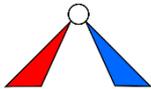


1788 CB

bncdoc.id	B0U
bncdoc.author	Kee, Robert
bncdoc.year	1991
bncdoc.title	A crowd is not company.
bncdoc.info	A crowd is not company. Sample containing about 41954 words from a book (domain: world affairs)
Text availability	Worldwide rights cleared
Publication date	1960-1974
Text type	Written books and periodicals
David Lee's classification	W_biography

<1788/c>	smoothly.’ ‘Look here: that was in broad daylight over a single strand of wire, not
 <p>Key: Footprint ConEn1 Footprint ConEn2 Footprint ConEn3</p>	<p>under fire from any machine guns, and with no patrolling goon with a gun to meet us on the other side. Quite apart from that, and even if the lights are fused properly, it will take double the time on the night itself. In the block we start running from just in front of the ladder, but on the night we’ve first of all got to run from the block to the wire, which is twenty yards away in the nearest place and then put the ladder up. Even the dimmest goon is going to realize there’s something queer going on in all that time. It’s murder.’ I saw his point. Still, I envied him. I had already been a prisoner nearly a year and had not yet escaped. It was like being an undergraduate a year without having been drunk. It was not so much the escape itself that mattered but being able to say you had done it. ‘It’s all right for old Ryan,’ Malleeson went on. ‘Bags of chaps will get over, chaps.’ Well, maybe the first four or five will, and he’s the first of the five. But after that the goon with the machine guns is going to get the range. No sir, I’m getting out of it’ That afternoon I walked round the circuit alone and thought about it. After all it would have a great element of surprise in its favour and although there might be some shooting it was doubtful if the Germans would know what they were shooting at, especially if good diversions were laid on. The same scheme had been tried at another camp with four ladders. Thirty-two men had got over and the only people hurt had been two patrolling guards hit by stray bullets. At tea I made one of the mistakes of my life. ‘Any chance of getting in at the end of that scheme?’ I asked Malleeson. He stopped thinking about the amount of jam he was taking and leant back in his chair. ‘You’re not considering ...’ ‘Yes.’ ‘You must be mad.’ He took some jam. ‘I’m sorry,’ he said. ‘You may be right, and you may get away with it. But I’m just not going to take the risk.’ ‘I think you’re very sensible if you feel like that about it. But what are my chances of getting onto it?’ ‘Fairly good, I should say. There’s</p>
	<p>a waiting list of three</p>
	<p>after the first ten and I don’t see why you shouldn’t persuade Ryan to let you be No. 4 on that. That’ll make you No. 14 on the whole thing. Of course people are talking pretty big at the moment but half of them are as ready to drop as I am.’ After tea I went out and saw Ryan. He had been playing football and lines of dust and sweat were pouring down his strained red face. ‘Sure,’ he said, in answer to my question, ‘and if one or two of the chaps drop out, you’ll have your chance. Good man.’ I went away wondering if I was being a fool. Still, there was no getting out of it now. I was only on the waiting list anyway and it wasn’t very likely that four people would drop out. But my uneasiness increased throughout the evening, and the words repeated themselves in my head: ‘There’s no getting out of it now.’ By the next morning I was feeling definitely unhappy. Malleeson had said that half the people were as ready to drop out as he was and he had already dropped out. I tried to forget about it and to go about my routine day as usual. After appel I collected some books from</p>

	<p>my locker - my locker was in a comer and there was always a pile of block rubbish in front of it so that it was a business to open and shut the door - and went out towards the library. A British orderly and a Polish civilian were pumping filth from one of the lavatories into a long cylindrical cart. The pump leaked and a jet of yellow liquid Splashed onto the path with every stroke. I waited behind the cart for them to stop and let me pass. As I waited, Ryan came out of a near-by block and called to me: 'Can I have a word with you, old boy?' We went out onto the circuit. 'Look, it so happens that a number of people have dropped out of the scheme for one reason or another, and there's now a place for you at the end of the team. Now, I feel I ought to warn you: you won't have quite such a good chance at the end as you would have at the front.' He paused. Perhaps I was expected to say something. I made a non-committal cluck at the back of my throat, but it came out higher than I had intended. 'Not that I think there's any danger of anyone getting hurt,' he added. `</p>
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