

*If you are in a group or a crowd, avoid standing in the middle, which is where they would expect you to hide.*

*If you fear that you are about to be found out, resist the temptation to own up. It is a fair assumption that the person questioning you or searching you will miss the obvious.*

She heard some shouting from behind the trees and over the shoulder of the soldier nearest to her she spotted two officers emerging. One of them was speaking loudly in bad French.

‘We are going to search you and then you can move on. Are any of you carrying weapons?’

Everyone around her was shaking their head. She noticed that Sylvie shook hers too.

He waited a while in case anyone might change their minds.

‘Are there any Jews in this group?’

There was silence. People glanced

suspiciously at those stood around them. At the word '*Jews*' the little girl's hand had tightened its grip on hers with a strength she could not have imagined. She looked down and saw that Sylvie had her head bowed and appeared to be sobbing. She realised the extent of her predicament. If they caught her looking after a Jewish child, she would have no excuses.

'My men will come and search you now. I am sure that you will all co-operate.'

Too late.

The soldiers spread the group out along the road and began searching people. Marcel was close to her and was searched before her. The soldier searching him gestured to him to remove his wristwatch. Marcel started to protest, until one of the officers walked over. He smiled, looked at the watch that had been passed to him, nodded approvingly and slipped it into his jacket pocket. Along the line, members of the group were being relieved of

possessions: watches, pieces of jewellery and even a bottle of cognac.

The soldier who came to search her appeared to be in his teens. His hands shook as he took her identity card. She noticed that his lips moved silently as he tried to read what it said. One of the officers appeared behind him and took the identity card.

‘You’ve come a long way.’ He handed her identity card back to her.

She nodded.

‘Is this your sister?’ He was staring intently at the little girl.

She gave the faintest of nods.

‘She is your sister, then?’

She hesitated. She had not said anything yet. She could do so now. They wouldn’t harm a child. The little girl now placed her other hand round her wrist, stroking her forearm as she did so.

‘Yes. She is my sister.’ She had replied in

German, speaking quietly and hoping that no one else in the group heard her. Trying to appear as relaxed as possible, she smiled sweetly at the officer who was probably in his mid-twenties, the same age as her. She threw her head back, allowing her long hair to settle over her shoulders.

*If you are an attractive woman – at that point the instructor had been looking directly at her, along with the rest of them – do not hesitate to use your charms on men.*

The officer raised his eyebrows approvingly and nodded.

‘And where did you learn to speak German?’

‘At school.’

‘A good school then. And does your sister have an identity card?’

It was too late. She should have realised this would happen. *Does he suspect something? She doesn't look anything like me. Her complexion is so much darker.* She had lost

the chance to tell them the truth.

‘She lost it.’

‘Where?’

‘In Amiens. A Gypsy stole it from her.’

The officer nodded knowingly. He understood. What do you expect? Gypsies. Don’t we warn people about them? Thieves. Almost as bad as the Jews. Almost.

He lowered himself down on his haunches so that he was at eye level with the little girl.

‘And what is your name?’

There was a pause. The little girl peered up at her for approval. She nodded and smiled.

Tell him.

‘Sylvie.’

‘Sylvie is a nice name. Sylvie what?’

‘Sylvie.’

‘What is your surname – your full name?’

‘Sylvie.’

‘So, your name is “Sylvie Sylvie”?’ The officer was beginning to sound exasperated.