

Out Of Time: An Alternative Outcome to the Civil War

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From the Prologue

...General Sherman reached the outskirts of Savannah in early December 1864, with 60,000 troops. To capture Savannah he first had to resupply his army with food and clothes, both depleted by the long march from Atlanta. Union ships with all the supplies needed were anchored in nearby Ossabaw Sound. The ships could only reach the army via the Ogeechee River, and the only route was past Confederate Ft. McAllister. The fort had proved impregnable to attack from Union gunboats. Sherman's plan was to take the fort by land. As long as Ft. McAllister remained under Confederate control there would be no resupply. There were only about 200 rebel soldiers at the fort, and most of its big guns pointed toward the river. Against this pitiful contingent Sherman planned to send several thousand battle-tested soldiers. He did not foresee any problem...

Chapter 1

Monday, December 12, 1864 -- Union army camp near Savannah, Georgia

At 4 in the afternoon tall and uniform-dressed Major Walter Garrison strode briskly toward General William Tecumseh Sherman's tent. A much shorter black man clothed in rags and walking with a slight limp followed a few steps behind. As they approached the tent Sherman's adjutant, sitting just outside the flap, stood quickly and saluted.

"Sir?"

"Major Garrison. I am here to see General Sherman."

"He's expecting you, sir?"

"Yes, he received my message this morning."

"The Negro too, sir?"

"He'll wait outside the tent. We'll call for him shortly."

The adjutant turned to enter the tent but was met by Sherman coming out. "Major Garrison, come in. I did get your message. Come inside." In contrast to Garrison the general appeared almost slovenly, with shirt tail hanging over unpressed pants, red hair and beard unkempt. They had both come 300 miles from Atlanta in less than a month, mainly (since they were officers) on horseback. Sherman, for his part, had no one to impress. "What is so damn urgent, Major?"

"The Negro with me. My men caught him last night. Or I should say he caught us. He's a runaway from Fort McAllister. Came up to our lines about two miles down river from here. Quite flea bitten and half starving, but coherent for all that. We gave him some rations and clothes and did a general debriefing."

"Well, Major, we already know from deserters the fort's complement of men and guns. All their big cannon are pointed to the river. We're attacking from the land side. It's never been attacked that way before, so I don't care what's pointing at the river. I don't expect much in the way of resistance. They can't have more than 200 troops."

"Tomorrow is it, sir?"

“Yes. I’ve chosen General Hazen’s division for the task. He’ll throw up three of his four thousand men against their small number and we’ll surround them from three sides. Shouldn’t take long. Is that what this is about?”

“Yes. I think you should listen to what Moses has to say. That’s his name.”

“OK, but summarize it before we call him in.”

“They have fresh troops and some new kinds of weapons. If what he says is accurate, they may be from a foreign nation.”

“Bring him in.”

Moses entered the tent. He looked older than his 45 years, and carried himself with head tilted slightly forward. His already-gray hair was balding in front and there were several teeth missing. At the sight of Sherman the Negro’s eyes opened wide. Whether affected or not, his manner showed deference and pleasure. He had heard plenty about William Tecumseh Sherman and like most slaves about Savannah viewed the general as savior to his people.

“Moses, this here is General Sherman. He’s the boss of all the troops about Savannah. Don’t be afraid. Just tell him what you know about Fort McAllister. What you told us last night.”

Sherman made a point of shaking Moses’ hand, to put him at ease. “Here, Moses, sit down. You’re in safe territory now. No one will harm you. How’d you run away?”

“At night. They don’t lock us up. They figured we got no place to go, the swamps will kill us no how. But I knows this area and mos important I knows da Yanks is about and I know Mr. Linkum done freed us some time ago, so I just got to find me da Yankees. And damn if I didn’t find the mightiest. Sho is a pleasure, Mr. Sherman.”

Sherman was amused. “Well, you’re right on all accounts so far. So what’s going on at the fort? They moved in some fresh troops? That’s not surprising.”

“And some new fangled guns, too. Ain’t never seen them befo.”

“Tell us what you saw.”

“Well, the new troops they came inside a long iron boat also new to Moses. Real low in da water, no sails, just one smokestack. And a sekund boat right beside it was came full of wood boxes that me and da other slaves unloaded,

but we had help from da troops also. Took all day to bring out da boxes and into da fort. The boss man in charge from dat boat had yellow hair and a funny way o' talking, what they tell me is an axent, they say, and not from 'round these parts. My buddies say he over from urope, but I don't know. Don't really know where this urope be no how. Anyway, they came about a week ago. After we get all da boxes into da fort, they don't let us touch the weapons inside. Only da troops."

"But you've seen the weapons that were in the boxes?"

"Oh, yeh, I seen 'em alright. They been playin' with 'em all week."

Can you describe them for me?"

"Yessir. One of them is long and gots a barrel with holes in it. Looks like a rifle but fires real rapid like, many bullets with just one pull o' da trigger. Da man carrying' da gun, he always has another soldier behind, carrying more bullets in dese round cans. Soon as one can empty, the shooter gets another can. Funny damn gun, dat way."

"Sounds like a fancy repeater, Walter. Fancier than our Spencers, which can fire seven bullets from a tube magazine. But not with one pull of the trigger. Each shell has to be chambered and the rifle cocked before it'll fire."

"Right, sir," said Garrison. "We have a number of those among our troops, though most of the men still carry their muzzle loaders."

"Moses, you're sure it fired many bullets with only one pull of the trigger?" asked Sherman.

"Oh, yessir. The mens hollerin' about that feature."

"I understand. Go on."

"Another type is bigger and heavier, and sits on two legs. It takes four mens to operate, one to pull the trigger, one to hold a long belt with all da bullets what goes into the gun, another to put water in da barrel when it gets too hot, and yet another to go get stuff what needs gettin. Sometimes dey change places, but always four men w' dis gun. And it shoots so many bullets, ol' Moses can't count em. Coss I can't count no how but it sho shoots more bullets in a split sekund den I got fingers and toes."

"A repeater cannon," Sherman offered. "Why did they fire them? Were they testing them or was there some kind of battle?" Sherman wondered if one of the Union ships had approached the fort.

“Ain’t no battle, just whole lot o’ testing and whooping and hollerin. Never seen such happy soldiers. Da mens from da boat teachin the mens already at the fort how to use ‘em. Sure waste a lot of bullets.”

“You said there were three types. What is the other one?”

“The other type, it be like a small cannon, and also four mens with dis one. It shoots a shell that don’t make a lot of noise, just goes ‘whiff’ and then explodes in the distance with lots of green and yellow smoke. Ain’t never seen that befo, neither, but I only knows McAllister.”

“How many of each type of weapon would you say they have?”

“I don’t rightly know. We carried dem boxes all day, mighty heavy, but dey didn’t let us touch what was inside. Most of da men has one of them skinny rifles I described befo. And da kind with the two legs, I only seen this many (he held up both hands). The ones w’ da shells that make the yellow smoke, maybe the same as all my fingers, no more.”

“So they have some new guns. We can get past that. We have repeaters also, though not as fancy. How many new soldiers came from that boat, Moses?”

“Well, Moses don’t count, but I heard one o’ da officers say the fort had three hundred men after dey all came in.”

“So it’s less than a hundred new men, that’s for sure. How the hell did they get past the blockade?”

“Suh?” answered Moses, not fully understanding the question.

“Could have been at night, Sir,” offered Major Garrison. “He describes them as a long, low profile iron boats.”

“Possibly,” agreed Sherman.

“The new soldiers, they have an accent too?”

A couple of dem, yea, including da man what watched us unload da boxes. But the others just regular southern boys.”

“Is Major George Anderson still in charge?”

“Yessir. He’s there, but now he always have that yellow-hair foreign guy by his side. And dey been practicing mighty hard with their new guns, and teaching de troops dat was already there.”

“Well, that’s mighty helpful, Moses. Anything else you noticed different?”

“One mo’ thing.”

“What’s that?”

“Whenever they fire dem small cannons what make the green smoke, first they keep looking at the flag, to see which way da wind is blowing. Then everyone’s got to put on a heavy mask. Even dis here nigger had to put one over his face. Most uncomfortable. Dey say if you don’t, you could die from da smoke.”

“Describe the mask,” said Sherman matter-of-factly.

“It fits over the front of the face and has these two big eyes covered in glass. Hangin from the front is somethin’ round and made of metal. I sure ain’t ever seen anything like it befo. We looks like de devil with it on. And glad when we can take it off.”

“How many times did you have to put it on?”

“Three times, as I recall. Whenever they practiced with dem cannons I jus told you bout.”

“But not with the repeating guns?”

“No, never wi’ those guns.”

“So the masks were only for shooting the small cannons?”

“Yessir. Only after all da mens had da masks on. The foreigner, he kept yelling “ready gas masks” until everyone had it over his face. Some had trouble and needed help puttin it on.”

“How long did you wear it for?”

“Oh, a long time. Each time the sun went from here to here on da ground.” He held his hands apart about 2 feet to show the movement of the sun’s shadow.

“About an hour,” Sherman muttered to Garrison, who acknowledged the fact.

“What’d you smell when you took the mask off?”

“Like a funny smell, don’t rightly know how to describe it. Not like gun smoke, dat for sure. Made my eyes run a little, but it went away. Some o’ the men coughed, and one man emptied his stomach. But da smoke from da cannon was mostly gone by then”

“Did the smoke drift toward the fort?”

“Maybe a little bit, nothin’ you could see. But you could see smoke out where the shells landed. Big yellow and green clouds of smoke. Far off.”

“How far would you say, Moses?”

“Don’t rightly know. I’d say ‘bout as far as from here to da river bank.” Moses pointed to show he meant the river near Sherman’s camp.

“Um, that’s about three hundred yards, I’d guess,” said Sherman. “From the time these new men arrived until you escaped, how many days passed?”

“About four or five, I reckon.”

“OK, Moses, you’ve been very helpful. You can go now, but you will stay with my camp.”

“Don’t mind my aksing, Mr. Sherman, but is we gonna be free soon? My people been waitin a long time.”

“Yes, Moses, real soon. I promise.” Sherman ordered his aide to get Moses some new clothes and a labor position with other blacks in the camp. Then Moses bowed, said “Real nice to meet you, gen’rl” and left with the adjutant.

“Well, Major Garrison, “What do you make of it?”

“Sounds like they’re better defended than we thought from the white deserters. I am certainly not familiar with the type of rifle Moses described.”

“He didn’t describe any army issue rifle. Sounds more like a fancy repeater gun. As for the larger repeaters – the ones that sit on two legs – they sound like an improved version of the Gatling guns Grant is supposed to have up in Virginia. But I hear the Gatlings are very bulky and prone to overheating, and take half a regiment to operate. Not ready for widespread use, that’s for sure. And what about those masks? Our cannons make a lot of smoke but the men don’t get sick from smoke drifting back to their position. Do you think Moses was set free to scare us away, and his story is made up?”

“The thought did cross my mind, General. But his remarks are consistent from yesterday, and in any case, why would they choose a slave, who would naturally want us to attack the fort, not scare us away. And being uneducated, Moses could not be relied on to get the story straight if it was made up. And why would they ever invent an idea of masks? No, the masks must be real. And if real, they must have a real purpose. His story is too far fetched to think it’s invented just to scare us. They wouldn’t make up stuff like this and then trust it to a slave. I do think he’s a runaway and nothing is invented.”

“I agree. As you explain it, there is no reason to doubt what he says.”

“Are we still going to attack?”

“Hell yes, tomorrow afternoon. We’ll prevail on numbers and skill. Every new weapon is always trouble the first time around. They are too few, they jam or overheat, or the troops need more training to use them effectively. He described about ten of the Gatling type. I trust our snipers can take them out from a great distance. How many men have Spencers, if you know??

“Probably about a tenth of the men, I estimate. Not that many. Are you going to inform General Hazen of this new development?”

“Yes, I’m meeting with him this evening to go over final plans. If I know Bill Hazen, he’ll look upon this development as just another obstacle to overcome. We may be up against more firepower than we first thought, but I don’t see how our men can fail.”

The major left and Sherman sat alone at his small wooden table. He studied for the umpteenth time a map of the fort and surrounding area. Fort McAllister was built on the southern bank of the Ogeechee River, 12 miles south of Savannah, to prevent Union ships from reaching the city via Ossabaw Sound. In the past two years it had been attacked seven times by federal navy ships and repulsed each attack. McAllister was just about invulnerable from river bombardment because its sand-constructed walls absorbed any cannon balls without much damage, and could be quickly repaired in a day. In contrast, the once-thought-impregnable Fort Pulaski, with brick walls 7 feet thick, fell to the Union’s rifled cannon on just the second day of bombardment, April 11, 1862. Pulaski was still in Union hands.

Savannah itself remained unscathed by Union ships because they could not travel safely up the Savannah River. Once past Fort Pulaski U.S. Navy ships had to contend with close-in Fort Jackson (three miles from the city), plus batteries along the banks and massive cribs that literally blocked any movement past Elba Island. All of this made the Savannah River not an option to resupply

Sherman's troops. That task could only be accomplished on the Ogeechee River.

Sherman had to have Fort McAllister. And why not? Nothing had stopped him so far in his splendid march from Atlanta. Reaching Savannah's outskirts had been like a country walk for his army, with few casualties and no real impediments. Soldiers called him "Uncle Billy," an endearing title that suggested his army was like one big happy family.

Yet...for the first time since leaving Atlanta, doubt crept in. Was there something new here he didn't understand? Was he being cavalier about the repeaters Moses described? And what about the strange masks? Did they have a true military purpose? Sherman didn't honestly know, but this fleeting doubt only renewed determination to take the fort and get his army resupplied. Savannah was but the halfway point of a long southern campaign that began in Tennessee. He folded up the map with a single thought: From here I will march to Virginia, join up with Grant and help end this war once and for all.

* * *

That same evening, 12 miles away in Savannah, a comely 18-year-old girl lay in bed, not quite ready for sleep. Julia Goodfellow, daughter of prosperous parents (her father was now off fighting for the South), had only this year finished high school and taken position as a school teacher. A kerosene lamp on the bedside table allowed her to re-read a letter received that day, from a 20-year-old soldier. Though not yet engaged, she and the letter writer agreed to marry as soon as the war was over. Assuming, of course, as he not infrequently reminded her, that he survived.

December 9, 1864
Dearest Julia,

I hope this letter finds its way to you. Never know what with the mail these days and the blockade, though I am only a few miles away, in Fort McAllister. The colonel said we could write and they would find a way to get the mail to Savannah, but when, he couldn't say. We arrived here recently and I cannot divulge anything else, as I am sure you understand, but am well and we are itchin for a fight, but don't know if and when, etc. The afternoon we spent together Saturday last is forever etched in my heart and soul. I loved you before and even more since then, if such a thing is possible. I pray to god this war will soon be over and we can join and live our lives together as husband and wife, as we are surely meant to be. You are the most wonderful, remarkable woman – (not girl!) – in the world. With all my love,

Jimmy,

Julia held the letter to her bosom and sighed. Her yearning was deep and she fantasized another afternoon alone with Jimmy. She put the letter inside the pages of a book whose cover was only a plain brown wrapper, no title or identifying words. Inside, the first printed page stated in small print:

The Art of Making Love.
For the Modern Woman.
Prince Philippe Gusteau, Paris, 1862.
Translated from the French.

The author was a pseudonym and *The Art* was no translation at all, having been written and published in New York, then disseminated under the counter to enlightened females north and south. This was Julia's second reading. From the introduction:

In my affairs with Parisian women I have learned much about the fairer sex. That this information is repressed and hidden by our society is unfortunate, but these pages are meant to unfold the truths of all womanhood. And make no mistake. Women are the same in London and New York and Moscow, as in Paris. Native cultures only alter the outward appearances, the dress perhaps, or the manners shown in polite society. Cultures do not -- cannot -- alter the inner soul of the intelligent woman, what they want and desire, how they behave in the uninhibited confines of the marriage chamber.

...women want to be held and caressed, which they sometimes mistaken for "love" or "affection." No! It is the physical need to be held and caressed by a man that they want. Yes, it is true that the man must care for his woman in the personal sense, to be kind and gentle and considerate. But all the "love" and "affection" expressed in ways other than physical will not satisfy -- nor should it -- the modern woman.

The key is for the modern woman to understand that she has every much a right to physical satisfaction as her male companion, that she has the same physical needs as he does, and to work toward that mutual satisfaction. These pages will tell you how to accomplish that goal. For readers of my work outside Paris, I trust the translation will not stint on the details...

Chapter 2

July 1, 1918 – Kaiser’s Wilhelm’s Imperial Office, Berlin, Germany

Kaiser Wilhelm II sat in his ornate, high-backed chair as three important-looking men entered through a side door. The office was more like a small ballroom, 3000 square feet, with faux columns and gold edged moldings. He would have preferred meeting in his castle in Poczyna, but it was too far south. Decisions had to be made in Berlin, the Prussian capital and much closer to the North Sea fleet.

The office dated to his grandfather, Kaiser Wilhelm I. On its walls hung photos of both Kaisers, along with assorted European royalty related to them in some fashion. Absent from the picture gallery were two notables: his grandmother, England’s revered Queen Victoria, whose country he was trying to crush by any means possible; and distant cousin Albert, King of Belgium, whose country he had overrun in August, 1914.

As the men entered Wilhelm did not stand nor speak. They took seats at an immense table opposite the Kaiser and remained silent. Admiral Eduard von Capelle, Secretary of the Reichsmarineamt, was 63. He had replaced Admiral Tirpitz 2 years earlier, and was soon himself to be replaced. For now, though, he had the Kaiser’s confidence. Capelle wore the navy uniform and was the only one of the three under Wilhelm’s military command.

Sixty-one year old Kurt Krebs, a civilian and head of military research, was the scientific genius behind what was now a desperate proposal to win the war. He wore a stiff suit with a thin German tie and was the only one of the three to have uncombed hair, which befit the image of scientist. Johann Friedrich Goethe, Professor of History at the University of Berlin, was there because his knowledge of 19th century American history was crucial to the plan’s execution. He, too, wore a suit, possibly from the same rack as Krebs’s. But the two would not be confused; Goethe wore his hair combed back into a pony tail, an affectation of some university intelligentsia.

Wilhelm doodled with a pen in his right hand. His shortened left arm, a birth defect, stayed hidden under the table. Now 59, he had reigned since his father’s death in 1888. In the decades since there were great advances in photography, a great boon to his narcissism. Wilhelm was the most photographed man in Europe. Most images showed him wearing that funny spiked helmet, a useless appendage of the German military uniform. *All* photos showed him with his distinctive mustache; a long, flattened W. People joked that the pointy ends matched his pointy helmet.

Now dressed in full military uniform (absent the spiked helmet), Wilhelm appeared as in a reverie. He looked *through* the eyes of Capelle, then Krebs and Goethe. They stared back uncomfortably, protocol requiring that he initiate conversation. If you could read their minds you would find, beneath outward deference, a measured contempt for their Kaiser. Capelle, for his part, had urged the policy of unrestricted submarine warfare, which more than anything else brought the United States *into* the war. But to him it was really blunders on the battlefield, both tactical and strategic, that led to this unhappy summer. And Wilhelm II -- supreme military commander -- was responsible. The two civilians certainly thought so, as did most of the German high command. Rumors already swirled about his possible abdication for losing the war.

Goethe, the historian, laid the beginning of Germany's descent to 1890, when Wilhelm fired Chancellor Otto Von Bismarck. Though Bismarck was 75 at the time, and would have died before the Great War, his firing -- and subsequent events -- showed Wilhelm to be a military and political *ignoramus*. Goethe counted the mistakes: unrestricted submarine warfare (including sinking of the *Lusitania*); unwinnable and unnecessary battles (Jutland, Verdun); invading Russia before the fall of France (that wasn't the Schlieffen plan!); and perhaps worst of all, assumptions about the enemy based on wishful thinking. "Oh, the Americans can't even mobilize before 1919," Wilhelm famously said. Yet now the Yanks were in France, a million strong and eager to fight.

Not all was his fault. Much of the blame lay at the feet of Generals Erich Ludendorff and Paul von Hindenburg, the former a fanatic who seemed to be systematically destroying Germany with futile land offensives. A March 1918 offensive had been temporarily successful and for that Wilhelm awarded each the Merit of Honor. This medal only deluded them further and led to more deaths in April, May and June. A *million* young German men killed or wounded since 1914, the country starving and all but bankrupt, and no end in sight -- except with capitulation. Bismarck had ruled with common sense and political savvy, backed by military strength. Wilhelm ruled by gut feelings and military assessments not consistent with reality. Under a different leader -- a *Bismarckian* Kaiser -- Germany would not now be in such dire circumstances. Dire they were, but the bumbling Wilhelm was still supreme commander and the men before him could not proceed without his approval.

Wilhelm finally broke his reverie. "Thank you for coming. Let's not flatter ourselves, gentlemen. We are losing the war. It is the Jews on our left and now the Americans on our right. What started so gloriously is ending in farce. FARCE! We had the French and British licked, kaput! Somme. Verdun. Gallipoli. Jutland. Even Russia gave in, and we have now concentrated all our troops at the Western Front. But then the Americans showed up, with their Jewish money and guns. We cannot beat them *and* the French *and* the British.

WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO SAY?" he screamed. This was his way and they did not take it personally.

"We must think a new way, try a new tactic, Herr Kaiser," spoke Krebs. This "new way" had been hashed out in a series of secret meetings and memos over the previous two months. First the idea was fantasy, then it became a mere possibility, then a concrete plan. With each military setback at the front Wilhelm became more and more receptive until now, now he wanted assurance it *could* work. Now he was desperate; any plan was acceptable, even one totally beyond his comprehension.

"Yes, yes, that's why you are here. To make a final decision. I want to decide today if we are to implement the plan. Reverse Time, you call it. You have all studied the secret documents. Let's have it out. You first, Krebs," he commanded.

"There is an excellent chance the time shift will work sir. Excellent. We have sent men and sizable objects back in time, and received indirect confirmation of their arrival, though the time they arrived was not always what we intended. We can send submarines as well, I am certain. What we don't know is just when they will enter the past. We can't be precise and once the transfer is done it cannot be undone. And we may never be certain that the desired changes will take place."

"Ah yes," said the Kaiser, "so I've heard many times since first learning of your marvelous time machine." For all his faults – including instigating the Great War (notwithstanding the Sarajevo assassination, really just a local dispute between Austria-Hungary and Serbia) and an egomaniacal lust for empire – Wilhelm could think logically when necessary. "If we are successful, why won't we know that right away? Why won't the Americans evaporate from the Western Front so that we can fight England and France alone and FINALLY CONQUER? That seems an obvious conclusion if YOUR machine works." Then, turning his glance toward Goethe, "if YOUR history is correct."

"I wish it were so," said Krebs. "But we are trying to *alter* history. If we are successful, and America does not enter this war against us, perhaps something else happens, something that is unforeseen and unforeseeable."

"Like what?" the Kaiser snapped.

"One could hypothesize an infinite variety of events, your Excellency. Perhaps the Confederates don't become a major power, and lose a later war to the northern states. Perhaps England, sensing a threat from a divided North America in the late 19th century, builds a bigger and stronger army and navy,

and easily defeats our troops well before America declares war in 1917. Perhaps Russia, spurred by mid-19th century events in North America, has its revolution well before 1917, and defeats us on the Eastern front. These are just some obvious possibilities. There are many more we can't even think of. As much as I believe in our project, and want it to succeed, Herr Kaiser, I must acknowledge that one can't alter history and predict how it will play out 50 years later."

"Sir, if I may speak," said Goethe. At 56 Goethe was the youngest and most widely respected of the three experts, in part because he was recruited late to the project and had not been part of the war effort. Goethe also won respect for his ancestry; he was a direct descendent of literary giant Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832). Johann Friedrich Goethe's specialty of 19th century American history was an arcane subject for a *German* professor, but offered some advantages. For one, it guaranteed very little academic competition. And now this; he never dreamed his specialty would one day put him before the Kaiser to help save Germany.

"Krebs is correct on all points. However, my study of the American Civil War does suggest that an independent Southern Confederacy will only grow stronger with time, and eventually *will* throw off the yoke of slavery and build a strong military. If there is still to be a great war – and given the belligerence of the nations we are fighting, there surely will be even if America is divided – I do think the American Confederacy will become our ally. That is, out of our conflict. Other than that, I have to agree, we don't know how it will ultimately play out."

"I want them ON OUR SIDE, not just "out of the conflict." Will they invade the United States to abort the American Expeditionary Force? Even better, will the Confederacy send troops over here, to help us win this GODDAMN WAR!"

"Possibly, Herr Kaiser, but if they just work to prevent the United States from getting involved, won't that be enough to secure our victory? What is the assessment of Ludendorff at the front?"

"General Ludendorff IS AN IDIOT! Everything is good, one more assault, one more division, one more this, one more that. Yes, Ludendorff is confident we could prevail without the Americans, but he's been confident of other battles that cost us dearly and lost us ground. Hindenburg is more sensible. Without the American intervention, he believes the war might already be over. America's entry last year, even before their first boat sailed to Europe, re-energized the French and British. Just the anticipation of America's help gave them new life, a new will to fight on. So yes, my own assessment is that we

would win this war if America had remained neutral. Why else would I go along with your crazy scheme? Capelle, is the navy prepared?"

"I have the volunteers and the submarines are ready, Herr Kaiser. It was not difficult. Three hundred of our best men, including naval architects, gunnery experts and of course submariners. Two dozen or so actually speak very good English."

"They know they won't return?"

"They have been told so."

"You assure me they are volunteers?"

"To a man." Capelle paused for a moment to consider: How strange. Wilhelm has never shown any concern for the hundreds of thousands young Germans killed at the front, or in iron casket submarines, and now he expresses concern about volunteers who agree on a no-return mission. Perhaps to him time travel is worse than being riddled with bullets.

"We have explained it is a submarine convoy," Capelle continued, "to North America to secure aid that will allow us to win the war, that the boats will not be returning, that the men will find a primitive country across the ocean. Some know of New York and its wealth, but the American South is a blank and they accept that it is bereft of modern conveniences. We do not think the men would believe us if we talked of time travel. We have said, 'men, do not volunteer if you are married or have a family you cannot leave. The risk of dying on this mission is very low, and the risk of succeeding to save Germany is very high. Just do not expect to return to Germany. You will be emigrating to America, to start a new life there.' That is a paraphrase of what we told them. And when I listed the sub commanders, that helped decide the issue. The volunteer captains are well respected, and excited for this project. To a man they would sacrifice all for a greater Germany. They and a small circle of officers know the true plan, but for the others our message was honest but vague. Three hundred volunteers. We turned many away, and took only the most qualified. They are looking for adventure and a new life in America."

"Good, good. Goethe, tell me more about this stupid American Civil War. Why did it last so long?"

"Excellent question, Herr Kaiser. The Yankee – that is, the northern – generals were mostly incompetent. One of them, a General George McClellan, was fired twice by President Lincoln for incompetence. The southern army was much better led, but it was considerably smaller. Consider our war with Belgium in

August 1914. Without our brilliant generals, it might have dragged on for much longer than a few weeks, given the resistance put up by the Belgians. But the outcome was inevitable given our superior numbers and greater armaments and industry, and we quickly dispatched the resisters. That should have been the case with the northern states in 1861. The north had twice the manpower to draw from, and several times the industrial might compared to the southern rebels. That war should have been over in months, not years. Only when Yankee generals named Grant and Sherman took charge in 1864 did the North ultimately prevail. But up until then, there was always hope for the South – because the northern leaders were so inept.”

“So when would you have us intervene?”

“Another excellent question,” Herr Kaiser. “We should not intervene too early, because a quick Confederate victory could lead to an early return of northern hostility. I think the middle of the war is best, when the north is weary of fighting, and ready to settle, to capitulate. I believe the ideal time is what the Americans call the battle of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, in July 1863. It is considered the pivotal battle of the war, and the southern army was repulsed. General Lee and his men had to retreat back to Virginia, and it was all downhill for the South from then on. If the southern army under Lee had won that battle, the outcome would likely have been northern capitulation sooner or later.”

“If I may interrupt,” interrupted Krebs. “We will be lucky to achieve a point within a year or two of our desired arrival. The machinery is not precise, as I have said. It would be best to aim for 1861 or 1862, to give us some leeway. That way, if Goethe is right, then our men could wait until the right time to intervene.”

“No, No, that’s not good,” said Capelle. “My men are soldiers, marines. They cannot sit for a year or two on our boats doing nothing. That could lead to lethargy, weakness, even mutiny. They must engage upon arrival, or shortly thereafter. No earlier than spring of 1863. Also, our subs will degrade over time, without modern shipyards to restore and repair them. I estimate the useful life of each sub, without ability to make major repairs, a year at most. We will go out on diesel fuel, but the supply won’t last more than 6 months. The subs can be retrofitted to run on coal, and we are carrying equipment for that purpose. Coal should be plentiful in North America, but even then the machinery will degrade over time. And for obvious reasons, we won’t have access to northern foundries to quickly build new boilers. No, our ships must engage on arrival to North America, or soon afterwards. I thought I made that clear in my previous memos.”

The Kaiser smiled at his experts. “So we have a machine that may send men and subs back in time, but not the precise time we desire. The men and subs

must engage the enemy shortly after arrival, or see their effectiveness degraded. Our time travel party may influence the result of a distant foreign war, but the change in the outcome may or may not be favorable for our own 20th century conflict. And I am supposed to be encouraged?”

“As I have proposed before, sir,” said Krebs, “it would be far easier to send a small group of men back in time to assassinate U.S. president Abraham Lincoln, who is uniquely responsible for the American Civil War. Or rather, to kill him before he becomes president. That way we could aim for any time in the 1850s.” Krebs also considered mentioning that the Kaiser himself go back in time, so he could make different decisions and prevent war in the first place. But Krebs’ idea died aborning. The Kaiser didn’t really think the war was a mistake, and going back, say, to 1914, might change a battle strategy or two, but not the fatal decision to declare war on France and Russia. Worse, such a proposal might be taken by Wilhelm as an invitation to commit suicide (suppose the time travel failed?), lead to Krebs immediate dismissal and destroy all hope for the Civil War mission. As much as he wanted to, Krebs would not suggest the Kaiser go back in time.

“I have already addressed that scenario in one of my memos,” objected Goethe. “Lincoln was the catalyst, like Serbia’s Gavrilo Princip, but the seeds of America’s civil war were present for decades before Lincoln became president, and would have sprouted without him. So I respectfully disagree with Herr Krebs. Assassinating a single leader would not change the deep-seated animosity between north and south. It must be an outright southern victory to be effective, to prove to the northern aggressors not to interfere with the Confederacy. And also to prove to the Confederacy that they must change from an agrarian economy to an industrial one, in order to maintain a strong army and navy. At least that is my considered opinion.”

“And you still plan to go on this suicide mission?” The Kaiser chuckled.

“Yes, Herr Kaiser,” Goethe replied, with the enthusiasm of an explorer to whom risks are secondary to discovery. “I am a widower, and my son died at the front.” The Kaiser nodded his head, as if in appreciation of the sacrifice. “This will be the opportunity of a lifetime. Admiral Capelle will appoint me an officer in the navy, answerable only to the boat captains. They will need me to direct the itinerary, which will depend on exactly when we arrive to North America. The war changed daily, and landing at the wrong port at the wrong time could jeopardize our mission. I will never feel so needed as on this mission. I am honored to go.”

“This is good. Your desires and Germany’s needs mesh beautifully. Good.” The Kaiser pointed to Krebs and Capelle: “And you two are staying?”

“Yes,” said Capelle. “We still have a war to run, a navy still to manage.”

“And as much as I would love to be part of the experiment,” answered Krebs, “I must supervise the time transfer. And continue my work to make it more precise.”

“Tell me Capelle: If your men are at sea, how will they know what year, what month it is? Radio communication is of recent origin, I know.”

“Yes, the ships will be able to communicate with each other, but there will be no radio on any land mass. This of course has the advantage that no one will ever be able to intercept our signals. After the subs go through our time portal they will sail past one of Germany’s north sea islands. About 5 miles offshore the *Deutschland* will send out a small life boat with two officers and a group of rowers, so it will not look like a vessel from the 20th century. Once they land the men will buy a few supplies, and through conversation ascertain the day, month and year. We have some old German marks for this purpose. And, since our subs will be well offshore, they should not arouse suspicion if we choose our sea lanes carefully. We of course have detailed charts of the area from the mid 19th century.”

“Which island, if you know?”

“Probably Borkum. That looks most promising.”

“Good. And just how many subs are we sending back in time?” asked the Kaiser.

“We can safely put eight vessels through,” said Krebs. “Two are fighting subs, torpedo-equipped U-151s, and six are of the *Deutschland* class, U-boats converted to carry cargo. When empty of cargo they can be quickly converted back to fighter subs, so we’ll always have the capacity to fire torpedoes. But it’s most important to transport enough guns and ammunition to get the job done. It will take about ½ hour for each sub to pass through the time portal, and they all must do so in a narrow window so they can re-enter on the same day. Eight is a safe number, with some leeway.”

“I should add,” chimed in Capelle, “that each cargo boat can each carry up to 800 tons of guns, fuel and torpedoes, plus a crew of 40. That’s almost 5000 tons of weapons. Three hundred tons of underwater missiles and the rest guns, artillery, shells and bullets. A fair amount for any army.”

“Good, excellent planning. And the subs should have no trouble getting past the British blockade,” added Wilhelm. Capelle was about to reply but Wilhelm

quickly corrected himself. “Of, but of course. I forgot. They will be in the North Sea in the mid 19th century. No English blockade. One forgets these little trivialities. You have the list?”

“Yes, Herr Kaiser.” Capelle reached into a folder on his lap and removed a single sheet of paper. He leaned way over the immense desk so Wilhelm could reach it with his good arm. The Kaiser scanned the typed page.

Project Reverse Time - Candidates

| Class | Type | Name | Captain |
|--------------|-------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| U-151 | Fighter | <i>Heidelberg</i> | Lurs Hurschel |
| U-152 | Fighter | <i>Dusseldorf</i> | Karl Steuben |
| U-153 | Cargo | <i>Bismarck</i> | <i>Erich Eckelmann</i> |
| U-154 | Cargo | <i>Hindenburg</i> | <i>Otto Whimer</i> |
| U-155 | Cargo | <i>Deutschland</i> | Gerhard Schnitzler |
| U-156 | Cargo | <i>Munich</i> | Paul Konig |
| U-157 | Cargo | <i>Wilhelm</i> | Karl Meusel |
| U-158 | Cargo | <i>Danzig</i> | Ferdinand Studdt |

Capelle gave Wilhelm a minute to peruse the sheet, then spoke: “Yes, two subs are torpedo ready, with capacity of 18 torpedoes each. The other six have been converted into cargo subs, though when emptied they can be quickly converted back to fighter subs. Each boat is equipped with two 15 centimeter deck guns, which alone can heavily damage a nineteenth century wooden boat. As you know, the *Deutschland* has already made the trip to North America twice, and she will be the lead ship. There will be two co-captains, Gerhard Schnitzler of the *Deutschland* and Lurs Hurschel of the *Heidelberg*. They have of course volunteered.”

“Yes, I see. Schnitzler and Hurschel, good men,” said Wilhelm. “I will be sorry to lose them from our era.”

“They will save Germany, in the end. They feel so and are compelled to go. And we have enough redundancy that even if we lose two or three subs to

weather or an unexpected error in the time warp, there will still be plenty of firepower for the southern armies. With our advanced armaments, even if only one or two fighting subs and two cargo subs make it to North America, they will be a force untouchable by any mid-19th century navy.”

“Do not be so smug,” retorted the Kaiser. “I remember well all the promises our generals gave about Belgium and France. We cannot predict these things. I understand they had armored ships and submarines in the 1860s.”

“Yes, but primitive by 20th century standards. Of course you are right, Herr Kaiser, we should not be complacent about this endeavor. Which is why we have built in redundancy, and taken only the best of our men to meet this challenge.”

“But why no battleship? I would think that could do the job all by itself.” Capelle turned toward Krebs, acknowledging that the scientist should answer.

“We strongly considered sending one or even two battleships,” said Krebs. “They could certainly do much damage to the cities of Washington and New York. But the mass of a battleship is six times that of a submarine, and would require a much larger portal than we have set for the submarines. And the larger the portal, the more risk there is of time warp failure. Also, according to Professor Goethe’s analysis, a battleship may not be the best weapon for our purpose.”

“Yes,” agreed Goethe, “a battleship bombardment of Washington or New York would kill a lot of civilians, and perhaps energize the northern population to fight harder. Also, even if Lincoln was killed or he surrendered, it would not mean a defeat of the northern armies. They could rebuild over a few years and launch another war. During that time the north could also learn to duplicate the very weapons we plan to provide the Confederates. And as the Admiral has pointed out, without modern shipyards and access to foundries, any ship we send will degrade and become useless in a year or two. So a battleship might be very effective in the short term, but to secure a lasting victory, the south must defeat the northern armies. Instead of General Lee surrendering to General Grant in Virginia, it must be the other way around. Ultimately, despite what we expect of our submarines, this war has to be fought and won on the ground, with guns we can bring to the South. We have thought this through very carefully.”

“Then you truly are ready.”

“Yes,” replied all three, in near unison. “With your permission,” said Krebs, “our transit will begin three days hence, July 4, 1918.”

“Then it shall be. You have my authority. See to it.”

Only Goethe appreciated the irony of the launch date: American Independence Day. Without another word the three men stood, bowed before the Kaiser and left the room.

North Sea, off Borkum Island, date unknown

The eight subs held position off the coast of Borkum Island, led by Captain Schnitzler’s *Deutschland* and its crew of 35. Through telegraphy Schnitzler had instructed all subs to halt progress and remain at least 1/2 kilometer behind the sub in front. At 7 am a small boat left *Deutschland* for the island. Now, at noon, it was returning. Schnitzler could see steam coming from the small stack in the boat’s middle section. No more need for rowers on the return trip.

“The men are coming back from Borkum. I see them now” Schnitzler informed the civilian standing beside him “Herr Goethe, do not ask any questions until the returning officers are sequestered in the tower. I have also instructed them not to speak until we are in private.”

“I completely understand, Herr Captain.”

The dinghy, with its 8 crew and 2 officers pulled up beside the sub and was promptly hoisted and secured to the deck. On deck the officers saluted their captain and followed him and Goethe to the tower, while the crew went below to their quarters. The small room in the sub’s tower was barely big enough for the four men and a chart table. As soon as the door shut Goethe asked: “Well? You can’t keep us in suspense any longer.”

Captain Erhard, leader of the island expedition, spoke up. “It is 1864. November 12th. We confirmed it with three villagers, and secured a newspaper from the mainland. It is a week old,” and he handed it to the professor. The masthead date was November 5, 1864.

“Then we are successful! We are back in time.” Goethe’s elation quickly turned to a frown. “But we are almost too late. Almost too late,” he muttered.

“Will this date change our destination?” Schnitzler asked.

“Most definitely. Most definitely. Let me think on it for an hour and look at my maps. We should proceed at once to cross the ocean, but where we will land, right now I am not certain. The American Civil War is almost over. Gettysburg is way past and the South is all but defeated.”