All stand, and greet the toast with acclamation. Even the Archbishop.

ARCHBISHOP
I don't usually drink, but at times like this..

He quaffs some of the wine.

ARCHBISHOP (CONT'D)
Better than lemonade anyway.

ALBERT SWEET
It is a shame we've no piano; we
could have had a sing song.

Bisset remains seated; plunged in serious thought whilst tugging at his beard.

ALbert Sweet notices his discomfort and claps him on the back playfully.

ALBERT SWEET (CONT'D)
You've got a face on you tonight;
what's up with you, old man?

Bisset casts one swift and scornful glance over the assemblage, and shouts

BISSET
I tell you all, you have done a
disgraceful thing!

He rises, reaches the door, and turns back to say:

BISSET (CONT'D)
Disgraceful!

The group becomes silent. Sweet looks foolish and disconcerted for a moment, but soon recovers and starts to laugh

ALBERT SWEET
The old man's just jealous.

JOHN STONEFALL
What do you mean?

ALBERT SWEET
I saw him in the corridor the
night before last, he was
knocking on Miss Ball's door
trying to persuade her to give
him one.

The ladies could hardly contain their delight, all but the Queen laugh. Lord Howey and John Minor are laughing so much their eyes water.

JOHN STONEFALL
What! you are sure? He wanted...

ALBERT SWEET
I saw it with my own eyes.

JOHN STONEFALL
And she refused?

ALBERT SWEET
Because the Russian was in the
next room!

LORD HOWEY
Surely you are mistaken?

ALBERT SWEET
I swear It.

The Lord is choking with laughter. Minor can barely breathe.

ALBERT SWEET (CONT'D)
So you can see why he doesn't
think this evening's business is
very funny

All three begin to laugh again, choking, coughing, almost ill with merriment.

EXT. CANAL. DAY

A clear winter morning. The boat, ready at last, sits invitingly in its mooring.

The driver, wrapped in his sheepskin coat, smokes a cigarette. All the passengers, radiant with delight at their approaching departure, are putting provisions into the vehicle for the remainder of the journey.

Only Miss Ball is missing. She appears, shamefaced and embarrassed, and advances with a timid step toward her companions, who turn aside as if can't see her. Lord Howey, with much dignity, ushers the Queen away from the danger of unclean contact and into the boat.

Following the lead of the Queen. The other passengers enter the boat.

The driver hops down from his box and unties the mooring.

INT. NARROW BOAT. DAY.

The passengers have taken their seats. Miss Ball, struggles to maintain her dignity and looks directly ahead. The eyes of the other passengers are on her. Mrs Sweet whispers to her husband.

MRS SWEET
Thank God I'm not sat next to
that creature.

EXT. NARROW BOAT. DAY.

The boat begins to lumber along it's way down the waterway.

INT. NARROW BOAT. DAY.

The group sits in silence. At the far end of the boat, Albert Sweet plays cards with his wife. Ben Brisset sits in contemplation and the Archbishop is deep in prayer. He makes unintelligible murmurs under his breath as he thumbs a rosary bead.

Miss Ball sits and dares not even raise her eyes. Her indignation and humiliation marked deeply on her face.

The Queen breaks the silence by speaking to Madame Stonefall.

QUEEN

I believe you know the?

MADAME STONEFALL

Yes, mum, she's a friend of mine

QUEEN

A charming woman

MADAME STONEFALL

Delightful! And such a talented artist. She sings marvellously.

Next to them Lord Howey and Albert Sweet chat about business.

LORD HOWEY

If I may ask you how you think the share situation will play out?

We catch just a few words of the reply as the sound of the rain beating on the roof.

JOHN STONEFALL

...Gold should hold its value...

He taps his nose as he says...

JOHN STONEFALL (CONT'D)

...Arms of course.

Lord Howey laughs.

Albert Sweet stretches and packs the cards away.

ALBERT SWEET

I'm hungry

His wife produces a parcel, filled with cold meats and pies.

LORD HOWEY

Ah, excellent idea

Murmurs of agreement from the crowd. Each of them bar Miss Ball bring out assorted delicacies from amongst their overcoats or from beneath their seats. Game pies, hunks of sausages.

They eat in their own way. Bisset gobbles at his boiled eggs hungrily, the Queen and Lord Howey eat with a delicacy most out of place in this setting.

Miss Ball looks at the eating group. Her body shakes with anger. None of them have offered her a morsel. Her anger subsides into sadness and rejection as she watches the greedy mouths eat. She battles to keep self control, swallowing the sobs that force themselves upon her; But the tars come anyway.

Two heavy drops course slowly down her cheeks. They are quickly followed by others. She sits upright, trying desperately to disappear into the darkness where no one will notice her.

But Madame Sweet notices that she is weeping, and draws her husband's attention to the fact. He shrugs his shoulders disinterestedly.

Madame Stonefall chuckles.

MADAME STONEFALL

She's weeping for shame.

Bissett stretches his long legs , throws himself back and begins to whistle sarcastically.

Rule Britannia, Britannia rules the waves

The faces of his neighbors cloud. Bisset sees the discomfort he's creating and whistles the louder.

The sound goes on and on with Bisset continuing in fierce obstinacy, his vengeful and monotonous whistling forcing his fellow guests to listen to the tune.

And Miss Ball continues to weep, and sometimes a sob she can't restrain is heard in the darkness between two verses of the song.

EXT. NARROW BOAT. DAY.

The hideous strains of the whistling can still be heard as we pull away from the boat and...

FADE TO BLACK.