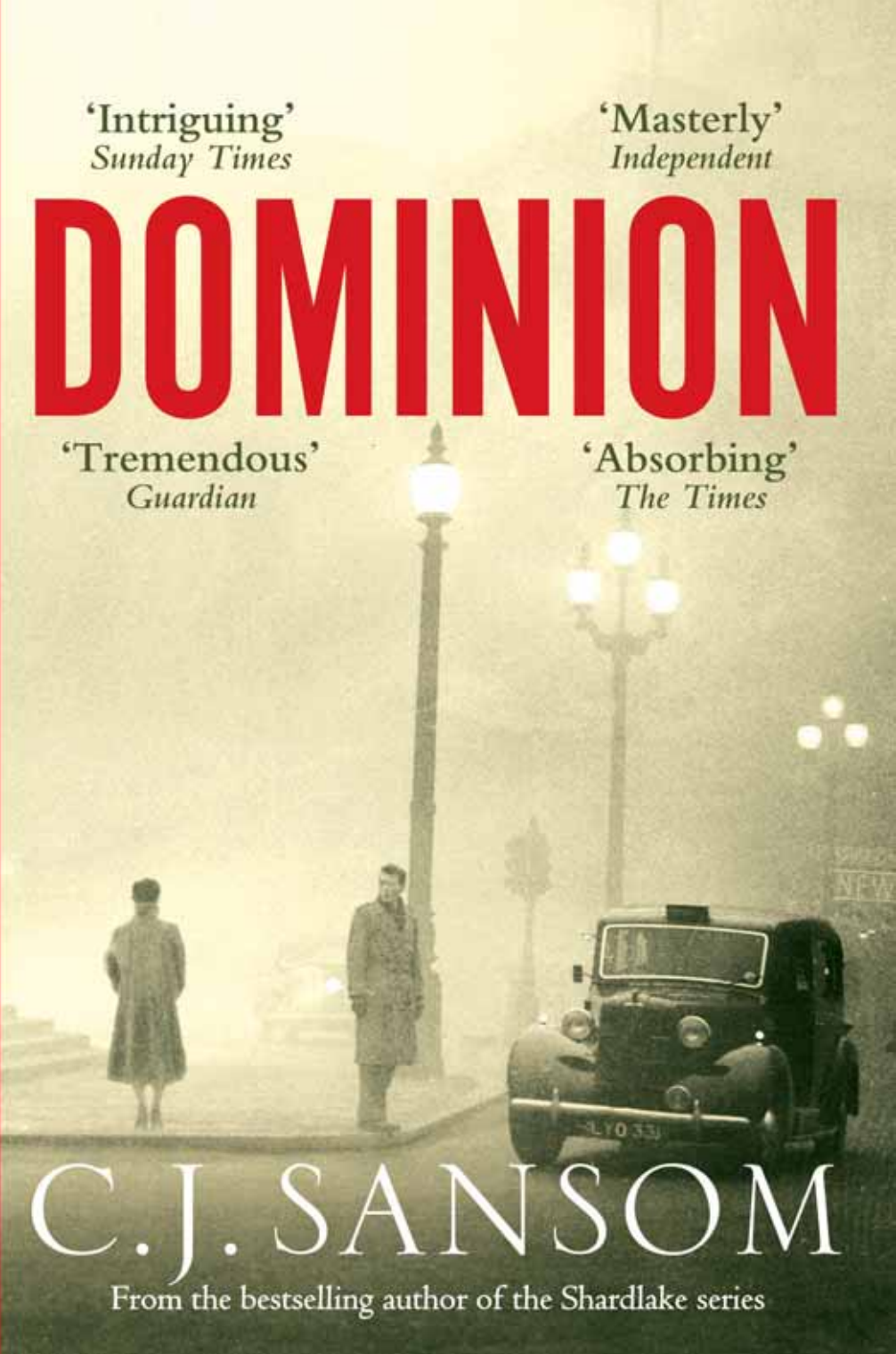
'Intriguing'
Sunday Times

'Masterly'
Independent

DOMINION

'Tremendous'
Guardian

'Absorbing'
The Times



C. J. SANSOM

From the bestselling author of the Shardlake series

Praise for Dominion

'C. J. Sansom is fascinated by the abuse of power, so it's not surprising that, hot on the heels of his splendid Shardlake series, comes a novel set in a post-war Britain dominated by Nazi ideology . . . There have been a number of other novels imagining this kind of alternate history – Robert Harris's *Fatherland*, Owen Sheers' *Resistance*, Len Deighton's *SS-GB* and, for children, Sally Gardner's *Maggot Moon*. All are outstanding in different ways but Sansom's *Dominion* is the most thoroughly imagined in all its ramifications. Like Harris, Sansom has woven a thriller with the tale of a man's growth into moral courage, but he has done it with the compassion and richness that many literary writers should emulate. Every detail of this nightmare Britain rings true . . . both as a historical novel and a thriller, *Dominion* is absorbing, mordant and written with a passionate persuasiveness'

Independent on Sunday

'A big novel with traces of a thriller . . . *Dominion* is evocative, alarming and richly satisfying' *Daily Express*

'One of the thrills of *Dominion* is to see a writer whose previous talent has been for the captivating dramatization of real history (in his five books about the Tudor sleuth, Matthew Shardlake, and the Spanish civil war novel *Winter in Madrid*) creating an invented mid-20th century Britain that has the intricate detail and delineation of J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle Earth . . . A tremendous novel that shakes historical preconceptions while also sending shivers down the spine'

Mark Lawson, *Guardian*

'One of the year's most accomplished London fictions evoked a city that never existed: the smog-bound, defeated metropolis of C. J. Sansom's *Dominion*. His chillingly persuasive "alternative history" drew a forlorn, fearful Britain in 1952, truly broken by surrender to Nazis abroad and dismal semi-fascism at home' *Independent* Books of the Year

'The chase is exciting and the action thrilling, but the really absorbing part of this excellent book is the detailed creation of a society that could so easily have existed'
Literary Review

'An intriguing thriller set in an alternative Britain under the Nazis cunningly reanimates the post-war years as they might have been . . . In this haunting, vividly imagined novel by C. J. Sansom, the hinge on which history turns is the resignation of Neville Chamberlain in May 1940 . . . As in the Shardlake novels, set in Tudor England, for which he is best known, Sansom is an admirably expansive and unhurried storyteller. His characters are all given personal histories and richly detailed pasts that serve to provide them with a depth more usually associated with literary fiction than the thriller. The alternative Britain that Sansom constructs, a brilliant amalgam of the 1950s as they actually were and as they might have been, is entirely convincing. Throwaway details cleverly add verisimilitude to his portrait. The tale he sets within his parallel universe is at once exciting, sophisticated and moving. There will be few better historical novels published this year, even if much of the history it uses never really happened' *Sunday Times*

'Masterly . . . sketched with hallucinatory clarity . . . Sansom, whose Tudor mysteries showed his feeling for the plight of good people in a brutal, treacherous society, builds his night-

mare Britain from the sooty bricks of truth . . . From the thuggish "Auxies" who beat up protestors to the apolitical rebellion of the "Jive Boys", every note in Sansom's smoggy hell rings true . . . No bulldog defiance in 1940; no weary triumph in 1945; no dogged renewal with the post-war Welfare State: *Dominion* shows us what a truly broken Britain would look, and feel, like' Boyd Tonkin, *Independent*

'C. J. Sansom takes a break from his Shardlake series to offer *Dominion*, an absorbing, thoughtful, spy-politico thriller set in the fog-ridden London of 1952. Not, however, the year as it is usually remembered . . . Part adventure, part espionage, all encompassed by terrific atmosphere and a well-argued "it might have been"' Marcel Berlins, *The Times*

'A thriller which is also, and perhaps primarily, a work of alternative or counter-factual history, set in 1952 . . . There are fine things a-plenty here, and the plot unfolds compellingly and gallops along briskly. C. J. Sansom has brought off a nice double, writing a good thriller which invites you to ponder the different course history might have taken'
Allan Massie, *Scotsman*

'Sansom's crime-writing background is perfect for a suspenseful political thriller like this . . . as well as knowing how to build tension he understands the importance of not making it easy to sort out the heroes from the villains'
Sunday Herald

'A spy thriller as sinister as the darkest night and as sharp as a knife . . . But as with *Winter in Madrid*, Sansom also stirs the little grey cells as well as sets pulses racing with his perceptive portrait of a Britain which has sold its soul and is beginning to regret the deal' *Northern Echo*

'A dark and terrifyingly real "alternate history" from the pen of C. J. Sansom, one of Britain's most accomplished historical novelists . . . a gripping and atmospheric spy story . . . Sansom creates a believable "what might have been" world by using high-profile people of the period and harnessing their personalities, predispositions and politics to persuade us that this is a Britain that could very well have existed. Departing from the comfortably successful territory of his Tudor novels was always going to be a gamble for Sansom but he pulls it off with characteristic brio and extraordinary storytelling. Vivid, authentic detail, fleshed-out characters and a rich, absorbing narrative provide the *trompe l'œil* framework for what is essentially a first-class thriller with a poignant love story at its heart. A novel of powerful ideas and haunting possibilities, *Dominion* is one of the best books of 2012. Don't miss it' *Lancashire Evening Post*

'This spy thriller is set in a nightmarish alternative Britain in 1952, twelve years after surrender to the Nazis at Dunkirk'
Books of the Year, *Sunday Express*

DOMINION

C. J. SANSOM

DOMINION

PAN BOOKS

All events that take place after
5 p.m. on 9 May 1940
are imaginary.

Prologue

The Cabinet Room, 10 Downing Street,
London 4.30 p.m., 9 May 1940

Churchill was last to arrive. He knocked once, sharply, and entered. Through the tall windows the warm spring day was fading, shadows lengthening on Horse Guards Parade. Margesson, the Conservative Chief Whip, sat with Prime Minister Chamberlain and Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax at the far end of the long, coffin-shaped table which dominated the Cabinet room. As Churchill approached them Margesson, formally dressed as ever in immaculate black morning coat, stood up.

'Winston.'

Churchill nodded at the Chief Whip, looking him sternly in the eye. Margesson, who was Chamberlain's creature, had made life difficult for him when he had stood out against party policy over India and Germany in the years before the war. He turned to Chamberlain and Halifax, the Prime Minister's right-hand man in the government's appeasement of Germany. 'Neville. Edward.' Both men looked bad; no sign today of Chamberlain's habitual half-sneer, nor of the snappy arrogance which had alienated the House of Commons during yesterday's debate over the military defeat in Norway. Ninety Conservatives had voted with the Opposition or abstained; Chamberlain had left the chamber

followed by shouts of 'Go!' The Prime Minister's eyes were red from lack of sleep or perhaps even tears – though it was hard to imagine Neville Chamberlain weeping. Last night the word around a feverish House of Commons was that his leadership could not survive.

Halifax looked little better. The Foreign Secretary held his enormously tall, thin body as erect as ever but his face was deathly pale, white skin stretched over his long, bony features. The rumour was that he was reluctant to take over, did not have the stomach for the premiership – literally, for at times of stress he was plagued with agonizing pains in his gut.

Churchill addressed Chamberlain, his deep voice sombre, the lisp pronounced. 'What is the latest news?'

'More German forces massed at the Belgian border. There could be an attack at any time.'

There was silence for a moment, the tick of a carriage clock on the marble mantelpiece suddenly loud.

'Please sit down,' Chamberlain said.

Churchill took a chair. Chamberlain continued, in tones of quiet sadness: 'We have discussed yesterday's Commons vote at considerable length. We feel there are grave difficulties in my remaining as Prime Minister. I have made up my mind that I must go. Support for me within the party is haemorrhaging. If there should be a vote of confidence, yesterday's abstainers may vote against the government. And soundings with the Labour Party indicate they would only join a coalition under a new Prime Minister. It is impossible for me to continue with this level of personal antipathy.' Chamberlain looked again at Margesson, almost as though seeking succour, but the Chief Whip only nodded sadly and said, 'If we are to have a coalition now, which we must, national unity is essential.'

Looking at Chamberlain, Churchill could find it in him-

self to pity him. He had lost everything; for two years he had tried to meet Hitler's demands, believing the Führer had made his last claim for territory at Munich only for him to invade Czechoslovakia a few months later, and then Poland. After Poland fell there had been seven months of military inaction, of 'phoney war'. Last month Chamberlain had told the Commons that Hitler had 'missed the bus' for a spring campaign, only for him suddenly to invade and occupy Norway, throwing back British forces. France would be next. Chamberlain looked between Churchill and Halifax. Then he spoke again, his voice still expressionless. 'It is between the two of you. I would be willing, if desired, to serve under either.'

Churchill nodded and leaned back in his chair. He looked at Halifax, who met his gaze with a cold, probing stare. Churchill knew Halifax held nearly all the cards, that most of the Conservative Party wanted him as the next Prime Minister. He had been Viceroy of India, a senior minister for years, a cool, steady, Olympian aristocrat, both trusted and respected. And most Tories had never forgiven Churchill his Liberal past, nor his opposition to his own party over Germany. They viewed him as an adventurer, unreliable, lacking in judgement. Chamberlain wanted Halifax, as did Margesson, together with most of the Cabinet. And so, Churchill knew, did Halifax's friend, the King. But Halifax had no fire in his belly, none. Churchill loathed Hitler but Halifax treated the Nazi leader with a sort of patrician contempt; he had once said the only people the Führer made life difficult for in Germany were a few trade unionists and Jews.

Churchill, though, had had the wind in his sails with the public since war was declared last September; Chamberlain had been forced to bring him back into the Cabinet when his warnings over Hitler had, finally, been proved right. But

how to play that one card? Churchill settled more firmly into his chair. *Say nothing*, he thought, see where Halifax stands, whether he wants the job at all, and how much.

'Winston,' Chamberlain began, his tone questioning now. 'You were very rough on Labour in the debate yesterday. And you have always been their fierce opponent. Do you think this might be an obstacle for you?'

Churchill did not answer, but stood abruptly and walked over to the window, looking out into the bright spring afternoon. *Don't reply*, he thought. *Flush Halifax out*.

The carriage clock struck five, a high, pinging sound. As it finished Big Ben began booming out the hour. As the last note died away Halifax finally spoke.

'I think,' he said, 'that I would be better placed to deal with the Labour men.'

Churchill turned and faced him, his expression suddenly fierce. 'The trials to be faced, Edward, will be very terrible.' Halifax looked tired, desperately unhappy, but there was determination in his face now. He had found steel in himself after all.

'That, Winston, is why I would like you at my side in a new, smaller War Cabinet. You would be Minister of Defence, you would have overall responsibility for conduct of the war.'

Churchill considered the offer, moving his heavy jaw slowly from side to side. If he was in charge of the war effort, perhaps he could dominate Halifax, become Prime Minister in all but name. It all depended on who else Halifax put in place. He asked, 'And the others? Who will you appoint?'

'From the Conservatives, you and I and Sam Hoare; I think that best reflects the balance of opinion within the party. Attlee for Labour, and Lloyd George to represent the Liberal interest, and as a national figure, the man who led us to victory in 1918.' Halifax turned to Chamberlain. 'I think

you could be of most use now, Neville, as Leader of the Commons.'

It was bad news, the worst. Lloyd George who, for all his recent backpedalling, had spent the thirties idolizing Hitler, calling him Germany's George Washington. And Sam Hoare, the arch-appeaser, Churchill's old enemy. Attlee was a fighter, for all his diffidence, but the two of them would be in a minority.

'Lloyd George is seventy-seven,' Churchill said. 'Is he up to the weight that must be borne?'

'I believe so. And he will be good for morale.' Halifax was sounding more resolute now. 'Winston,' he said, 'I would very much like you beside me at this hour.'

Churchill hesitated. This new War Cabinet would hobble him. He knew that Halifax had decided to take the premiership reluctantly and out of duty. He would do his best, but his heart was not in the struggle that was coming. Like so many, he had fought in the Great War and feared seeing all that bloodshed again.

For a moment Churchill thought of resigning from the Cabinet; but what good would that do? And Margesson was right; public unity was all important now. He would do what he could, while he could. He had thought, earlier that day, that his hour had come at last, but it was not to be after all, not yet. 'I will serve under you,' he said, his heart heavy.

Chapter One

November 1952

Almost all the passengers on the tube to Victoria were, like David and his family, on their way to the Remembrance Sunday parade. It was a cold morning and the men and women all wore black winter coats. Scarves and handbags were also black, or muted brown, the only colour the bright red poppies everyone wore in their buttonholes. David ushered Sarah and her mother into a carriage; they found two empty wooden benches and sat facing each other.

As the tube rattled out of Kenton Station David looked round him. Everyone seemed sad and sombre, befitting the day. There were relatively few older men – most of the Great War veterans, like Sarah's father, would be in central London already, preparing for the march past the Cenotaph. David was himself a veteran of the second war, the brief 1939–40 conflict that people called the Dunkirk campaign or the Jews' war, according to political taste. But David, who had served in Norway, and the other survivors of that defeated, humiliated army – whose retreat from Europe had been followed so quickly by Britain's surrender – did not have a place at the Remembrance Day ceremonies. Nor did the British soldiers who had died in the endless conflicts in India, and now Africa, that had begun since the 1940 Peace Treaty. Remembrance Day now had a political overtone:

remember the slaughter when Britain and Germany fought in 1914–18; remember that must never happen again. Britain must remain Germany's ally.

'It's very cloudy,' Sarah's mother said. 'I hope it isn't going to rain.'

'It'll be all right, Betty,' David said reassuringly. 'The forecast said it would just stay cloudy.'

Betty nodded. A plump little woman in her sixties, her whole life was focused on caring for Sarah's father, who had had half his face blown off on the Somme in 1916.

'It gets very uncomfortable for Jim, marching in the rain,' she said. 'The water drips behind his prosthesis and of course he can't take it off.'

Sarah took her mother's hand. Her square face with its strong round chin – her father's chin – looked dignified. Her long blonde hair, curled at the ends, was framed by a modest black hat. Betty smiled at her. The tube halted at a station and more people got on. Sarah turned to David. 'There's more passengers than usual.'

'People wanting to get a first look at the Queen, I imagine.'

'I hope we manage to find Steve and Irene all right,' Betty said, worrying again.

'I told them to meet us by the ticket booths at Victoria,' Sarah told her. 'They'll be there, dear, don't worry.'

David looked out of the window. He was not looking forward to spending the afternoon with his wife's sister and her husband. Irene was good-natured enough, although she was full of silly ideas and never stopped talking, but David loathed Steve, with his mixture of oily charm and arrogance, his Blackshirt politics. David would have to try to keep his lip buttoned as usual.

The train ground to a jolting halt, just before the mouth of a tunnel. There was a hiss somewhere as brakes engaged.

'Not today,' someone said. 'These delays are getting worse. It's a disgrace.' Outside, David saw, the track looked down on rows of back-to-back houses of soot-stained London brick. Grey smoke rose from chimneys, washing was hanging out to dry in the backyards. The streets were empty. A grocer's window just below them had a prominent sign in the window, *Food Stamps Taken Here*. There was a sudden jolt and the train moved into the tunnel, only to judder to a halt again a few moments later. David saw his own face reflected back from the dark window, his head framed by his bulky dark coat with its wide lapels. A bowler hat hid his short black hair, a few unruly curls just visible. His unlined, regular features made him look younger than thirty-five; deceptively unmarked. He suddenly recalled a childhood memory, his mother's constant refrain to women visitors, 'Isn't he a good-looking boy, couldn't you just eat him?' Delivered in her sharp Dublin brogue, it had made him squirm with embarrassment. Another memory came unbidden, of when he was seventeen and had won the inter-schools Diving Cup. He remembered standing on the high board, a sea of faces far below, the board trembling slightly beneath his feet. Two steps forward and then the dive, down into the great expanse of still water, the moment of fear and then the exhilaration of striking out into silence.

Steve and Irene were waiting at Victoria. Irene, Sarah's older sister, was also tall and blonde but with a little dimpled chin like her mother's. Her black coat had a thick brown fur collar. Steve was good-looking in a raffish way, with a thin black moustache that made him look like a poor man's Errol Flynn. He wore a black fedora on his thickly brilliantined head – David could smell the chemical tang as he shook his brother-in-law's hand.

'How's the Civil Service, old man?' Steve asked.

'Surviving.' David smiled.

'Still keeping watch over the Empire?'

'Something like that. How are the boys?'

'Grand. Getting bigger and noisier every week. We might bring them next year, they're getting old enough.' David saw a shadow pass across Sarah's face and knew she was remembering their own dead son.

'We ought to hurry, get the tube to Westminster,' Irene said. 'Look at all these people.'

They joined the throng heading for the escalator. As the crowd pressed together their pace slowed to a silent shuffle, reminding David for a moment of his time as a soldier, shuffling with the rest of the weary troops onto the ships evacuating British forces from Norway, back in 1940.

They turned into Whitehall. David's office was just behind the Cenotaph; men walking past would still remove their hats as they passed it, respectfully and unselfconsciously, though fewer and fewer with each passing year – thirty-four now since the Great War ended. The sky was grey-white, the air cold. People's breath steamed before them as they jostled – quietly and politely – for places behind the low metal barriers opposite the tall white rectangle of the Cenotaph, a line of policemen in heavy coats in front. Some were ordinary constables in their helmets, but many were Special Branch Auxiliaries in their flat peaked caps and slimmer blue uniforms. When they were first created in the 1940s, to deal with growing civil unrest, David's father had said the Auxiliaries reminded him of the Black and Tans, the violent trench veterans recruited by Lloyd George to augment the police during the Irish Independence War. All were armed.

The ceremony had changed in the last few years; serving personnel no longer stood on parade around the Cenotaph,

blocking the public view, and wooden boards had been laid on blocks behind the barriers to give people a better vantage point. It was part of what Prime Minister Beaverbrook called 'demystifying the thing'.

The family managed to get a good place opposite Downing Street and the big Victorian building which housed the Dominions Office where David worked. Beyond the barriers, forming three sides of a hollow square around the Cenotaph, the military and religious leaders had already taken their places. The soldiers were in full dress uniform, Archbishop Headlam, head of the section of the Anglican Church that had not split away in opposition to his compromises with the regime, in gorgeous green-and-gold vestments. Beside them stood the politicians and ambassadors, each holding a wreath. David looked them over; there was Prime Minister Beaverbrook with his wizened little monkey face, the wide fleshy mouth downturned in an expression of sorrow. For forty years, since he first came to England from Canada with business scandals hanging over him, Beaverbrook had combined building a newspaper empire with manoeuvring in politics, pushing his causes of free enterprise, the Empire, and appeasement on the public and politicians. He was trusted by few, elected by none, and after the death of his immediate predecessor, Lloyd George, in 1945, the coalition had made him Prime Minister.

Lord Halifax, the Prime Minister who had surrendered after France fell, stood beside Beaverbrook, overtopping him by a foot. Halifax was bald now, his cadaverous face an ashen shadow beneath his hat, deep-set eyes staring over the crowd with a curious blankness. Beside him stood Beaverbrook's coalition colleagues: Home Secretary Oswald Mosley, tall and ramrod-straight, India Secretary Enoch Powell, only forty but seeming far older, black-moustached and darkly saturnine, Viscount Swinton, the Dominions

Office Secretary and David's own minister, tall and aristocratic, Foreign Secretary Rab Butler with his pouched froggy face, and the Coalition Labour leader Ben Greene, one of the few Labour figures who had admired the Nazis in the 1930s. When Labour split in 1940 Herbert Morrison had led the Pro-Treaty minority that went into coalition with Halifax; he was one of those politicians for whom ambition was all-consuming. But he had resigned in 1943; the degree of British support for Germany had become too much for him, as it had for some other politicians such as the Conservative Sam Hoare; all had retreated into private life with peerages.

Also standing in their dark coats were representatives of the Dominions; David recognized some of the High Commissioners from work, like the thickset, frowning Vorster of South Africa. Then behind them came ambassadors representing the other nations who had fought in the Great War: Germany's Rommel, Mussolini's son-in-law Ciano, the ambassadors of France and Japan, Joe Kennedy from America. Russia, though, had no representative; Britain, as Germany's ally, was still formally at war with the Soviet Union though she had no troops to spare for that giant meat-grinder, the German–Soviet war, which had gone on, over a 1,200-mile front, for eleven years now.

A little way off a group of men stood round an outside-broadcast camera, an enormous squat thing trailing thick wires, *BBC* emblazoned on the side. Beside it the heavy form of Richard Dimbleby could be seen speaking into a microphone, though he was too far off for David to hear anything.

Sarah shivered, rubbing her gloved hands together. 'Golly, it's cold. Poor Dad will feel it standing around waiting for the march past to start.' She looked at the Cenotaph, the bare white memorial. 'God, it's all so sad.'

'At least we know we'll never go to war with Germany again,' Irene said.

'Look, there she is.' Betty spoke in tones of hushed reverence.

The Queen had come out of the Home Office. Accompanied by the Queen Mother and her grandmother, old Queen Mary, equerries carrying their wreaths, she took her place in front of the Archbishop. Her pretty young face was ill suited to her black clothes. This was one of her few public appearances since her father's death early in the year. David thought she looked tired and afraid. Her expression reminded him of the late King's in 1940, when George VI rode down Whitehall in an open carriage beside Adolf Hitler, on the Führer's state visit after the Berlin Peace Treaty. David, still convalescing from frostbite caught in Norway, had watched the ceremony on the new television his father had bought, one of the first in the street, when the BBC resumed broadcasting. Hitler had looked in seventh heaven, beaming, flushed and rosy-cheeked, his dream of an alliance with the Aryan British at last fulfilled. He smiled and waved at the silent crowd, but the King had sat expressionless, only raising a hand occasionally, his body angled away from Hitler's. Afterwards David's father had said 'enough', that was it, he was off to live with his brother in New Zealand, and David would come too if he knew what was good for him, never mind his Civil Service job. Thank God, he added feelingly, David's mother hadn't lived to see this.

Sarah was looking at the Queen. 'Poor woman,' she said.

David glanced over. He said very quietly, 'She shouldn't have let them make her their puppet.'

'What alternative did she have?'

David didn't answer.

People in the crowd glanced at their watches, then they

all fell silent, removing hats and caps as, across Westminster, Big Ben boomed out eleven times. Then, shockingly loud in the still air, came the sound of a big gun firing, marking the moment the guns had stopped in 1918. Everyone bowed their heads for the two minutes' silence, remembering the terrible costs of Britain's victory in the Great War, or perhaps, like David, those of her defeat in 1940. Two minutes later the field-gun on Horse Guards Parade fired again, ending the silence. A bugler sounded the notes of the last post, indescribably haunting and sad. The crowd listened, bareheaded in the winter cold, the only sound an occasional stifled cough. Every time he attended the ceremony David wondered that nobody in the crowd ever burst out crying, or, remembering the recent past, fell shrieking to the ground.

The last note died away. Then, to the sound of the 'Funeral March' played by the band of the Brigade of Guards, the young Queen bore a wreath of poppies that looked too big for her to carry, laid it down on the Cenotaph, and stood with bowed head. She walked slowly back to her place and the Queen Mother followed. 'So young to be a widow,' Sarah said.

'Yes.' David had noticed a faint smoky tang in the air and, looking up Whitehall for a moment, saw a slight haze. There would be fog tonight.

The rest of the Royal Family laid their wreaths, followed by the military leaders, the Prime Minister and politicians, and representatives of the Empire governments. The base of the stark, simple monument was now carpeted in the dark green wreaths with their red poppies. Then Germany's ambassador, Erwin Rommel, one of the victors of the 1940 campaign in France, stepped forward, trim and military, Iron Cross pinned to his breast, his handsome face stern and sad. The wreath he bore was enormous, larger even than the

Queen's. In the centre, on a white background, was a swastika. He laid the wreath and stood, head bowed, for a long moment before turning away. Behind him Joseph Kennedy, the veteran American ambassador, waited. It was his turn next.

Then, from behind David, came a sudden shouting. 'End Nazi control! Democracy now! Up the Resistance!' Something sailed over the heads of the crowd and crashed at Rommel's feet. Sarah gasped. Irene and some of the other women in the crowd screamed. The steps of the Cenotaph and the bottom of Rommel's coat were instantly streaked with red and for a moment David thought it was blood, that someone had thrown a bomb, but then he saw a paint-pot rattle down the steps onto the pavement. Rommel did not flinch, just stood where he was. Ambassador Kennedy, though, had jumped back in panic. Policemen were reaching for truncheons and pistols. A group of soldiers, rifles at the ready, stepped forward. David saw the Royal Family being hurried away.

'Nazis out!' someone called from the crowd. 'We want Churchill!' Policemen were vaulting the barriers now. A couple of men in the crowd had also produced guns and looked fiercely around: Special Branch undercover men. David pulled Sarah to him. The crowd parted to let the police through, and he glimpsed a struggle off to his right. He saw a baton raised, heard someone call out, 'Get the bastards!' encouragingly to the police.

Sarah said, 'Oh God, what are they doing?'

'I don't know.' Irene was holding Betty, the old woman weeping, while Steve was staring at the melee with a face like thunder. The whole crowd was talking now, a susurrating murmur from which the occasional shout could be heard. 'Bloody Communists, beat their heads in!' 'They're right, get the Germans out!'

A British general, a thin man with a sunburned face and grey moustache, climbed the steps of the Cenotaph, carrying a megaphone, picking his way through the wreaths, and called for order from the crowd.

'Did they get them?' Sarah asked David. 'I couldn't see.'

'Yes. I think there were just a few.'

'It's bloody treason!' Steve said. 'I hope they hang the buggers!'

The ceremony continued with the rest of the wreath-laying and then a short service led by Archbishop Headlam. He spoke a prayer, the microphone giving his voice an odd, tinny echo.

'O Lord, look down on us as we remember the brave men who have died fighting for Britain. We remember the legions who fell between 1914 and 1918, that great and tragic conflict which still marks us all, here and across all Europe. Lord, remember the pain of those gathered here today who have lost loved ones. Comfort them, comfort them.'

Then came the march past, the thousands of soldiers, many old now, marching proudly along in lines as the band played popular tunes from the Great War, each contingent laying a wreath. As always David and his family looked out for Sarah's father, but they didn't see him. The steps of the Cenotaph were still splotched with red, Rommel's swastika prominent among the wreaths. David wondered who the demonstrators had been. One of the independent pacifist groups perhaps; the Resistance would have shot Rommel, would have shot a lot of the Nazis stationed in Britain, but for the fear of reprisals. Poor devils, whoever they were; they would be getting a beating in a Special Branch Interrogation Centre now, or perhaps even in the basement of Senate House, the German embassy. As it had been an attack on Rommel, the British police might have handed the

demonstrators over. He felt powerless. He hadn't even contradicted Steve. But he had to keep his cover intact, never step out of line, try to play the model civil servant. All the more because of Sarah's family's past. David felt a stab of unreasonable irritation against his wife.

His eyes were drawn back to the veterans. An old man of about sixty, his face stern and defiant, was marching past, his chest thrust out proudly. On one side of his coat was pinned a row of medals but on the other was sewn a large, bright yellow Star of David. Jews knew to stay out of the limelight now, not to attract attention, but the old man had defied common sense to go on the march wearing a prominent star, although he could have got away with the little Star of David lapel badge all Jews had to wear now, very British and discreet.

Someone in the crowd shouted out 'Kike!' The old man did not flinch but David did, anger coursing through him. He knew that under the law he too should have worn a yellow badge, and should not be working in government service, an employment forbidden to Jews. But David's father, twelve thousand miles away, was the only other person who knew his mother had been that rare thing, an Irish Jew. And half a Jew was a Jew in Britain now; the penalty for concealing your identity was indefinite detention. In the 1941 census, when people were asked for the first time to state their religion, he had declared himself a Catholic. He had done the same thing whenever renewing his identity card, and the same again in the 1951 census, which this time also asked about Jewish parents or grandparents. But however often David pushed it all to the back of his mind, sometimes, in the night, he woke up terrified.

The rest of the ceremony went ahead without interruption, and afterwards they met up with Jim, Sarah's father, and

went back to David and Sarah's mock-Tudor semi in Kenton, where Sarah would cook dinner for them all. Jim had known nothing about the paint-throwing until his family told him, though he had noticed the red stain on the Cenotaph steps. He said almost nothing about it on the journey back, and neither did Sarah or David, though Irene and especially Steve were full of outraged indignation. When they got back to the house Steve suggested they watch the news, see what it said about the attack.

David switched on the television, rearranging the chairs to face it. He didn't like the way that in most houses now the furniture was arranged around the set; over the last decade, ownership of what some still called the idiot-box had spread to half the population; having a television was a mark of the sharp dividing line between rich and poor. It was coming to take over national life. It wasn't quite time for the news; a children's serial was on, a dramatization of some Bulldog Drummond adventure story, featuring Imperial heroes and treacherous natives. Sarah brought them tea and David passed round the cigarette-box. He glanced at Jim. Despite his conversion to pacifism after the Great War, his father-in-law always took part in the Remembrance Day parade; however much he loathed war, he honoured his old comrades. David wondered what he thought of the paint-throwing, but Jim's prosthetic mask was turned towards him. It was a good prosthesis, close-fitting and flesh-coloured; there were even artificial eyelashes on the flat painted eye. Sarah confessed once that when she was small the crude mask he wore then, made from a thin sheet of metal, had frightened her and when he sat her in his lap on one occasion she'd burst into tears and Irene had to take her away. Her mother had called her a nasty, selfish girl but Irene, four years older, had held her and said, 'You mustn't mind it. It's not Daddy's fault.'

The news came on. They watched the young Queen paying her respects, and listened to Dimbleby's sonorous, respectful reporting. But the BBC did not show the incident with Rommel; they simply passed from the Dominion representatives' wreath-laying to Ambassador Kennedy's. There was a flicker on the screen that you wouldn't notice unless you were looking for it, and no break in the commentary – the BBC technicians must have done a re-recording later.

'Nothing,' Irene said.

'They must have decided not to report it.' Sarah had come in from the kitchen to watch, flushed from cooking.

'Makes you wonder what else they don't report,' Jim said quietly.

Steve turned to him. He was wearing one of his glaringly bright sweaters, his plump stomach straining it unattractively. 'They don't want people to be upset,' he said. 'Seeing something like that happen on Remembrance Day.'

'People should know, though,' Irene said fiercely. 'They should see what these despicable terrorists do. In front of the Queen, too, poor girl! No wonder she's so seldom seen in public. It's a disgrace!'

David spoke up then, before he could stop himself. 'It's what happens when people aren't allowed to protest against their masters.'

Steve turned on him. He was still angry, looking for a scrap. 'You mean the Germans, I suppose.'

David shrugged non-committally, though he would have liked to knock every tooth out of Steve's head. His brother-in-law continued. 'The Germans are our partners, and jolly lucky for us they are, too.'

'Lucky for those who make money trading with them,' David snapped.

'What the devil's that supposed to mean? Is that a dig at my business in the Anglo-German Fellowship?'

David glowered at him. 'If the cap fits.'

'You'd rather have the Resistance people in charge, I suppose? Churchill – if the old warmonger's even still alive – and the bunch of Communists he's got himself in with. Murdering soldiers, blowing people up – like that little girl who stepped on one of their mines in Yorkshire last week.' He was beginning to get red in the face.

'Please,' Sarah said sharply. 'Don't start an argument.' She exchanged a look with Irene.

'All right.' Steve backed down. 'I don't want to spoil the day any more than those swine have spoiled it already. So much for civil servants being impartial,' he added sarcastically.

'What was that, Steve?' David asked sharply.

'Nothing.' Steve raised his hands, palms up. 'Pax.'

'Rommel,' Jim said, sadly. 'He was a soldier in the Great War, like me. If only Remembrance Day could be less military. Then people mightn't feel the need to protest. There's rumours Hitler's very ill,' he added. 'He never broadcasts these days. And with the Democrats back in America, maybe changes will come.' He smiled at his wife. 'I always said they would, if we waited long enough.'

'I'm sure they'd have told us if Herr Hitler was ill,' Steve said dismissively. David glanced at Sarah, but said nothing.

Afterwards, when the rest of the family had driven off in Steve's new Morris Minor, David and Sarah argued. 'Why must you get into fights with him, in front of everyone?' Sarah asked. She looked exhausted; she had been waiting on the family all afternoon, her hair was limp now, her voice ragged. 'In front of Daddy, today of all days.' She hesitated, then continued bitterly, 'You were the one who told me to stay out of politics years ago, said it was safer to keep quiet.'

'I know. I'm sorry. But Steve can't keep his damn trap shut. Today it was just – too much.'

'How do you think these rows make Irene and me feel?'

'You don't like him any more than I do.'

'We have to put up with him. For the family.'

'Yes, and go visit him, look at that picture on the mantelpiece of him and his business pals with Speer, see his Mosley books and *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* on the bookshelf,' David said heavily. 'I don't know why he doesn't join the Blackshirts and have done with it. But then he'd have to exercise, lose some of that fat.'

Unexpectedly, Sarah shouted. 'Haven't we been through enough? Haven't we?' She stormed out of the lounge; David heard her go into the kitchen, and the door banged shut. He got up and began gathering the dirty plates and cutlery onto the trolley. He wheeled it into the little hall. As he passed the staircase he could not help looking up, to the torn wallpaper at the top and bottom of the stairs, where the little gates had stood. He and Sarah had talked, since Charlie died, about getting new wallpaper. But like so much else, they had never got round to it. He would go to her in a minute, apologize, try to close the ever-growing gap a little. Though he knew it could not really be closed, not with the secrets he had to keep.