

CHAPTER 93

September 23, 1937

Scotland

By the dim light of a torch, that night the order was given.

“Climb, damn ye! For once yer long fancy nails serve some kind of *purpose*, Lady Chatterley. You’re being chased by Spanish Fascists who want to ravage yer knickers girl! Climb for yer life! There’s a whole company of filthy, boar-bristle Jerries out there, ravaging Alleymen with black agendas! Cycle that manhood. Twelve o’clock low. *Load*. ten rounds on each target in quick succession. ‘Phereson ye bawjaws, *light*. Where’s my damn spotlight, ye mangy three-legged stag? Good. Ready, aim, *fire!*”

McPhereson shone a spotlight on one of the floating, rectangular, painted-grey wood target buoys in the firth. They were at fifty-yard intervals starting at seventy-five yards. Bea loaded her stripper clips and began to fire rapidly. The smooth bolt slid back and forth seamlessly, mindlessly, as each shell ejected with a *ping*. Her heart pounded like a bass drum, making it difficult to aim as the rifle moved to her heart’s every beat; she shot between them.

Kirkaldy fired his shotgun in the air, yelling: “A hit. Second target—acquire. Load. Faster. Red Cossacks are coming. A bit o’ quim for Musso if he gets to ye. Crawl and concentrate. If ye can’t think steady while under fire you’ll be dead as a bedpost. Shoot for your life, Private Lassie. Shoot, shoot to bloody *kill!*”

Last round ping-ejected, she heaved out: “Enough.”

“Shut yur geggie ye wee tumshie, and fire on command. Lomond, more ammo over here ye lazy, never-be-lance-jack Johnny Turk!” Kirkaldy gestured wildly.

“Oh, what the hell,” she said.

“Fire on the run! Move your sweet tender arse, Private Lassie. Roll, roll, roll. Ye maneuver like a pigtailed schoolgirl ‘cause ye *ar-r-r-re* a fockin’ schoolgirl. Snug that hard butt to yur soft teat—thirty rounds a minute, girl. Oh-h-h, a bit crabbit am I?—*ye damned right I am*. Don’t you dare turn yer backside on me. Stand at attention. About, turn. I said about turn. Pretend there’s an officer present. Yes, me. Chest out. I want to hear each backbone click into place. Snap that God-forsaken bray-ze-e-er in two if ye have to.”

“M-madness,” heaved Bea, gasping. *I’m not strong or brave or good, I’m tired, I’m lonely*. She fell to knees, scraping her forehead on the rifle’s iron sights.

“Oh? *Madness* is it? You liliputian Moaning Minnie. Stop yer incessant weepin’, always weepin’ like a wee hungry dog. Are ye goin’ t’cry in the field of action? If a Japan-man snuggles up to ye? There’s no room fer *that*. Tough he said ye were, manly he said ye were. Fockin’ dog-eating dogshite. We three jocks should be out getting piss drunk mafficking with the lads right about now. But no-o-o, I and the chosen lads here have to train a spoiled city girlie on how to be ah Seaforth—*ah SEAFORTH!* A titted tattyboggie’s more like it! That’s what ahm ordered to do, so I’ll do it. Up and *over*, girl.”