

MURPHY AND THE KOMMANDANT

The two guards bundled Murphy along the corridor to the Kommandant's office. He was shoved down onto a low seat so that he had to look up to meet the Kommandant's eyes. The guards then took up positions outside the Kommandant's door.

Kom (*sipping from a glass of whiskey*) I vant to talk to you Murphy about your behaviour since you arrived at my camp.

Mur Yes you honour.

K Murphy - you are an Irishman?

M Well your honour I was born in Dublin, but my family moved to Coventry when I was fourteen.

K Ah Coventry! I think our Luftwaffe paid it a few visits - yes?

M It certainly did your worship. The city is in a state of chaos - and the Cathedral is totally destroyed. Two so-called Christian countries are trying to bomb each other to smithereens. War is much too serious a thing to be left to the military. Look at Ancient Rome now; it is merely a marvellous mass of broken and castaway wine-pots.

K I agree with much of what you say Murphy; but I vant to talk to you about your numerous escape attempts.

M Yes your honour.

K Murphy most prisoners try to escape once or perhaps twice.

M Yes your worship.

K But you have attempted to escape *five times* in one year.

M Yes your honour.

K Vi is that Murphy?

M Well you see sir I want to get home to start my writing career as soon as possible. My aim is to have the maximum insight with the minimum number of words.

K That sounds like a worthy objective.

Now Murphy three of these escape attempt involved tunnels.

M Yes your honour.

K And two involved vaulting the wires.

M Yes sir.

K Murphy one of the tunnel attempts involved a *Wooden Horse*.

M Yes your honour.

K I have to tell you Murphy that this method has been used before.

M Has it your worship?

K And few other prisoners have attempted to vault the wires.

M Yes you honour - well I was always good at athletics at Scho-ol.

K But Murphy you only got over the *inner wire* on both occasions!

M Yes sir - but you see I need more practice vaulting over two obstacles at the same time.

- K** I realise that Murphy.
Now Murphy, as you have tried to escape many times, I have the power to send you to the Eastern Front or to Belsen. *People tend not to come back from these places Murphy! What do you think of that?*
- M** Well sir as Shakspeare said:

"life's but a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more."

However I would advise you honour strongly not to pursue either course of action.
- K** Vi is that Murphy?
- M** Well your worship my information is that the Americans are only forty miles away to the West.
- K** *How do you know this?*
- M** And the Russians are about to take Berlin.
- K** *Donner und Blitzen!*
- M** It is well known that you have sent many prisoners to the Eastern Front and to extermination camps. A list of these has been sent to the Russians - and to the Americans! *I understand that the Russian Secret Police are very keen to talk to you Kommandant!*
- K** *You are threatening me Murphy!*
- M** I am just stating the facts sir.

K Ve...ll perhaps I could find a more lenient punishment for you
Murphy. A few days in the cooler perhaps. I stand astonished at my
own moderation Murphy!

M Thank you very much sir. *In the circumstances I felt sure that we
could reach an understanding. Good evening to you Kommandant!*

*There was a definite spring in Murphy's step as he was escorted back to his
block. The guards seemed to be treating him with new respect. Meanwhile
the Kommandant gulped down two more whiskeys in quick succession before
retiring early for the night.*

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02/04/08