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## PROLOGUE

# *The Fall of Gondolin*

On a chilly, misty morning, as the rain pattered into the puddles in his trench, a young man sat alone and dreamed of the lost city of Gondolin.

All around him were death and devastation. Thick black mud filled the bottom of the trench, so clinging and oozy you could be stuck in it for hours.

A rat scurried past, sleek and satisfied; then another, as big as a cat. But the young man barely noticed, lost in his thoughts.

A few yards away the other men were brewing tea. They all wore the same brown-green uniforms, so dirty they might have been creatures from beneath the earth – dwarves from some underground realm. Their faces were grimy, their eyes hollow. After months at the front, they had seen things they could never have imagined.

The young man looked up. The hammering of the guns had started up once more: *doom, doom, doom*, again and again and again.

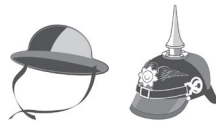
Over the top of the trench, he knew, was a scene of

utter horror. Splintered trees and shattered bodies . . . dying grasses and rotting reeds . . . pools choked with ash . . . dead things, dead faces in the water . . .

Yet for a brief, precious moment, it was as if he had stepped through a door and left the mud and misery far behind.

He saw a magical island, glittering in the western sea. He saw kings and wizards, elves and goblins. He saw three jewels, burning with the light of the gods. A dragon, coiled around its glittering treasure. A great mountain kingdom, hewn from the rock. A band of adventurers, creeping through the woods . . .

Then the guns crashed out again, and the ground itself gave a shudder. The dream was broken, and he was back in the trench.



The young man's name was Ronald, and he was an orphan. His father had died when he was three, his mother when he was twelve.

Born in 1892, he had grown up in Birmingham, in the heart of England: a busy, bustling city of factories and cinemas, trams and telephones.

But Ronald was no fan of machines and inventions. He had always been a daydreamer, wandering alone and inventing adventures.

*Prologue: The Fall of Gondolin*

He adored tales of the ancient past: gods and kings, heroes and monsters. Most of all, he loved the myths and sagas of the old North: Odin and Thor, trolls and dragons.

At school he had formed a secret society with three close friends: the Tea Club and Barrovian Society, or TCBS. Meeting in the school library, they smuggled in snacks for covert feasts, and spent their afternoons making up jokes and stories.

When their school years came to an end, they set out on the great adventure of grown-up life. Soon, they told themselves, they would write tales to enthrall the world.

Then came the war.

At first Ronald hesitated to join the army. He had always seen himself as a writer, a man of words – not a soldier.

But like his friends, he had been brought up to believe in honour, patriotism, courage and duty. At school they had learned about the knights of old. And on the sports field, they had been taught to put the team first.

So as soon as he had married his childhood sweetheart, Ronald joined the army. He was now a Second Lieutenant in the Lancashire Fusiliers, pledged to fight for his King and Country.

When his training was over, he boarded a ship to France, alongside hundreds of similarly nervous young men. They were bound for the bloodiest battlefield in human history, the great slaughterhouse of the Western Front.

And so, in the summer of 1916, Ronald found himself knee-deep in mud and water, near the banks of the River Somme. Nothing he had ever read – no fairy tale or

adventure story, no Greek myth or Viking saga – had prepared him for anything like this. This was a war like no other, a nightmare of shellfire and shrapnel, machine guns and flamethrowers.

Bodies hung from barbed-wire barriers. Explosive shells rained down from a burning sky. Horses clattered through wastelands of broken trees. The earth itself shook beneath the fury of the guns.

On the very first day of the Battle of the Somme, one of Ronald's dearest school friends was killed by a German shell. Another was killed that autumn, hit by shrapnel.

Now just two members of the TCBS remained. In only a few months, their secret society had been ripped apart.

And so, amid the ordeal of the trenches, Ronald took refuge in the world of his imagination. He brought together the myths he had loved as a boy, and combined them with the horrors he saw every day on the Somme. And he turned them into a single tragic story, the tale of the elves of Gondolin, besieged in their mountain city by the armies of the Dark Lord.

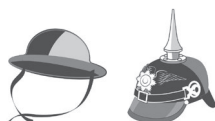
But in his story, the forces of evil were not merely armed with swords and spears. Thanks to their smiths and sorcerers, they could call on fire-breathing dragons made from bronze and iron – just like the tanks crawling through the mud of the Western Front.

*Some were all of iron so cunningly linked that they might flow like slow rivers of metal or coil themselves around and above all obstacles before them, and these were filled in their*

*Prologue: The Fall of Gondolin*

*innermost depths with the grimmest of the Orcs with scimitars  
and spears . . .*

There the young man sat, huddled in his trench, scribbling ideas as the shells rained down.



Today, you can walk into any bookshop in the world and find John Ronald Reuel Tolkien's books.

With *The Fall of Gondolin*, he began work on a universe of his own, the world of Middle-earth, forged in the fire of the trenches. And today books like *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, his masterpieces of adventure and comradeship, are known and loved by readers in every country on earth.

But this book tells the story that lies behind them – the vast and terrible saga of the First World War – or, as people called it at the time, the Great War.

Breaking like a tidal wave over Europe in the summer of 1914, the war came to engulf almost all the globe. Two mighty power blocs struggled for mastery: the Allies, led by Britain, France and Russia; and the Central Powers, led by Germany, Austria-Hungary and Turkey.

Both sides threw millions of men into the heart of the inferno. Before long, soldiers from every corner of the



planet, from India, Africa, Australia and the Americas, were on their way to join them.

This was the greatest clash of empires in human history. Mighty realms were smashed to pieces, maps ripped up and redrawn, entire nations made and broken.

But at the heart of it all were millions of ordinary people. Not just soldiers and sailors, air aces and submarine commanders, but nurses, ambulance drivers, Boy Scouts and factory girls. This is their story.

Even at the time, many of them wondered how it had happened. How, and why, had so many rich, powerful countries hurled themselves into such an abyss of fire and rage?

To answer that question, we have to go back even further in time. So let us leave the trenches for now, and return to a poor, forgotten corner of southern Europe, more than a hundred years ago. The sun is shining, the birds are singing and all seems right with the world.

And here, far from the eyes of kings and emperors, two small figures are trudging across the mountains, towards their place in history . . .



G.R.

**BRITAINS**



"WANTS

**YOU**

**JOIN YOUR COUNTRY'S ARMY**  
**GOD SAVE THE KING**

**ENGLAND EXPECTS  
EVERY MAN  
TO DO HIS DUTY**

**JOIN THE ARMY  
TO-DAY**

PART ONE

THE NIGHTMARE BEGINS



## *The Black Hand*

One fine summer morning, in the early years of the last century, a boy and his father set off on a journey.

Stepping out of their ramshackle stone farmhouse, they loaded their packs onto a horse's back, closed the gate behind them and began the long hike east across the hills.

For a long time they walked, tracing the path along the valley. It was a gentle, peaceful day, the silence broken only by the slow, steady drumbeat of the horse's hooves.

At nightfall they rested. In the woods, the boy heard wolves howling in the darkness.

Next morning, as the sun rose above the eastern peaks, he and his father hoisted their bags onto the horse and set off again.

For eighty miles they walked, day after long day. At last, through the dust, they saw the town ahead. Here, the boy's father said gruffly, they would catch the train to the capital.

At the station, his father counted out the precious coins, and held out his hand for the tickets. They took their places on the platform, and waited.

The minutes ticked by. And then, far away, the boy heard the shriek of the whistle, the rattle of wheels, the hiss of steam, and knew the great metal beast was approaching.

The boy's name was Gavrilo. He was a country lad, pale and thin, the son of a peasant farmer from the western hills of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

For all his thirteen years Gavrilo had known only his home village of Obljaj, so small most maps didn't even show it. There he had learned to look after the chickens, to guard the sheep and to read and write.

Gavrilo was bright and bookish, and his mother had great hopes for him. Obljaj was too small, too backward, for her precious boy. So now he was on his way to the capital, Sarajevo, to go to school.

And there, Gavrilo would do something most children only dream about. In one single, blinding moment, he would change the world.



The Principis had lived in the Bosnian highlands for as long as anyone could remember, scratching out a living from a land that seemed unaltered by the passage of time.

Yet beyond the forested hills, the world was changing. A few weeks before Gavrilo was born, in the summer of

## *The Black Hand*

1894, the first bottles of Coca-Cola had changed hands in distant America.

Hundreds of miles from Obljaj, inventors had already made the first telephones, motor cars, light bulbs and film cameras. When Gavrilo was nine, the Wright brothers built the first working aeroplane.

Even Bosnia, a poor, rural country in southern Europe's Balkan peninsula, was not immune to change. For centuries it had been a province of the Ottoman Empire, ruled by the Turkish Sultan in faraway Constantinople.\*

But the Ottoman Empire was in steep decline. By the time Gavrilo was born, Bosnia had been taken over by the neighbouring empire of Austria-Hungary, governed from Vienna by the Habsburg family.

The Habsburg Emperor, the elderly Franz Joseph, ruled one of the most ancient states in Europe. In some ways it was an endearingly old-fashioned world of glittering dances, sumptuous uniforms, glorious music and colossal cakes.

Yet Franz Joseph could never rest easy. Among his fifty million subjects were Austrians, Hungarians, Czechs, Croats, Poles, Ukrainians, Romanians, Slovaks, Slovenes, Bosnians, Italians and Jews, many of whom utterly despised one another.

For years people had been predicting the end of his ramshackle empire. Somehow, though, it kept going. But how long could it last?

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\* The Ottomans were Turks, so their empire was often called Turkey, even though more than half of their subjects weren't actually Turkish. Their capital, Constantinople, is now called Istanbul.



As imperial rulers go, the Austrians were not really so bad. They had a magnificent capital in Vienna, with some of Europe's most brilliant artists and musicians. And in Bosnia they had built new railways, factories and schools.

But most Bosnians remained grindingly poor. Even after decades of Austrian rule, nine out of ten could not read and write. Gavrilo was a rare exception.

To some young Bosnians, the answer seemed obvious. They should throw off the Austrian yoke, and run their country for themselves.

For inspiration, these young hotheads looked to their neighbour, Serbia, whose people had similar peasant customs and spoke the same South Slavic language.

Like Bosnia, Serbia had been a province of the Ottoman Empire. But after rising up against Turkish rule, it had become a little kingdom in its own right. A proud, warlike people, the Serbs hated the Austrians. They saw themselves as the champions of the South Slavs, fighting heroically against foreign oppression.

To the Austrians in their grand coffee houses, the Serbs were barbaric bandits. But they could not ignore them. For as the Austrians knew, many Serbs had fixed their eyes on Bosnia, and would not rest until they had brought it into their own kingdom.

Of all the Serbian groups, none was more mysterious than a secret society known as the Black Hand. Its leader, a Serbian intelligence officer, called himself 'Apis' after the sacred bull of the ancient Egyptians.

It was Apis who designed the Black Hand's insignia: a

## *The Black Hand*

skull and crossbones, with a phial of poison, a dagger and a bomb. That summed up the group's approach.

To join the Black Hand, you had to bow before a hooded figure in a darkened room. There you swore a solemn oath, on the blood of your ancestors, to sacrifice your life for the cause.

Most people would never have dreamed of having anything to do with the Black Hand. But Gavrilo Princip was not most people.



Gavrilo's train pulled into Sarajevo in August 1907. It was a city of fewer than fifty thousand people – nothing compared with great European cities such as Vienna, Berlin, London and Paris.

To a boy from a country village, though, it seemed overwhelming: the streets teeming with life; the old bazaar crowded with blacksmiths and carpet-sellers; the mosques and churches buzzing with activity.

At first, Gavrilo rose to the challenge. Before saying farewell, his father had found him lodgings with an old widow, and he knuckled down to work.

In school he worked hard and never missed a lesson. In the evenings, he curled up with the adventures of the Three Musketeers and the mysteries of Sherlock Holmes.

But in his second year Gavrilo's marks began to dip. He ran out of money and struggled to focus. By the start of his third year he was so distracted that he missed lesson after lesson.

His school career went from bad to worse. He dropped out, then dropped back in again. At last, when he was seventeen, he failed to turn up to a crucial exam, and that was that.

The truth was that Gavrilo had found a new passion. Not books, or football, or even romance, but something much more dangerous – politics.

Whenever he thought of the Austrians, his heart thumped with hatred. Under their empire, he thought, ordinary Bosnians were 'treated like cattle'. He wanted to punish the Austrians for his misfortunes, and dreamed of revenge for the long years of occupation.

Other boys sometimes talked like that too, especially late at night, after a few drinks. But Gavrilo was different. He really meant it.

In the spring of 1912 he left Sarajevo and hitchhiked across the border to Serbia. He was bound for the capital, Belgrade, the home of the Black Hand.

For two years Gavrilo hung around the streets of Belgrade. But it was not the paradise he had imagined.

He had no money, no job and no home. He drifted in and out of college. He tried to join the Serbian army, but was turned down because he looked so frail.

'Wherever I went,' he said later, 'people took me for a weakling: indeed, for a man who had been completely ruined by too much reading.'

## *The Black Hand*

In the coffee houses of Belgrade, he and his friends dreamed up schemes to fight for Bosnian independence. But the months passed, and nothing happened. A year went by, then another, and Gavrilo Princip remained a nobody.

And then, in the spring of 1914, one of his friends came into the café with a newspaper cutting. The article said that at the end of June, the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, would be making a special visit to Sarajevo.

And as Gavrilo looked down at the page, his eyes widened.



If you had told Franz Ferdinand that, in the future, his name would be eternally entwined with that of Gavrilo Princip, he would never have believed you.

At the age of fifty, the Archduke seemed the picture of Austrian self-satisfaction. He was a big, heavy man, with a close-cropped haircut and an enormous curled moustache.

His great passion was hunting. He had personally shot almost 275,000 animals, among them tigers, elephants and kangaroos.

This makes Franz Ferdinand sound very objectionable. And at the time many people found him a grumpy, difficult fellow.

In those days, though, hunting was enormously popular, especially among the upper classes. And beneath the stiff uniform, Franz Ferdinand did have a softer side.

As a young man he had fallen in love with a lady-in-waiting, Sophie Chotek. But under Vienna's strict court rules, she was just not grand enough. As the heir to the throne, he was expected to marry somebody of equal rank.

But Franz Ferdinand stuck to his guns. It was Sophie or nobody. So his uncle, the Emperor, gave his permission – as long as the Archduke swore a humiliating oath.

Under the terms of the oath, Sophie could never be Empress. At court she would always be treated as an inferior. She could not travel in her husband's carriage and could not sit next to him at grand dinners. And to cap it all, their children could never succeed to the throne.

Reluctantly Franz Ferdinand took the oath. If he wanted to marry the love of his life, he had no choice.

He never regretted it, though. Marrying Sophie, he once said, was the best thing he had ever done. She was his 'entire happiness', while their three young children were his 'whole delight and pride'.

'I sit with them and admire them the whole day,' the Archduke said, 'because I love them so.'

Franz Ferdinand spent a lot of time thinking about the future of the empire. He wanted to be a modern monarch and had plans for a 'United States of Greater Austria', with the fifteen member states running their own affairs in their own languages.

But the years went by and his elderly uncle, Franz

## *The Black Hand*

Joseph, refused to die. So Franz Ferdinand had to wait, bursting with impatience.

And always there was the shadow of Sophie's status. To Franz Ferdinand's fury, the Viennese still treated her like a peasant, looking down their noses at her at balls and dinners.

So when he was invited to inspect the Austrian troops in Bosnia, he jumped at the chance. Away from the court, he and Sophie could travel as husband and wife, just like any other couple.

As luck would have it, they would arrive in Sarajevo on 28 June. For Franz Ferdinand and Sophie, no day was more sacred.

It was the anniversary of the day he had sworn the oath.



In Belgrade, Gavrilo Princip raised his eyes from the newspaper.

The Archduke was coming to Bosnia? The heir to the Austrian throne, the symbol of everything he hated, was coming to Sarajevo?

It was almost too good to be true.

Over the next few weeks, Gavrilo and his friends drew up their plans. This was their chance to write their names into the history books.

But they were little more than boys. They needed guns, bombs and help getting back to Sarajevo. And this was where the Black Hand, with its connections in Serbian military intelligence, came in.

On 27 May a Black Hand agent handed them four pistols, six grenades and some tiny phials of poison, so they could kill themselves once the deed was done. That way, the Austrians would be unable to interrogate them and they would be remembered as heroic martyrs.

The next day Gavrilo left Belgrade by boat. Four days later he crossed the border into Bosnia, guided by the Black Hand's contacts in the Serbian police.

On 4 June he arrived in Sarajevo. Quietly, patiently, like a hunter stalking his prey, he waited.



Sunday, 28 June 1914. After days of rain, it was a beautiful sunny morning.

Franz Ferdinand was on excellent form. The first three days of his trip had gone splendidly. It was such a treat to be away with his Sophie, and the locals had shown them every kindness.

So far they had been staying just outside Sarajevo, in a grand new spa hotel. But on Saturday afternoon Sophie had suggested a quick trip into the capital to do some shopping.

## *The Black Hand*

Touring the crowded bazaar had been great fun, and the shopkeepers had been so friendly. When they got back to the hotel, Sophie even teased a nervous local politician, Dr Sumarić, about it.

‘My dear Dr Sumarić, you are wrong,’ she said cheerfully. ‘Wherever we have been, everyone, down to the last Serb, has greeted us with such great friendliness, politeness and true warmth, that we are very happy with our visit.’

Dr Sumarić smiled weakly. He knew the next day, Sunday, was not just a special day for the couple. For the Serbs it was a day of tragic suffering.

Sunday was the anniversary of the medieval Battle of Kosovo, when the Serbs had been crushed by the Ottomans. Wasn’t there a risk that some young lunatic would be tempted to do something stupid?

Yet as the couple strolled out of their hotel on Sunday morning, the politicians’ fears seemed to fade away in the morning sunshine. It was, after all, such a lovely day.

The visitors were splendidly dressed. The Archduke wore his sky-blue general’s uniform, his huge helmet topped with green peacock feathers. His wife wore a long white silk dress, beneath a wide-brimmed hat with a white veil.

Six cars were waiting to take them through the streets of Sarajevo. Five of them were for local officials, policemen and the couple’s attendants.

The sixth, an elegant Austrian-made automobile, was for Franz Ferdinand and Sophie. The canvas roof had been rolled back, so the crowds would be able to see them.

They took their seats. The drivers started their engines,



and the motorcade moved off, with Franz Ferdinand's car second in line.

It was only a short journey to the Town Hall, and a very pretty one. Sarajevo was nestled in a valley, along the banks of a little river. On either side rose the minarets of the local Muslims' mosques.

The cars rolled along the left-hand bank of the river, the Appel Quay, heading east. The pavements were lined with cheering crowds, the buildings decorated with black and yellow Habsburg flags. Sarajevo didn't often get famous visitors, so this was a day to remember.

At 10.10, the cars reached the Ćurumija Bridge. Everything was going perfectly.

And then, as if from nowhere, a bomb fell through the sky.



It was not Gavrilo Princip who threw the bomb, but another member of his gang. Earlier that morning, six of them had taken up positions along the riverbank, so they could be sure of getting the Archduke.

The first young man, frozen with nerves, had not even thrown his grenade. But the second was more decisive.

His bomb missed its target by inches. Bouncing off the

back of Franz Ferdinand's car, it exploded beneath the next car in the motorcade, in a vast cloud of dust and splinters.

Amazingly, none of the passengers was killed, though one of the Austrian officers was bleeding from a bad head wound.

The cars screeched to a halt. White-faced with shock, Franz Ferdinand shouted at his men to look after the wounded. Then he glanced at his wife.

'Come on,' he said. 'That fellow was clearly mad. Let's carry on with the programme.'

At that, some of his aides gasped in disbelief. But he was the Archduke of Austria. If he was brave enough to carry on, so be it.

At the Town Hall, the local bigwigs were waiting nervously to welcome their guests. Garbled rumours of the incident were just coming in. But in his panic and confusion, the mayor decided to plough ahead with his speech as if nothing had happened.

The mayor had only just started speaking when Franz Ferdinand broke in. 'Mr Mayor, what is the good of this?' he roared. 'I have come here as your guest, and someone throws a bomb at me!'

There was a long, horrified silence. Then Sophie stepped forward and whispered gently in her husband's ear.

'Very well,' Franz Ferdinand said to the mayor, his voice a little calmer. 'You may speak.'

Shaking with nerves, the mayor got to the end of his speech. Then it was Franz Ferdinand's turn.

One of his men handed him his notes, and Franz

Ferdinand frowned. They were drenched in the blood of the officers in the bomb-damaged car. But he read the speech, just as planned.

Now, for a few moments, the couple split up. Franz Ferdinand went off to send a telegram to the Emperor, assuring him that he and Sophie were perfectly all right.

Meanwhile Sophie went upstairs to meet a group of local women. Not surprisingly, she seemed quiet, almost sad.

At one point she saw a local girl, who had come with her mother. 'This girl is just about as tall as my Sophie,' she said wistfully.\*

She was looking forward to seeing her daughter again, she said. 'We have never left our children alone for so long.'



The clock ticked on. 10.30 . . . 10.35 . . .

At 10.40, the couple left the Town Hall and headed down the steps towards the cars. Originally the plan had been to tour the old city, but Franz Ferdinand wanted to check on the injured men in the state hospital.

'I'll come with you,' Sophie said.

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\* Franz Ferdinand's daughter was called Sophie after her mother, as was very common in those days.

## *The Black Hand*

The cars moved off. For extra security, their friend Count von Harrach had positioned himself on the running board on the car's left-hand side, in case there was another attack.

So they headed back along the Appel Quay. There were still people lining the streets, waving and clapping.

At Moritz Schiller's delicatessen, by the Latin Bridge, the first driver turned right. Nobody had told him about the change of plan, and he didn't know they were heading to the hospital.

In Franz Ferdinand's car, the second driver began to follow him around the corner. 'No!' somebody shouted from the car behind. 'This is the wrong way!'

The driver braked abruptly. The engine cut out. For a moment, the couple's car was motionless, as if frozen in time.

Outside Schiller's shop, the spectators were still cheering.

It was 10.45 in the morning, and the fate of millions of people hung in the balance.

From the crowd on the right, a young man stepped forward. He was thin, frail and shabbily dressed, with a dark unblinking stare.

Gavrilo Princip took out his pistol, levelled it at the car and fired.



The car gave an almighty jerk.

The driver had finally restarted the engine, and was swinging back around the corner.

From the running board on the far side, Count von Harrach leaned into the car to check the couple were all right. To his horror, he saw a trickle of blood coming from Franz Ferdinand's mouth.

At his side, Sophie was deathly white. 'My God!' she said unsteadily. 'What has happened to you?'

A moment later she slumped over, her head falling into her husband's lap. Her dress was wet with blood.

At first Harrach thought she had fainted. Then he heard Franz Ferdinand's voice, quiet, almost gentle.

'Sophie, Sophie, don't die,' Franz Ferdinand said. 'Stay alive for our children!'

The helmet slipped from the Archduke's head. His body began to fall sideways. Harrach grabbed his collar to keep him upright.

'It is nothing,' Franz Ferdinand whispered. 'It is nothing . . . it is nothing . . . it is nothing . . .'

Then his eyes closed, and it was over.

## *Towards Doomsday*

Hundreds of miles to the north, the city of Vienna was in holiday mood.

It was a perfect Sunday afternoon, and the parks were packed. Courting couples strolled arm in arm. Giggling children skipped and played. The air was full of light and music, sunshine and laughter.

The moustachioed men in their smart straw hats, the elegant women in their sweeping dresses; the girls in their pinafores, the boys in their sailor suits . . . this was Vienna in the summer of 1914, an ancient capital rushing headlong into the twentieth century.

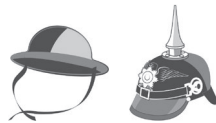
The people strolling in the parks had grown up in a world of dizzying change. Most of them lived longer, more comfortable lives than ever before. And thanks to the train, the steamship and the telegraph, the world seemed a friendlier, better-connected place than at any time in history.

Year by year, the old order of kings and emperors was giving way to the new. Across Europe workers were calling

for better pay, while millions of women were demanding the right to vote.

So if you had stopped the clock then, in the early afternoon of Sunday, 28 June, and asked the people of Vienna what the future would bring, most of them would have seen sunshine ahead.

This was an age of peace. There had not been a major European war for almost a century. There would never be another – would there?



In Vienna, the clocks chimed half-past two.

Just outside the capital, the young writer Stefan Zweig was enjoying the sunshine. He had found a quiet corner in a park and was engrossed in a book.

As his eyes travelled across the page, he was vaguely aware of ‘the wind in the trees, the twittering of the birds and the music floating across from the park’. The air was warm, the sky a perfect blue. It was ‘a day made to be happy.’

And then, abruptly, the music stopped. Instinctively, Zweig looked up from his book.

‘The crowd,’ he remembered, ‘also seemed to have undergone a change; it, too, had suddenly come to a halt. Something must have happened.’