

No man is an Iland, intire of it selfe; every man is a peece of the Continent, a part of the maine; if a Clod bee washed away by the Sea, Europe is the lesse, as well as if a Promontorie were, as well as if a Mannor of thy friends or of thine owne were; any mans death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankinde; And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; It tolls for thee. —John Donne 1

He lay flat on the brown, pine-needed floor of the forest, his chin on his folded arms, and high overhead the wind blew in the tops of the pine trees. The mountainside sloped gently where he lay; but below it was steep and he could see the dark of the oiled road winding through the pass. There was a stream alongside the road and far down the pass he saw a mill beside the stream and the falling water of the dam, white in the summer sunlight. “Is that the mill?” he asked. “Yes.” “I do not remember it.” “It was built since you were here. The old mill is farther down; much below the pass.” He spread the photostated military map out on the forest floor and looked at it carefully. The old man looked over his shoulder. He was a short and solid old man in a black peasant’s smock and gray iron-stiff trousers and he wore rope-soled shoes. He was breathing heavily from the climb and his hand rested on one of the two heavy packs they had been carrying. “Then you cannot see the bridge from here.” “No,” the old man said. “This is the easy country of the pass where the stream flows gently. Below, where the road turns out of sight in the trees, it drops suddenly and there is a steep gorge—” “I remember.” “Across this gorge is the bridge.” “And where are their posts?” “There is a post at the mill that you see there.” The young man, who was studying the country, took his glasses from the pocket of his faded, khaki flannel shirt, wiped the lenses with a handkerchief, screwed the eyepieces around until the boards of the mill showed suddenly clearly and he saw the wooden bench beside the door; the huge pile of sawdust that rose behind the open shed where the circular saw was, and a stretch of the flume that brought the logs down from the mountainside on the other bank of the stream. The stream showed clear and smoothlooking in the glasses and, below the curl of the falling water, the spray from the dam was blowing in the wind. “There is no sentry.” “There is smoke coming from the millhouse,” the old man said. “There are also clothes hanging on a line.” “I see them but I do not see any sentry.” “Perhaps he is in the shade,” the old man explained. “It is hot there now. He would be in the shadow at the end we do not see.” “Probably. Where is the next post?” “Below the bridge. It is at the roadmender’s hut at kilometer five from the top of the pass.” “How many men are here?” He pointed at the mill. “Perhaps four and a corporal.” “And below?” “More. I will find out.” “And at the bridge?”