

Outline notes

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STEEP FALL

1. It is January 1948. Europe is slowly recovering from the Second World War. President Truman has presented Congress with the Marshall Plan, a scheme to aid European economic recovery, but the cost is \$4 billion and Republicans are opposed, especially as some of the money will go to Germany.

Also recovering from the war is the Baxter family. Sidney Baxter, 54, is a self-made millionaire. However, he spent the war manufacturing military vehicles at low profits and is now finding it hard to make money in post-war austerity. He strongly favours the Marshall Plan. His elder son was killed in North Africa. His second son, Jack, 31, lost an arm in the Normandy invasion and is now a Member of Parliament, having been elected in the Labour landslide of 1945. There is also a daughter, Annabel, 29. During the war, she was a secret agent with SOE.

They are gathered for the weekend at Steepfall, the family home on the edge of a cliff on England's south coast. Annabel looks up from a magazine and says: "How extraordinary." She shows Jack a photograph.

The picture was taken here at Steepfall ten years ago. Jack, then an undergraduate at Cambridge (French & German) had brought some university friends home for a weekend. The picture shows them on the lawn, in tweed jackets and open-necked shirts, posing for the camera. The magazine article is about how many of them died in the war.

But Annabel points out something wrong. Ronald Trumper, known as Trumps, was here that weekend. A friend of Jack's, he arrived at Cambridge searching for a religion. He became a Buddhist briefly, flirted with communism, then turned to jingoistic conservatism, and even proposed the motion: Communism is an experiment that has failed, and deservedly so.

Annabel is sure Trumps was in this picture. She doesn't say so, but she had a brief romantic fling with him. Also, something happened in Trumps's personal life that weekend. But now he has gone, deleted from the photo.

Jack is not sure Trumps was there. Annabel goes to fetch the family album to prove it. But the photo has been removed from the album.

2. Jack is summoned to see the Prime Minister and offered a post as junior minister in the Foreign Office. His special area of responsibility will be Germany.

Since the war, Germany has been divided into four zones. The capital, Berlin, though similarly divided, lies deep within the Russian zone.

Jack believes strongly that the rise of Hitler was caused, at least in part, by the harsh terms the Versailles Treaty imposed on Germany (and that American economic sanctions against Japan caused Pearl Harbour). The best way to prevent another war is to make Germany a prosperous democratic country. This argument is hard for veterans to swallow, but Jack, as a wounded war hero, makes a persuasive advocate, which is why Attlee is giving him this job. Two key elements are the Marshall Plan and the reunification of Germany.

As well as the opposition of Republicans and veterans, this policy has a formidable enemy in Josef Stalin. The argument for a strong Germany is too subtle for Stalin's peasant realpolitik. He remembers that Russia has been invaded by Germany twice in 20 years, and his solution is to keep Germany divided, impoverished and weak.

3. Annabel speaks to the editor of the magazine that printed the photograph. After much evasion he admits that he doctored the picture on instructions from MI6.

4. Jack in his new post is part of the government ministry that supervises MI6. He asks why they doctored the picture. They refuse to tell him. As a new boy he is reluctant to make a fuss, but he remains puzzled and uneasy.

5. Annabel goes to see a relative of Trumps but gets nowhere.

6. Jack meets with a group of MPs opposed to reunification. Their leader, Healey Jones, is the communist MP for a Welsh constituency, and was at the Steepfall weekend. Jack tries to reason with him about Germany but realises he is just parroting

the Moscow line.

7. Annabel sees Healey, who denies vehemently that Trumps was there that weekend.
8. The Marshall Plan is in trouble in Congress. Then in February 1948 there is a Soviet-backed coup in Czechoslovakia. This changes the minds of Republicans, who begin to see the plan as a bulwark against communism.

Jack is taken by surprise by the coup and is humiliated in the House of Commons. He asks why MI6 gave him no warning. He does not get a satisfactory answer. His boss demands to know how much money and how many staff MI6 devote to Kremlin watching, but after a sinister visit from an MI6 person he drops the question.

9. Entering her London flat, Annabel surprises burglars. Her SOE training kicks in and she injures them seriously. But the police refuse to investigate and she concludes they were MI6.

The KGB plans to sabotage the reunification of West Germany. Their tool is Ronald Trumper, a KGB agent within MI6. During his job interview he claimed never to have met Prof Arnold Daisy, the Cambridge professor who recruits students as communist spies. If this lie were exposed he would be finished. Imagine his horror when he realised that a photo of him with Daisy was about to be published in a magazine!

- Trump's recruitment
- His MI6 interview
- His discovery of the existence of the photo
- How he doctored the pic
- How he learned of Annabel's inquiries.