

50 — THE POWER AND THE GLORY

It was as if an enemy were laying a gas-cloud across a whole territory, carefully, to see that nobody escaped. The rain spread and stayed just long enough, as though the enemy had his stop-watch out and knew to a second the limit of the lungs' endurance. The roof held the rain out for a while and then let it through — the twigs bent under the weight of water and shot apart: it came through in half a dozen places, pouring down in black funnels: then the downpour stopped and the roof dripped and the rain moved on, with the lightning quivering on its flanks like a protective barrage. In a few minutes it would reach the mountains: a few more storms like this and they would be impassable.

He had been walking all day and he was very tired: he found a dry spot and sat down. When the lightning struck he could see the clearing: all around was the gentle noise of the dripping water. It was nearly like peace, but not quite. For peace you needed human company — his aloneness was like a threat of things to come.

Graham Green