

Characters

Noor: Three actors will play Noor, showing Noor at different ages. One as a very young girl, another as a teenager, and finally one as an adult. Noor is a very peaceful person, partly down to her Sufi upbringing. She is half Indian, half American. She is a Muslim. She is the protagonist of the play. She is sometimes known as Noor, Nora, Madeleine, Jeanne-Marie Renier and Nurse.

Vilayat: He is Noor's younger brother. Vilayat, like Noor is a peaceful person. He, throughout the play, often takes on the role of the narrator, talking directly to the audience.

Vera: Vera is a feisty character. She is part of MI6. She is an intelligence officer for the British, in charge of the British operatives working in France. Vera develops a close relationship with Noor, during Noor's training.

Ameena: She is Noor's mother. She is a mystic, believing in Sufism. When her husband dies, Ameena is grief stricken, leaving Noor to raise the children.

Khair: She is Noor's youngest sibling and her only sister.

Hidayat: He is Noor's youngest brother.

Child 1, 2 and 3 (fictional): They listen to Noor's reading from Twenty Jataka Tales.

Neighbour (fictional): He is Noor's neighbour in France. He tells the family about Operation Ariel, which takes refugees from occupied France to England. He decides to stay in France. His granddaughter supposedly dies in the Luftwaffe attack on one of the evacuee ships.

Captain (fictional): The captain of the boat which takes the family from occupied France to England.

Story Actors (fictional): They re-enact the story from Twenty Jataka Tales by mime.

Buckmaster: Buckmaster is the colonel in charge of the SOE for France. Throughout the play, he becomes increasingly tense as the SOE in France is evidently failing.

Vera: F Section's intelligence officer and Buckmaster's assistant. She had a hands-on personal relationship with many of the operatives working in France.

SOE Instructor 1, 2, 3, and 4: The instructors who are training Noor to be a wireless operator in occupied territory.

Man 1, 2 and 3: British intelligence officers, pretending to be German whilst interrogating Noor for her mock interrogation.

Conducting Officer: The female officer, overseeing Noor and Diana and Cicely in their final stages before leaving for France. She sends a letter to Vera when she becomes concerned with Noor's wellbeing.

Diana: One of the SOE couriers who is living with Noor in the lead up to her departure for France. She sends a letter to Vera when she becomes concerned with Noor's wellbeing. She is one of the women who died at Natzweiler.

Cicely: One of the SOE couriers who is living with Noor in the lead up to her departure for France. She sends a letter to Vera when she becomes concerned with Noor's wellbeing.

Operations Officer: An expert on radio transmission who advises Buckmaster and Vera of Noor's infiltration.

Prosper: The leader of the Prosper circuit. He becomes increasingly tense as his circuit is evidently failing.

Cinema: Prosper circuit's sub-circuit organiser. He is also classed as the clown. It is Cinema's sister, who betrays Noor to the Gestapo.

Archambaud: Prosper's personal wireless operator. He is arrested soon after Prosper. Noor meets him again in Avenue Foch and they attempt to escape. She learns that he has been cooperating with Hans Kieffer.

Marcel: One of the Prosper network's wireless operators. He goes back to London on leave, with the news of Prosper's arrest.

Antoine: An agent for the Prosper network. He supposedly has relations with Cinema's sister; however, he shows a certain amount of affection, instead, towards Noor.

Denise: One of the Prosper circuit couriers. She is one of the women who died at Natzweiler.

Simone: One of the Prosper circuit couriers. She is one of the women who died at Natzweiler.

Jacqueline: One of the Prosper circuit couriers.

Sonia: Alias Tania. From the French resistance and part of the SOE as a courier. She transmits a message when Noor is captured; however, Colonel Buckmaster chooses to ignore her message as he does not recognise her as one of the British operatives.

Gestapo Officers/Guards: They sometimes patrol, and other times interact with Noor. They occur throughout the last half of the play.

Yolande: The prisoner who communicated with Noor in Pforzheim Prison, bringing the truth about Noor's final execution to light.

PROLOGUE

A spotlight stage left. Vera stands in the spotlight. She is holding a letter.

VERA: *(reading)* 15th April 1946. Dear Vilayat Inayat Khan, it is with great sadness that I write to you. I expect that word of your sister, Noor, has been greatly anticipated within your family since our last correspondence. I understand you do not fully know the nature of, or even the whereabouts, of Noor's work. It is with pride that I tell you that Noor worked as a Secret Operations Executive, helping us and our allies to win the war. Noor was a wireless radio operator, reporting some of the most vital information back to London from occupied France. Noor's work was extremely dangerous, but ever so necessary. Without her, and our other SOE agents, it is unlikely that we would have seen victory. As my last letter to you indicated, we lost touch with Noor four months after her arrival in France. We now, with enough witnesses giving testimony, believe that Noor was imprisoned at 84 Avenue Foch in October. She was then moved to a concentration camp in Germany, called Natzweiler. It is with sadness that I must tell you that Noor was given the lethal injection and her body was then cremated. We believe that Noor was not alone. Eyewitnesses claim that she was in the company of the friends that she had made in her journey of being an SOE – Diana Rowden, Andrée Borell and Vera Lee. I feel this loss personally. I cannot begin to imagine how you and your family must feel. I offer my help in any way that you might see fit. For now, I will leave you with my deepest condolences. Yours Sincerely, Vera Atkins.

A spotlight stage right comes up. Vilayat is standing in the spotlight.

VILAYAT: There were a few discrepancies in Vera's letter to me. When Noor was arrested, the Gestapo had ransacked her temporary home. They had found her transmitter and her journals where she kept notes of the messages that she was sending back to London. They used their experts to study her fist – I am told that means her distinctive typing style, such as how heavy her fingers were when she transmitted. With this information, they stole her identity, tapping messages back to London. And London believed it was her. They thought she was safe. When really, she was in the hands of the enemy. They say that the agents who were murdered at Natzweiler were cremated before being fully dead. One of them, so it is said, called out for help whilst aflame. I suppose Vera felt that this was too horrific to write in the death letter to Noor's next of kin. But the biggest discrepancy in Vera's letter, wasn't the overlooking of sensitive information, but a mistaken identity. My sister, Noor Inayat Khan did not die at Natzweiler.

ACT ONE, SCENE ONE

Hazrat Inayat Khan, The Light of Your Soul plays. Noor is 9 and Vilayat is 7. They are looking off stage right. Ameena, their mother, is reading.

Young Noor: Mama, can we watch today?

Ameena: You cannot watch, Noor.

Young Vilayat: Please, Mama?

Ameena: When Papa makes music, we do not watch it. We hear it and we feel it. Sit with me.

She kneels and taps the floor either side of her. The children sit.

Ameena: Close your eyes.

They listen, their eyes all closed.

Ameena: Do you feel it?

Young Vilayat: I feel the floor shaking.

Ameena: Being able to touch and being able to feel is a very different experience, Vilayat. What about you, Noor?

Young Noor: I feel it.

Ameena: Where do you feel it?

Young Noor: I feel it in my ears. Where do you feel it, Mama?

Ameena: Here *(she strokes Noor's fingers)*, here *(she strokes Noor's feet)*, here *(she strokes Noor's arm)* and here *(she places her hand against Noor's chest)*.

Young Noor: How do you know so much?

Ameena: Papa says that we do not know about music. We *are* the music. As we listen and feel the music, we come closer to God.

Young Vilayat: Is God closer to me now because I am listening to Papa play?

Ameena: Yes, Vilayat. Your soul is closer to God.

Young Noor: *(gasps)* Look, they're dancing!

Ameena: They are whirling.

Young Noor: It's beautiful.

Ameena stands and pulls her two children up onto their feet. They begin whirling.

Young Vilayat: How does God know that this is for him?

Ameena: Because he is God. He knows that we are devoting ourselves to him.

Young Noor: How else can we make our souls closer to God?

Ameena: By being a good Muslim. Live in peace with yourself and with others. Sometimes, you will be told that violence is the only option. We must remember that violence is never the option.

Young Noor: What if someone is going to hurt me?

Ameena: If someone hurts you, then they are hurting their relationship with God. But listen to me, both of you, so long as Papa and I are here, nobody will ever hurt you.

Ameena begins whirling again, showing the children how to do it.

SCENE TWO

Noor is now 13 and Vilayat, 11. They are sitting around the table eating dinner with their younger siblings, Hidayat and Khair-un-Nissa.

Hidayat: Noor, where is Mama?

Teenage Noor: With God.

Hidayat: She has been with God more than with us these last few days.

Teenage Noor: And so she should be. So we all should be. It is important for us all to be with God right now.

Hidayat: But why is she not eating with us?

Teenage Noor: Mama is in Iddah. She misses Papa. But when she spends time with God, she finds Papa again. God helps her to be less sad.

Hidayat: I miss Papa, but I also miss Mama. It is like she has gone, too.

Khair: Where is Papa?

Teenage Noor: Remember we told you last week. He is waiting for Allah to take him to Janna.

Young Vilayat: That is why she can only be with Papa when she is with God.

Khair: I miss him.

Teenage Noor: Vilayat is right. Be with God, and then you can be with Papa. No more now. Eat your food before it gets cold. We must eat and feel strong to help support Mama.

Young Vilayat: Did you practise your English today Khair?

Khair: In England, they have which witch and wich, or deer and dear. It is a silly language. In France, we know exactly what each word means. They spell tear paper and when their eyes tear up the same way. It is a silly language in England.

Teenage Noor: In England, nobody knows how to speak our language. One day, the world will forget how to speak French entirely. Everyone will speak English. So, we must learn how to speak it. It is very important for us to learn.

Hidayat: Why do we speak French, if everyone will forget it?

Teenage Noor: *(contemplates momentarily)* Because we are in France. Believe me Hidayat, in the future, people will need us to speak English. They won't care that we are fluent in French.

Enter Ameena. She is dressed in black and looks distressed. The children are silent, watching their mother as she joins them at the table.

Teenage Noor: Mama?

Ameena looks concerned by what Noor is about to ask

Teenage Noor: Would you like some Dal? Hidayat and I went to the market today. We bought new spices.

Ameena: That would be nice.

Teenage Noor: Chapati?

Ameena: Please.

Teenage Noor: Khair, tell Mama about what you learnt today about the English language.

Khair: In England they have the same words for lots...

Adult Vilayat enters. The children around the table freeze.

Vilayat: Noor grew up fast, raising me and my brother and sister. At Thirteen, she had become our surrogate mother. Our own mother, grief stricken, after our father died from poor health. When our father was alive, we spent a lot of time touring the world, as he spread his Sufi teaching. After he died, we became stationary in Paris. When Noor was old enough, she studied Child Psychology at The Sorbonne. She then practised music at the Paris Conservatory, composing for the harp and piano. She was a natural harpist. Alike, she was a successful writer. In 1939, her children's book, *Twenty Jataka Tales*, was published. It taught of nonviolent resolutions to problems.

*Adult Noor enters and sits on a stool. The children from the table unfreeze and sit on the floor around adult Noor. They are no longer Noor, Vilayat, Hidayat and Khair, but unidentified French children. She begins to read *The Fairy and the Hare from Twenty Jataka Tales*. Enter Story Actors. They re-enact the story physically.*

Noor: *(reading)* A young hare once lived in a small forest between a mountain, a village, and a river. My children, many hares run through the heather and the moss, but none as sweet as he. Three friends he had, a Jackal, a water-weasel, and a monkey. After the long day's toil, searching for food, they came together at evening, all four, to talk and think. The handsome hare spoke to his three companions and taught them many things. And they listened

to him and learned to love all the creatures of the woods, and they were very happy. "My friends," said the hare one day, "let us not eat tomorrow. The food we find in the day, we will give to any poor creature we meet." This they all agreed to. And the next day, as every day, they started out at dawn in search of food. The Jackal found in a hut, in the village, a piece of meat and a jar of curdled milk with a rope tied to each handle. Three times he cried aloud: "Whose is this meat? Whose is this curdled milk?" But the hut was empty, and hearing no answer, he put the piece of meat in his mouth, and the rope of the jar around his neck, and away he fled to the forest. Laying them at his side, he thought: "What a good Jackal I am! Tomorrow I shall eat what I have found if no one comes this way." And what did little water-weasel find on his rounds? A fisherman had caught some sparkling golden fish, and after hiding them under the sand, he returned to the river. But the water-weasel found the hiding-place, and after taking the fish out of the sand, he called three times: "Whose are these golden fish?" But the fisherman heard only the rippling of the river and none answered his call! So, he took the fish into the forest to his little home and thought: "What a good water-weasel I am! These fish I shall not eat today, but perhaps another day." Meanwhile, monkey-friend had climbed the mountain, and finding some ripe mangoes, he carried them down into the woods and put them under a tree, and he thought: "What a good monkey I am!" But the hare lay in the grass in the woods, and his beautiful eyes were moist with sadness. "What can I offer if any poor creature should pass by the way?" he thought. "I cannot offer grass, and I have neither rice nor nuts to give." But suddenly he leaped with joy. "If someone comes this way," he thought, "I shall give him myself to eat." Now, in the sweet little wood lived a fairy with butterfly wings, and long hair of moonlight-rays. Her name was Sakka. She knew everything that took place in the wood. She knew if a small ant had stolen from another ant. She knew the thoughts of all the little creatures, even of the poor little flowers, trampled over in the grass. And she knew that day that the four friends in the wood were not eating, and that all food that they might find was to be given to any poor creature they might meet. And so, Sakka changed herself into an old beggar man, bent over, walking with a stick. She went first to the Jackal and said: "I have walked for days and weeks and have had nothing to eat. I have no strength to search for food! Pray give me something, O Jackal!" "Take this piece of meat, and this jar of curdled milk," said the Jackal. "I stole it from a hut in the village, but it is all I have to give." "I will see about it later," said the beggar, and she went on through the shady trees. Then Sakka met the water-weasel and asked: "What have you to give to me, little one?" "Take these fish, O beggar, and rest awhile beneath this tree," answered the water-weasel. "Another time," the beggar replied, and passed on through the woods. A little farther Sakka met the monkey and said: "Give me your fruits, I pray. I am poor and starved and weary." "Take all these mangoes," said the monkey. "I plucked them all for you." "Some other time," replied the beggar, and did not stay. Then Sakka met the hare and said: "Sweet one of the mossy woods, tell me, where can I find food? I am lost within the forest and far away from home." "I will give you myself to eat," replied the hare. "Gather some wood and make a fire; I will jump into the flames and you shall then have the flesh of a little hare." Sakka caused magic flames to rise from some logs of wood, and full of joy the hare jumped into the glowing fire. But the flames were cool as water and did not burn his skin. "Why is it," said he to Sakka, "I do not feel the flames? The sparks are as fresh as the dew of the dawn." Sakka then

changed herself into her fairy form again and spoke to the hare in a voice sweeter than any voice he had heard. "Dear one," she said, "I am the fairy Sakka. This fire is not real, it is only a test. The kindness of your heart, little hare, shall be known throughout the world for ages to come." So, saying Sakka struck the mountain with her wand, and with the essence which gushed forth, she drew the picture of the hare on the orb of the moon. Next day the hare met his friends again, and all the creatures of the woods gathered round them. And the hare told them of all that had happened to him, and they rejoiced. And all lived happy every after.

Exit Story Actors

Noor: What do we think the story is trying to tell us?

Child 1: That the Hare is silly.

Noor: And why do you say that?

Child 1: He could have been all burnt.

Noor: He could have been burnt, yes, but he sacrificed himself to help others and he was rewarded.

Child 2: But he could have found food and been safe.

Noor: He had no food to offer and, so, he offered himself.

Child 3: I think that he is brave, Miss Khan.

Noor: Very good. The hare is brave and generous. He offers himself up for the good of others. We can all learn something from his kindness.

The children and Noor freeze.

Vilayat: A few weeks after this, on the 3rd September 1939, France and Britain declared war against Germany. We were living in Paris at the time. Throughout May 1940, German troops defeated our ally forces. Within six weeks, Germany had occupied France.

The children exit. Enter men dressed as The Gestapo. They patrol the stage. Ameena and adult Khair enter and join Vilayat's side with Noor.

Vilayat: Our neighbour had told us that his granddaughter was evacuated via boat, from occupied France to England.

Enter Neighbour holding a cigarette

Neighbour: It's called Operation Ariel (*he looks around for The Gestapo, nervous, his voice becoming a whisper*). The boats carry British troops but, also, refugees.

Noor: Come with us.

Neighbour: I can't. My darling Marion is buried in the Père Lachaise. She is waiting for me there.

Vilayat: We pulled Noor, reluctantly, from our kind neighbour's side. And we fled to Bordeaux to try and board the final ship evacuating refugees from occupied France to England in 1940.

Neighbour becomes the Captain of the ship

Captain: It is full. I'm sorry.

Noor: Please, Sir. It is just the four of us.

Vilayat: Hidayat had chosen to stay behind with his wife.

Captain: We have to save space for British troops. No more refugees. I'm sorry, I can't help you.

Ameena: Sir, my late husband was the Sufi leader, Hazrat Inayat Khan. He was a direct descendant of Tipu Sultan – the Tiger of Mysore. My son is a prince; my daughters – princesses. Please, give us entry.

Captain: (*hesitant – looking around him. He sighs*) Very well, but it will be cramped.

Vilayat: We climbed on board the very last ship.

The four of them climb on the boat and sit cramped together.

Vilayat: and sat between other French men and women, relieved to be squashed against perfect strangers. As the ship pulled into Falmouth's docks on the 22nd June 1940, Noor said

Noor: We will need some heavy clothes. I was not prepared for the English summer.

Vilayat: We laughed.

They laugh

Vilayat: Our neighbour, who had told us of Operation Ariel, wrote to us a few weeks after our arrival into England. He said that a few days before we had left France, the Luftwaffe had attacked and sunk an evacuating ship. His granddaughter had been on board.

The Captain becomes the Neighbour again

Neighbour: She had promised to send me a letter upon her arrival into England

Vilayat: he wrote.

Neighbour: I have heard nothing from her. I can only hope that her letter has been lost.

Vilayat: He went on to write

Neighbour: I am glad to hear of your safe arrival into England. You escaped just in time. The Gestapo have now invaded every part of Paris. They are arresting anyone who is showing any form of resistance. We are locked into our homes by nine o'clock each night for curfew. But worst of all

Vilayat: he wrote

Neighbour: They have rationed tobacco!

SCENE THREE

Noor and Vilayat are sitting at the table listening to Winston Churchill's radio broadcast from 14th July 1940. Churchill is talking about Britain's relationship with France and the German occupation.

Noor: I want to help.

Vilayat does not respond. He continues to listen to the radio, turning up the volume. After a while Noor tries again.

Noor: I need to do something towards the effort to bring peace.

Vilayat: You should stay with Mama.

Noor: I can help bring peace quicker. Is that not what everyone wants? Peace.

Vilayat: Dear sister, not everyone.

Noor: If I help, I am bringing India closer to Britain in the war effort. I will be doing justice to the friendship between two countries and bringing peace all at once, Vilayat. I must join the war against the Nazis.

Vilayat: Ghandi says that nonviolence is a weapon of the strong. How can you be involved in the war, but without violence?

On the radio, it has reached the moment that Churchill says the following "bearing ourselves humbly before God. But conscious that we serve an unfolding purpose".

Noor: I must do something, but I don't want to kill anyone.

Vilayat: If we are going to join the war, we have to involve ourselves in the most dangerous positions, which would mean no killing.

Noor: (*nods*) The most dangerous positions.

Vilayat: Dangerous, because we will not hold a gun in our hands. We have only God and our peace to protect us.

Noor freezes. Vilayat speaks to the audience now.

Vilayat: I regularly mull over this conversation with guilt. Had I not said what I did, maybe what happened next might have been different.

ACT TWO, SCENE ONE

Buckmaster is sitting at a table with paperwork in front of him. Enter Vera.

Vera: Sir, we are meeting with Noor Inayat Khan, in relation to Prosper's request for another operative to join the Prosper Network in France. She has adopted the British name, Nora Baker.

Buckmaster: Very good. Bring her in.

Vera: Yes Sir.

Vera exits and re-enters with Noor.

Vera: This is Nora, Sir.

Buckmaster: Yes, yes. Welcome Nora, sit down, please.

Noor: Thank you, Sir.

Buckmaster: Nora, it says here that you're considered a princess in India.

Noor: That is correct. My father was a descendant of Tipu Sultan.

Buckmaster: Ah! A great warrior. I suppose we can expect a lot from you.

Vera: Nora, tell us a bit about your work for Women's Auxiliary Air Force.

Noor: When I came to England from France in 1940, I wanted to help bring some peace to the world, so I joined the WAAFs. I worked mostly with packing parachutes and maintenance of the aircraft. I also dealt with wireless communication through Morse Code.

Vera: So, you know Morse Code?

Noor: Yes, Miss Atkins.

Buckmaster: Very good. Go on.

Noor: I found the work very boring, so I applied to be relieved from my duties. I would like to contribute to the war effort in another way, if possible.

Buckmaster: Yes, I have your application for commission to be relieved here. Tell me, Miss Baker, how are you at languages?

Noor: Well, I am fluent in English.

Buckmaster: Yes, yes. But what about other languages?

Noor: I spent most of my childhood in Paris, so I am fluent in French, too.

Buckmaster: Excellent. And I suppose you know Paris quite well, having lived there so long.

Noor: I suppose you could say that, yes.

Buckmaster: Miss Baker, let us tell you a little bit about the job. Miss Atkins?

Vera: We are the Secret Operations Executive, commonly referred to as SOE or Churchill's Secret Army. We are a top-secret operation. We are looking for a new wireless operator for the Prosper network in France. The role would involve correspondence between our operatives in France and us, here, in London. The role that you are going for would be in charge of transmitting messages via Morse Code over a radio transmitter. You would be our eyes and our ears in France. You would arrange welcome committees to greet new operatives into France. You would arrange for resistance groups in France to be armed. You would play a part in organising sabotage missions. You would collect information on German troop movement. You would notify us on German weapon sites. You would be in constant threat of German detection, and consequent arrest. It is a highly dangerous role. Should you be interested in this role, you will receive vigorous training in multiple disciplines.

Buckmaster: It is a lot to ask of anybody, but we value your work for us so far and we believe that you will make an excellent candidate for the role. Few people in Britain speak perfect French, as you do.

Vera: It is worth noting, that should you be successful in your training, you are free to withdraw yourself from the operation, up until the moment that you board your plane to leave for France. You do not need to make a decision today. You can contact us in the next few days, should you be interested.

Noor: Thank you for this opportunity and thank you for giving me a chance to decide, but my mind is made up. I would like to go for the role.

Buckmaster: I like this one.

Vera: Brilliant. You will be attending special training in Buckinghamshire. It is a special course, aimed at preparing you for being a wireless operator in occupied territory. It is not for the faint of heart, Nora Baker. You will be contacted in a few days, to arrange your move. Thank you for your contribution to the war effort.

Noor: Thank you for giving me the opportunity to do something more.

Buckmaster: I suggest you spend some time with your family for now, Miss Baker. We will be in touch.

Noor: Thank you, Sir.

Vera escorts Noor offstage and re-enters

Buckmaster: A woman, as a wireless operator. It is dangerous business for a man, let alone a woman. Women have been couriers, but never have we had a woman as a wireless operator, Miss Atkins.

Vera: She could be our first.

Buckmaster: She could be our best.

SCENE TWO

Several men and women are sitting at desks. In front of them is a large chalkboard. On it is a drawing of a rat. Noor is sitting among the men and women at a desk, furiously taking notes. SOE Instructor 1 stands before them at the chalkboard.

SOE Instructor 1: Explosive Rats. What are they? Well, quite simply, rats that explode. The rat is skinned and filled with P.E. *(he gestures to the parts of the rat, as he explains)* and a Standard Number Six Primer is inserted within the P.E. We initiate the explosion by means of a short length of safety fuse with a number twenty-seven detonator crimped on one end. On the other end, is a copper tube igniter. The rat is left amongst the coal beside a boiler and the flames initiate the safety fuse. Alternatively, the rat is thrown onto the fire and BOOM! Sabotage, complete. Moving on, this is a...

Noor: Sir, I'm sorry. Could you repeat that, or write it down for me, please?

SOE Instructor 1: Do you want me to slow the rest of the class down and work only at your pace, Miss Baker?

Noor: No, I –

SOE Instructor 1: The slower I talk, the more people in France die at the hands of the Nazis.

Noor: I just –

SOE Instructor 1: Anything else, Princess?

Noor: I just want to make sure I fully understand, Sir.

SOE Instructor 1: Do you also require a cup of tea and cuddly toy?

The other men and women laugh. Noor is quiet.

SOE Instructor 1: As I was saying. This is a Mk II Sleeve Pistol. As you can see, it is short in length. It is a silent murder weapon, firing 0.32-inch ammunition. It is a single shot weapon designed for carriage in the sleeve. *(Demonstrating)* The gun can simply be slipped from the sleeve into the hand. It is really for contact with the target, but its range can reach up to around three yards. Excellent to avoid combat. It is a stealthy little weapon. Silent and the empty case is stored within the gun. Pull the trigger and bang, they're dead. You merely slide the gun back up your sleeve and you can be on your way. The life expectancy of a radio operator is six weeks. Without weapons, such as this, it would be a lot less. Miss Baker, how about a demonstration.

Noor: No thank you.

SOE Instructor 1: Miss Baker, may I remind you, that use of weapons is a mandatory part of your training. Without this training, your life expectancy in occupied territory will be decreased by ninety-five percent. Up you get.

She reluctantly gets up but hesitates to take the gun.

SOE Instructor 1: Take the weapon

Noor: I don't want to. I'm training to be a wireless operator, not a murderer, Sir.

SOE Instructor 1 begins writing.

SOE Instructor 1: *(as he is writing)* Report on Nora Baker: she is nervous around weapons; she has an unstable personality; she is too gentle for the role and her feminine softness fails her. She is no good.

Enter SOE Instructor 2. Exit SOE Instructor 1.

SOE Instructor 2: Fitness. We need to be fit, but not too fit! We need to blend in. We need to look like regular French citizens. The life expectancy of a radio operator is six weeks. Without fitness it would be a lot less. Miss Baker, fifty jumping jacks.

Noor begins the jumping jacks, clumsily. SOE Instructor 2 begins to write.

SOE Instructor 2: *(reading as he is writing)* Report on Nora Baker: she is extremely clumsy; she is unsuitable for jumping; physically, she is ill equipped for the role - her face is too striking, meaning she will not be able to simply merge in. She is no good.

Enter SOE Instructor 3. Exit SOE Instructor 2.

SOE Instructor 3: Interrogation. Interrogation is inevitable if you are caught. Knowing how to hold on to sensitive information is crucial to the role. The life expectancy of a radio operator is six weeks. If you are bad in an interrogation, your life expectancy will be a lot less. *(He walks in front of Noor)* Why are you in France?

Noor: I am in England, Sir.

SOE Instructor 3: This is roleplay, Nora. *(Aggressively)* Why are you in France?

Noor: I am French.

SOE Instructor 3: So why are you speaking in English, if you are French?

Noor: *(unsure)* You asked me the question in English, Sir.

SOE Instructor 3: You always respond in French! You are French. Speak in French. *(Continues the interrogation)* What is your real name?

Noor: Erm, we haven't been given our fake names yet, Sir.

SOE Instructor 3 sighs

Noor: *(Floundering)* Gloria.

SOE Instructor 3: Gloria? We're in bloody France!

SOE Instructor 3 begins writing.

SOE Instructor 3: *(reads as he writes)* Report on Nora Baker: she cannot lie; she gives away far too much information when questioned; she is too emotional; she has expressed that she would feel uncomfortable being "two faced" – as far as I am aware, the ultimate purpose of the role is deception. She is no good.

Exit SOE Instructor 3. Enter SOE Instructor Four with a suitcase.

SOE Instructor 4: Transmitting. The main thing that you need to know is how to be a wireless operator. You need to know Morse code and you need to be able to transmit it. *(He opens the suitcase)* This is a B Mark ii radio. It weighs in at roughly 33 pounds. A good aerial can marvellously improve a wireless set. There are several ways to conceal an aerial; for example, one may tie it along a washing line or conceal it within a window sash cord. To be a good wireless operator you must possess two qualities. One, you must have an eye for where you can hide your aerial. Two, you must be an excellent typist. Miss Baker, I believe you are competent with Morse Code?

Noor: Yes, Sir.

SOE Instructor 4: Transmit a message.

She begins to transmit.

SOE Instructor 4: Report on Nora Baker: she is an excellent typist; her experience as a harpist owes her to be a natural signaller; her chilblains provide her with a heavy typing fist; she is eager to give a heavy sacrifice and is, therefore, extremely committed to the role. She is very good.

SCENE THREE

The tables are now gone. Noor, and the men and women who have been training are standing in a group. Vera is standing before them with the SOE Instructors. They are holding several suitcases. With the instructors, stands a man.

Vera: Welcome to Beulieu. We recognise that your training has been cut short, but our need for a new wireless operator for the Prosper Circuit in France is crucial. This is your final training session where you will undertake a mock mission. From this mission, and your final reports, we will decide who will be our wireless operator. This man, here, is an agent. You must find a place to transmit a message to us, without your designated agent detecting you. He will attempt to track your movements. You must not be caught. Here are your transmitters. Off you go.

They each take their suitcase. All exit. Noor re-enters stage right in new clothing. It is clear she is in New Forest National Park, as the sound of birds can be heard. She begins to transmit. Enter Vera with the instructor's stage left.

Vera: Excellent, we are getting a message from Nora Baker. She is transmitting to us undetected. We are good to go.

After a pause, as Noor continues to transmit, a group of men enter the stage. They suddenly grab Noor and drag her offstage. Blackout.

SCENE FOUR

A spotlight comes up and Noor is sat, tied in a chair. The men surround her speaking in German accents.

Man 1: You work for the British?

Noor: What is this?

Man 1: I says, you work for the British?

Noor: Erg – no, no. Well, yes. I am a – a nurse. A children’s nurse.

Man 2: You are a children’s nurse?

Noor: Yes, I work with sick children.

Man 1: So, you do not work for the British?

Noor: I work for the British hospital, in London. So, yes, I work for the British.

Man 3: Do you work for MI6?

Noor: No, no!

Man 1: You are lying!

Noor: I’m not lying! Who are you? What is this?

Man 3: I tell you what, little nurse. You tell us who you really are and what you are doing, and we will tell you who we are.

Noor: I told you already. I promise I am just a nurse.

Man 2: If you say you are a nurse again, I will shoot you (*reveal a gun from his sleeve*).

Man 3: Who are you really? (*grabs Noor aggressively*)

Noor: Please. (*she begins to cry*)

Man 1: She’s just a little girl. Why would MI6 want a little crying baby?

Man 2: You’re a baby Nora Baker.

Noor: How do you know my name?

Man 3: We also know you’re part of MI6.

Noor: How do you know that?

Man 1: A confession!

Noor: No! I – I told you what my profession is. I am a nurse!

Man 2: I said I will shoot you!

Enter Vera.

Vera: That's enough gentlemen. Untie her. I'm sorry about that, Noor. You're training has finished. We will be in touch in a few days regarding whether you have been successful.

Man 2: *(now in an English accent)* Sorry about the gun Miss. It wasn't loaded if it helps.

Man 3: Yes, sorry about that Miss.

The men finish untying her and exit. Noor is left sitting on the chair. She is in shock.

SCENE FIVE

Buckmaster and Vera are sitting at the table. They are holding papers and are mid-conversation.

Buckmaster: Very good. Who is next?

Vera: The final report on Nora Baker sir.

Buckmaster: Ah yes, finally. Go ahead, Miss Atkins.

Vera: It says *(reading)* Nora Baker is not over-burdened with brains and it is very doubtful whether she is really suited to the work in the field.

Buckmaster: That is disgraceful! Preposterous! We don't want them over-burdened with brains! She speaks perfect French; she is an excellent radio operator; and she knows Paris inside out. You only need to see her map-reading reports to know she is the perfect candidate. What are your thoughts, Miss Atkins?

Vera: She is not so strong in interrogation, and she does show signs of fear around weapons. However, I believe her commitment is what makes her stronger than the rest of the candidates. She is extremely courageous, trustworthy and reliable. I think she's an excellent choice.

Buckmaster: Prosper's request for a new operative was listed as urgent. We don't have time to be going back and forth between who is the best candidate. We need to make the decision. Transport her to the country house tonight. We want her to begin practising her new identity as soon as possible. Begin developing her alias, please, Miss Atkins.

Vera: We already have it, Sir. We thought her gentle personality would fit a job that involved caring for others. She basically did the work for us in her mock interrogation. From now on, she is Jeanne-Marie Renier, a children's nurse.

Buckmaster: Yes, that's perfect.

Vera: Her callsign will be Nurse. Her SOE codename is Madeleine.

Buckmaster: Very good Miss Atkins. You may tell her the good news.

ACT THREE, SCENE ONE

Noor is sitting at the table, her head in her hands. Cicely and Diana are sitting with her. Her female conducting officer is observing the group.

Diana: What kind of shoes will you wear as Cecile?

Cicely: She is a teacher. Something sensible, but pretty. What will you wear?

Diana: Juliette would wear heavy boots. Something sturdy

Cicely: Nora, what will you wear when you are Jeanne-Marie?

She is distant and unresponsive.

Diana: Nora?

Cicely: Nora, what is the matter?

Noor: Nothing.

Cicely: Have you changed your mind about being in France?

Noor: No.

Cicely: Then what is wrong, sweet Nora?

Noor: I am quite well, thank you.

Diana: We are worried about you Nora. You have been quiet and agitated the last few days.

Noor: I am fine, ladies. Excuse me.

She exits.

Diana: *(writing and reading)* Dear Miss Atkins

Cicely: *(writing and reading)* Dear Miss Atkins

Conducting Officer: *(writing and reading)* Dear Miss Atkins

Diana: I am concerned for Miss Nora Baker's wellbeing.

Cicely: She has been out of sorts lately.

Conducting Officer: As her conducting officer, I fear she is

Diana: changing her mind about going to France.

Cicely: It is as though a

Conducting Officer: gloom has descended upon her.

Diana: I do not believe

Cicely: I do not believe

Conducting Officer: I do not believe

All: That she should be sent to France

Diana: In her current state of mind.

Cicely: Please consider this letter

Conducting Officer: As concern for her wellbeing.

Cicely: I do hope her own welfare will be put first.

All: Kind regards.

SCENE TWO

Noor and Vilayat are on stage.

Vilayat: My darling sister, I did not expect to see you.

Noor: I wanted to see you before...

Vilayat: Before what? What is this work you are doing?

Noor: It is secret.

Vilayat: I understand, but I am your brother. Who will I tell?

Noor: It is secret.

Vilayat: Noor, what is the matter? You are acting out of character.

Noor: How is Mama?

Vilayat: She is well. I went to see her. She misses you. She says you are going to Africa.

Noor: That is right.

Vilayat: Where will you really be going?

Noor: To Africa, Vilayat. Do not make me say it again, please. I hate to lie.

Vilayat: Very well. Can I get you a drink? Some food? You look so tired. Maybe you should have a lie down whilst you are here?

Noor: No.

Vilayat: Some tea then.

He goes to make tea.

Noor: What is life like as a mine sweeper, brother?

Vilayat: Terrifying. I cannot think of a scarier job. At least I do not have to hold a gun, though.

He brings her the tea. Noor is fiddling with something.

Vilayat: What is that you're holding?

Noor: It is my lipstick.

Vilayat: You do not wear lipstick, Noor.

Noor: Look at this.

She unscrews the lipstick.

Vilayat: What is that?

Noor: A pill.

Vilayat: What kind of pill?

Noor: If I am captured, I take it.

Vilayat: And what does it do to you?

She is silent.

Vilayat: Noor, what does it do to you?

She turns away from him.

Vilayat: You cannot take that, Noor!

Noor: It is important, Vilayat.

Vilayat: No! That is not your choice. That is Allah's choice. Only he decides when. Not you. You cannot do this mission, whatever it is, Noor! You must withdraw yourself. Tell them you cannot go. You cannot do it!

Noor: Tell Mama that I love her. I will see you all soon, Vilayat.

Vilayat: Please, Noor.

Noor: I must go.

Vilayat: Must go away or must leave me now?

Noor: Both.

Vilayat: No, please stay. Finish your tea. We will discuss something else.

Noor: My dear brother. I love you. I will see you soon.

SCENE THREE

Noor and Vera are sitting close together at a table.

Vera: Thank you for coming all the way to London to meet me.

Noor: Thank you for inviting me, Miss Atkins.

Vera: Yes, well, I thought it might be nice for you to come here. Get away from Buckinghamshire for a while.

Noor: That is very considerate of you. Will you be doing the same for the rest of the ladies?

Vera: (*ignoring*) I do love it here. Manetta's has always been my favourite place to meet with people and have a drink. It is rather lavish, is it not?

Noor: Yes, it is quite lovely.

Vera: These red seats, they are just splendid.

Noor: They are very nice, yes.

Vera: I do love to shop in Mayfair.

Noor: It is a beautiful area of London.

Vera: I don't suppose you have ever been to London before?

Noor: Once when I was young.

Vera: It is a lovely city. Very expensive.

Noor: Miss Atkins. I am very happy to be here with you and I am so grateful to have been invited. But, is there a reason why I am here?

Vera: (*awkward*) Well, yes, actually Nora, there is. I will ask you this without any judgement of your answer. Please, speak freely with me. Woman to woman.

Noor: Of course, Miss Atkins, I have always been honest with you.

Vera: Are you happy with what you are doing?

Noor: I don't understand what you're asking.

Vera: Are you happy doing the mission? Do you believe that you are doing the right thing? Are you, for example, afraid? Have you changed your mind about being a wireless operator?

Noor: Of course, I am happy! I am nervous, yes, but I have not changed my mind about my duty, Miss Atkins. It is an honour to have been given such an important job.

Vera: I have received several letters recently, from the other ladies that you are residing with, as well as your conducting officer. They are concerned about your wellbeing.

Noor: Excuse me?

Vera: They say that a gloom has descended upon you.

Noor: Miss Atkins, I can assure you, I am quite well. The only gloom that is upon me is the sadness at knowing these letters have been sent to you and worried you. I promise, I am very well.

Vera takes Noor's hand.

Vera: Please, Nora, do not be upset. They were just concerned about you. I must admit, you do not seem to me to be your normal happy, lovely self. At SOE, we understand the pressure that we are putting upon you. Therefore, we want you to know, that if you have changed your mind, or are having second thoughts about your work for us, then you are free to leave. There will be zero judgement. Your bravery is unspeakable, and will never be doubted, even if you must resign from your role.

Noor: You cannot change my mind, Miss Atkins. I must go to France. I must join the Prosper network. It is my duty.

Vera: Very well, then we will not stop you.

Noor: *(hesitant)* It is only...

Vera: Only what, Nora?

Noor: I am concerned for my family.

Vera: I see.

Noor: Since my Papa died, I have really been the mother. My own Mama has relied on me. I feel terribly upset at the thought of leaving her. I am also overcome with this feeling of guilt. Telling her that I would be in Africa. It felt immoral. I am a cruel, cruel woman, to lie to my Mama. I am worried that if something happens to me, my family will crumble. She will not be able to handle any more grief. Miss Atkins, please, if something happens to me. If, say, you lose contact with me, or you think that I have been captured, please do not tell her. The bad-news-letter should only be sent to her if it is without a doubt that I have, in fact, died. It is a lot to ask, I know. But please, I will not ask for anything else.

Vera: Asking someone to put their life in danger is a lot to ask. What you have asked for is nothing. Of course, I promise, the letter shall only be sent if we have concrete evidence.

Noor: Thank you.

Vera: Now, are you sure I cannot get you anything stronger than a cup of tea?

SCENE FOUR

Noor, Diana and Cicely are sitting on stage. Cicely and Diana are nervous. Before them stand Vera and Hugh. They are all, but Noor, smoking. There is a board with a map of France – on it are red markings. There is also a table with a black telephone and a green seccraphone.

Hugh: Good evening. I am Hugh Verity, the head of the Lysander Operation. Now JOEs, a Lysander is a short-winged monoplane. We use these, because they are light enough to land on small fields. For example, our operatives working in France, might have made contacts with farmers who are allowing us to use their farm to land our plane. It is crucial, therefore, that we use this type of aircraft. You will be flying, by Lysander, with the June Moon. We

have news from the Met Office, that the weather is fair, with a low risk of mist. Excellent for flying. This is the field that you will be landing in (*shows photograph*). This field is just 3 kilometres north of northwest Angers. As you can see, it is surrounded by woods and there is a river towards the southern end. You will be able to follow your map by the natural light of the moon. Your eyes will soon adjust. And don't worry, you may use such light to locate a flask of whisky stowed in front of your seat. (*Gesturing towards the map*) Here and here you may see red markings. These are high risk areas for flak. We want to try our best not to get caught up here. That would be a sticky wicket. Tonight, we have released the BBC message 'romeo embrasse juliette'. Your welcome committee on the ground have received it and will soon be ready and waiting. Goodluck JOEs. Miss Atkins?

Vera: I am just going to inspect each of you in turn, and we will have a quick debrief.

Vera gestures for Diana to follow her. They walk to the other side of the stage and mime talking. Vera checks over Diana's clothes, leaving Cicely, Hugh and Noor.

Hugh: So, I guess it's Madeleine from now on?

Noor: Madeleine to you, Jeanne-Marie – children's nurse – to the Nazis.

Hugh: Very good, Madeleine. And you, what is your codename?

Cicely: I'm Alice.

Hugh: And your alias?

Cicely: Cecile Marguerite Legrand, the teacher.

Vera walks back over with Diana and takes Cicely this time. They begin miming again.

Hugh: What about you? What's your new identity.

Diana: You'll know me as Paulette. I will be a chaplain called Juliette Therese Rondeau.

Hugh: Very good. But, you *are* Juliette. You are not pretending to be your aliases. You are them. Don't forget it.

Hugh busies himself looking at the map.

Diana: (*quietly to Noor*) Are you nervous?

Noor: I am elated.

Diana: Are you not worried?

Noor: I am just happy that I am finally going to be able to help bring some peace.

Diana: I am nervous.

Noor: You will be fine – no – you will be fantastic, sweet lady.

Diana: I wish I could be as brave as you.

Noor: You are here; therefore, you are brave. A brave little hare.

Vera returns with Cicely.

Vera: Nora?

She takes Noor to the other side of the stage. The others mime talking.

Noor: That is a lovely brooch you are wearing, Miss Atkins. You are so clever. You always make sure you wear something pretty. Birds make lovely brooches.

Vera: *(she smiles and puts her hand over the brooch)* Thank you, Nora. Now, when you get to Angers, you will be met by Fabian. He is F Section's new air movement officer. He is the best. You are in safe hands. Your journey to Paris has been coordinated. Remember. Straight to Paris, ok Noor?

Noor: Yes, of course. Straight to Paris.

Vera: Now who are you?

Noor: I am Jeanne-Marie Renier.

Vera: What do you do for work?

Noor: I am a nurse on the children's ward.

Vera: Very good.

Noor: You seem tense, Miss Atkins. Are you worried about my capability?

Vera: Of course not. I have every faith in you Nora. You are the least of my worries.

Noor: You can speak freely with me. I do not want you to be upset or worried.

Vera: You are too kind. I appreciate your concern. I am just worried for the other ladies. They are just so English in their manner.

Noor: They will do perfectly.

Vera: Yes, yes, you are probably right. Now, let me look at you. Do you have all of your French labels?

Vera begins inspecting Noor's clothes.

Vera: Excellent. You are looking completely French. Here.

Vera presents a box and gives it to Noor.

Noor: Thank you, Miss Atkins, but I do not smoke.

Vera: *(she laughs)* No, Nora, they are props. French cigarettes. Now, one final touch.

She removes her brooch and pins it onto Noor's clothes.

Vera: You look perfect.

Noor: Miss Atkins, I couldn't possibly take...

Vera: Not another word. It is yours.

Noor: Thank you.

Vera: It's ten o'clock. Your ride will be here.

Vera hugs Noor tightly.

Vera: You will be brilliant. Don't forget: one regular suitcase with your clothes, and the other with your transmitter. Remember, you are a wonderful typist. So strong, so brave.

Noor: Thank you for everything, Miss Atkins. It has been a pleasure knowing you.

Vera: I will see you again, Nora. Very soon. Off you go now.

Noor re-joins the others. Noor pulls her pistol from her sleeve and places it on the table without anyone noticing. They all exit. Vera is left on stage. She stands for a moment watching after them. She walks over to the table and notices the pistol. She picks it up and examines it.

Vera: Oh, Nora.

She begins to quietly sob. She exits.

ACT FOUR, SCENE ONE

Enter Jacqueline, Denise, Simone, Noor, Sonia, Prosper, Cinema, Archambaud, Antoine and Marcel. On the other side of the stage, enter Vera and Buckmaster.

Vera: We haven't heard a peep.

Buckmaster: I am sure she is just fine.

Vera: She should have been in contact with us by now. Not once have I seen the call sign 'Nurse' written up.

Buckmaster: She will be finding her feet and a safe place to transmit. She is a smart girl. Until then, we wait, Miss Atkins.

Lights dim on Buckmaster and Vera, as they brighten over the group.

Prosper: Welcome everyone to the Ecole Nationale d'Agriculture. The staff have very kindly let us meet here. Welcome Madeleine, our newest member of the group.

They all look at Noor. She does a small wave.

Prosper: You will be knowing me as Prosper. I believe your transmitter broke upon arrival?

Noor: Yes, I haven't been in contact with London yet.

Prosper: This is Archambaud. He is my principle wireless operator within the network.

Archambaud: Nice to meet you Miss Madeleine *(he shakes her hand)*.

Prosper: Archambaud, please get a message back to London tonight, notifying them of Madeleine's safe arrival.

Archambaud: Yes, we'll do it right away.

Prosper: I believe you have met Cinema here *(Cinema does a small curtsey)*. He is the sub-circuit organiser. You'll soon realise that he also thinks he's a part-time clown. This is Antoine *(Antoine nods and smiles)*, one of our operatives. This is Marcel *(Marcel salutes)*, another of our wireless operators. Here we have Jacqueline, Denise and Simone. These ladies are our couriers. And this is Tania *(Sonia waves)*, part of the French resistance and now working for us as a courier.

Noor: Nice to meet you all.

Prosper: Now, down to matters. The Gestapo are aware of our presence in Paris. There have been further arrests within the group. We need to be more vigilant. Don't draw unnecessary attention to yourself. Remember, we are innocent French citizens. Don't show nerves. Don't stay in the same place for too long. Stay on the move.

Cinema: Sorry Prosper. *(He gestures towards Antoine with his thumb. Loud whispering, as though Antoine can't hear him)* He's got an extra decade of strain on his knees. Can't move too quickly at his ripe old age.

Prosper: Cinema, do you take anything seriously?

Cinema: The Vichy Government has banned rugby in France. It is an outrage! I bloody take *that* seriously.

Prosper: Do you take anything that *I say* seriously?

Cinema: *(Thinks)*. If you'd been the one to break the news about the rugby, then maybe...

Prosper sighs and moves off in conversation with Archambaud. The others all split off into groups and begin talking. Noor is left, awkwardly, with Antoine and Cinema.

Cinema: When can I expect to dig out my best suit then, Antoine?

Antoine: Excuse me?

Cinema: You didn't think to tell me that you and my sister have been getting cosy. *(To Noor)* What kind of man gets affectionate towards another man's sister and doesn't have the decency to tell him?

Antoine: I wouldn't tell you, even if I was affectionate towards your sister.

Cinema: *(to Noor)* Poor guy. My sister is a jealous mare. She has the face of one too. He's dealt himself a rough hand there.

Antoine: Ignore him. He's full of it.

Cinema: It's true. She's a nightmare. *(Antoine)* Mother and father will be delighted for you to take her off their hands. They were worried it would never happen. *(To Noor again)* She's a hideous creature, you see.

Antoine: Cinema, you're talking about your own sister, do not forget.

Cinema: You certainly can't choose your family. Frankly, I never liked her much. Wouldn't trust her with my life. When we were young, she used to run to mummy and daddy, the moment I did something even slightly wrong. She's a snivelling little beast. Anyway, I'll leave you two to get acquainted. Remember, Sir *(he slaps Antoine on the back)*, make better decisions.

Cinema walks away.

Antoine: He's a fool but he's harmless, really. You don't need to look so nervous. There's a lot of big characters I know, but everyone's so nice. In case you forgot, I'm Antoine *(they shake hands)*.

Noor: Yes, I remembered.

Antoine: It's very good to have you as part of the team. That's what we are really – a team.

Noor: Thank you. It's nice to be here, actually doing something useful to help out.

Sonia approaches Noor tentatively.

Sonia: You are a woman and a wireless operator?

Noor: Yes.

Sonia: That is impressive. If a woman can do it, then I would like to be a transmitter, too.

Archambaud: For now, you are a courier. Stay focused, Tania. *(To Noor)* Come along, you. We have some work to do. I expect they are frantic in London, worrying that something has happened to you. Your safe house isn't far from mine. I'll walk you back after we have done.

Prosper: Remember, we are meeting again in two days. Marcel is going on leave, so if you have any letters to be sent home, bring them with you.

The group exit, leaving Vera and Buckmaster on stage. Enter Operations Officer.

Operations Officer: We have a message from Archambaud. Madeleine has safely arrived in Paris and attended the first sub-circuit group meeting. Her transmitter was damaged on arrival. He is requesting a replacement radio for her.

SCENE TWO

Noor, Sonia, Vera, Prosper, Cinema, Antoine and Marcel are on stage. There is a commotion as they are disagreeing.

Antoine: I know it is tense, but if we are all arguing, then we will put ourselves in greater risk. Let us talk rationally. We have learnt some important lessons.

Prosper: Yes, we have. Haven't we Madeleine?! We do not, under any circumstances, make contact with other circuits. As we know, that is an obvious invitation to disaster. That circuit has been infiltrated by the Gestapo. She narrowly escaped arrest.

Noor: I am sorry.

Prosper: You lack training and it is evident.

Antoine: She escaped. There is no harm done.

Prosper: Apart from nearly sabotaging our whole operation. Don't be so naïve Antoine.

Antoine: Naïve?!

Prosper: She put us all in danger.

Antoine: Hardly. We are still here, are we not?

Prosper: Not all of us! So little care is given to this operation. None of you seem to care. Who can blame you, considering in London, they don't care! *(Ranting, now)* Their conception of a letter box, where we can safely pass on letters, appears to be a place where an agent, usually covered in mud, carrying an obvious suitcase, can turn up at an unreasonable hour to be lodged and fed and laundered for anything up to three weeks. The group has been penetrated. We have lost several agents over the last few days! And there has been a great deal of confusion this month over the Lysander receptions, owing to Fabian's insufficient instructions. Can Colonel Buckmaster not hire a single competent being.

Cinema, for instance, on arriving, was given a bicycle by Fabian and left to his own devices. As he cannot ride a bicycle, he had to walk and came to me!

The group are silent for a moment.

Marcel: *(Laughing)* You can't ride a bike, Cinema?

Prosper: This is not the time for jokes, Marcel.

Cinema: It is true.

Marcel: Even my niece can ride a bike. She's four.

Cinema: Alas, I will never be riding the Tour de France!

Prosper: This is ridiculous. Do you not hear me? People are dying!

Antoine: Your problem is not with Fabian, or with London. Your problem, Prosper, is that you do not trust a single person. You are jealous of anyone that threatens your status. There are too many people in this circuit. You cannot empathise with them all. How can you possibly understand intellectuals, farmers, communists and aristocrats? This network is too big for one man to manage.

Prosper: May I remind you who is in charge here?

Noor: Please stop this arguing. Have we all forgotten why we are here? We are here to make peace, to stop the fighting between countries, but how can we do that if we are fighting amongst ourselves? I am sorry for what I have done wrong, Prosper. Now let us move on and plan our next step.

The group is silent.

Prosper: Marcel, take this letter with you when you go on leave. I want London to know how much of a shambles this is. Tell them the group has been infiltrated and of the further arrests. I suggest we lie low for a while. You can all leave.

The group trail out, leaving Prosper on stage. He puts on his jacket and begins to exit in the opposite direction. He is met by a Gestapo officer.

Gestapo Officer 1: Prosper, yes?

Prosper hesitates for a moment, before running in the opposite direction. The Gestapo officer catches up to him and physically arrests him.

Gestapo Officer 1: Tut, tut, tut. You have been naughty.

He escorts Prosper off stage.

SCENE THREE

Noor is sitting at a table with Antoine. They are in the basement of the safe house. She is watching him as he reads the paper by a small light.

Noor: How long do you think we will be down here? I have never had to sleep in a basement until now.

Antoine: I am sure not much longer. Prosper will escape and then we can get back to business, I am sure of it.

Noor: I fear I have forgotten what daylight looks like.

Antoine: It is very beautiful.

They are silent for a moment.

Noor: May we speak freely with one another, with the knowledge that we cannot be heard?

Antoine: We might as well.

Noor: Where are you from?

Antoine: Mauritius. My ancestors were French. What about you?

Noor: I was born in Kremlin on New Year's Day 1914. Though, my Papa's work meant we were on the move a lot. I grew up in Paris. My Papa was Indian and my Mama American.

Antoine: What did you do before the war?

Noor: I was a children's author. I had just published my first book when the war broke out. And now I am here. I did not expect to be locked up in basements. What was it like before I arrived?

Antoine: Exhilarating. I carried messages from Winston Churchill to Edouard Herriot and Paul Reynaud. He wanted to invite them to go to England. I, also, demolished several locomotive turntables at Le Mans.

Noor: And when you are done? Will you marry Cinema's sister like he said?

Antoine: No. No. That's just Cinema speculating.

Noor: Oh. Good.

They are silent for a moment.

Noor: I never thanked you for defending me against Prosper.

Antoine: It has never been, nor will it ever be, right for a grown man to bully a lady.

Noor: I still appreciate it a lot.

Antoine: I know Prosper too well to know that it wasn't you he was angry with. He was angry with the system. With it all. He was taking his anger out on you. It was not right. He is a good man. Very funny. Unlike Cinema, who is rather bold with his humour, Prosper is dry and witty. That is, when he's not at war with himself and everyone around him... Well he was a good man. Who knows what has become of him now?

Noor: We could pray for him. Here *(she takes his hands and they begin to pray)*.

Antoine: You seem to be a peaceful person, and yet, here you are, in one of the most dangerous lines of work in the war. How is it that you find yourself here?

Noor: I need to help.

Antoine: But, imagine if they said that you could leave today, with zero judgement. How nice it would be.

Noor: I have been given that opportunity Antoine.

Antoine: What?

Noor: A few days after Marcel reached London and told them of the arrests, they offered me the chance to leave.

Antoine: Then why are you here?

Noor: I know how important my work is.

Antoine: You are very brave, indeed... Madeleine, I am glad that you're here. Paris seems a little brighter with you in the city.

Enter Vera and Buckmaster. Noor freezes and Antoine gets up and walks over to them.

Antoine: I can confirm that Prosper has been arrested.

Buckmaster: Oh dear.

Antoine: Madeleine narrowly escaped arrest for the second time. She was to meet with Archambaud at the agricultural college in Grignon to practise her transmitting. When she arrived, the place was swarming with the Gestapo. She came straight back to the safe house. We do not know anything of Archambaud. We can only presume that he has been arrested.

Buckmaster: Crikey.

Antoine: We lay low for two weeks after Prosper's arrest. Within the circuit, we have destroyed all of our paperwork and notes. When I left, I put Madeleine in contact with the Lysander operator, Fabian. He was looking for a new wireless operator.

Buckmaster: Very good work, Antoine

Antoine: But, Sir, I am afraid for her safety. I feel I should not have left her there. I have this feeling that she is in danger. We believe that there is someone within the circuit working for the Gestapo.

Vera: Sir, I must agree with Antoine. She should be brought back. It is too dangerous for her.

Buckmaster: No, she has already declined our offer.

Vera: But Sir, she does not know the whole –

Buckmaster: We need her out there. She is our only link to Paris.

Vera: (*tense*) But sir, if there is someone cooperating with the Gestapo, she doesn't stand a chance.

Buckmaster: (*angry*) I said, no.

Vera: She might –

Buckmaster: I am in charge here! Thank you Antoine. You may go. Miss Atkins, please see Antoine out.

She storms away, Antoine following her. Once they have reached some distance, she turns to him.

Vera: Between you and me, this must go no further; when one of our operatives returned on leave, he told us that he had met a German colonel in the pub, who had told him of a corrupt British operative. The German had said that the mole's name is Fabian. You might know this man as Fabian. Our operative claimed that the reports returning to London, by Lysander, were first being copied and passed to the Gestapo.

Antoine: But Madeleine is with Fabian now.

Vera: I know.

Antoine: Well we can't just leave her with him. He might be dangerous.

Vera: Colonel Buckmaster has chosen to ignore these allegations. There is nothing we can do but pray for her now.

SCENE FOUR

Enter Noor and Vera opposite sides of the stage. They are both holding letters and reading.

Noor: Dear Miss Atkins, (excuse pencil) your bird has brought me luck. I remember you so often. You cheered me up so sweetly before I left – lots of things have happened and I haven't been able to settle down properly. Still my contacts have started to be regular and I am awfully happy. The news of allied invasion of Sicily is marvellous and I hope we shall soon be celebrating. In fact, I owe you a date. Lots of love, Yours, Nora.

Enter Gestapo officers.

Gestapo Officer 1: It has been two months.

Noor: Excuse me, what are you doing in my home?

Gestapo Officer 1: Come now, no need for pretence.

Gestapo Officer 2: You were given up, Missy, for 100,000 francs.

Gestapo Officer 1: It appears you have upset someone's girlfriend.

Gestapo Officer 2: A young lady is very angry with you. It appears she has lost the affections of her suitor to you.

Noor: I do not know what you mean.

Gestapo Officer 1: An ugly looking girl. The face of a horse.

Gestapo Officer 2: The sister of one your friends, so she says. It seems she didn't care much for yours, or her brother's wellbeing.

Gestapo Officer 1: I never liked jealous women, until now. You've been a tricky one to find.

Gestapo Officer 1 grabs Noor. There is a struggle, as Noor tries to get free.

Gestapo Officer 2: I will shoot you if you resist!

She struggles for a moment longer, then goes limp. Gestapo Officer 2 begins searching the stage. He finds a series of papers and some notebooks.

Gestapo 2: I see you like to document everything. Dr Goetz will be pleased.

They carry her offstage. Vera, meanwhile, is standing with Noor's letter pressed to her chest, smiling with relief.

ACT FIVE, SCENE ONE

Dr Goetz is sitting at the table with Noor's papers and journals. Kieffer is sat next to him with his feet up on the table. Noor is standing in front of them. There are two Gestapo guards on stage with them. On the other side of the stage is a bath and a window. It is not lit.

Goetz: You are a meticulous notetaker, I see. I do like notetakers. Thanks to your friends in London, I know they will be expecting two security checks, not one. I see your callsign is Nurse? What else do I need to know?

Noor does not say anything.

Kieffer: They all think they can be silent at first, too. But when they realise how much better I treat them than London does, well, things begin to change. They don't care for you. Not really, Madeleine. We can do this the easy way, or the hard way.

One of the guards slap Noor.

Kieffer: That was very gentle. They can be a lot rougher. Now, do us a very small favour, and you might be rewarded. Dr Goetz, here, well he's just had a baby. Frankly, I think he would rather be at home with his wife and his baby. The longer you keep him here, the more upset his wife is going to be with him. Do you really want to upset his wife?

Goetz: Kieffer, I think I have enough here to get a message together without her.

Kieffer: Very good. *(Turning to one of the guards)* Please, bring it in.

The guard leaves and returns with Noor's suitcase with her wireless transmitter inside. She is shocked that they are in possession of it.

Goetz: This will have to do for now. *(He begins transmitting, reading as he does)* N.U.R.S.E. My cachette unsafe. New address Belliard RPT Belliard 157 Rue Vercingetorix RPT Vercingetorix, Paris. Password de part de monsieur de rual. RPT de rual stop. This perfectly safe. True check present. Bluff check omitted. Goodbye. *(Turning to guard again)* Thank you.

The guard takes the case offstage again.

Goetz: That ought to keep London quiet for a short amount of time.

Kieffer: Good work. Thank you for your cooperation, Miss. Your notes have been ever so helpful. If you don't mind, we'll let Dr Goetz leave for now. But, I would just like to keep hold of you, for a little bit longer. Thank you Dr Goetz, you have been marvellous, as always.

Goetz: Have a good evening gentlemen. Goodnight, Miss Madeleine.

Goetz leaves.

Kieffer: How are you settling into 84 Avenue Foch? I rather like my office, don't you? My, my, you are the quiet type, aren't you? I do like quiet people. Loud people are infuriating. Maybe we can be friends. Maybe we can work together. Tell me, who are you really? What

is your name? What are you doing in France? What is your involvement with the British resistance in France?

Noor is silent.

Kieffer: Do you usually carry a wireless transmitter around just for fun? Is that what you do in your spare time? Transmit messages to your friends? Maybe the other nurses in the hospital. Or, maybe, to London.

Noor: I work for my country.

Kieffer: Who are you? Tell me what I want to hear, and we can both be on our way. You can trust me. You are in safe hands here.

Noor: I don't trust you.

Kieffer: Come now, young lady. You are making this far more difficult than it needs to be.

Noor: I have not had a bath. It is wrong to stop a lady from having a bath.

Kieffer: *(Sighs)* Very well. A bath, then cooperation. *(To the guard)* Take Madeleine to have a bath.

The guard walks Noor to the other side of the stage where the lights come up.

Noor: It is indecent for you to watch a lady have a bath. You can wait outside.

The guard looks around nervously, then reluctantly turns around. She walks over to the bath and turns on the tap. The other guard walks across the stage. Meanwhile, Noor is attempting to climb up onto the window ledge.

Gestapo Guard 1: She forgot the soap.

The guard knocks on the bathroom door. When he gets no response he quickly runs into the bathroom, finding Noor about the jump out of the window. The other guard follows him in, and they pull her back down. They tug her back across the stage to Kieffer, who is still sitting at his desk.

Gestapo Guard 2: We caught her trying to jump out the window. Looked like suicide, rather than escape, Sir.

Kieffer: My, my. You are a tough little one, aren't you? If you don't want to play today, perhaps tomorrow. Gentlemen, please escort the lady to her cell.

SCENE TWO

Buckmaster is sitting with Vera. Enter Operations Officer.

Operations Officer: Sir, the Lysander Operation to take Antoine back to France is scheduled for Tuesday night. I have been sent to ask whether it will be going ahead as planned?

Buckmaster: Why on earth would it not?

Operations Officer: Sir, I am trained in reading wireless messages. It is from Nora Baker's transmitter that the operation was organised. As I have voiced several times to you over the last few weeks, we are concerned by Nora's messages. They are out of character and I am unhappy with her fist.

Buckmaster: She is merely concerned for her security. She is a smart girl.

Operations Officer: Sir, there have been no sightings of Nora for two months. She has not sent handwritten letters back to England since the beginning of October.

Buckmaster: I have told you, several times, Nora Baker is lying low. There is so much conspiracy.

Operations Officer: May I also remind you of a message that you received last month from Sonja: Maurice and Madeleine had serious accident and in hospital. Maurice is barde. Madeleine is W/T operator.

Buckmaster: We dismissed that as fake and suspicious. I do not know of a Sonja.

Operations Officer: Nonetheless, since Prosper's arrest, we have reason to believe that anyone working for us in Paris at the time, is now, also, under arrest. The Prosper network is no longer functioning – besides these irregular messages from Nora Baker's transmitter. It is not just Prosper; most of our F-Section networks are corrupted, Sir.

Vera: Perhaps I may interject.

Buckmaster: Yes, Miss Atkins, please stop this nonsense from continuing.

Vera: We can test Nora. We will ask questions that only she would know. That way we can all be at peace with the knowledge that is it her. Or, we can pursue further investigations if the answers come back wrong.

Buckmaster: Excellent. That way I can prove that it is Nora, once and for all. You may oversee this investigation, Miss Atkins.

SCENE THREE

Several prisoners are sitting together, talking. Noor is sitting alone. She is praying. Across the stage sits Archambaud. He looks over at her then around at the guards. When he sees no guards are looking, he walks over and sits about a metre from her. He looks straight ahead as he talks.

Archambaud: Madeleine?

She keeps her head lowered.

Archambaud: Madeleine? It's Archambaud.

She quickly turns to him, but he interrupts her action

Archambaud: Don't look at me. We don't know each other, ok?

Noor does a small nod.

Archambaud: How are you?

Noor: I am fine. How are you?

Archambaud: Just fine.

Noor: I'm going to get us out of here.

Archambaud: There's no way out.

Noor: Kieffer – the one who does the interrogations. You know him?

He nods.

Noor: He gives all of the ladies a face cream and powder.

Enter Dr Goetz and Kieffer, both of whom begin talking to a guard.

Noor: I'm going to mix them together to make plaster. We are going to remove the bars from our windows, and then we will apply the plaster to the walls to hide the damage.

He nods. The guard begins to approach them.

Noor: We will climb onto the roof with our bed sheets, ok?

Guard: Talking to yourself again Archambaud? You will scare the poor lady. Miss, Dr Goetz is asking for you. Come along.

Noor gets up and follows the guard, looking at Archambaud as she passes him. Dr Goetz beckons for her to sit and he and Kieffer stand before her. The guards escort the other prisoners offstage.

Goetz: London are asking Nurse some very personal questions. I thought, perhaps, you could help me.

Kieffer: Come now, Madeleine. There will be a big reward for your assistance.

Goetz: Tell me a bit about your family.

Noor is silent.

Goetz: Tell me about your upbringing, your religion.

Kieffer walks around Noor and grabs her shoulders. He shakes her violently.

Kieffer: Tell him.

She remains silent.

Kieffer: Speak! (*He grabs hold of her arm*). If I tighten, like this, the blood will stop flowing. Like a balloon, it will pop. They will have to cut it off. You will be lame.

When she does not react, he throws her arm away.

Kieffer: How is it, little lady, that you say not a word? Your friends, they have all squeaked at the slightest bit of pressure. But you. No. You are mute. I barely know what you sound like. Come now, I bet you have a beautiful voice. Just let me hear it.

Noor looks at him with disgust and turns away again.

Goetz: We don't need her. I can get a message to London without her cooperation - thanks to Fabian.

Kieffer: Guards, we have finished with her.

They escort her offstage.

Kieffer: How is it that a little girl does not crumble, but a grown man looks me in the eyes and trembles and cries. She is frustratingly brave.

Goetz: I am beginning to think you like our prisoner, Kieffer.

Kieffer: She is maddening, but brilliant. I like challenges. She is a challenge. I will break her.

SCENE FOUR

Buckmaster is sitting at the table. After a few moments, Vera runs onstage excitedly.

Vera: Sir, we have excellent news! Nora Baker's test worked. The answers came back, slow, but practically faultless. Nora is still on the move in Paris, Sir. She passed the test.

Vera is so overcome with joy, she hugs Buckmaster.

Buckmaster: Good. Then she will be waiting for Antoine with the reception committee tonight. Prepare him for his journey, Miss Atkins.

Vera: Yes, Sir.

He begins to walk offstage, then hesitates.

Buckmaster: And Miss Atkins?

Vera: Yes, Sir?

Buckmaster: Excellent job.

He exits. She goes to stage right, as Antoine enters. She begins fussing over his clothes. Noor and Archambaud enter stage left.

Archambaud: Crikey, Madeleine. What took you so long? I've been waiting on this roof for two hours. What happened?

Noor: *(out of breath)* I'm sorry. I couldn't get the bars off my window.

Archambaud: You are here now. That's what's important.

Exit Vera. Antoine is sitting, raised on a platform now, looking around him. He is on the Lysander plane to France.

Archambaud: What do we do now?

Noor: We need to get down onto the street below. We're going to need to jump onto that balcony, there *(pointing)*. Then we'll need to climb down the pipe. After that, we'll have to jump.

Archambaud: I don't know if I can do it.

Noor: You will be perfect.

Antoine walks down from the platform. As he reaches the bottom a group of Gestapo officers meet him. They grab him and arrest him, pulling him offstage.

Noor: I will go first. You just have to copy what I do.

Suddenly, there is the sound of an air raid alert. Kieffer, Dr Goetz and the Guards enter the stage and surround them.

Kieffer: It is not so easy to escape I am afraid. I am disappointed – no – I am furious. Why would you do this to me? This is deceitful. I am so angry; I could shoot you. And you, Archambaud, had been cooperating with me so nicely.

Noor and Archambaud exchange a look. Archambaud looks guilty.

Kieffer: Do you not like it here? I have welcomed you into my home.

Noor: This is a prison, not your home.

Kieffer: Turn around. *(He brings out a gun)* Turn around!

They both turn around and he holds the gun to Noor's head. He holds it there for a while, then relents.

Kieffer: This is the deal. You sign a document, swearing to no more escape attempts, and we will be best friends again.

Noor: No.

Kieffer: No?

Noor: I will not sign that.

Kieffer: Well gentlemen, she has up her mind. *(To the guard)* Organise for transportation to Germany. She will be kept there for... safe keeping.

SCENE FIVE

Enter Vilayat. He is holding the letter from Vera Atkins.

Vilayat: It is from here that we must diverge from Miss Vera Atkins' letter. You may remember that, in her letter to me, she claimed that from the French prison, ran by Hans Josef Kieffer, 84 Avenue Foch, Noor was taken to the German concentration camp, Natzweiler. Around the time of Noor's arrest, Sonia Olschanezky,

Enter Sonia

Vilayat: alias Tania, from the Prosper network, had transmitted a message back to London, claiming that Madeleine was injured and in hospital. Colonel Buckmaster had decided to ignore that message, continuing to trust the messages from Noor's transmitter. Sonia was then captured several weeks later. She was sent to Natzweiler, along with Vera Leigh, Diana Rowden and Andrée Borrell.

Enter Simone, Diana and Denise

Vilayat: It would go down in official records that it was, in fact, Noor who was imprisoned with these three women, not Sonia. Ten months later, came a letter, from a name I did not recognise – Yolande Lagrave. She said that Noor had been imprisoned, instead, at Pforzheim prison in solitary confinement. She was considered a Nacht und Nebel – a 'Disappearance without Trace' prisoner.

Exit Sonia, Diana, Simone and Denise, holding hands. Enter Yolande

Yolande: We used to scratch messages onto the bottom of our mess tins to communicate. At first, when we asked for her name, she had scratched back that she could not give it. Eventually, though, she wrote Nora Baker and her Paris and London addresses. The governor of the prison tried to remove the chains from her feet – for our Nora was so miserable. He was reprimanded for his actions. In the end, he had telephoned the Karlsruhe Gestapo and asked if the shackles could be made looser. For a short period of time, Nora was handcuffed by only one hand to her bed. On one occasion, in the afternoon, we heard some footsteps in the courtyard. Immediately we thought it must be Nora Baker. We climbed onto our beds to see her. She raised her eyes towards our cell and smiled at us. We saw her three times in total. She was soon chained up completely, again. We tried to communicate with her as much as possible to keep her spirits up. One day, two friends in cell three sang news to her. The warden immediately opened the door to the cell and hit Nora and took her to the dungeon on the below ground. She cried all night. Another time, the peep-hole was open. He went into Nora's cell, shouting. When Nora denied that it was her who had raised the judas, we heard heavy blows coming from her cell. One day we received her mess tin. It simply said, I am going. Poor Nora. Several weeks after she left, we were all woken at five in the morning, to go to an unknown destination. For some reason I was to stay at the prison. That morning my friends were massacred. The women were first raped. They were then shot and thrown into a mass grave. I considered that, maybe, Nora had faced the same fate, too.

Exit Yolande.

Vilayat: Years later, as Britain began its formal investigations into the German war crimes, it was revealed that Noor was moved to Dachau Concentration Camp. In 1958 it was claimed by an anonymous Dutch prisoner, that Noor was cruelly beaten by an SS officer.

The lights come up on the other side of the stage and Noor, along with three other women are kneeling, bending their heads to the ground. Behind each of them stands an SS officer, pointing a gun at them.

Vilayat: The women were forced onto their knees, their heads bent down to the ground and they were shot.

Four consecutive shots are heard, and the women fall one at a time.

SCENE SIX

Vilayat: *(reading the newspaper)* In London, yesterday, Vera Atkins, executive of the Top-Secret Department, described Noor Inayat Khan's heroism and said: 'Since the war I have seen Sturmbannfuhrer Hans Kieffer, Gestapo chief at Avenue Foch, Paris. It was he who sent Noor on her way, describing her as intractable and highly dangerous. Bully and hard man though he was, the reminder of her courage and patriotism caused him to break down and weep bitterly. This was written under the 1949 headline, George Cross for Braver Than They Thought Girl.

He walks over to the table and picks up a book. He sits with the book open on his legs. Enter children. They sit around him on the floor. Hazrat Inayat Khan, The Light of Your Soul begins to play, becoming increasing louder. Vilayat continues the story until the music drowns out his dialogue. Even then, he mimes telling the story to the children.

Vilayat: The kindness of your heart, little hare, shall be known throughout the world for ages to come. So, saying Sakka struck the mountain with her wand, and with the essence which gushed forth, she drew the picture of the hare on the orb of the moon. Next day the hare met his friends again...

