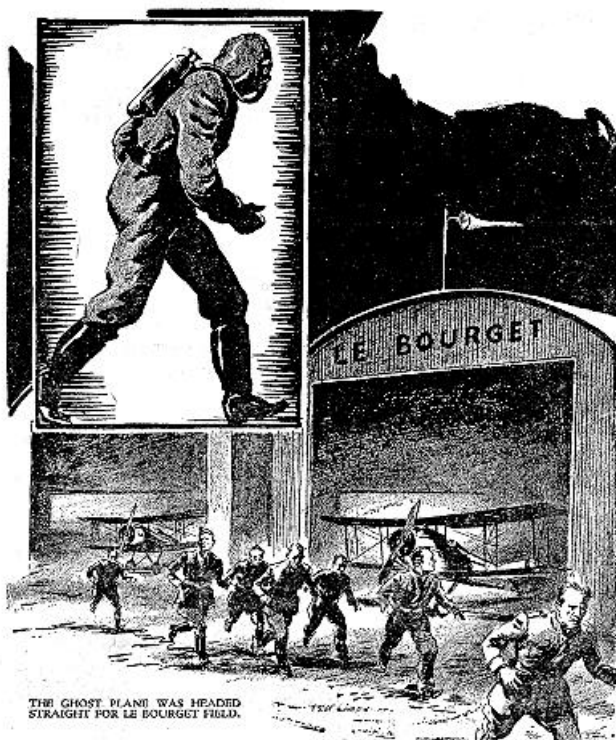


# PATROL OF THE SKY VULTURE

By Robert J. Hogan

*"Calling G-8—calling G-8! Unknown Death rides the Western Front!" And Death did ride the Front on invisible wings, with the hot breath of doom falling upon the luckless! G-8 heard the anxious call and lifted his Spad to the sky. He flew into the jaws of the enemy and perhaps his task was too great. But you can't blame a fighting man for trying, and shrieking his defiance at the laughing Gods of War!*



## PATROL OF THE SKY VULTURE

As told by G-8 to Robert J. Hogan

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### CHAPTER ONE Death's Vanishing Act

THE Battle Aces were seated at breakfast in the dining room of their apartment in the end hangar at Le Bourget when the phone rang. Nippy Weston, the little terrier ace, was first to answer.

Big Bull Martin, former All-American halfback, came charging into the living room as a fear-palsied voice crackled into Nippy's ear:

"G-8! The 19th Pursuits has just been wiped out; No report came from them since midnight. A few minutes ago, a special agent who was sent to investigate reported that there isn't a human being

within a mile of the field. All the ships—everything—is there, but no men."

Nippy Weston nodded, but his usual smile was gone.

"Yes, I know," he said. "You're late in getting the report. G-8 got the tip at twelve-thirty this morning. He's on the job now, somewhere in Germany."

Nippy hung up and turned to Bull Martin.

"G.H.Q.," he said. "I didn't expect they'd hear about it until about next Christmas. I wish I could pull a magic trick like that and make the whole German army vanish as completely."

"Listen, squirt," Bull growled, "if you think this is a time for joking you're crazy."

"I'm not joking," Nippy insisted. "I'd give my right arm if I could pull a stunt like that. And I'd give a fingernail or so right now if I could know where G-8 is and how he's making out. This is serious."

NIPPY WESTON was right—this situation was serious. Perhaps the most serious that G8, the Master Flying Spy, and his Battle Aces had yet encountered.

Shortly after midnight the report had reached G-8 from the 19th. With that information, he and Nippy had started for the field of the 19th in a D.H. two-seater.

He had found the report to be a ghastly truth. Not a living thing was left on the field. He had known some of the men at that Yank drome, too. There had been Captain Dickerson, the skipper. He had owned a big German police dog which he had captured as a pup. The last time G8 had been there he remembered that the police dog, a vicious animal, had been chained to a house built for him outside the little headquarters office. Now all that remained as a reminder of the dog was the house, the chain, and, fastened to the chain, a portion of the metal part of the dog's collar.

As G-8 and Nippy strode from one empty building to another, they sensed a faint odor. It was as though the bodies of animals or men had been burned here weeks before and the smell, like that of burning hair, still lingered ever so slightly.

The night had not been dark. There had been a moon, and far off to the northeast, they could see the towering peaks of the Vosges mountain range,

the northern part, behind the German lines, the southern part in Allied territory.

Later, they had returned to Le Bourget and there G-8 had changed to a disguise that made him appear as an old mountaineer. So dressed, he had flown his Spad into the northern Vosges Mountains and had hidden it at a little field away from any populated area.

Once well behind the German lines, he had started his work even before dawn. Knowing from past experience that it would be almost certainly fatal to try to get information from any soldiers in that area, he had decided to contact various natives of the mountains. He was working on the hunch that these mountains held the secret of the disappearance of the men of the 19th. Working from that angle, he was satisfied that the trouble had come from the German side of the Vosges Mountains because of the peculiar proximity of the towering cliffs to the 19th airdrome.

Dawn had spread light over the mountains when he rounded a turn in the dusty road and came face to face with a soldier. He was a corporal, tall, lean, and angular. His eyes held a mean glint as he strode up to the hobbling old man who was really G-8.

G-8 stepped to the side of the road to give the corporal plenty of room and tipped his hat as he was about to hobble past. The corporal swung around at him arrogantly and caught him by the arm.

"Wait, old man," he snapped. "Not so fast. Where do you think you're going?"

In a voice quavering with age, G-8 answered, "I am on my way to see a friend who lives about a mile and a half up the road. Surely there is nothing wrong in that."

The corporal glared at him.

"I will be the one to tell you whether it is wrong or not," he snapped. "Now tell me, who are you?"

"I am Franz Schmidt," G-8 said. "Please do not pinch my arm so. You are hurting me."

"*Halt's Maul* and stop making complaints!" the corporal barked. "Now let me see your paper of identification."

The Master Spy looked up into the corporal's face.

"Paper of identification?" he asked. "*Ach Himmel*, that must be something new that I do not know about."

"*Ach*," the corporal growled, "so you have no paper of identification! The rule was put into effect three days ago."

G-8 shook his head sadly.

"I am sorry," he said. "I must go to the village and get my paper of identification, then. This is the first time I have been away from my little cabin on the mountainside in a week."

The corporal stared at him.

"What did you say your name was?" he barked again.

"Franz Schmidt," G-8 said plaintively. "You see, I live alone in my little cabin and no one ever passes that way. there is only a small path to it which leads up the mountain there."

He pointed toward a mountain two miles away.

"So," the corporal growled, "We will go to your cabin and see if you are telling the truth. *Macht schnell, Grosvater*. I haven't much time."

G-8 turned about, wagging his head sorrowfully.

"*Ach*," he said, "my rheumatism has been bothering me so much lately. And to think after I have hobbled along this far I must go back without completing my journey."

"*Jawohl*," the corporal snapped, "and you're going to move faster than you are now."

He gave the Master Spy a rough shove.

"Come on, stir up your old bones," he ordered. "Do not keep the Kaiser's army waiting."

"I will do my best," G-8 quavered.

He hobbled on, one hand on his hip. The corporal shoved him again.

"Go on, faster!" he commanded. "I haven't all day."

There was something maddeningly arrogant about this corporal. It was apparent that he believed G-8 to be an old man, and yet he was brutal enough to drive him on with such rough treatment.

The corporal was walking behind the Master Spy, and now and then G-8 turned and glanced at him out of the corner of his eye. The corporal's gun was in his holster. Apparently, he was confident he

could handle an old man of such puny strength without the aid of his gun.

They trudged along that road for a mile, then G-8 came to a path that led up into the woods. He turned into it and the corporal followed him. It was an old trail and there was little evidence that it had been used to any extent. Brambles grew across the path, and G-8 heard the corporal curse as he was forced to duck under branches of trees. The path became steeper as it ascended the mountainside.

"*Himmelkreuzdonnerwetter!*" the corporal spat.

He gave G-8 a hard shove, but the Master Spy was ready for it now. He had come to a point in the trail where there were rocks—heavy round ones two or three inches in diameter. Into that rock pile G-8 sprawled pitifully.

"*Ach Himmel!*" he groaned. "*Ach Himmel*, I cannot go so fast, *Herr Corporal!*"

He managed to roll over and sit up. There he remained, panting, while the corporal cursed at him. But the right hand of the Master Spy was fumbling for a rock that would be just large enough to hold in his hand. Suddenly, the corporal bent down, clutched him by one shoulder and tried to yank him to his feet.

"Come on, you *verdammt* old man!" he ordered. "You are too old to live anyway. What good is an old man like you to Germany? Get on your feet and come on. I have no more time to waste on you."

G-8 began struggling to his feet as the corporal yanked at him, then suddenly he leaped up. His right hand, with the rock in it, rose and crashed down on the head of the German. The first was a glancing blow. As the corporal now realized his mistake, his face turned white, betraying his cowardly nature. He opened his mouth to cry out but no sound ever came from his lips again. With lightning speed, G-8 brought the rock down on his skull a second time. He delivered the blow so hard that the rock buried itself in the skull of the corporal. The latter dropped like a limp bag of meal.

The Master Spy stood looking down at him for a moment. He shook his head.

"So old men are good for nothing except to die," he said half aloud. "Well, Corporal, I doubt

very much whether you will ever curse an old man again."



WITH that, the Master Spy carried the corporal's body a little way back from the path and covered it with brush. Then he retraced his steps back to the dirt road.

Later, a little way off, he saw an old peasant coming toward him. When they met, G-8 bowed.

"*Eine minute bitte*," he said. "Could I see your paper of identification?"

The man he had confronted was perhaps sixty-five years old. He was a little fellow with a round, kindly face and a drooping moustache.

"*Jawohl*," he smiled.

He fumbled in his pockets, brought out a slip of paper about five inches long and three inches wide and held it up for G-8 to see. The Master Spy blinked and reached out his hand.

"My eyes are not so good any more," he said. "May I see it more closely?"

He took the paper in his own hand and studied it. He must remember the details of this slip. At the top was printed "Identification" in German, then below was written the name of the man, his occupation, the village where he lived and his age. After the Master Spy had memorized that data, he handed the paper back to the old man.

"*Danke schon*," he said. "I must see about securing one of these at once. I have been in my lonely cabin for a week and I was not notified about it before."

"*Jawohl*," said the other, "you must get one before you are questioned. It will perhaps save you much trouble."

G-8 bowed.

"*Danke schon*," he said. "I shall do so at once."

He hobbled on a step or two, then he turned back.

"Another thing, *mein freund*," he said. He spoke as though it had just occurred to him, but the question had been uppermost in his mind when he had first met this old man. "Have you heard anything of the war? Is anything of interest going on about here? I live so far away from everyone that I hear very little about what is going on." The old peasant shrugged. "No change, I believe," he answered.

G-8 wagged his head.

"It is strange," he said. "I had a dream last night. I dreamed that there were weird things going on in these mountains—things we could not understand—things going on around midnight."

"I have heard some little talk," the old peasant confided, his eyes narrowing. "Last night we heard a strange sound over the mountain and toward the front lines. It was sort of a low moaning in the sky like the sighing of a lonely wind, or—" His face lighted suddenly. "*Mein Herr*," he said, "did you ever have a grandfather or perhaps a grandmother when you were a boy?"

"*Jawohl*," G-8 said, "I had a very kind grandmother and grandfather. I was brought up by them."

"Then perhaps they told you the same stories that my grandparents told me when I was a little boy. Did they tell you the story about the Ghost of the Vosges Mountains that traveled about at night and made strange sounds?"

G-8 nodded.

"*Jawohl*," he said. "That is an old legend of these parts, is it not?"

"Yes," said the other. "A sort of fairy tale."

"But why do you speak of it now?" G-8 asked.

"Because," the old man answered, "the sound that was heard last night was not unlike that sound my grandfather used to make when he would tell me of the Ghost of the Vosges Mountains."



## CHAPTER TWO

### The Mad Fisherman

G-8's made-up, wrinkled old face registered surprise and horror at what the peasant had just told him.

"*Ach Himmel, mein freund!*" he gasped. "Do you really mean to say that this is true?"

The other nodded.

"I am as sure of it as I can be of anything," he said. "I heard the sound myself several times and I was not alone. Only this morning I have heard several others in the village mention it. Of course, most of the people were asleep at the time and didn't hear it, but a few of us happened to be awake."

"From what direction did it seem to come?" G-8 asked.

"It seemed to come from the direction of the Front," the old man told him. "And yet it was perhaps not quite a sound after all. It seemed that I could feel it as well as hear it."

"Did you look up at the sky?" G-8 asked.

The old man nodded.

"*Jawohl*," he said. "I got up and looked out of the window. There was a full moon and I could see quite clearly."

G-8 was almost whispering now as he suggested, "Perhaps it is a new secret airplane that our men have developed. Perhaps it flies about at night, making that sound, to scare the enemy."

The old man shook his head.

"I do not think so," he said. "It didn't sound like an airplane. There was no sound of any motor, and besides, I pride myself that my eyes are still very good, yet I could see nothing. No stars were shut off from my vision by any moving object." He lowered his voice still more as he hissed, "There is a fortune teller in the village. She says that it's the Ghost of the Vosges Mountains flying once more to smite our enemies, the Allies." "But that is impossible," G-8 said. "You and I are old men. We know that there is really no such thing as a ghost."

The other hesitated.

"After hearing that sound last night," he said, "I am not so sure."

"It would be *wunderbar*," G-8 suggested, "if there were really a ghost of the Vosges Mountains and he were working with us against our enemies. But I must not keep you longer, *mein freund*. Auf *wiedersehen*."

"Auf *wiedersehen*," the other repeated.

They strode down the road in opposite directions. G-8's first move was to go a little way

into the mountains and there, in seclusion, he brought out a folded packet of papers. He had blank sheets of various types of paper, and each slip of paper was of German manufacture. There was a sheet of the type of paper on which important orders were usually written by the high commanders; there was a sheet of another type used for passes issued to soldiers and officers of the German army. There were still others for various reports.

The Master Spy selected a sheet of paper of the same type that the identification slip had been made out on. This he cut to the proper size, and with a small fountain pen which he carried, he printed the German word for "identification" at the top, wrote in the description of himself, Franz Schmidt, together with his age, seventy-six; the necessary dates, address, and so on. Armed with proper identification, he plodded along the road once more, moving generally toward the Front, although the lines were some distance away.

Twice that morning he was stopped by German soldiers who asked, in a more kindly fashion than had the corporal, to see his identification papers. In each case it proved satisfactory and he was passed. About noon he reached a small village nestled well back in a valley of the Vosges mountains. He stopped an old man on the street.

"*Bitte*," he said, "could you tell me where I could buy a noon-day meal?"

The other hesitated, then nodded.

"*Frau* Engleberg in the cottage across the street takes boarders," he answered, "and she sets a very good table, too."

Even as the Master Spy walked up the flower-decked path to the house, he could smell the savory scent of sauerbraten and the vinegar tang of sauerkraut. There was, too, the smell of fresh biscuits just taken from the oven. All this rushed into his nostrils with double force as *Frau* Engleberg answered his knock on the door.

G-8 found *Frau* Engleberg to be a wholesome, middle-aged German woman. She would be glad to serve him with a noon-day meal. She smiled at him kindly.

"You look very tired, *Grosvater*," she said.

There were two other old men at the table with him. At this stage of the war, young men were

seldom to be seen in Germany without a soldier's uniform. G-8 asked guarded questions. Yes, the moaning sound had been heard in that village, too. It had come from the direction of the Front, but high in the air. It seemed as though the legend of the Ghost of the Vosges Mountains was true. *Frau* Engleberg had heard the sound, but she scoffed at the idea of ghosts for she was a practical woman.

"It was more likely the sound of some new machine of war," she said.

That was G-8's own idea, but he didn't say so. He gained little information there. When the meal was finished, he paid for it in German money that he had brought along and left.

HE TURNED into the mountains when he was well out of the village, but still he moved at a shuffling gait. He broke off a stick that he could use for a cane and walked on deep into the forest. By mid-afternoon, he was getting thirsty. He found a little spring coming out of the side of the mountain, and the water was clear and cold. He satisfied his thirst there and went on.

A short time later, he came to a brook that bubbled down the mountain with a sizeable flow of water. Suddenly he stopped and stared at marks along the high bank of the stream. He could tell they were the footprints of a mountaineer, for they were made by heavy, well-worn shoes. Following them, he saw that the wearer of those shoes had been moving constantly upstream, stopping here and there where pools formed in the brook. That would mean, of course, that this man G-8 was trailing was a fisherman.

The Master Spy had followed those tracks for perhaps a half mile upstream, walking back away from the water and the bank so as not to obliterate the tracks. Suddenly, from a little distance ahead, he heard a cry of alarm. Thick bushes grew around that area along the creek bank so that he could not see the person who had cried out. The cry came again.

"*Gott im Himmel! Gott im Himmel!*"

G-8 hurried up toward that fear-quaking voice. He heard a rustling sound ahead of him and a thudding of feet. Someone was running toward him down the bank of the stream.

In the next instant, a bewhiskered mountaineer with wrinkled, leathery face crashed

through a clump of bushes ahead of him, waving his arms. He almost collided with the Master Spy before he saw him, for by now the Master Spy was standing very still. The bewhiskered man stopped not three feet away from G-8 and stared at him as though he were seeing a ghost.

"*Lieber Gott!*" he said, again and again.

"*Was ist?*" G-8 asked in a calm voice. "You seem very excited, *mein freund*. What is wrong?"

The old mountaineer shut his eyes, shook his head in a sort of shuddering gesture, then opened them once more to peer into G-8's face. Then, haltingly, he reached out a trembling hand and touched G-8's shoulder.

He took a long breath, sighing, "*Gott sie danke!* You are real! You are alive! I am not seeing things!"

G-8 smiled.

"Of course I'm alive," he assured him. "What's wrong?"

The mountaineer clutched him frantically by the shoulder. His hands were still shaking.

"Look at me, *mein freund*," he repeated. "Look closely. Do I appear to be mad?"

G-8 shook his head.

"You are very excited," he said, "but I would not say you were mad."

The old man waggled his head.

"Always *meine Frau* has warned me that some day I will drink too much and I will see things." He raised his right hand as though he were taking an oath. "But I tell you, I have not had a single drink since before breakfast. When I came fishing this morning, *mein Frau* Augustine told me that I could not take a bottle or a jug with me today. At first I became very angry, then I thought perhaps she was right, that perhaps I have been drinking too much. So I came away with only my fishing pole and my worms and my little bag of black bread sandwiches with Limburger cheese and a large piece of *apfelkuchen*. I fished one stream all morning *und* I caught four trout. They are nice, big ones. I have them here in the basket."

He raised the lid so that G-8 could see them.

"Then I had my lunch," he went on, and I came to this stream, I fished each pool I came to for an hour without catching any fish, then a little way up the stream I came upon a fine, deep pool. I

could see big trout swimming about in the bottom, so I put bait on my hook and dropped it in on my fine copper wire that I use for a line. From behind a bush, I could see one of the big trout. He seemed very hungry and he took my hook. I gave a jerk and began raising him out of the water. He dived for the bottom. *Ach*, he was a game fellow! *Und* then I tire him out and raise him up. Then—*Lieber Gott!*"

The old man was trembling again. "As I drew him out of the water, a little smoke rose, *aber* that is all. The trout vanished before my very eyes. *Und* I tell you again, I have not had a drink since before breakfast and that was only a glass of wine."

Only half-consciously, G-8 moved a step further away from that river bank. He took the trembling old man by the arm.

"Come," he said. "Let's go to the pool. Perhaps you will let me try my luck."

"That is what I was going to ask you to do," the mountaineer said. "I was going to ask you to go up there with me and fish. If the same thing happens to you when you hook a trout, I will know that I am not mad, as my wife said I would be if I did not stop drinking."

TOGETHER, they went back through the underbrush until they came to a low growth of bushes at the edge of a deep mountain pool at least six feet across. The bewhiskered mountaineer pointed, and G-8 could see the trout swimming about at the bottom of the pool.

"Bait your hook," the Master Spy ordered, "as you baited it before. Then let me try."

"*Jawohl*," the man said.

His hands were shaking so he could scarcely thread the worm onto the hook. When he had finally succeeded, he handed the pole to the Master Spy.

"There," he said. "Drop it into the center of the pool quickly."

G-8 dropped the worm-covered hook into the water. His eyes were glued to that hook. Strangely enough, as the hook hit the water, he realized that it was nearly bare—there was only a little of the worm left. One of the largest trout rose to take the morsel and struck at it. At the same instant that he grabbed it, G-8 jerked the pole to hook him. He felt the tug. The big trout dived off to the bottom and

the Master Spy let him go until he had plunged back under a shelf of rock.

"You see," the old mountaineer explained, "that is why I use a very fine copper wire instead of a fish line. The rocks in these streams are very jagged and sharp, *und* the trout, when he dives under a rock ledge, often breaks the line. But with the wire, it is different."

G-8 was drawing the fighting trout out of the water. He brought him up slowly. As the trout came out of the water, a wisp of smoke arose, and in that thin smoke, the trout vanished completely, as though a magician had waved a wand. G-8 drew out only the bare hook.

Even the Master Spy stared in amazement at that wisp of smoke that rose. A breeze from down the mountain disintegrated the smoke and the pool was still once more.

"I am not mad! I am not mad!" the mountaineer cried. "*Lieber Gott*, the same thing happened to you! Tell me," he was shaking the Master Spy violently, "that I am not mad!"

G-8 nodded.

"*Jawohl*, you are right," he said. "The same thing happened to me. The trout vanished."

He handed the mountaineer his pole.

"*Mein freund*," he said, "you had better go home. There is something strange here. Perhaps it is the Ghost of the Vosges Mountains at work. Say nothing of this to anyone, not even to your good wife."

The mountaineer nodded.

"I will do that," he promised. "*Aber*, you are sure that I am not mad?"

The Master Spy shook his head.

"No," he said, "you are not mad, *mein freund*. Or if you are, I am, too."

The old man seized G-8's hand and wrung it.

"*Danke schon*," he said gratefully. "*Und* now I go. But you must be careful, too."

"I shall be careful," G-8 assured him. "*Aber, eine minute, bitte*. You, perhaps, know these mountains better than I do. I have understood there is a very old castle here—the castle of my ancient ancestors."

The mountaineer's eyes widened.

"*Ja?*" he said.

"Do you know of a castle in the mountains somewhere about here?" G-8 asked.

"*Jawohl*," the mountaineer said. "There is Felden castle. It is on top of this very mountain, nearly two miles away from here. It was unused until lately and is in partial ruins. I heard last week that the name has been changed to Todberg Castle, or the Castle of the Death Mountain."

G-8 nodded.

"*Danke schon*," he said. "*Auf wiedersehen, mein freund*."

When the old mountaineer had gone and G-8 couldn't hear him crashing through the underbrush anymore, the Master Spy started up along the stream. He was sure that farther up this mountain brook lay the secret of the vanished 19th Pursuit Squadron.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### Todberg Castle

THE brook had cut a deep gash into the side of the mountain, and the banks on either side were three and sometimes four feet high. The Master Spy kept well away from the water level and moved on along the high bank. He was satisfied now that this stream would lead him to the source of the menace that had caused the men of the 19th Squadron to vanish from the face of the earth.

As he climbed, he tried to figure out what might be the cause of this ghastly curse. The fact that the trout had vanished as they rose above the surface of the water led him to believe that there was something—perhaps a thin, light liquid, moving down on the surface of the water that instantly ate away flesh as it came in contact with it. Somewhere above, along that stream, would be the source of that liquid or whatever it might be.

And so he went on and on higher into the mountain. From what the mountaineer had told him, he guessed that this stream must flow past Todberg Castle. He had no doubt that the headquarters for this new, awful death was located there. Apparently the castle had been rebuilt to



some extent and the name changed, probably to keep curious peasants away from the place.

The brush at the sides of the stream became thicker and G-8 was forced to lose sight of it now and then in order to keep away from the deadly surface. But occasionally he came back to it.

The afternoon light was waning and it was growing rather dark along the side of the mountain. Farther on, he climbed a tall tree which he found. Reaching the top, he could look over the other trees. The mountain rose far above, and he guessed he had climbed only halfway to the top so far.

He quickened his pace in the hope that he might come upon the source of the stream while there was still light. With each minute, darkness was approaching.

Suddenly, he stopped. He was standing on a flat rock that jutted out above the stream. He had followed the stream as far as he could without actually wading in it; now he found that the stream poured out from under another ledge of rock in the side of the mountain. There was a space above that rock through which a man might possibly pass—perhaps two feet of space above the stream level itself.

G-8 realized the danger, for in order to crawl into that tiny cave and follow the stream, he would have to wade in water up to his waist. And he had every reason to believe that the moment his body touched that surface liquid or whatever that invisible stuff was, his flesh would be eaten away. He would vanish completely, leaving only a wisp of smoke behind to rise and disintegrate in the air.

He stood there on the rock for a long time, trying to plan out his future course. He realized that he had only one objective left, that was Todberg Castle.

With that in mind, he left the rock and the stream and continued up the side of the mountain, taking the same general course that the stream followed. He moved with extreme caution now, for he realized that it was possible that the stream might appear on the surface farther up and he must not take a chance of stumbling into the water.

But the brook did not come out on the surface. From a rocky square on the mountainside where no trees or bushes grew, G-8 looked up toward the top. There, against the evening sky, he

saw one of the partially crumbled towers of Todberg Castle.

INSTANTLY he ducked back under cover as a guard appeared, walking about the castle. He was sure the guard hadn't seen him. Keeping well covered, he moved on again, coming ever closer to the castle above. At length he reached the mountain top, and from behind a clump of bushes he could see the castle plainly, less than a hundred feet away.

It was peculiarly situated and he realized now why it had been called Felden castle in years gone by. 'Felden' referred to a field, and the top of the mountain was quite level and stretched away into a flat plateau of perhaps fifty or sixty acres. This was pretty well grown up with trees and brush from years of neglect.

The castle itself was built in the near corner of this field or mountain plateau. One side of the castle bordered on the field itself and the other side seemed to fairly hang over the steep, sloping side of the mountain, where trees grew up near the castle wall.

There, G-8 decided, was his best means of approach to the castle. He moved around the edge of the mountain, still keeping covered by the undergrowth and being careful to make no sound.

His plan was quite clear in his mind now. He could climb one of those trees that rose along the sheer side of the castle. From there he would get his bearings by peering into the castle windows and thus try to learn who might be behind this deadly mass murder conspiracy.

He thought of the great scientists and arch villains whom he had met before. There was *Herr Doktor* Kreuger, Stahlmaske, Chu Lung. He had hoped that all of these were dead, but there was no telling for certain because he hadn't actually seen any of them die.

When he had had time to make observations of the interior of the castle, he would find some way to get inside. It might even be necessary for him to appear as a spy and be captured so that he would be taken inside and brought before the ringleaders of this fiendish scheme. In spite of the fact that it was the most dangerous method, it was the way in which the Master Spy liked best to accomplish his feats.

HE CHOSE one of the tallest of the black spruces to climb, and there, well hidden by the branches, he stared in one of the long, narrow, slitted castle windows. He was looking into a small room. Several German soldiers were seated about a great table, talking and smoking and sipping from champagne glasses. It was obvious that they had just finished dinner.

G-8 recognized only one of them, a good-looking barrel-chested *leutnant* who wore a *Ulannen* uniform. That man was one of his cleverest enemies. He was Baron von Zastrow. He had met him on several previous encounters, and he had always respected him very highly. The baron was not only extremely clever, but he always played the game of war fairly. He was a sportsman, a gentleman fighter.

G-8 saw that Baron von Zastrow was shaking his head. He knew the baron was possessed of a keen sense of humor, but from the expression on his face, G-8 judged that he wasn't particularly amused by anything at the moment. He was saying something in a low voice, but although the window was open a little way, G-8 couldn't hear any of the words.

The Master Spy climbed down the tree closer to the crack in the window. Ever so faintly, the baron's words reached him.

"*Jawohl*, naturally we are at war. You need not tell me that. I have been at it since I was a young lad just out of the University of Denmark. I have seen plenty of it, both on the Russian front and this front. But this is not my way of fighting a war."

One of the other *offiziers* at the table, a stout, pompous fellow who was a *leutnant* also, laughed rather sneeringly.

"*Aber*, *Herr* Baron, what do you expect to do about it?" he asked. "Perhaps you would care to turn yellow and be a deserter."

A look of disgust crossed Baron von Zastrow's face.

"That from you, Hermann," he said, "deserves no notice at all. If I had nothing more important to say, I would keep my mouth shut."

A *Hauptmann* spoke up.

"You will, of course, carry out the orders that have been given you regarding the"—he smiled—"the ghost?"

Baron von Zastrow nodded.

"*Jawohl*," he said, "I am a soldier."

Instantly, G-8 realized two things. There was some truth to the stories the natives had been telling of the Ghost of the Vosges Mountains. Perhaps not truth in the legend, but in the sounds that they had heard. Also, equally as important, his old enemy Baron von Zastrow definitely had something to do with this matter and it was distasteful to him. Nevertheless, because he was a good soldier, he was going to carry out his orders, regardless of his personal feelings in the matter.

Noiselessly, the Master Spy descended to the ground. Farther on, along the wall of the castle, he saw a light gleam through another window. He chose another tree and climbed almost to the top. As he stared in that second window, he grew tense and his hands gripped the branches tighter. There, in that large room, a figure sat before a desk. He recognized the man instantly as *Herr* Geist, the German escape artist who could get out of handcuffs, chains, or even a tightly-nailed box with the ease of a Houdini.

At the moment, *Herr* Geist was looking over large sheets of paper. G-8 couldn't see what was on them, of course, but he guessed from their size that they were drawings or plans.

He studied *Herr* Geist for a while. He was a wiry man, small but not puny or weak by any means. He had keen eyes and an intelligent face. Never before had G-8 seen him in a military uniform. Now he was dressed as an *Oberst* and there were two tiers of medals, more than a half dozen in all, pinned across his left breast.

Since the Master Spy had seen him last, *Herr* Geist had assumed an air of arrogant importance. G-8 smiled, for this was exactly to his liking. *Herr* Geist had obviously received his first commission of great importance and it had gone to his head. This was a great stroke of luck.

The Master Spy must meet him. He would try to get in as a native bringing *Herr* Geist important information. If that failed, he would take the more desperate measure of doing some suspicious thing and being taken prisoner.

He started down the tree as noiselessly as possible. He had just dropped from the bottom limb to the sloping side of the mountain when suddenly

he heard a rustling behind him. A flashlight went on, a gun muzzle jabbed him in the back.

A voice said sharply, "You are my prisoner."



#### CHAPTER FOUR Condemned to Die

G-8 began trembling, not because he was afraid, but because that was part of his act. He became instantly a palsied old man.

"*Ach du Lieber!*" he moaned. "*Ach du Lieber*, I have been caught spying. I should not have done this. I knew I would get into trouble. I have betrayed my own *Vaterland* for a mere hundred marks *und* now—" He turned his head so he could catch a glimpse of the fellow standing behind him. He was of a little larger than average build. "What will become of me now?" G-8 asked.

"I do not know," the German said. "That will be up to the authorities in the castle."

"*Ach, bitte* take me to them. Perhaps I can explain. Who is that *oberst* sitting at the desk? Is he in command here?" "He is *Herr Oberst Geist*," the guard said, prodding him again with the gun. "Come on, *Grosvater*, get moving."

G-8 hobbled to the front of the castle with the guard following him. More guards stood at the entrance. They stared at him and turned their flashlights on him. The Master Spy ducked his head in shame.

"*Ach*," he deplored, "I deserve to die. I should not have done it!"

The guards didn't answer. They simply separated.

"Go in, *Grosvater*," his captor commanded.

G-8 hobbled into the castle. He remained bent over and no one seemed to doubt that he was really an old man. His captor directed him to the door where he had seen Baron von Zastrow and the others sitting about the table.

The *Hauptmann*, highest ranking of the *offiziers* present, who was sitting at the opposite end of the table, was first to see the old man in the doorway.

"*Himmelkreuzdonnerwetter!*" he exclaimed. "We have company."

At that, Baron von Zastrow turned his head with the others and looked at the old man. G-8 hurried into the room, his hands clasped before him in supplication. He was babbling words as he came toward the *Hauptmann*.

"*Bitte, mein Herr—bitte Excellencies*, I really meant no wrong," he pleaded. "I am only a poor mountaineer. Here is my paper of identification. My name is Franz Schmidt."

The *Hauptmann* took his identification paper, glanced at it, and kept it.

"What was he doing?" he demanded of the guard who had captured G-8.

"He was climbing the trees outside the castle and looking into the windows," the German soldier said. "I chanced to be on duty in the woods and I saw him moving from one thicket to another, so I moved noiselessly after him. I saw him climb a great spruce tree outside your window here. He looked in upon you gentlemen for a time, then he moved down the tree closer to the opening in the window so he could hear what you were saying. When he reached the ground I did not stop him, but followed him to another tree outside *Herr Oberst Geist's* window. When he came down from that, I captured him."

The *Hauptmann* glared at G-8.

"What have you got to say for yourself?" he demanded.

"Perhaps I can explain," G-8 said. "Your Excellency, I met a man down the mountain this afternoon. He promised me a hundred marks if I would come up to the castle and find out what was going on up here and come back and report to him."

"You old fool!" the *Hauptmann* roared. "Don't you know that that man was probably a spy? When were you to meet him?"

"Tomorrow morning," G-8 answered, "in the village at the foot of the mountain."

The *Hauptmann* nodded to the *leutnant* on his left.

"Make a note of that," he said. "Where in the village were you to meet him, Grosvater?"

"I WAS to meet him in the beer garden at a corner table," the Master Spy said. "He was to pay me a hundred marks then." He wagged his head back and forth. "*Ach*," he sighed, "I was afraid that he might be a spy. But he explained that he was a descendant of the family of von Felden who once owned this castle and that he merely wanted to find out what was going on here without going near the castle himself. I thought he was all right at first, and I did need the hundred marks so much. I am old, Excellency, as you can see. *Und* later, as I was coming up the mountain, I heard strange stories about the castle here, about how the name has been changed to Todberg Castle. I have heard the villagers talking of the sound of the Vosges Mountains Ghost that they heard last night at midnight. I became afraid then that perhaps this man was a spy and not a descendant of the von Felden family as he claimed. *Aber*, I came anyway, because as I have told you before, I am very poor."

"Do you know the penalty for aiding an enemy spy?" the *Hauptmann* barked.

G-8 wagged his old man's head.

"*Ach*," he said, "I suppose I will probably be put in jail for the rest of my life."

"You would be lucky if that were all," the *Hauptmann* cracked. "You probably will be shot."

G-8 began shaking in an imitation of fear.

"*Ach*, shot!" he said. "*Lieber Gott! Lieber Gott!* To think that my long life should end that way!"

Baron von Zastrow got up from his chair and came around to G-8.

"Tell me, *Grosvater*," he said in a kindly tone, "what did this man look like who offered you the hundred marks?"

The Master Spy hesitated as if trying to recall, then he said, "He was dressed as a civilian and—"

He went on describing *himself*, exactly as he appeared without make-up. He saw the baron's eyes narrow.

"*Und* you say," the baron said, "that this man is to meet you in the village beer garden tomorrow morning?"

"*Jawohl*," G-8 nodded, "at a corner table. *Ach Himmel*, if he is really a spy, I would like nothing better than the opportunity of capturing him myself."

"You have described him well," the baron said, "*aber* I do not think you will have the opportunity of capturing him. I will take charge of that personally."

"You?" G-8 gasped like a surprised old man.

The baron nodded.

"*Jawohl*," he said. "Do you know who you have described to me? You have described G-8, probably the greatest spy of this war. That's who he was." The Master Spy gasped in astonishment.

"*Himmel!*" he exclaimed. Not the *verdammter kerl*, the one who is blamed for keeping Germany from an early victory?"

Baron von Zastrow nodded again.

"*Jawohl*, he said, "*und* he is a particular friend, or perhaps I should say enemy, of mine. I will be honored, meeting him in the beer garden tomorrow morning."

Baron von Zastrow went back and sat down. The *Hauptmann* nodded to the others about the table.

"You have heard the evidence, gentlemen," he said. "You have heard this old man admit that in spite of the fact that he suspected this man whom he met of being a spy, he tried to carry out his treacherous work and would have reported back to him if he had not been caught. I am convinced that this old man, *Herr* Franz Schmidt, should be shot at dawn. Is anyone opposed?"

No one spoke. Most of the men stared down into their champagne glasses. The *Hauptmann* gave a decisive nod.

"Very well," he said. "*Herr* Franz Schmidt, you are hereby sentenced to be shot at dawn against the castle wall."

G-8 shuddered for a moment.

"*Lieber Gott*, have mercy on my soul!" he breathed.

The *Hauptmann* nodded to the guard.

"Lock him up in the dungeon until time for his execution," he ordered.

THERE was an open grill in the heavy oak door of the dungeon where the Master Spy was locked—a grill that was perhaps a foot square and covered by two bars. There was a light in the corridor, but the dungeon itself where he had been put was dark except for what little illumination filtered in through the square opening.

G-8 thought there seemed to be an unusual amount of activity, as the night progressed, for a dungeon corridor. There were many soldiers moving back and forth, and occasionally he saw an old man or two dressed in civilian clothing.

Far down the corridor, the Master Spy could hear a door open and close now and then. Oftentimes, he caught snatches of conversation from the passing Germans as they walked in two's and three's down the corridor. Most of the talk was petty and had no particular interest for him, but now and then he caught something that made his pulse quicken.

Once he heard a German say, "In another day or so, when the tunnel is finished, it will be much easier to take the stuff directly to the cave."

And another voice close to his cell said, "It is not certain yet whether the Ghost flies tonight."

Well after midnight, G-8 heard mention once more of that tunnel which, so far as he could tell, would join the castle dungeons with the mysterious cave that seemed to have some connection with the Ghost of the Vosges Mountains.

As dawn approached, bringing the hour of his execution ever nearer, the castle became deathly still. Calmly, the Master Spy leaned back against a pillar of stone in the center of the dungeon cell and caught a wink or two of sleep. But his rest was not long. It served merely to give him enough relaxation so that he would be fresh for the ordeal ahead of him. He rose from his seat on a heap of human bones, yawned and stretched.

Now that dawn had practically arrived, he noticed there was a narrow, two-inch slit on the outside wall of his dungeon. Through this, a dim, gray light filtered. He shrugged.

"It ought not to be long now," he breathed, "and if I know *Herr Geist*, I'll win. If I don't—"

He shrugged again. He was talking to himself in a low voice—his own voice which was far too young for the old peasant he appeared to be. He wasn't stooped now. Instead, he stood erect. His eyes were those of commanding youth, hard, steel-gray, possessed of magnetic power to hold others.

MINUTES raced on while death came closer, but the Master Spy smiled as he watched the light of day grow brighter through the slit in the wall. He laughed suddenly. Only a man of iron nerves could burst out in a peel of mirth at a time like this.

Footsteps sounded down the dank, musty corridor. Men were coming for him.

"I would give a hundred francs," the Master Spy said to himself, "to have a picture of their faces when I tell them who I am."

A flashlight beam penetrated the gloom and a close-cropped head appeared. A rusty key scraped in the lock and hinges creaked as the door was pushed open. A German guard was straining at it with all his might.

As that beam of light was thrust in at him, G-8 assumed his bent position, once more. He was the old, stooped peasant again. Two figures slipped in through the open dungeon door. One was the Baron von Zastrow. He carried the flashlight, and behind him came a chaplain bearing a black book. The baron spoke.

"You are about to die, *mein Herr*," he said. He shook his head. "I am sorry to have to be the officer of your execution."

G-8 was suddenly no longer the palpitating old man. Although he was still standing in a stooped position, his eyes flashed. He twisted his head around so that he could look up into the Baron von Zastrow's face.

"I could tell you some things that would surprise you, *Herr Baron*," he barked. "I will tell these things if you take me to your commander, *Herr Geist*. I realize, of course, that you are only an underling, doing the bidding of *Herr Geist*—much like a slave."

The baron's eyes narrowed.

"What is this?" he demanded. He turned to the chaplain. "I do not understand this old man," he said. "When we placed him in the cell last night, he

was quaking with fear, *und* now he tells me I am no better than a slave."

The chaplain shook his head and leaned close to the baron's ear.

"Poor old fellow," he said. "Perhaps the knowledge that he is going to be shot has made him insane."

Von Zastrow nodded.

"*Jawohl*," he said. "Perhaps you are right. Perhaps it will be best if I go and leave you here with him." He turned to G-8. "I go now and leave you with the chaplain so that he may prepare you for your death against the wall."

G-8 let out a peal of laughter. Gently, he pushed the chaplain aside and took hold of the baron's arm.

To the astonished chaplain, he said, "It isn't that I do not honor your calling or my Maker, but I am not ready to die yet." He laughed insolently into the baron's face. "Listen, *Herr* Baron," he hissed, "go and take your chaplain with you and tell your boss, *Herr* Geist, that I have something to tell him. It concerns the Ghost of the Vosges Mountains, the cave, and the tunnel to the cave."

The baron stared at him, his eyes widening.

"You?" he gasped. "*Himmelkreuzdonnerwetter*, do you know about all these things?"

G-8 chuckled.

"*Jawohl*," he said. "Go tell your boss, you underling, what I have said. And since I am not going to die, take the chaplain with you. He makes me nervous. *Macht schnell*. It will soon be time for the shooting, and I would not want to miss that."



## CHAPTER FIVE

### *Herr Geist*

BARON VON ZASTROW and the chaplain turned to go. The baron kept his eyes on G-8 while the chaplain passed through the door. It was obvious that the baron had plenty of suspicions concerning this prisoner. Keeping his flashlight turned on the Master Spy, he backed through the door to prevent any possible attack from behind, then he drew the door after him. It creaked on the old, rusty hinges and boomed as it finally shut. He heard the baron locking it from outside, then the footsteps of the two men died away as they went up the corridor.

G-8 smiled and straightened from his stooped position. Once more it was dark inside the dungeon, except for the streak of light that filtered in through the small grating of the door. The Master Spy laughed as he stretched and yawned.

"I wonder if the baron has any suspicion yet as to who I am?" he breathed. "That was funny, his going out of the door backward to make sure I didn't attack him. He doesn't know that all this is going pretty much according to my own plans."

He chuckled and walked across the dungeon and back again. Five, then ten long minutes dragged by. G-8 was at the grill in the door, listening. He heard men coming down the corridor.

There were three of them, and he stepped back a pace or two from the door as they passed.

One of them laughed and said, "I wonder what the *verdammter kerl*, G-8, thinks about the ghost of the Vosges Mountains? It would be a good joke on him if we sent the ghost over Le Bourget on one of these night raids."

A second German chuckled.

"This is only the beginning," he said. "If the *verdammter kerl* and the Allies in general think that a great loss has come to them already, wait until the tunnel is finished so that we can begin our work in earnest."

"*Jawohl*," the third ventured. "With our new facilities, we will be able to wipe out hundreds of thousands of troops and citizens each night. It will not be long before the Allies will be coming to us on their knees, begging for peace."

Those three passed on and G-8 stepped to the door again to listen for the return of the baron. Presently, he thought he heard him coming. Yes, he was sure. He knew the step of Baron von Zastrow perfectly.

As the baron reached his door, the Master Spy bent over again like the old man he was impersonating. Von Zastrow unlocked the door and stepped back.

"Come," he ordered.

G-8 shuffled toward the door and out into the corridor. The baron had his Luger in his hand, now. He motioned the Master Spy to walk ahead of him.

They had only gone a few yards down the corridor when the baron ordered, "Turn right."

G-8 turned into a narrower passage. Ahead, in the light of the baron's electric torch, he saw a narrow staircase leading up into the rear part of the castle. He climbed the stone steps and found a door open at the top. He passed through that into a well-lighted room. There he stopped and turned to the baron.

"You have asked to see *Herr Geist*," the baron said. "We wait here."

G-8 glanced about. The room was of ample size, and there was a desk near the center. There were several tables about the room, on which were books, some chemical apparatus, and several cages of guinea pigs, their soft coats mottled brown and white. There seemed to be a pitiful

sadness about the little animals as they looked at the Master Spy, as though they were saying, "Have they brought you here to die, too?"

G-8 had not noticed these things before, but now he recognized the desk in the center of the room and the long, slitted window to the right. That was the window through which he had looked from the tree outside.

They waited for some time in silence, then the Master Spy grunted with disgust. The first rays of dawn were coming through the narrow window.

"*Himmel!*" he snorted. "How long will we have to wait for your boss?" He laughed. "Don't forget I am to be shot at sunrise, and it is already growing light. I haven't much time and I like to be punctual in my engagements."

Baron von Zastrow stared at him.

"I do not know who you are," he said, "but I will gamble that you are not the old man that you represent. Either you have gone suddenly crazy or you are extremely brave."

"Let us say," G-8 smiled, "that I simply hold the whip hand over *Herr Geist*, at the moment, because of the fact that I know certain things he would like to know."

"What are those things?" the baron demanded, his curiosity aroused.

"I do not tell everything I know to underlings," G-8 chuckled. "I save what I know only for the ones in high positions."

"You are not only an old fool but you are insulting as well," Baron von Zastrow observed.

"A fool perhaps," G-8 smiled, "but when a man is condemned to die, he gains nothing by being meek and afraid. In other words, *Herr Baron*, when you are condemned to death, you have nothing more to lose."

G-8 HAD not heard another sound—except his voice and that of the baron, but he suddenly became aware that someone else was in the room. He turned. There, standing close behind him, was *Herr Geist*. He was slim and trim, a small, wiry man. The six medals on his left breast gleamed in the light, for they had apparently been recently polished.

*Herr Geist* stood in an arrogant posture, head thrust back, chest out. He assumed the same air

of importance now as he had when G-8 had seen him seated in front of his desk. He scowled with apparent annoyance as his eyes fell upon the bent figure of the old man before him. G-8 noticed now that another German had come in from the opposite side of the room. He was a powerful brute of a man and heavily armed. It was apparent that he was the bodyguard of *Herr Geist*.

*Herr Geist*'s eyes snapped as they covered in one swift glance the Master Spy's stooping figure.

"Well, *Grosvater*," he cracked, "what do you want?" He nodded sideways to Baron von Zastrow. "You may go, *Herr Baron*," he said.

Von Zastrow hesitated.

"I feel," he said, "that I should warn you, *Herr Geist*, that I believe this man is not quite what he pretends to be."

"What do you mean?" *Herr Geist* flung at him.

"I suspect," the baron replied, "that he is an Allied spy disguised as an old man. At any rate, judging from some of the things he has said, he must either be a fool or a very brave man."

"I need no warning from you," *Herr Geist* snapped arrogantly. "As I said before, *Herr Baron*, you may go."

Von Zastrow bowed and the door closed behind him. *Herr Geist* faced G-8 once more.

"*Und* now," he demanded, "who are you and what do you want? I understand you have some information that you think I would like to learn."

"Yes," G-8 answered. "It happens that I know about the tunnel that is almost finished to the cave of the ghost, and also about the ghost and the ghost's breath."

He was smiling twistedly up at *Herr Geist* from his bent position.

"Why should I care what you know?" *Herr Geist* demanded.

G-8 shrugged.

"Only for this reason," he said. "Baron von Zastrow suspects that I am an enemy spy disguised as an old man. I have come to tell you that is true. Perhaps that may make some difference to you."

*Herr Geist*'s face darkened and his eyes widened in astonishment.

"*Himmelkreuzdonnerwetter!*" he spat. "You have nerve to admit this."

G-8 laughed in his face.

"After all," he said, "a man condemned to die can lose nothing."

A glint of uncertainty verging on fear suddenly flashed into the dark, keen eyes of *Herr Geist*.

"Who are you?" he demanded.

G-8 was still smiling as he answered, "It has struck me, *Herr Geist*, that you are very clever, possibly one of the greatest scientific minds in all Germany."

He saw *Herr Geist*'s chest swell, and he hurried on.

"I have made quite a record for myself in my own work. You are about to crown your career with the greatest victory of your life, so far as I can judge. I must reserve admitting my identity until we understand each other a little more thoroughly. My thought is this: when I tell you who I am, you will realize perhaps that while I still live, you will have difficulty in succeeding in your work."

"That is ridiculous!" *Herr Geist* snapped. "You are due to be shot at any moment."

"*Jawohl*," the Master Spy nodded. "*Aber*, I have been condemned to death before *und* I am still alive. *Und* there are men even greater than you, *Herr Geist*, who have come to regret that I have lived to work against them." He lowered his voice to a more confidential tone. Inwardly, he was laughing to see how seriously *Herr Geist* was taking him.

He went on, "If I were to understand the details of your plans—that is, the workings of the gas and the ghost—and your plans appeared to have possibilities, I might even go so far as to work with you instead of against you."

*Herr Geist*'s eyes narrowed and he took a closer look at the stooped old man before him.

"Stand up straight!" he commanded. "You do not have to remain bent like that, do you?"

Smiling, G-8 shook his head.

"No, indeed," he said,

He straightened to his normal height. *Herr Geist* gaped at him. "*Himmelkreuzdonnerwetter!*" he gasped. "Could it be that you are—the *verdammter kerl?*"

G-8 nodded.



"It took you quite a while to realize it, *Herr Geist*," he said, "but you guessed correctly—if you have the right *verdammter kerl* in mind. I am G-8. Does that mean anything to you?"

*Herr Geist* caught his breath in amazement, then softly, he breathed, "*Gott im Himmel! Und you are here?*"

His face turned a shade lighter, betraying the sudden fear that he felt. He had met the Master Spy several times before and he knew well the unerring cleverness with which G-8 worked. Across the room, the big German bodyguard drew two Lugers, one in each hand.

G-8 was chuckling.

"I knew you would be surprised when I told you, *Herr Geist*," he said.

He wasn't missing a single move of *Herr Geist*. Part of the fear he had shown vanished from the German's face and he managed to smile.

"*Und you might be willing to work with me,*" he asked, "if I explain some of my methods and plans?"

"Under the proper circumstances, perhaps," G-8 said.

*Herr Geist* nodded.

"Then I shall most certainly tell you my plans," he answered.

G-8 moved closer to him, maneuvering so that *Herr Geist* was between him and the armed German bodyguard stationed across the room.

"I am listening," the Master Spy said. "You may proceed, but you must hurry. *Bitte*, do not forget the time for my execution is almost past."

"I SHALL begin at the beginning," *Herr Geist* said. "As you know, I have been an expert magician and escape artist. No jail can hold me and I know the secret of every lock in the world. That is why I am known as *Herr Geist*, which is the German word for 'ghost.' I have made a study of chemistry and lately I have gone more deeply into it, for I realized it would be the crowning glory of my life to discover something—some gas or chemical—which would cause a human being to vanish completely; to go up into smoke. I have finally perfected my chemical. It is a heavy gas that settles close to the earth and, like water, seeks its lowest level."

"And that," G-8 said, "explains why fish vanish into thin air when they are drawn out of the stream that runs down the mountain?"

"That is possible," *Herr Geist* nodded. "There is an underground stream which flows through the execution chamber on the south side of the dungeon and, I presume, comes out on the surface below. This stream carries away some gases that leak out while being forced into the cylinders in which we keep them."

The Master Spy was aware that *Herr Geist* had shot a quick, keen glance at him to see how he was taking it. He nodded calmly and the *oberst* went on.

"I discovered an old legend of these mountains—the legend of the Ghost of the Vosges. I began investigating it, realizing that many old legends have some truth as a basis. I finally discovered this ghost. I cannot explain at the moment what it is. It is so fantastic that you would probably not believe it. However, these are the facts that I have discovered. Years ago, this ghostly form used to be heard in the sky near the midnight hour. Many people died in the valleys below as the ghost passed over. Because of the weird sound that it made, it was traced finally to a great cave. The townspeople walled up this cave, and until I opened the cave myself, the ghost has not been heard."

G-8 nodded,

"Very well," he said. "Go ahead."

"I believe that is all I can tell you now," *Herr Geist* said. "It is simply the fact that the Vosges Ghost has been persuaded to carry my death gas since his release. As soon as the tunnel from the castle to the cave is completed, which will be very shortly, we will be able to run a supply of the gas to the Vosges Ghost fast enough so that the Ghost may continue to fly during the entire dark hours of the night." He grinned. "Perhaps you would like to see how the breath of the Ghost works on one of these guinea pigs."

Without waiting for G-8's reply, he nodded and said, "Come, I show you."

From one of the laboratory tables, he picked up a small metal container with a valve at one end. He moved to the nearest cage, which contained only one guinea pig.

"Now watch closely," he ordered.

He held the tank off at arm's length, poked the nozzle into the cage, and turned the valve. There came a hissing sound. Apparently, there was no color to the gas. A slight wisp of smoke rose from the cage and the guinea pig vanished before the Master Spy's eyes.

*Herr Geist* laughed nervously.

"You see, it is very simple," he said. "With this gas, I can rule the world. If you will work with me instead of against me, I will see that you are given a good position when we have subdued the great powers."

Inwardly, G-8 was blazing with anger.

"*Herr Geist*," he said, "you are a fool to think that I would ever go in for anything like this, or even that I would go in with you at all. I have merely been leading you on so that I can learn exactly what you are up to."

*Herr Geist*'s eyes blazed and his face went white.

"So you have tricked me!" he almost screamed. "Very well. It is time for you to die, G-8. Here, I will give you a dose of my vanishing gas and there will be nothing left of you."

He poked the tank toward G-8, turned the valve. There came an ominous hissing sound as the deadly gas was set free.

## CHAPTER SIX

### *Death Walks Quickly*

IN ONE swift glance, the Master Spy took in the situation. *Herr Geist*, with outstretched arms holding the tank, was leaping straight for him. That most deadly of all chemicals, the breath of the Ghost, was spraying from the nozzle. And since it was a colorless gas, G-8 couldn't even see where it was going.

At the other side of the room stood the powerful German bodyguard, with his two Lugers ready to fire at any sign of resistance from the Master Spy. Up to now G-8 had tried to keep *Herr Geist* between himself and the German bodyguard. But *Herr Geist* moved a little to the side now so

that the guard could get a fairly straight shot at the Master Spy.

Instantly, G-8 leaped behind *Herr Geist*. Both Lugers in the guard's hands spat fire. Bullets screamed past G-8 and thudded into the wall beyond. *Herr Geist* tried to whirl and turn the nozzle full on him now, but fast as *Herr Geist* was, he couldn't escape the desperate attack of the Master Spy.

G-8 caught him by the shoulder and jerked him so that his back was toward the Master Spy and the deadly tank was held far in front of the German. Again those Luger pistols cracked, then there came the cry from *Herr Geist*.

"Fritz! *Gott im Himmel*, don't shoot! You will kill me!"

With one hand, G-8 clutched the throat of *Herr Geist*, held him close to him. With the other hand, he reached for the tank. The gas was still hissing through the nozzle. They struggled together for a moment, the Master Spy and the master escape artist. Nothing that *Herr Geist* could do would release that clutch. Meantime, the guard had started toward them. G-8 made a quick lunge. His hand closed over the handle of the tank valve. He turned it off and the hissing ceased. The hand that he had about *Herr Geist*'s neck tightened, the fingers biting deeply into the flesh. *Herr Geist*'s face was turning blue and his hands relaxed from the tank momentarily. G-8 wrenched it from his grasp.

Still holding *Herr Geist* in the same manner, G-8 drew back the tank and yelled to the guard, "Get back, you big gorilla. Get back or I'll let you have this!"

In the next instant, he flung the small tank with all his might. It flew straight as an arrow into the face of the oncoming guard and caught him across the bridge of the nose with terrific force and hurled him back.

As the guard fell, he realized his danger. Still half-conscious, he was struggling to catch that tank of deadly gas before it crashed to the stone floor. Once he almost had it, then it slipped from his grasp and thudded to the paving. There came an angry hissing sound as the whole valve at the end of the tank was broken off.

Someone was pounding on one of the doors of the room. It was apparently locked from the inside.

The hissing continued. In a flash, a wisp of smoke went up before G-8's eyes and the big German guard who had fallen to the floor vanished.

G-8 spun *Herr Geist* half around with the hand that was clutching his throat, then sent his right crashing to *Herr Geist's* jaw. *Herr Geist* sagged as he flew backward from the force of the punch.

The Master Spy had no more time to waste, for that deadly gas was still hissing into the room. The guard had already been consumed by it.

There was a wide window not six feet away. G-8 made a running dash for it and jumped feet first into the heavy glass pane. He felt the broken glass scratch his legs and one shoulder as shots crackled from within the room. Then, miraculously, he was outside, plunging down toward the ground.

There were trees outside, and he crashed into some branches and landed in a heap on sloping ground ten feet below and rolled into the underbrush.

He heard heavy boots pounding around the castle, and in spite of the stinging cuts on his body and his hard breathing, he realized that he must get away from that spot as quickly as possible. At first he crawled on his hands and knees through the brush so as not to make any sound. He heard shouting now from the castle. The place was in an uproar.

Someone yelled, "*Herr Geist! Herr Geist! Are you all right?*"

Then he heard *Herr Geist* answer, "*Jawohl, I am all right. Get that verdammter kerl, G-8! He must not escape!*"

G-8 knew then that his enemy was still alive. He had thought the gas would finish him.

The Master Spy was heading down the mountain on a run. Men were coming in his direction, having picked up his trail outside the window, and he went—on and on. He could hear his pursuers crashing after him steadily. Suddenly, he circled to the right where great ledges of rock protruded. The rocks would hide his tracks.

He moved over and started down the face of a small cliff. That was tedious work, lowering himself from shelf to shelf with a sheer drop of fifty feet below. He could hear voices from above as he neared the bottom of his descent. If they should see him over the edge, he was done. They would shoot him down instantly.

Ten more feet to go, then five. He must move with lightning speed and yet he must not make any scraping sound lest they hear him. He dropped noiselessly into a thicket and crouched there at the very moment that a voice above him said, "*Nein, I do not think he could have gone down the face of this cliff. It is too sheer a drop. Perhaps we can pick up his tracks beyond the rocks. Search everywhere. Macht Schnell!*"

G-8 MOVED on slowly, the leaves of the trees and the shrubs hiding him from prying eyes above. The cuts on his legs and shoulder burned painfully. He went on along the mountain for perhaps a quarter of a mile, then he reached a pool of water. It was a mountain spring bubbling up from under the ground. He was sure he was safe here, for the gas could not be hovering over this water. He bathed his cuts in the spring, found now that they were little more than deep scratches.

He had a plan in mind for his next move. In the face of that rocky cliff near the base he had seen a narrow cave. He knew that before the search was over, the German soldiers would cover every inch of mountain space. If he could reach that cave, he would be ready.

Now and then, along the mountain above him, he heard a shout as one soldier called to another. As far as he could tell, they were still up there at a higher altitude. The search would eventually proceed down the mountain.

Moving at a dog trot, he hurried back toward the cave in the cliff. On his way, he picked up a heavy piece of wood for a weapon.

As he neared the cliffs, he heard Germans moving through the underbrush no more than a hundred feet up the mountain. Reaching the cave, he ducked inside. He found that it widened in the interior and the ceiling was much higher than at the opening. He crouched in a dark corner on one side of the cavernous room and waited.

Long minutes dragged by. Through the opening of the cave he could hear men's voices occasionally but they were still far off. Gradually, they came closer. G-8 tensed in his hiding place and waited. He knew they would soon discover the cave and someone would enter to search it.

If two or three came in at once, he would have a tough time of it. Furthermore, if any of them carried a flashlight, it would be all over for him.

The voices ceased for a time, then G-8 heard them again, coming suddenly closer. The brush outside the cave rustled, then someone said, "A cave! I must look into this."

The tone was that of a man talking to himself. There was no answer. G-8's hopes rose higher. Someone was coming into the cave and he was alone. The sound of his heavy boots treading on the stone floor echoed throughout the cavern.

G-8's eyes were accustomed to the darkness, now, and a minute or so after the German entered, he saw the man. He was big and appeared to be wearing the uniform of a corporal. He blinked about in the darkness, trying to peer into every corner. It was apparent he had no flashlight with him or he would be using it now. That was another lucky thing for the Master Spy.

G-8 clutched his club more tightly and held his breath. The big German was coming nearer to him, leaning forward, trying his best to see into the darker reaches of the cavern. Another step brought him almost within reach of the Master Spy.

Still G-8 waited to strike, for the fellow's face was turned partly toward him and he held his Luger in his hand. The slightest move on G-8's part would attract his attention.

Suddenly, he turned and came directly toward G-8. Standing there, he peered straight at the Master Spy. He blinked his eyes in an effort to see into the pitch black corner where the Master Spy crouched. His Luger was pointed at him. G-8 knew it would go off instantly at the slightest move or sound from him.

Abruptly, the German turned and stared back into the rear of the cavern. His back was toward the Master Spy. This was his chance, G-8 decided. With one swift movement, he leaped up, raised his club to strike.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### ***Death On the Wing***

G-8's BLOW, aimed at the big German's head, struck true. The club was solid and the thud, as it connected with the corporal's skull, echoed against the cavern walls. The Hun slumped to the floor like a great rag doll. With that done, G-8 tensed suddenly, for another sound came to him from outside the cavern entrance. It was the voice of a German who spoke with authority.

"Is anyone inside?" he asked. "*Herr Corporal!*"

For a split second, G-8 couldn't decide just what to do, then he remembered the deep voice of the corporal when he had been talking to himself outside the cave. He mimicked that voice as best he could.

"*Jawohl,*" he answered. "I am here."

"Do you find anything?" the man outside demanded.

"Only some things of interest that you would perhaps like to see," G-8 told him. "*The verdammter kerl* is not here. If you will come inside, I will show you."

The Master Spy stepped back into his niche as he finished speaking. He heard the other enter and a moment later he saw him. This was much better. The man was an *unter-leutnant* about G-8's size. He came striding in, unaware of the trap that was set for him and he, like the big German had done, blinked about in the darkness. Suddenly, he stumbled across the body of the fallen corporal and leaped back, gasping out in surprise.

"*Was ist?*" he demanded. "Where are you, *Herr Corporal?*"

With that, the *unter-offizier* looked away from the Master Spy. Once more G-8 sprang from his hiding place, club upraised. But the *unter-leutnant* heard him coming and started to turn around. However, G-8 landed his blow smartly on the *offizier's* skull. The *leutnant* wavered and brought up his Luger, but even before he could pull the trigger, G-8 had struck again. This time, the *unter-leutnant* went down, crumpling in a heap on the floor.

Instantly, G-8 went to work. He stripped off the *unter-offizier's* uniform, then took off his own peasant's clothing and put it on the German. Now he donned the *unter-offizier's* uniform. It fit him very well. Next, the tiny make-up kit came out and he began working to change both his face and that of the *unter-leutnant*.

When he had finished, he resembled the German *unter-offizier* closely enough to be taken for his twin brother; and the *unter-leutnant* was made up to look like the old man that G-8 had represented. Only a few things were left to do before he could go. He dragged the body of the big corporal far back into the cavern where it wouldn't be seen, then he took out the automatic and fired three shots, two into the face of the *unter-leutnant* and one at his heart.

While changing clothes, he had glanced at the record book in the *unter-leutnant's* pocket and learned that henceforth he would be *Unter-leutnant* Gurtner. As the shots from the Luger echoed through the cave, shouts came to him from outside.

He seized the *unter-leutnant's* body under one arm and dragging it to the opening of the cave yelled, "I have him! I have killed the *verdammter kerl*!"

He heard men crashing through the brush as they ran toward him. In a moment they were gathered about him, babbling excitedly. The Master Spy smiled. "*Ach du Lieber, Herr Unter-leutnant* Gurtner, you are very brave!"

"*Jawohl*, you have killed Germany's greatest enemy."

"*Himmelkreuzdonnerwetter!*" a big fellow boomed. "I had hoped to have that honor myself." He slapped G-8 on the back. "But for you, *Herr Unter-leutnant* Gurtner, I am glad. *Ach Himmel, Herr Oberst* Geist will bestow all kinds of medals on you for this."

From above the cliff someone called, "What's the excitement about? What goes on down there?"

In *Unter-leutnant* Gurtner's voice, G-8 called back, "I have killed him! I have killed the *verdammter kerl* with two bullets in the head and one in the heart."

Another German came running up.

"*Ach Himmel*, it doesn't seem possible!" he said.

G-8 smiled.

"It was not an easy task," he admitted. "I shot him as he sprang at me from the dark interior of the cave where he was hiding."

As more soldiers gathered around, he said, "Come, I will show you."

He led them inside the cave and pointed to the dark recesses where he himself had crouched.

"The *verdammter kerl* was hiding there," he told them. "As I turned to look at him, he leaped at me. Another second and I would have had my brains dashed out. But I finished him with three shots *und* here he is."

They went out again. Eager hands carried the body of *Unter-leutnant* Gurtner up the mountain to the castle. Before the castle, *Herr* Geist met the Master Spy. G-8 clicked his heels and saluted smartly. He had a chance to kill *Herr* Geist, now, since he still possessed a loaded Luger, but he knew that would not stop this deadly menace for it had gone too far. Others would probably carry on after their leader was gone. He must find the seat of the trouble. He must discover the cave from which the Ghost of the Vosges flew at night.

*Herr* Geist shook him by the hand and congratulated him.

"You have done the *Vaterland* a great deal of good," he commended. "Now we can go ahead without fear of being held up in our plans. We must move everything forward at top speed. The tunnel will be ready soon, but we must not wait even until that is finished."

He shouted orders to the other men,

"Bring tanks that contain the ghost death. A Hannoveraner two-seater waits in the field back of the castle to fly the gas to the secret plateau above the cave of the Ghost. Load the tanks into that plane."

Thus G-8 was given the freedom of the great castle grounds. He watched until he saw men carrying the tanks of deadly gas from the south dungeon of the castle to the plane. The soldiers moved with utmost caution as they transported the tanks.

The Master Spy didn't wait to see more. This was all he could get here. Now he must find where the two-seater Hannoveraner was going to take the gas tanks.

THE edge of the mountain top was so heavily wooded that he knew he couldn't see, from there, any other mountain where the plane might land. There was only one alternative. In broad daylight he must get to his Spad, where he had left it under some trees in a little field in the valley, and take the

air to watch the course of the Hannoveraner that carried the tanks of gas.

Hurriedly, he slipped through the woods and made his way down the mountain. As soon as he reached the valley, he strode rapidly along the road where his plane was partly hidden.

Suddenly, he stared up into the air, for to his ears had come the sound of two Hissos snarling through the skies. A moment later he got a glimpse of one of the planes. It was a Spad and bore a number Seven on the side. Just behind it came Nippy Weston in his old Number Thirteen. The Spads were diving and zooming, diving and zooming. Their Vickers guns rattled out as they blazed away at something below.

In less than five minutes, G-8 reached one end of the small field. Dead Germans were sprawled out along the ground here and there. From the field near the plane, other Germans were running and shooting at the diving planes. The truth was apparent to the Master Spy at once. Nippy and Bull had come over for some reason and spotted G-8's Spad surrounded by German guards. Now they were wiping out the guards.

Keeping under cover of the brush, G-8 ran around the edge of the field toward his plane. Two Germans who hadn't yet been killed came running to meet him. There was nothing for him to do but bluff his way through.

"What goes on here?" he yelled, waving his arms. "Get back. Get over to that plane. I can fly it."

Both of the oncoming Germans were privates. They recognized G-8's superior rank and respected it.

"*Ach Himmel*," one of them cried. "You will be killed if you try to take off with those two planes flying above."

G-8 shook his head.

"Watch me," he said.

He set the switch and throttle and dashed around to the front of the plane. At that very instant, Bull Martin in number Seven was tearing down at him. Vickers lead spattered the ground as G-8 ducked under the Hiss motor for protection. He came out again as Bull zoomed away, pulled the prop through twice, then a third time. His Hiss engine snorted and ran.

"They're coming back. They'll kill you!" the same German called as the Master Spy ran for the cockpit.

The Master Spy smiled.

"Don't stand there gaping, *dummkopf!*" he snapped. "Have you a white handkerchief?"

The German fished in his pockets, pulled out one that was fairly white.

"Now watch me trick them," G-8 said. "They'll think I'm the pilot of this plane."

As Nippy and Bull tore down at him from the skies, G-8 waved the white handkerchief frantically above his head. The Battle Aces had begun firing from a high altitude. Now they ceased abruptly and zoomed upward.

G-8 hopped into his cockpit.

"You see," he said, "I fooled them. Hold that wing while I turn the plane around."

He gunned his motor, kicked around, and started down the field for the takeoff.

It was obvious that Nippy and Bull were still suspicious of him for they hung high above, ready to dive on him at any moment. The instant that he climbed above the trees, G-8 turned toward the Vosges mountains. Already he could see the Hannoveraner with its cargo of deadly gas traveling south far off along the Vosges range.

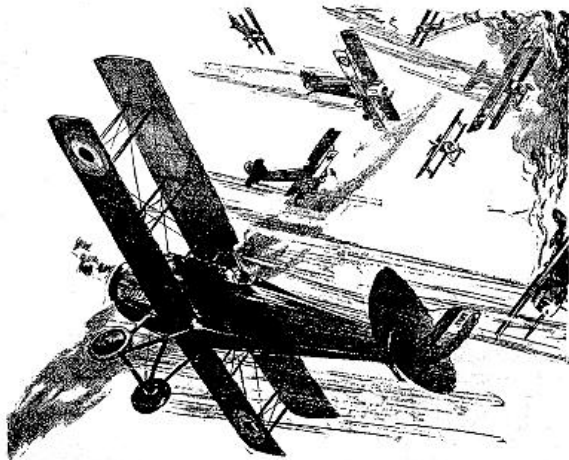
The Master Spy shot up his fist in a signal to Nippy and Bull to prove his identity. Instantly, the Battle Aces fell in behind and in their usual close formation they droned on together toward the Hannoveraner.

The two-seater was going down toward a small mountain plateau several miles south of Todberg castle. It was easy to see now why they were using this method of transportation. The ruggedness of the mountains made it almost impossible to build a roadway across them. In fact, G-8 realized that the tunnel which was nearly completed to the cave of the Ghost was an easier bit of engineering. Probably the tunnel would join into other caverns on the way, since the mountains themselves seemed to be entirely made up of rocky formations.

The Hannoveraner was diving for the field, and G-8 and Nippy and Bull were heading for it. Now that they had discovered the location of the landing place, the Master Spy's main concern was to shoot

down the Hannoveraner and destroy the supply of deadly gas it carried.

He leaned forward over his sights, his fingers tightened on the triggers, and he took aim.



## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### ***Back to Le Bourget***

AS G-8 pulled the triggers, he heard a rapid staccato from above and behind. That served to throw him off aim, for he instinctively kicked rudder to send his plane dodging out of the line of fire. He knew that there must be enemy planes in the vicinity.

The Hannoveraner was leveling out to land, and G-8 whirled in the cockpit and stole a look over his shoulder. Five Fokkers were snarling down at him, but they were barely within range. He motioned to Nippy and Bull to zoom and engage the five in combat, saw that Nippy reacted first, whirling old number Thirteen around in a tight Immelmann. Big Bull Martin followed closely. In what seemed less than two or three seconds, a wild dogfight was going on above him. G-8 leveled out his Spad once more and took aim for the second time. The German pilot had gunned the motor of the Hannoveraner. Apparently he had decided that he wouldn't land on the plateau, but go somewhere else. That, the Master Spy realized, was a ruse to throw him off the track, to make him believe that this was not the location of the cave of

the Vosges Ghost. The Hannoveraner was sweeping across the field.

G-8 held his Spad on a steady course until he had the pilot in that Hannoveraner dead center in his sights. He squeezed the triggers and the twin Vickers guns on the nose of the Master Spy's Spad rattled their death chant.

The body of the German pilot jerked forward as at least a dozen bullets pierced him. His head hit the instrument board and the force of his weight being thrown forward carried the stick with it. At full throttle the two-seater dived for a mass of jagged rocks at the south end of the little mountain plateau. There was a rending crash as the Hannoveraner struck those rocks, and plane parts flew in every direction. There came a series of sharp, booming sounds. G-8 knew that meant the tanks of gas had let go.

Instantly, the Master Spy zoomed upward. His work for the moment was done. He knew that it would be a perilous thing to try to land at that field now and make any inspection—not because of the diving, snarling Fokkers above, but because with those explosions in the crashed plane; the deadly gas had been liberated and the whole mountaintop would be covered with the stuff.

He did, however, go snarling down close to the scene of the wreckage. Ahead of the crashed Hannoveraner there were great heaps of rocks that jutted out along that section of the mountain top. But there was no tree growth or brush there, nothing to hide the pilot if he had been thrown clear of the crash. G-8 was sure that he hadn't, because he had kept his eyes glued to that plane every second.

The Master Spy stared into the cockpit of the Hannoveraner. A wisp of smoke was rising from it, being carried off on the breeze that blew from the south. The pilot himself had vanished, consumed by the gas.

As G-8 roared over the rocks, he saw another figure loom up from an opening between two large boulders. The figure came running toward the plane wreckage. Behind him, coming from the same place, was a second figure. The Master Spy zoomed up, looking back over the tail of his Spad. Suddenly, he saw both those figures vanish from view completely. A wisp of smoke drifted up from the spot where they had stood. The gas from the exploded tanks had gotten them, too. The

Germans of the ghost cave were getting a dose of their own medicine.

Out of the tail of his eye, G-8 saw a Fokker in flames tearing down into the mountains. Nippy and Bull were doing their stuff well. He turned back to help them.

By now the odds were not so much in favor of the Germans. With G-8 coming to help, there were four Fokkers against three Spads—three of the most dangerous fighters on the Front. But the Hun ships were not giving up yet. As G-8 came tearing in, the German pilots turned, and all four pairs of Spandau guns were spitting as they came in.

For an instant, G-8 and his Battle Aces were kept busy dodging the flying tracer bullets in that furious attack. It was a clever move on the part of the German pilots. Before the three Spads could retaliate, the four Fokkers had gone screaming out of the fight and were roaring back out of range toward their drome.

G-8 LED his Battle Aces back to Le Bourget, a long flight that was without incident. But when they landed, conversation burst from all three.

"Holy Herring!" Bull exploded. "I never saw anything like that in my life."

"Like which?" Nippy demanded. "Like those three birds—the pilot and the other two who came from the rocks—disappearing as they did?"

"Did you see that?" the Master Spy demanded. "I thought you were fighting Fokkers."

"I was," Bull said, "but I happened to be looking down right after that Hannoveraner crashed. When the crash came, I saw the pilot in the cockpit, then all of a sudden I didn't see him. And while I was still looking, the two Germans who came from between the rocks started to run toward the Hannoveraner, then they seemed to go up in smoke. Do you suppose that's what happened to the men over at the 19th Squadron?"

"I'm afraid so," G-8 admitted.

They entered the apartment, and Battle met them in the living room.

"I say, sir," he said, bowing, "you're a bit late for breakfast and a little early for lunch, but I'll get you something to eat at once. Which shall it be, breakfast or lunch?"

"Just something to eat and a lot of it," Bull growled.

"Sure," Nippy nodded. "There isn't much of anything that would take his appetite away, not even seeing three men vanish."

"So long as they're Germans, it wouldn't affect my appetite," Bull countered.

"Three men vanished!" Battle gasped. "Oh, I say! Is that one of your magic tricks, Nippy?"

"No," the terrier ace said. "I had nothing to do with it. This is a mess, if you ask me, Battle."

The manservant looked hurt. He stared about the living room in perplexity.

"Begging your pardon, sir," he said, "I didn't think it was a mess. In fact, I just got through giving the apartment a general housecleaning."

Nippy grinned and slapped the manservant on the shoulder.

"Cheer up, Battle," he said. "I wasn't talking about the apartment. It always looks swell here. I was talking about the job we've been out on. What do you make of it, G-8?"

The Master Spy shook his head.

"It's plenty bad," he admitted, "probably the worst case of mass murder we've tackled yet. There's one thing I've been wondering. How did you happen to be ground strafing over the field where I left my plane this morning, just as I came up? That was certainly a lucky thing for me."

"Holy Herring!" Bull boomed. "I forgot all about that."

"Yes," Nippy said, "we were coming over to look for you by order of the chief himself."

G-8 smiled.

"You found me, all right," he said, "and if one of those German privates hadn't had a fairly white handkerchief, your machine gun bullets might have found me, too. Why did the general send you over?"

"The old boy's all steamed up," Nippy explained. "It seems he just got the report of what happened to the 19th Squadron. They knew he'd go up in the air when they turned it in to him, so they were kind of holding off until they heard from you. But when no word came from you, they decided they'd have to give the report anyway. The general called up this morning right after he read it."



"Yeah," Bull growled, "he even got us out of bed to answer the phone. If there's anything I hate, it's being waked up about an hour before I want to get up. That hurts."

"Yeah," Nippy cracked, "I'll say it does. You've been belly-aching about it ever since."

"What did the general want you to do?" G8 asked.

Nippy shrugged.

"He ordered us to go over and locate you and find out if you were all right. Frankly, I think the old boy is worried sick about you. You'd better call him up."

"I will," the Master Spy nodded.

HE WENT to the phone and called the general. A moment later, he heard his chief's voice coming over the wire, strained and anxious.

"This is G8," the Master Spy announced. "I just got back, with the help of Nippy and Bull."

"Thank heaven for that!" the general breathed. "I never heard of anything quite so ghastly as the report that came from the 19<sup>th</sup>. Completely wiped out, vanished, gone! Have you found any way to stop this?"

"Not yet, sir," G8 answered. "I've got some pretty important information, however."

"Such as what?" the general demanded.

"You remember *Herr Geist*?" the Master Spy said. "You called me down to your office to meet him some time ago."

"I remember him well," the general said grimly. "You mean the escape artist. He's a clever rascal."

"Yes," G8 said, "and he's behind this. I've met him, talked with him, and fought with him. I thought for awhile that I'd finished him, but he's still alive. I have a suggestion to make, General."

"Good," the general said.

"I would suggest," the Master Spy went on, "that you send out an order, particularly to those troops in the flat country below the Vosges mountains. Tell everyone there that the Ghost will fly again tonight about midnight. Tell them to get as far off the ground as they can when they hear the moaning sound from the skies. Tell them to climb trees, take off in airplanes, anything of that sort. I

don't know whether the tree climbing will do any good, but it may help. I'm afraid that's all I have for you now, General. How do the men feel about the reports? I suppose the news of the 19th has traveled plenty."

"Yes," the general admitted, "it's spread like wildfire. Some of the men don't believe it. Others that have heard about it are scared to death. I'm afraid the Allied morale is pretty well shattered for the time being. What do you propose to do next?"

"I haven't quite figured that out yet, sir," G8 told him. "I have several ideas in mind. I'll get in touch with you as soon as something develops."

"Do so by all means," the general said. "Good luck to you, but for heaven's sake, be careful. I'd rather lose a hundred thousand men than you, G-8."

"Thank you, sir," the Master Spy said. He hung up and turned to his Battle Aces. "It's been some time since we've had anything to eat," he said. "I think we'll tie on the feed bag." He raised his voice and called, "Hey, Battle, how's chow coming along? We're all starving."

"I'll have it ready in ten minutes, sir," the manservant replied.

"Swell," G8 said. "That will just give me time to get this makeup off my face, take a shower and change my clothes."

"And what goes on after lunch?" Nippy asked.

"I'm going to do a little research work on the matter of ghosts," G8 told him.

## CHAPTER NINE

### *Death Wears a Mask*

IN TODBERG Castle, *Herr Oberst* Geist was becoming very suspicious. The body of *Unter-leutnant* Gurtner, whom G-8 had changed to look like the old man he had represented, lay on the stone floor of the entrance hall. Now and then the Baron von Zastrow paused by that still figure as he went about his work and looked down on it. He knew G-8 better, perhaps, than any other German.

When he stopped for the third time beside the still form to study it, *Herr* Geist slipped up noiselessly from the rear of the castle and asked, "What do you think, *Herr* Baron?"

Von Zastrow had already felt the presence of *Herr* Geist. Without turning, he shook his head slowly.

"*Herr Oberst*," he said, "I am of the opinion that perhaps this man is not the *verdammter kerl*. In fact, I am becoming more positive of it all the time. He is the same height as G-8—as you probably know, I have made quite a thorough study of the Master American Spy—but that neck is a little shorter than the neck of G-8 and the head is not quite so well formed. Also, I believe the shoulders lack an inch or two of being as broad as those of G-8."

"*Himmelkreuzdonnerwetter!*" *Herr* Geist growled under his breath. "Can it be possible that the *verdammter kerl* has tricked us again? That is impossible!"

"Such a thing," Baron von Zastrow said, "is always possible where G-8 is concerned. He is the cleverest individual I have ever known."

*Herr* Geist bristled suddenly. Arrogantly, he barked, "*Herr* Baron, you forget that I am here. I am supposed to be very clever also."

Von Zastrow bowed from the waist.

"*Jawohl*," he argued, "you are clever, *Herr* Geist. I do not mean to make any insults whatever against you. But when you have trailed G-8 as long as I have, you will perhaps realize how brainy this man is—how miraculously he escapes his enemies."

"I have escaped my enemies," *Herr* Geist reminded him, "on several occasions, much more easily than he. Once, while hand-cuffed to a powerful guard as I stood before a number of high commanders, I slipped out as easily as that." He snapped his fingers.

"*Jawohl*, to be sure," Baron von Zastrow admitted. "*Aber*, on the other hand, you are known to be an escape artist. G-8 is not skilled in slipping handcuffs or in any of the tricks that you possess, and still he escapes. However, I believe we were speaking of this dead man. I suggest that we hold a post mortem. There must be some way in which we can determine whether—"

Suddenly, the baron stopped and turned to face *Herr* Geist more squarely.

"Let me see," he said. "As I recall, it was *Herr Unter-leutnant* Gurtner who brought in the body and claimed to have killed G-8. Now if the *verdammter kerl* is working as he has several times in the past, he would perhaps do this. He would kill *Herr Unter-leutnant* Gurtner, then he would disguise Gurtner as he himself was last disguised. Then the Master Spy would disguise himself as *Herr Unter-leutnant* Gurtner and would bring in the body of the genuine Gurtner and present it as the body of G-8. Do you understand what I mean?"

"Perfectly," *Herr* Geist snapped. "*Und* I am afraid, *Herr* Baron, that is what has been done."

"*Jawohl*," the baron nodded. "Then if this is *Herr Unter-leutnant* Gurtner, his fingerprints and his teeth should correspond with the records of *Herr* Gurtner, *nicht wahr?*"

*HERR* Geist nodded savagely and began calling his men about him—a surgeon of the castle, a clerk. Records of *Herr Unter-leutnant* Gurtner were brought and compared. They were nearly finished when a telephone call brought *Herr* Geist to his office. A moment later, he returned in a furious rage. The surgeon turned to him.

"We have finished our examination," he said, "We find that this man"—he pointed to the still form on the floor—"is *Unter-leutnant* Gurtner *und* not G-8."

"*Jawohl!*" *Herr* Geist snapped. "I know! That telephone call, do you know what news it brought me?"

Baron von Zastrow nodded.

"I suspect," he said, "it brought you news of G-8's escape from Germany."

*Herr* Geist nodded angrily.

"That is exactly true," he said. "The *verdammter kerl* had a plane hidden in a field in the valley. His two assistants in their Spads Seven and Thirteen were killing our ground troops that had been stationed to guard the plane. G-8, disguised as *Herr Unter-leutnant* Gurtner, climbed into the plane and took off and joined his two assistants. *Und* that is not the end of it. They followed our Hannoveraner loaded with gas tanks and shot it down so that it crashed on the mountain."

Baron von Zastrow nodded.

"I told you, *Herr Geist*," he said, "that I would not put too much confidence in the death of G8. *Und* now what do you propose to do?"

*Geist's* face contorted with emotion.

"*Ach Himmel!*" he spat. "You have not heard the worst of it yet. When the Hannoveraner crashed on the mountain plateau where our ghost is situated, the gas tanks exploded. The pilot and several men of our personnel were killed by the gas."

He threw out his chest and spat out a curse.

"The *verdammter kerl* must die! He and his assistants and all of his friends must die as my men died. They must vanish horribly with the gas. They will be killed in their headquarters at Le Bourget. And you"—he pointed a finger at Baron von Zastrow—"you shall carry out the execution."

The baron straightened.

"*Herr Oberst Geist*," he said, "with your permission, there is something I would like to discuss with you. May we go into your office?"

*Herr Geist* looked at him suspiciously and nodded.

"*Jawohl*," he said.

*Herr Geist* sat behind his desk and the baron stood before him.

"*Herr Oberst Geist*," von Zastrow began, "I have been connected with the Imperial Air Force for a long time. Before that, I was an *offizier* in the Cavalry. I have been decorated six times for bravery. No man can say that I am afraid. I enjoy a fair fight, *Herr Oberst*, but I do not favor this wholesale murder of helpless people who cannot fight back. I petition you, *Herr Oberst*, to let me resign from the mission you have picked for me. Give someone else the command of the Ghost of the Vosges Mountains."

"You yellow cur!" *Herr Geist* spat.

Baron von Zastrow scarcely moved. He shook his head slowly.

"I believe you know better than that *Herr Geist*," he said quietly. "I do not care to argue the matter with you. I am simply stating a fact. Feeling the way I do about the operation of the Ghost and the gas, I cannot do my best work."

"I am your commanding *offizier!*" *Herr Geist* cracked. "I command you to carry on as you have already been ordered. Do you understand?"

Baron von Zastrow bowed and clicked his heels.

"*Jawohl*, *Herr Oberst*," he said mechanically. "I believe that's all?"

"*Jawohl*," *Herr Geist* snapped. "*Das ist alles*. Tonight the Ghost strikes at Le Bourget. At eight o'clock sharp you will spread the gas over Le Bourget and every man there will vanish!"



## CHAPTER TEN

### *The Legend of the Vosges Ghost*

IT WOULD be incorrect to say that G8 was unmindful of his danger. The Master Spy was always on the alert, always conscious of the fact that his enemies were endeavoring to do away with him. But he had no way of knowing that eight o'clock that evening was the time set for the horrible mass murder by gas of himself, Nippy, Bull, Battle and all the others who made up the personnel of the enormous field.

According to the plan he had set for himself, the Master Spy left Nippy, Bull, and Battle to take care of things and set out for Paris in the early afternoon. He needed time to think, so he drove leisurely along the broad highway flanked by Lombard poplars. When he reached the main library, he parked his car in front of it and went inside. He addressed the elderly woman who sat at the information desk in French.

"I would like to have all books pertaining to legends of the Vosges Mountains," he said, "particularly the legend concerning the Ghost of the Vosges."

The gray-haired French woman blinked her eyes and looked curiously at this young American a second time to be sure she was seeing right. She noted his firm, clean-cut, somewhat tanned

features—the captain's bars on his shoulder straps—his highly polished boots.

It was obvious she was thinking, "What would a young flying captain do with some silly old legends about ghosts that flew from the Vosges Mountains?" But the old woman merely shrugged and smiled as she said, "*Oui, Monsieur* Captain. As you wish."

She went into the back of the library and returned after some time with three books. She stared at the signature that G-8 wrote on the card.

"*Mon Dieu!*" she breathed. She called to several other women as G-8, with the books under his arm, strode out of the library. "Look," she said excitedly. She pointed out his signature. "*Monsieur* G-8. We have all heard so much about him. I did not think I would ever meet him face to face. There he goes now, out the door!" Three pairs of admiring old feminine eyes were glued to G-8's broad shoulders until he passed from view.

With the books lying on the roadster seat beside him, the Master Spy drove back to Le Bourget. It was as though he were a student or a young professor engrossed in his work. No one would have guessed that the lives of thousands of men depended on him.

Big Bull Martin eyed him as he came in with the books under one arm.

"What are you going to do, G-8, go back to school?" he asked.

The Master Spy smiled and nodded.

"Yes," he said, "I figured it wouldn't do me any harm to bone up on my history a little. I haven't been getting such good marks in it lately."

Bull looked perplexed.

"What is this, a gag?" he demanded.

"Certainly it's a gag, you big ox," Nippy cut in. "When G-8 says he needs to study up on some subject, it's pretty much of a gag, but it wouldn't be if you said it, you big dumb-bell. You'd have to study a lot in any subject to bring you up to the elementary stage."

Bull Martin dived for the cushions on the davenport and sent them sailing one after the other in Nippy's direction. G-8 stepped between them.

"Wait a minute, you two," he smiled. "If you don't mind, would you take your scrap outside or be quiet? I've really got something I want to look

up. I'm going into the matter of the Vosges Ghost legend."

"Come on, you big kid," Nippy told Bull. "Cut it out and let's give G-8 a hand. He's got three books, so we can each take one and start after the dope he wants."

For a long time they studied the histories. The afternoon dragged on and the deadly hour of eight o'clock drew nearer. Still they found no mention of the Ghost of the Vosges. Then, just before Battle called them to dinner, G-8 discovered a portion of a chapter in one of the books. He began to read aloud:

ONE OF THE INTERESTING LEGENDS OF THE VOSGES MOUNTAINS IS THE TALE OF THE GHOST WHICH, SOME TWO HUNDRED YEARS AGO, WAS SUPPOSED TO HAVE FLOWN FROM A MYSTERIOUS CAVE SOMEWHERE IN THE MOUNTAINS OUT ACROSS THE LOWLANDS TO THE EAST. IT IS RECORDED THAT SOME OF THE PEASANTS SWORE THEY HAD SEEN THE GHOST AT NIGHT, A FILMY, SHAPELESS THING FLAPPING ITS WAY FROM THE CAVE ACROSS THE STAR-LIT SKIES. THIS GHOST IS SAID TO HAVE FLOWN ONLY AT MIDNIGHT. STORIES OF THE GHOST DIFFER IN MANY RESPECTS, BUT ONE REPORT SEEMS QUITE DEFINITELY FIXED. THIS IS THE FACT THAT THE GHOST MADE A STRANGE MOANING SOUND AS IT FLEW THROUGH THE SKIES. IT IS SAID THAT ALL THE INHABITANTS OF THE LOW COUNTRY WEST OF THE VOSGES MOUNTAINS TESTIFIED AT VARIOUS TIMES TO HEARING THE MOANING OF THIS GHOST.

A FEW EARLY SCIENTISTS TRIED TO ATTRIBUTE THE MOANING SOUND TO VARIOUS NATURAL PHENOMENA, BUT THEIR THEORIES WERE SCOFFED AT BY THE MORE IGNORANT PEASANTRY WHO PEOPLED THE REGION. ONE MAN, A MOUNTAINEER OF THE VOSGES, IS REPORTED TO HAVE SAID THAT HE GOT A CLEAR VIEW OF THE GHOST ONE NIGHT AS IT LEFT THE MOUNTAINS. HE SAID IT WAS A TRANSPARENT, FILMY FORM AND THAT HE COULD SEE THE STARS SHINING THROUGH IT. IT PASSED FROM HIS VIEW BUT CONTINUED TO MOAN IN AN EERIE FASHION. THERE IS NO DIRECT INFORMATION AS TO WHETHER THE GHOST ACTUALLY DID ANY HARM TO HUMAN

BEINGS. LEGEND HAS IT THAT WHEN THE GHOST PASSED OVER CERTAIN SECTIONS ON ITS NOCTURNAL TRIPS, VARIOUS PEOPLE BELOW DIED. BUT THIS CANNOT BE SUBSTANTIATED TO ANY AUTHENTIC DEGREE. IT IS ASSUMED THAT IF A FEW DID DIE, THEIR DEATHS WERE CAUSED BY FRIGHT AND PERHAPS HEART FAILURE RATHER THAN BY THE GHOST ITSELF—IF SUCH A PHENOMENON DID ACTUALLY EXIST.

The Master Spy looked up from his reading.

"That's one thing I've been looking for," he said. "I'm satisfied now. Let's eat."

THEY filed into the dining room and took their places. Bull, hungry as usual, fell to eating at once but the terrier ace was too curious.

"What I can't figure out, G-8," he said, "is what you see in that write-up of the Ghost legend that seems so important. It doesn't say anything beyond what *Herr Geist* has already told."

G-8 smiled.

"That's where you're wrong, Nippy," he said. "But maybe it's simply because I didn't tell you all that *Herr Geist* said. From what he told me, I'm supposed to think that the legendary ghost killed everybody that it flew over. For instance, when it passed over a village, everybody below in that village died mysteriously. But you notice this report of the legend and it's apparently pretty well authenticated—says that there are only a few scattered reports of people dying when the ghost passed over, or at least when the moaning sound occurred at midnight. And those few deaths probably didn't have anything to do with the moaning or the flight of the ghost. In other words, almost every community has one or two people who have very bad hearts and who would probably drop dead under stress of great fear or excitement. It's natural to assume, then, that when the Ghost flew over, a few people here and there became so frightened or excited when they heard that moaning sound that they dropped dead.

"Even animals die of fear, let alone human beings. I heard of a French poodle in Paris not long ago that ran out in front of a truck. It just narrowly escaped being run over and ran over to the opposite side of the street. Then it lay down and died of pure

fear. In a case like that, if there had been any strange phenomenon like a moaning sound or the appearance of one of your crazy ghosts that you make out of bed sheets, many people would have sworn that the dog was killed by the presence of the ghost."

Having satisfied his first pangs of hunger, Bull cut in, "Holy Herring, that means that *Herr Geist*'s story about the Ghost is just a lot of baloney!"

The Master Spy laughed.

"Certainly," he said. "You don't think that *Herr Geist*, even though he is an expert magician, would have the power to team up with an actual ghost—even if there were such a thing—and get his help to fly over territory and kill people, do you? This report on the legend makes me absolutely positive that every single thing about this menace is just baloney, and any deaths resulting from it come from causes that can be logically explained. There's the vanishing gas that *Herr Geist* has perfected. I'm sure that's nothing supernatural because I saw it work. All he has to do is have some sort of plane that makes a noise like a ghost to spread that gas where he wants it."

G-8 glanced at his wrist watch. It was a quarter past six.

"Tonight we're going to move up into the territory of the Ghost," he said.

Bull Martin stopped with a forkful of fried potatoes halfway to his mouth.

"Huh?" he grunted.

"Sure," G-8 nodded. "The four of us are going to the quarters of the 19th Squadron. Every man was wiped out there, so I don't think the Ghost will strike in that spot again very soon. We'll go up there pretty secretly. I'll give out the order generally that the field is to remain abandoned. In some way that report will probably reach *Herr Geist*'s agents and they'll leave the place alone. When we're ready, we'll take off for the field of the 19th and we'll make that our headquarters temporarily."

"How soon will that be?" Nippy asked.

G-8 gleamed at his wrist watch again.

"I'd say we'll probably get started around nine o'clock," he ventured.

But the Master Spy didn't know that preparations were being made already on the German side of the Vosges Mountains to kill them

all; nor did he know that if they remained at Le Bourget until nine o'clock, he, Nippy, Bull, and Battle would become only thin wisps of smoke carried away on the night breeze.

## **CHAPTER ELEVEN**

### ***Barracks of the Damned***

THE three finished their evening meal quite leisurely. G-8 was first to rise. "I think I'll get things under way," he said.

He went straight to the telephone in the living room and called the general's office. Fortunately, the general had not gone to dinner as yet and was still at his desk.

"Chief," G-8 said, "I'd like to ask you a couple of favors. Here's the plan I have in mind at the moment. The four of us are going up to the 19th Squadron field this evening."

"What!" the general exploded.

"Yes," the Master Spy said. "It may sound rather dangerous at first, but you see that's one of the reasons I'm calling you. I want the fact that we're there kept in the strictest secrecy. I don't want anyone except you and a telephone engineer to know that we're there. Let the word go out that we all figure the 19th field is hoodooed."

"That's an excellent idea," the general commended. "What do you plan to do there?"

"Watch and listen for the Ghost of the Vosges Mountains," G-8 said. "If you don't mind, I would like to have you choose a telephone engineer who can be trusted absolutely. Tell him what's going on and swear him to secrecy. I want him to hook up a telephone line to the 19th Squadron headquarters that will be directly connected with this phone at all times. In other words, I want it fixed so that when anyone calls me here at Le Bourget, I get the call at the 19th field also. Get the idea?"

"Yes, of course," the general said. "Just a moment while I make a note of that to be sure I have it straight." A moment later, he said, "All right, go ahead. Anything else?"

"Yes," the Master Spy nodded. "Will you give out an order to all officers in the entire area between here and the Vosges Mountains to call me immediately on this phone and advise me of any moaning sound that they hear in the skies? Is that clear?"

"Perfectly," the general said. "I'll see to that as soon as I have taken care of the other matter."

"Good," G-8 said. "I'll depend upon you to take care of those items, General, and I'll wait for the calls. Thank you, sir."

He hung up the receiver and called Nippy, Bull, and Battle about him.

"I guess you all heard what I told the general over the phone," he said. "Now here's what I'd like to have each of you do. Battle, you pack up enough supplies for several days and put them in the roadster." He glanced out of the window. "It will be dark very shortly."

As he spoke, he reached for the button on the wall and punched it in a signal for the planes to be warned.

"Nippy and Bull," he said, "you fly to the field of the 19th Squadron. It will be dark when you get there. Land and set yourselves up in the headquarters building. That phone, as you know, will soon be connected with this one. I want you to be there, ready to take reports by the time I leave here. I'll probably start about nine, and fly my Spad over. You can start about the same time I do, Battle, if you have everything packed by then, and drive the roadster over."

"That will give me plenty of time, sir," the manservant assured him.

"Good," G-8 nodded. "Then you, Nippy and Bull, can shove off as soon as you can get ready."

Already Spads Seven and Thirteen were blasting out on the line in answer to the signal that G-8 had given the mechanics. A few minutes later, the two Battle Aces strolled out to their waiting planes, climbed into their cockpits, and roared away into the twilight, heading east for the field of the 19th.

G-8 helped Battle pack and waited. He really wasn't expecting any word of the moaning sound to come before midnight, but he couldn't be sure. He would wait here until Nippy and Bull had had ample time to reach the 19th field. That would probably be some time after eight o'clock.

Little did the Master Spy know that already, under cover of darkness, the Vosges Ghost had started on its way toward Le Bourget and that with each minute he waited there at the field, his doom came closer and closer.

It was nearly seven-thirty when the phone bell jangled. The Master Spy strode rapidly to answer the call. He wasn't expecting any bad news as yet, but in times like these, that phone might bring any sort of report.

"Yes?" he said, "G-8 speaking."

An excited voice reached him—a voice that seemed faint and far away. "This is Major Dunhill," the voice said. "I'm located on the Front just below the Vosges Mountains, almost due east of Le Bourget. We have heard a moaning sound in the sky. It's high up. We've tried to locate it with searchlights but we can't see a thing."

"The sound is coming from the Vosges Mountains?" G-8 demanded.

"Yes," the major told him. "It's coming from the German side of the Vosges range, heading due west."

"Thanks," the Master Spy nodded.

He reached out for the bell to signal the mechanics even before he hung up the receiver. In two minutes his plane would be out there warming. He whirled from the phone.

"O. K., Battle," he said, "I'm shoving off right now. The Vosges Ghost has started. It just crossed the front lines."

"Oh, but I say!" the manservant gasped. "Don't tell me there really is such a thing as the Vosges Ghost. I thought that was supposed to be just a legend, sir."

"It was," G-8 said. "*Herr Geist* is simply trying to make the legend of the Vosges Ghost come true. I'm going to see if I can locate that thing, whatever it is. You hang on here. More reports may come in."

"How long shall I wait before I start, sir?" Battle asked.

"Better wait until after eight o'clock; say eight-thirty," G-8 advised, "so that Nippy and Bull will have a chance to get to the 19th field. Then come ahead if you're packed up. Take care of yourself."

The manservant bowed.

"Yes, sir," he said. "Thank you, sir."

The roar of G-8's Spad sounded outside. The Master Spy was already in his flying togs. At a dog trot he made for his cockpit, climbed in, and thundered into the east through the early darkness.

AS HE flew, he turned on the little dashlight before him and dropped the map case cover that came down before him like a small writing desk, but high enough to afford his stick control free movement. On that map he found the location of Major Dunhill's outfit at the Front, just below the Vosges Mountains. Mentally, he computed the proper course that would take him to that spot, swung his plane on the course and roared on farther into the night.

As he flew, he climbed to ten thousand feet. Perhaps from above he would be able to see some sign of the sky Ghost. It was evident that it wasn't visible from the ground at night.

He glanced at his watch, saw that he had been gone ten minutes. It was twenty minutes of eight. He switched on his two-way wireless set, uncoiled the aerial with the lead fish at the bottom of it, to keep it straight so it wouldn't tangle in his tail group.

He was wondering about Battle, about the reports the manservant might have received since G-8 had taken off. He tried to contact him now. Soon Battle was answering him. The signals were very weak but G-8 caught a few words:

ANOTHER REPORT JUST CAME IN FROM TORELIEU. GHOST JUST BEEN HEARD OVER THERE. BATTLE

The Master Spy dropped the map again and searched it. He located Torelieu, where a small French concentration camp was stationed. It lay straight ahead of him, about five minutes away at the rate he was flying. Any minute now he would see the sky Ghost. He strained his eyes, peering down to catch any moving thing, any sign of exhaust stacks; any sign at all that would signify that the Ghost of the Vosges Mountains was passing beneath him.

Five minutes passed, but he saw nothing except the black blotch of the earth, with here and there a twinkling light winking up at him.

He switched on his set and jabbed away at his key to call Battle again for further directions. He began to circle as he called, but as he waited, no word came from Le Bourget. Again and again he tried to contact his manservant and master of make-up, but there was still no word. He changed the tuning on his set, tried to catch any other message. This was mainly to test his set. His wireless appeared dead. He tried sending, and now he realized the truth. Probably the small battery that worked his wireless set had gone bad. He was out of touch with everything and would be until he landed at the field of the 19th.

He jerked his Spad out of the great spiral and took a course straight for the 19th headquarters. Nippy and Bull should be almost there now. Minutes dragged on. Eight o'clock came and passed and yet G-8 didn't know what that time would mean to him. Eight o'clock, the time set by *Herr Geist* for the death of all those at Le Bourget field. It was ten minutes after eight, now, a quarter past, then half past eight and the minute hand was climbing up toward nine o'clock.

As he had about twenty-four hours ago, G-8 recognized the terrain about the 19th field. He was spiralling down and soon he located the field itself and was coming down to land. His wheels and tail skid touched the ground in front of the little headquarters office. There seemed to be a pall of death about this mysterious field, where more than a hundred men had vanished from the face of the earth. He saw the planes of his Battle Aces standing in front of headquarters.

He could make out the numbers Seven and Thirteen on the sides fairly well a hundred feet from where he had stopped. Sudden, fearful apprehension gripped him as he climbed from his cockpit. At the moment no one seemed to be alive in the place. Could it be that the Ghost had attacked again and had killed Nippy and Bull? He was running toward the door of the little headquarters building when it burst open before him and big Bull Martin stood silhouetted in the light that shone from within.

Bull cried out, "Holy Herring, you're here! Nippy! It's G-8. He's O. K!"

The Master Spy stared at the big fellow.

"O. K.?" he repeated. "Certainly I'm O. K. Why shouldn't I be?"

The big fellow caught him by the arm.

"Come in here quick," he said.

As the Master Spy entered, he saw Nippy hunched over the phone. The terrier ace glanced sidewise at him.

"O. K.," he said into the mouthpiece.

He slammed up the receiver, leaped from his chair to face the Master Spy. For once Nippy wasn't grinning and his face was white.

"Jumping Jupiter, G-8!" he cried. He caught hold of the Master Spy's hand and gripped it. "You just about scared the life out of us. Where's Battle? Is he coming?"

G-8 frowned.

"Look here," he said, "What is this all about?"

THEN Nippy and Bull were both talking at once, babbling something about Le Bourget and the phone being dead there. G-8 laid a hand on each of their shoulders.

"Wait a minute," he commanded. "Stop, both of you. I've got to get this straight and get it straight quickly. Nippy, you were on the phone last. Suppose you tell me what's happened.

The terrier ace took a long breath and gulped.

"G-8," he said, "we're afraid Battle has gone west with the rest of the crowd. We've been getting reports since we landed here. I've been at the phone for over half an hour, ever since we sat down. Every time somebody finishes a report, the general calls in."

"For heaven's sake," G-8 exploded, "tell me what's happened. You can go into details afterward."

"Shut up, squirt!" Bull boomed. "Let me tell it. As near as we can guess, Le Bourget is done for. The general says nobody can make contact with Le Bourget field. The telephone bell just keeps on ringing. We've tried to get Battle at the end hangar, we've tried to get the French commandant, we've tried everything."

"Yeah," Nippy chimed in, "the general has been trying to get Le Bourget, too. The worst of the whole thing is that all the reports which have come in tell us that the Ghost, or whatever it is that makes the moaning sound, was headed straight for Le Bourget field ever since it left the Vosges Mountains."



G-8 snatched up the phone. He heard the wire hum, showing that it was in working order.

"Get me the general at once," he barked into the mouthpiece.

In ten seconds he heard the general's anxious voice coming across the wires.

"What's the latest report on Le Bourget?" G-8 cracked.

"Good heavens!" the general exploded. "Is this you, G-8?"

"Yes," the Master Spy said. "I'm O. K. I want to find out about Battle and the rest at Le Bourget."

"We can't raise a soul there," the general said, "but from the outlying sections of Paris reports have been coming in that they heard a moaning sound in the sky like this Ghost you described. I'm afraid to send men to Le Bourget to check up. If this deadly gas has been spread over Le Bourget field, there isn't a man living there. The air is still tonight, so of course the gas is probably still hanging over the field. Anyone else who goes near it will be affected by it."

"Right," G-8 said. "Hold everything for a while until I've had time to think. Thanks, General."

He took a long breath and hung up slowly. He was utterly baffled. He shook his head sadly and turned to his Battle Aces. There was a catch in his voice when he spoke.

"I guess the Ghost was after us, and it got Battle and the rest of the men at Le Bourget instead."



## **CHAPTER TWELVE**

### ***The Devil Rides the Night***

FOR a long time a dead silence reigned in that little headquarters office of the vanished 19th Squadron, broken only by the breathing of G-8 and his Battle Aces. The minds of all three men were on the same thing. They had lost a comrade, a very close friend. They realized now, all of them, how much Battle had meant to them. The English manservant had been slow in getting jokes, but even that, his greatest drawback, had only increased the fun they had had together. There had been times when Battle had been rather dictatorial concerning meals. When G-8 was expected back, he wouldn't permit Nippy or Bull to eat until their chief returned. But now Bull Martin forgave him even that.

G-8 was thinking of half a dozen times when Battle had saved his life and those of Nippy and Bull. There were many humorous incidents to remember Battle by, yet the manservant had been far from a clown. He had been a most loyal assistant, and no man on earth could handle a frying pan or a make-up kit more skillfully than he. He had been incomparable in his own lines of work.

Nippy was the first to break the silence.

"It doesn't seem possible," he said slowly, "that Battle can really be gone. Why, only a little over an hour and a half ago we left him at Le Bourget packing up supplies to bring here in the roadster." Then the terrier ace brightened momentarily, for he was by nature optimistic. "Hey, maybe Battle got away before the Ghost arrived," he suggested. "What did you tell him about coming here, G-8?"

"Too much, I'm afraid," the Master Spy admitted sadly. "I told him he'd better wait there until you two had had a chance to reach here so that the telephone wouldn't be without someone to answer it at any time. I wanted to get all the reports possible."

"That would keep him there after eight o'clock, wouldn't it?" Bull asked.

G-8 nodded. The big fellow shook his head.

"Holy Herring!" he said. "I wish now that I hadn't kidded Battle so much. I guess I was kind of tough on him at times."

"I guess we were all a little tough on him now and then," G-8 admitted. Arabella will probably be pretty well broken up over it."

"Yeah," Nippy nodded, "I guess she and Battle were figuring on getting married as soon as the war was over. In fact, I made Battle promise that after he and Arabella were married, they would invite me over to dinner some time before we were called back to the United States. I'll bet with both of them swinging a mean frying pan, there would be a mess of cooking for you."

"Stop it, will you?" Bull growled.

He rubbed savagely at the corner of one eye with the back of his great fist. "The war isn't over yet," G-8 said. "Far from it." He took a long breath. "Well, we've got matters at hand to contend with. Battle was one of our best friends, but there are thousands of others going to die because of this gas that the Ghost spreads unless we do something about it mighty soon."

"Do what?" Nippy challenged.

G-8 shrugged.

"That's what we've got to figure out," he said. "Now look. It's evident that the Ghost was sent out to get us, because it went straight to Le Bourget and back. You haven't received reports of any other outfit being wiped out, have you?"

"No," Nippy said. "I guess that was the purpose of that flight around eight o'clock."

"All right," the Master Spy said. "The Ghost will probably fly again at midnight as it has been doing. I've got to figure out some way to detect it so that we can try and stop it. It's a clear, star-lit night and I think we're going to have a moon later on. That ought to help us somewhat."

"It seems," Bull ventured, "that you should have been able to see the thing while you were on your way here just now."

"I tried," G-8 told him. "I contacted Battle to get the dope on the Ghost's progress. We must have passed pretty close. I kept a close watch, figuring that I might see flame from the exhaust."

"You seem pretty sure," Bull ventured, "that the Ghost is a machine."

"Sure," G-8 nodded. "I'm quite positive that it's a plane of some sort, and the exhausts are fixed so that they make a moaning sound as the plane goes through the sky. But I can't figure why it isn't possible to see it. Even in the dark I should have located it, but I simply couldn't find it."

A few more scattered reports came in of the Ghost on its return trip. An hour dragged by. Bull Martin was growing more and more angry.

"Listen," he pleaded, "let me go out and chase this thing in old number Seven. Maybe I can locate it."

G-8 shrugged.

"I'm afraid not," he said. "Our reports of its return trip aren't quite definite enough as to location. We've got three reports of the moaning sound, and apparently the Ghost is flying a zigzag course on its way back to the Vosges Mountains."

"Yes, but the doggoned thing makes a moaning sound you can hear for miles."

"Yes," G-8 admitted. "That is, if you're down on the ground and there isn't too much noise around you. But with one of our Hissos churning in our laps, we can't very well hear anything. It's too late anyway. The Ghost has passed this point and I don't think we'd be able to catch it. I think there's only one way to spot it. I'm going to try that method when it flies at midnight."

"What's that?" Nippy demanded.

"I haven't got it fully worked out yet," G-8 said. "I'll tell you later when I have."

Suddenly, every man in that room tensed. A sound had come to them from outside—the sound of a purring automobile engine and the crunching of tires on gravel. As one, G-8 and his Battle Aces raced for the door and threw it open. Nippy let out a yell.

"Jumping Jupiter, it's the roadster!"

ALL THREE could see the lines of the low, powerful roadster that was their private means of transportation. A thin faced man peered out from the dark interior of the car and a familiar voice reached them as the engine was switched off.

"Oh, I say, gentlemen, are you there?"

G-8, Nippy, and Bull shouted one name in unison:

"Battle!"

Battle beamed.

"Right-o," he said.

Three pairs of eager hands helped pull him out of the car.

"Thank heaven you're O. K!" G-8 cried, slapping him on the back.

Nippy and Bull were dancing around Battle like a couple of wild Indians on the warpath.

"Boy," the terrier ace cried, "are you a sight for sore eyes!"

"Thank you, sir," Battle said as they led him into the little headquarters office. "And may I say I'm delighted and thankful to be here, gentlemen. I've been driving as though the very dickens himself were after me."

"Come in and tell us all about it," Bull boomed joyously.

"You aren't by any chance a ghost, are you, Battle?" Nippy cracked. "Here, let me pinch you." He gave the manservant a twinge on the arm, "No," he said, "I guess you aren't a ghost but you're almost thin enough to be one."

"We thought you were done for," G-8 said. "What's happened at Le Bourget, or don't you know?"

Battle shook his head.

"I'm sorry, sir," he said, "but I don't exactly know the results, sir."

"All right," G-8 said. "Now begin at the beginning, Battle. The last I heard from you was about twenty minutes of eight, then my wireless went dead. I was out of touch after that."

"Oh, so that's what happened," Battle said. "I tried very hard to get you, sir. Right after I received your last message, I got several calls on the phone giving the location of the ghostly moaning sounds. I had a map out on the table and I charted the course of the Ghost on that by sticking pins at the points that I heard from. I guess it was about a quarter past eight when I suddenly realized that the Ghost seemed to be heading directly for Le Bourget field. I said to myself, 'My word, Battle, something must be done. They're sending the Ghost straight for Le Bourget field. They intend to get us all here. They want the Master and Mister Nippy and Mister Bull and they're planning to kill all the rest of us to get them.' Then I realized the danger that everyone must be in, so I notified the commanding officer at Le Bourget of what I believed was happening. I told him that my advice would be to order everybody away from the field as fast as they could leave."

"That was about a quarter past eight?" G-8 asked.

Battle nodded.

"Yes, sir," he said. "I hurriedly packed things into the car and started out. By that time almost everyone had left the field by cars and trucks and planes. Ambulances were taking them out of the hospital and moving them to a safe distance."

Battle looked a little worried now.

"I say, sir," he said, "it seemed to me that it was necessary to hurry things terrifically. I couldn't get in touch with you, sir, so I—er—took matters in my own hands, so to speak. I trust you don't think that I presumed too much in doing so, sir. I wouldn't want to overstep my bounds."

G-8 laughed with relief.

"Overstep your bounds, Battle?" he cried. "Listen, fellow—he slapped the manservant a resounding thump on the back—the general himself couldn't have acted more wisely. You were marvelous. You saved the life of every man that got away from Le Bourget field in time. I'm sure of it."

Battle's worried frown changed and he beamed with genuine pleasure.

"Thank you, sir," he said. "I am very much relieved to know that you feel that way about it, sir."

"You're going to get medals for this job, Battle," G-8 assured him. "Take it from me, Arabella is going to be proud of you—just as proud as we all are of you."

Battle bowed.

"Gentlemen," he said, "may I say this is the happiest moment of my life? I can't tell you how much I appreciate your kindness."

"Kindness nothing!" Bull thundered. "It's only what you deserve, you old poker-faced penguin."

Still beaming, Battle bowed to the big fellow.

"THANK you kindly, sir," he said. "That from you is a high compliment indeed." He sobered suddenly and turned to the Master Spy. "But—er—one thing, sir. I knew your presence here was to be held in the greatest secrecy, so I didn't mention to the commander of Le Bourget field that you had come here, nor did I even mention that you were not at Le Bourget. In fact, I went one step farther, sir. I told him that you were busy at the moment

and that you had asked me to talk to him and deliver the message to him."

"Battle," the Master Spy said in earnest approval, "you're a wonder! You're marvelous! Don't ever let anybody tell you anything different."

"Thank you, sir," Battle said. "I must hurry now and get the things unpacked from the car."

"And we'll help you," G-8 said. "We'll set up our living quarters right here in this office."

He glanced at his wrist watch.

"It's getting along toward midnight," he said. "Nippy and Bull, you give Battle a hand will you? I want to check over my wireless set and see what's wrong with it. When the Ghost flies again, I want to be in direct contact with you here on the ground at all times."

In ten minutes G-8 had checked over his radio set, had found the battery to be dead and had replaced it with a fresh one. By the time he had finished his work, Nippy, Bull, and Battle had set up four cots in the headquarters office and a small stove for cooking. They were ready to begin living there.

G-8 stood on the tarmac listening. Nippy came out and joined him.

"What's the dope on this next trip, G-8?" the terrier ace asked.

At that point, Bull came up to them.

"I'm just about satisfied," the Master Spy said, "that because of the strange make-up of this Ghost machine, it can't be seen at night, at least not very easily. But it can be heard. What I want to do is shoot the thing down, destroy it. We know that we can't hear it as long as our engines are running. I'm going to wait until it comes out tonight. Possibly we'll hear it here; at any rate, we'll get reports on the telephone as to where it's flying. Others on the ground will be able to tell from the sound, and they've been ordered to report to us by phone. I'll wait until I know just about when it's due back in its cave, or wherever it's housed in the mountains. We know that point is somewhere in the immediate vicinity of where we shot down the Hannoveraner. I'm going to fly to a high altitude above that part of the Vosges Mountains, then cut my throttle and switch so it will be absolutely still except for the wind rushing over the wings and the brace wires. I figure in that way I'll be able to hear the Ghost

when it comes back and I can locate it from the sound rather than by sight."

"Holy Herring!" Bull exploded. "That sure seems like a dangerous undertaking. But it sounds like a swell idea if it works. But if anything goes wrong—" "Yeah," Nippy nodded, "if it works. Aren't you going to take Bull and me with you?"

"No," G-8 said, "you'll stay here with Battle. I'll need you here probably more than I will over there."

"If you can't get your engine started again," Nippy ventured, "you will have to land somewhere in the mountains."

"That," the Master Spy said "is the chance I've got to take."

Suddenly, he grew rigid. To his keen ears had come a weird sound from far off. It was a moaning sound that traveled from high above the Vosges Mountains and seemed to grow slightly louder as he listened.

"Holy Herring!" Bull gasped. "What's that?"

"That," G-8 said, "is the moan of the Vosges Ghost."

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### *Trail of the Ghost*

AT THAT very moment the telephone bell rang inside the little headquarters office, and all three dashed to answer it. G-8 reached the phone first. The call was from a captain stationed at the Front, nearer the Vosges Mountains than was the 19th squadron. He was making the first report of the moaning sound. From then on, reports came thick and fast all along the line.

On a map spread out over the desk, Nippy and Bull punched pins along the route that the Ghost was taking. Between reports, G-8 perused the map.

"From the way the Ghost is starting out," he said, "it isn't heading for Le Bourget field this time. It's—"

Suddenly he tensed, for he had drawn an imaginary line ahead of the course that the Ghost

had already traveled and his fingers crossed a point some forty miles to the west of them, directly in the path of the Ghost. The Master Spy leaped for the phone.

"Give me the commanding officer of the rest camp near Poulet," he ordered. "Quick!"

He drummed his fingers nervously on the desk as he waited, feeling sure that as each second sped by, thousands of lives would be taken. Then he heard a commanding voice answer him on the phone. It was slow and deliberate in speech.

"Hello. This is General Charleton, commander of the rest camp at—"

"Good," G-8 cut in. "Now listen closely, General. There isn't a second to lose. You've heard of the Ghost of the Vosges Mountains. Well, it's heading in your direction. I believe you've got a whole division there at your rest camp. I know they've just returned from the Front and they're tired and worn out—but get them as far away from that rest camp as you can immediately. If they don't get away before the Ghost arrives, they'll vanish completely and you'll go with them. This is G-8 speaking."

That seemed to galvanize the general into action.

"Thank you," he said. "I'll act at once."

The Master Spy heard his receiver bang up on the hook. He took a long breath.

"I hope we're not entirely too late," he said. "Some of them will get it, I haven't any doubt of that. The trouble is, we don't know how far this gas spreads after it's sprayed out from the Ghost plane."

"There's one way we can tell," Nippy said. "If it spreads a great deal, you'll find that a lot of people in Paris have vanished from that which was dumped over Le Bourget."

G-8 nodded.

"That's right, Nippy," he said. "I'll see what I can find out."

He talked with the general for a few minutes, then hung up, nodding with satisfaction.

"That's the first break we've got," he said. "They have no reports of anyone vanishing from the outlying sections of Paris. So far, they haven't dared send anyone to Le Bourget field, so they can't tell how many have been accounted for there."

The French commander of the field and a large number of his men reported to the general in Paris since their escape."

G-8 glanced at his wrist watch.

"Well, I'll be getting ready to shove off before long," he said. "I want to catch that Ghost when he returns."

Battle bowed beside him.

"If I may make a suggestion, sir," he ventured, "it seems to me that after spreading the gas at Le Bourget, the enemy will be certain that all of us are dead. From that it would seem that the Germans would scarcely expect you in Germany now."

G-8 smiled and laid a hand on the manservant's arm.

"Battle," he said, "you're going great guns. I really hadn't thought of that myself. We'll have to move around here with the greatest of secrecy. When we open a door, let's turn out the lights so that no one from the air can see that this field is occupied. From now on until this case is cleared up, we'll all work with the greatest secrecy."

"Do you plan to return to Germany tonight, sir?" Battle asked.

G-8 thought a moment, shook his head.

"TO TELL you the truth, Battle," he admitted, "I don't know just what I'm going to do. I won't know until further circumstances turn up. I only know now that I'm going to try and get that Vosges Ghost and shoot it down. Outside of that I'm not certain of anything."

"You wouldn't want to wear a change of make-up, perhaps?" Battle suggested. "I brought a large make-up kit with me, of course."

The Master Spy considered that a moment.

"How about the wardrobe?" he asked. "Did you bring most of that along?"

"Quite a bit of it," Battle answered. "As much of it as I could carry in the car. Did you want another uniform?"

"No," the Master Spy said. "On the contrary, I'll wear this one, but I think I'll put on a pair of second lieutenant's bars and you can change my face to look like someone else—just anyone so long as it isn't myself. But hurry. I want to be in the air over the mountains when the Vosges Ghost returns."

Battle beamed as he hastily prepared his make-up kit.

"Yes, sir," he said. "I'll make it cracky, as you Americans say. Really, I think that's very expressive, sir; cracky; meaning very quick."

"Holy Herring!" Bull grinned. "You're the one that's cracky around here, Battle. The term is 'snappy,' not 'cracky.' Make it snappy. Do you catch on, Battle?" "Oh, yes, Sir," Battle nodded. "Snappy like the snap of a finger rather than cracky like the crack of a firecracker. I get it." As the manservant bantered with Bull, he worked on G-8's face. In less than three minutes, he had the Master Spy's features changed so that he looked quite unlike himself. G-8 pulled on his helmet and goggles.

"All right," he said nodding to his Battle Aces. "One of you keep tight to the wireless set. I want the other one to be on the phone. Keep me posted as to the progress of the Ghost."

"I'd a lot rather be flying out there with you tonight than punching a wireless key," Bull ventured.

"You would," Nippy chirped. "You always want to be doing something besides what you're supposed to do—unless it's eating."

"All right," G-8 smiled, "now don't you two get into a fight between yourselves. Attend to your business. Remember, I'll be hung out on a limb above the mountains if you don't keep in touch with me."

Big Bull Martin looked hurt.

"Holy Herring!" he boomed. "Did we ever let you down, G-8?"

"No," the Master Spy admitted. "Come to think about it, I guess you never have, but sometimes I wonder if you aren't going to get into some friendly brawl that's going to tangle things up a bit."

Nippy grinned.

"Don't let the big ox worry you," he said. "If he starts getting funny around here, I'll clip him one on the chin and teach him a lesson."

"Huh," Bull grunted, "it would hurt more to be bitten by a mosquito."

ANOTHER report came in as G-8 prepared for flight. Then the Master Spy was out in front of his plane, twisting the prop and starting the engine.

Two more reports came in as he waited for the engine to warm. The first report stated that the Vosges Ghost had been heard some distance away, circling over the divisional rest camp that G-8 had endeavored to clear. The second report was from this side of the rest camp. The Vosges Ghost appeared to be returning to its mountain hideout.

With that, the Master Spy opened his throttle, guided his Spad across the field and thundered into the night. The stars were out, and over the Vosges mountains rose a waning moon. Luck was with him all around, it seemed. If ever there was a night on which he could spot a ghostly thing flying across the sky, it would be tonight.

He strung out his wireless aerial and tested his set while he still climbed toward the mountains. His set was working perfectly. So was the outfit that Bull operated back at the 19th. He tapped out a message in the secret code that only he and Nippy and Bull and Battle knew.

HOW IS THE GHOST COMING?

Bull's answer came back:

GHOST SEEMS TO BE DOING ALL RIGHT. ACCORDING TO REPORTS HE'S HEADING BACK TOWARD THE VOSGES MOUNTAINS NOW.

G-8 punched out an answer.

SWELL. KEEP ME POSTED ON ANY CHANGE. LET ME KNOW HOW HE'S COMING. I WANT TO CHECK HIS POSITION FROM TIME TO TIME AS THE REPORTS COME IN.

The Master Spy climbed higher and higher until the altitude made him snuggle down lower in his cockpit to keep warm. The moon was brilliant and in its light he could see the mountain tops ahead of him clearly. Never had he seen a night any clearer than this one. Up there in that high altitude it was almost light enough to read the heavy print in a newspaper.

More reports came in as he spotted the small mountain plateau where the Hannoveraner had landed. The Ghost of the Vosges Mountains was still holding to its course. He checked that from various points where the reports had come from. Yes, it was heading straight for this mountain plateau.

A few minutes later, at ten thousand feet above the plateau, G-8 continued to circle. Then a report came from Bull. The moaning of the Vosges Ghost had been heard five minutes before off to the west, where it crossed the front lines. This was all German territory that stretched beneath the Master Spy. He punched out his last message on the key.

I'M GOING DOWN AFTER THE GHOST NOW.

He shut off his wireless and reeled in the aerial. The engine slowed until it was idling. Already the nose of the Spad was down. Next, he reached up for the switch and turned off the ignition. The motor died with a plaintive gasp.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### *Hell's Holiday*

THE Master Spy was straining over the cockpit cowl, staring down toward the mountains. But he didn't expect to see anything; not yet, at any rate. His ears were on the alert, straining to catch the first moaning sound of the approaching Ghost. But there was only stillness about him, except for the swishing of the wind through the rigging as he glided on down.

Suddenly, G-8 straightened in the seat. Off to the west he heard, for the first time, the moaning sound of the Ghost. It was coming nearer rapidly, heading straight for the plateau on the mountaintop. It grew louder and louder, and G-8 stuck his Spad into a steeper dive. From the direction of the sound he could tell the exact course the Ghost was taking.

He was diving rapidly to intercept it, but now the moaning slowly diminished in volume, although it was coming nearer. The Master Spy knew instantly the explanation for that. It was bearing out his theory that the Ghost was a machine of the air; a plane, perhaps invisible, but a plane nevertheless. The exhausts were probably built in such a way that they made that moaning sound.

Now the Ghost plane was coming in to land, and whoever was flying it was throttling back the motor. Off to the west, where the moaning sound came from, G-8 thought he caught a momentary glint of moonlight reflected on some object, but it was so fleeting that he couldn't be sure that it wasn't an optical illusion. He went tearing on down straight in the path of the Ghost plane.

Suddenly, from near that flat-topped mountain where the Hannoveraner had crashed, there came a blinding light. A searchlight beam knifed the sky. Back and forth G-8 ducked to dodge the light, but with his engine off, he was practically powerless. Suddenly, the beam caught and held him. While that searchlight glowed, he was blinded.

In wild desperation, he kicked his Spad over and sent it hurling straight down the searchlight beam. His fingers clamped down on the triggers and his Vickers guns crashed out in angry staccato. The searchlight went off abruptly. He couldn't tell whether he had hit it or whether the operators had turned it off to save it from his bullets.

Again he turned for the Ghost. He could still hear the low moaning, but it was much fainter now than when he had first heard it. Yes, the throttles had been pulled back. The Ghost plane was getting ready to land.

Again G-8 saw the glint of moonlight reflected on something near the mountain plateau. He aimed his guns ahead of the spot and pressed his triggers. The moaning of the Ghost plane ceased entirely. He went hurtling down for another attack, feeling that he had missed in the first one, but there was no more glinting of moonlight on that weird craft. He was little more than a thousand feet above the plateau top of the mountain, struggling to see that invisible plane.

From the mountain came a rattle of machine gun fire, then the searchlights blazed up at the Master Spy again, blinding him. An Archie gun grunted from the side of the mountain and there

came a boom and a puff of smoke ahead and to the left. With lightning speed, G-8 kicked his plane to the right. He swung over like mad once more, directly into the face of the blinding searchlight, and tramped on his triggers. His Vickers guns bellowed out once more and he heard the crash of glass below. The light went out, and he knew that this time he had disabled the searchlight. He made a last frantic search for the phantom death plane, but he couldn't see it anywhere, either on the mountain plateau or in the sky above.

He was only three hundred feet above that mountain field, now, and guns were blasting at him from every angle. Men were firing with Lugers, and pistols and rifles and the Archie guns were bellowing at dangerously close range. Below, to the West, lay the side of the mountain that dipped sharply into the valley beneath. G-8 sent his Spad in a steep dive down the side of that mountain. He must get his engine started now. The racing wind flapped his propeller through once and the engine seemed to stick. He jerked up and dived again in the hope that he could flip it over. The switch was on; the throttle was set.

The Master Spy knew that he had a fifty-fifty chance to start that engine, yet the odds seemed against him. He was halfway down the side of the mountain, now, and the motor still refused to budge. Slowly, the propeller flipped another notch. He heard the cylinders wheeze as one took in gas and another hissed on the exhaust stroke. But no other sound came from the engine.

Over to the west in the valley was a small field, and it looked fairly good to G-8 from his present position. He would have to fishtail his way into that field, and then he would be lucky if his plane didn't ram into the trees at the far end.

Desperately, he made for the field, but on his way he tried in a last desperate attempt to start his engine. He lashed his stick about to rock the plane in the hope of making the propeller turn once more. Perhaps the engine would catch this time. Then it was too late. He had no more altitude. He would have to come straight into that field to make it, now.

Down closer to the field, the Master Spy found that the trees were twice as high as he had thought they were. Frantically, he kicked the Spad over into the steepest sideslip possible and came dropping down, left wing low, in an almost straight dive. He

would hold that until the very last second, then just before he crashed into the field he would kick straight.

HE HELD on, his heart pounding a little faster, his eyes riveted to the moonlit earth below him, judging his distance expertly. Then, at the last moment, when anyone watching would surely have thought that it was too late to pull out, G-8 kicked opposite rudder and neutralized his stick. The plane swung around, heading straight across the field. His wing tip and then his wheels missed crashing the earth by a scant few inches as the lifting surfaces of his plane took up the shock and cushioned him down.

He was gliding across the field, his flying speed dying suddenly. Then the bottom seemed to drop out from under his Spad. Wheels and tail skid touched the ground at the same time. He had held the plane off the ground as long as he possibly could to kill its speed. Now the rest was up to providence.

The plane rumbled on, bounding and bucking over the uneven surface of the field. Trees loomed up ahead of him, and he knew now that he wouldn't be able to escape crashing into them. Of course, his speed would be greatly lessened, but the plane would be put out of flying commission.

Suddenly fate stepped in with something unforeseen—a hole in the ground just ahead. G-8 kicked rudder in an effort to avoid it, but that was only an instinctive move. Even as he did so, he knew that he didn't have enough speed for the rudder to take hold. The right wheel dropped into the hole, and there was a rending crash as one side of the landing gear was wiped off. A wing plowed into the ground and cracked off, folding back along the fuselage. The Spad leaped and bucked and hurled itself around in a half turn.

G-8 had already thrown his arms up over his head as the crash came in the hope that he wouldn't be knocked out. The Spad gave a pitiful shiver, then settled back to lay still. G-8 unfastened his safety belt and moved about in the cockpit to make sure he was all there. He sensed a slight pain in his left shoulder, but that seemed to be the only injury he had received. He climbed out and stretched. Yes, he seemed to be quite O. K. But the plane was a hopeless wreck.



Far up along the edge of the mountain plateau, he heard a machine gun stutter and bullets thudded into the ground a few feet away. He ducked for the motor cowl and crouched under it for protection while the barrage continued from far off. From along the side of the mountain he heard shouts, and the machine gun fire had ceased. Men were coming to take him prisoner.

G-8 remembered that he had a good supply of gas in the tank. That should send a flame pretty well up in the sky when it first blew. Under cover of that, he would make his escape down across the valley. Calmly he struck a match and touched it to the fabric. At first a small flame licked up over the covering. It mounted to the wings, crept back along the fuselage, and then, with a rush of flame, the entire ship was on fire. Flames roared and crackled like tinder. G-8 crouched just ahead of the engine mounting, with the plane between him and the mountain plateau beyond.

The flames were making so much noise that he hadn't heard the soft pounding of feet as someone ran toward him from the other side of the field. Abruptly, a figure loomed no more than ten feet away from him, in front of the burning plane. It was a small German soldier with Luger drawn. As G-8 saw him, the German's eyes were on the flaming cockpit.

The Master Spy reached for his gun and whipped it out. His movement on the ground caught the eye of the other. He whirled to face G-8 but already the Master Spy's finger was pressing the trigger. His aim was true.

G-8 had suddenly hit upon a plan to cover his escape.

As the German saw him and shifted the aim of his Luger, he opened his mouth to cry out a warning to others who might be coming. Into that open mouth, G-8's single bullet crashed. The German collapsed.

WITH the flames mounting up like a screen to hide his movements, G-8 sprang for the soldier. He picked him up bodily and hurled him into the mass of flames. When other Germans found his body after the wreckage had cooled, the dead man would be burned beyond recognition. The Germans naturally, would believe he had been the pilot, burned to cinders in his own crash.

The body had little more than landed across the fuselage when the gasoline tank let go with a roar. Flames shot up into the sky and fiery gasoline sprayed in every direction. But by now, G-8 was on his way across the field toward a small clump of trees about fifty feet away. The flames hid him from the German searching party that came running from the mountainside. As the Huns circled the flaming Spad, G-8 guessed there must be fifty of them. He crouched low in his wooded hiding place and listened.

He heard one voice cry above the others, "*Ach Himmel*, look! The pilot is dead. He lies there in the burning wreckage."

"*Jawohl*," said another. "All his clothes are already burned off of him."

Then a third spoke and G-8 recognized the voice. A moment later he recognized the figure. It was his old friendly enemy, Baron von Zastrow. There was one German for whom the Master Spy had always had great admiration.

"It appears," the baron was saying, "as though the pilot was about to crawl out of the wreckage when the plane caught on fire."

G-8 smiled to himself and ducked lower as he peered through the branches. If the baron thought this was the body of the pilot, all the rest of the Germans would probably think the same thing. The decision of von Zastrow would be respected. While the plane still flared brightly enough to help him see, G-8 picked his way through the woods. He kept on going.

Once he stopped short in the darkness. From straight ahead there came a crashing sound, as though someone were running through the woods. An old, rotten log lay across his path. The Master Spy dropped behind it and lay motionless. The sound came closer. Whoever was running through that woods couldn't be more than fifty feet away now. Then, a moment later someone climbed over the big log against which G-8 lay. His foot,

## **CHAPTER FIFTEEN**

### ***Out of the Flames***

stamping down on the other side, missed the Master Spy's arm by only a scant inch or two.

G-8 could just make out the man in the darkness. He was a tall, heavy fellow. He could hear him panting from his running.

"*Ach Himmel!*" the man gasped. "The fire is dying down and I will be too late."

That breathless expression told G-8 the story. Some peasant was trying to get to the fire before it was over. After the man's thumping steps died away, G-8 rose from his hiding place and went on. He moved with more caution now, for he was still dressed in the garb of a Yank captain.

The flames had died down completely. There was not even a red glow in the sky by the time he reached a road that ran through the valley. He followed the road for perhaps a mile. It was winding through woods and fields of the valley, then abruptly it started up a steep incline.

G-8 climbed almost to the crest of the hill, then crouched in a clump of bushes at the side. He waited there while long minutes dragged by. At this hour few vehicles were moving along the highway.

At length, his wait was rewarded. From far down the road he heard the rumble of a heavy vehicle. It was coming slowly. Probably, he decided, it was a truck. It reached the bottom of the hill and he heard the driver shift into low gear for the steep climb. With a roar that could be heard for half a mile, the engine took hold, the gears ground, and the truck began to climb.

G-8 waited as it came nearer and nearer. The water began boiling in the radiator as the truck climbed higher. He could hear the steam hissing out of the overflow pipe.

The truck was moving so slowly as it passed G-8 that he was able to step out into the road without being seen and pull himself up on the rear end, almost without effort. He found the truck laden with large bottles and cases. It was a load such as might be going to a chemical factory. Those giant bottles, he guessed, probably contained sulfuric acid or something of the kind.

G-8 crawled over the load toward the driver's seat. He could see the driver's head silhouetted against the thin rays of the headlights. That head was his goal. He crouched on the boxes behind the driver and reached for his automatic. The truck had reached the top of the hill now. At this point the

driver leaned forward, threw the shift lever out of gear and pulled on the emergency brake. The radiator was boiling like a steam engine. He took a bucket from beside the seat and walked to the brook near the side of the road. He filled the bucket and returned, opened the radiator cap.

All this time G-8 remained crouched on the cases. At length, the driver finished filling his radiator and stepped on the running board beside his seat. From there he looked back through the darkness over his cargo as if to check up and make sure that everything there was O. K. Suddenly, his eyes fell on the Master Spy's crouched form atop the cases.

At that moment, G-8 sprang for him. There was no use trying to hide his presence any longer. In another second the driver would be up there to investigate. The German was already on guard. He sprang back out of the way as G-8 swung his automatic like a club. The Master Spy missed his head by a good foot.

"*Donnerwetter!*" the truck driver boomed. "*Was ist!*"

His hand dived for his Luger, G-8 sprang off the truck, straight for him. As he came down, he struck the driver in the chest with both feet. With a grunt, the German's breath left him and he was hurled backward. The Master Spy landed in a heap beside him and the two struggled together, the driver fighting to get at his Luger and regain his balance.

Even though the truck's headlights were turned down, it was so dim beside the truck that G-8 could not see clearly as he struck again. The blow missed.

"*Gott im Himmel!*" the German grunted. "Who are you?"

He was still trying to get his breath. "What is the meaning of this?"

He was up on one knee as G-8 sprang to his feet. A Luger flashed in the German's hands as he jerked it from his holster. The Master Spy rushed in close. He was staking everything on this one blow. If that Luger pistol went off, it would be a warning to every German within earshot. That must not happen. So he struck again at the skull of the German with the butt of his automatic and this time the blow was accurate and swift. There was a crunching sound as the pistol butt sank into the

driver's skull and he crumpled there beside the road.

G-8 carried the heavy body off into the woods a little way and exchanged clothing with him. The uniform, the well-worn black boots, everything was a little too large for him, but it would have to do. The driver's face was round and moon-like, so there was not much use of G-8's trying to make up his face to look like that. It would be almost impossible. With the help of the tiny make-up kit which the Master Spy always carried, he remade his face to look like any ordinary German's face. Hastily, he covered his old uniform and the body of the truck driver with leaves and branches, then returned to the truck.

Reaching the road, he peered out through the woods to make sure that no one had come while he was gone. Then he stepped before the headlights and examined the German's personal effects. There was a pass of identification directed to *Herr Geist*. That in itself was enough to tell the Master Spy that this load of chemicals was to be delivered to Todberg Castle. On the back of the pass was a crude road-map drawn in pencil showing the location of *Herr Geist*'s headquarters at Todberg.

There was also a record book bearing a name that checked with the one on the pass. For a time, G-8 would be Private Ansel. He put the papers back into his pocket and climbed up behind the wheel. Following the map on the back of the pass, he drove higher and higher up a winding road, along the back of the mountain on which Todberg Castle was situated.

One thing worried the Master Spy. Perhaps there would be a password, and without that he would no doubt be suspected. His dim headlights caught the outline of a German soldier, a stooped, plodding sort of fellow, walking along the edge of the mountain road toward the castle. He might learn something here. G-8 stopped the truck as he was about to pass and called out, "Climb on if you want to ride. Are you going to Todberg Castle?"

The other nodded.

"*Jawohl*," he said, climbing up beside the Master Spy.

G-8 urged the snorting truck into motion once more.

"You have been out on leave, *mein freund*?" he asked.

The German soldier nodded.

"*Jawohl*," he said. "I am just getting back."

G-8 grinned.

"Then perhaps you can help me," he suggested.

He saw the passenger glance at him.

"Look," the Master Spy said, fishing the pass out of his pocket and handing it over, "I have my pass, all my credentials, to get this load of chemicals through the guard at the castle. But I admit frankly that I am a *dummkopf*. I have forgotten the password."

At that, the German sitting beside him jerked around and stared at him, and G-8 could see that he was instantly on guard.

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

### *The Password*

THE moment that G-8 received that hostile glance from the German beside him, he knew there was suspicion in his mind. Quickly he laughed, as though he hadn't seen his passenger look at him.

"Forgetfulness has always been a failing of mine. My school teacher used to say that the only thing I could remember was the last bell for dismissal. My mother always said I would forget my head, as useless as it was, if it wasn't fastened to my shoulders. Good old mother, she was always joking—before she died."

He turned to the soldier beside him.

"Your mother is still living, I trust?"

"*Nein*. *Mein* mother died a year ago when my brothers and my father were killed in the same battle. I am the only one left of my entire family."

"All," G-8 said, shaking his head. "I sometimes wonder what is to be gained by the war. I also lost two brothers. But my father and my mother, thank Heaven, died before the war began. I guess they were lucky."

As the Master Spy talked, he sent the truck climbing higher and higher up the mountain road toward Todberg Castle. By now, the headlights showed that the road was dropping away toward the more level top of the mountain. A quarter of a mile away, he caught the glimpse of a light shining from the castle. There was need for hurry now. He must learn that password quickly.

He turned to the German passenger once more.

"Let me see, I believe we were talking about something before I mentioned my mother, but I can't remember what it was. I have such a poor memory."

"*Jawohl*," the other said in a more friendly voice. "You were telling me how forgetful you are."

The Master Spy burst out in a laugh.

"Imagine that. I am so forgetful that I did not remember that I was talking about my forgetfulness. That is a good joke, *nicht wahr*?"

They laughed together.

"*Ach ja*," G-8 said, "it was a matter of the password. I cannot, for the life of me, remember it. I believe those are guards up ahead in the road. That reminds me that a password would probably be necessary."

He was driving the truck very slowly, playing for time.

He went on, "It seems strange, *nicht wahr*, that it should be necessary for me to remember a password anyway when I bring with me an official pass of entry and am delivering a truckload of supplies that the *offiziers* here are probably waiting for."

G-8 was a little tense as he finished, for the headlights of the truck showed two armed guards standing in the road, less than a hundred feet ahead.

"*Jawohl*," his German companion nodded, "it does seem rather ridiculous, but a matter of form, no doubt."

Still the Master Spy waited, breathless now, as the truck bore down on the guards. In another moment he would have to stop and give the password that he didn't know as yet. The German beside him spoke, close to his ear.

"The word is *mittag*."

G-8 dared take a long breath. "*Danke schon*," he said.

The truck rolled on. G-8 felt a great weight lifted from him as he pressed down the brake pedal and one guard came up on either side of the truck, bearing flashlights.

The guard closest to G-8 demanded, "What is the password?"

Even as the Master Spy was about to speak, he wasn't sure that the password was correct. The German beside him might have tricked him. He thought fast.

He smiled down at the guard. The German word, *mittag*, meant noon or midday. He decided to put it into a sentence, so that if it were wrong, he would still have a chance to say he had forgotten the correct word.

"I hope I will get something to eat here," he said, "for I have hurried through with my supplies and have not eaten since *mittag*."

He emphasized the last word slightly, keeping his eyes glued to the guard. The guard nodded.

"Correct," he said, "but now your pass."

"*Jawohl*," G-8 said, relieved.

He fished the pass from his pocket and poked it out at the guard. The guard turned his flashlight beam down upon it while he examined it, then handed it back.

Meanwhile, the other guard had been making similar demands upon the German beside G-8. Both guards stepped back out of the way now.

"Pass," they chorused.

G-8 pulled the shift lever into low and set the truck once more in motion. The road led on around the castle to the front entrance. Apparently they were expected, for a dozen Germans came from the entrance as he rumbled up. His passenger stepped to the ground.

As he did so, he said, "*Danke schon* for the ride, *mein freund*."

"*Danke schon* for your company," G-8 smiled.

THE other soldiers hastily began unloading the contents of the truck and carrying them inside the castle. G-8 could see the men disappearing down the stairs which led to the dungeon corridor below. He climbed down from his seat and

stretched. Apparently he was not expected to help with the unloading.

Presently an *offizier*—a *Hauptmann* appeared around the corner of the castle and came straight to G-8.

"You are the driver of this truck?" he demanded.

The Master Spy nodded and snapped to attention with a click of his heels.

"*Jawohl, Herr Hauptmann*," he said.

He waited tensely for the *Hauptmann* to go on.

"I understand you have not eaten since *mittag*," the *Hauptmann* said.

"*Jawohl, Herr Hauptmann*," G-8 replied.

"Very well," the *Hauptmann* said. "Follow me."

He led the way into the castle and to the left, through a wing of the ancient structure apparently reserved for the quarters of the enlisted men. As he followed the *Hauptmann*, G-8 passed two *offiziers* who were going out. One of them was the Baron von Zastrow. They brushed elbows in passing. The Master Spy sensed that von Zastrow gave him a sharp look out of the corner of his eye. He felt for a second as though he had been scrutinized by an X-ray machine, but he was reasonably sure that there was nothing about him that should cause his old enemy suspicion.

Soon G-8 was eating black bread and bean soup. The *Hauptmann* sat by and watched him as he devoured the meager fare with sufficient show of gluttony.

When he was almost through, the *Hauptmann* asked, "You are returning tonight?"

G-8 straightened quickly.

"*Jawohl, Herr Hauptmann*."

"In the valley you go by the main road to Konighoff?"

"*Jawohl, Herr Hauptmann*," G-8 nodded.

He was immediately on guard, wondering what further questions might come.

"In that case," the *Hauptmann* said, "I will ride with you as far as Konighoff."

The Master Spy nodded.

"It will be an honor, *Herr Hauptmann*," he said.

He gulped down his last mouthful of black bread and soup, then rose from the table.

"If they have finished unloading the truck," he said, "I am ready for the trip whenever you are, *Herr Hauptmann*."

"*Gut*," the *Hauptmann* said. "I'll meet you at the truck in five minutes."

It took just about that length of time after G-8 had returned to the truck for the unloading to be completed. He had cranked up the engine and had turned the truck about when the *Hauptmann* appeared and climbed on the seat beside him.

G-8 had been making a thorough study of the *Hauptmann*. His clothes would fit the Master Spy very nicely, but his face could not easily be imitated. The shape was not so difficult, but the features were rather peculiar, being small and angular and he had a queer-shaped nose, much smaller than G-8's, and sharper. From his long experience with make-up, the Master Spy knew that so long as the features he was imitating were a little larger than his own, the shape of them didn't matter particularly, because with his secret plastic material he could take care of the shape very nicely. But it was impossible to make his own features smaller.

Therefore, impersonating the *Hauptmann* was out, but that uniform would help greatly. As they rumbled and jolted down the mountain road, G-8 led the *Hauptmann* into conversation.

He began by saying, "I understand the war will probably be over, in a week or so. Do you believe that is true, *Herr Hauptmann*?"

The *Hauptmann* nodded. "In all probability," he said.

"*Herr Geist* must be a wonderful man," G-8 went on.

The *Hauptmann* turned quickly and glanced at him sharply.

"What do you know about *Herr Geist*?" he demanded.

G-8 shrugged.

"Only what is common talk, *Herr Hauptmann*," he answered. "It is said that *Herr Geist* has in some way found a method of communicating with and controlling the ancient Ghost of the Vosges Mountains, and that the Ghost goes out every night to kill our enemies."

The *Hauptmann* laughed rather derisively.

"Is that what the average person of the German army believes?" he asked.

"That is what I have heard," G-8 told him. "I am wondering if it is true."

The *Hauptmann* chuckled.

"Of course it is true," he said. Then G-8 heard him mumble to himself, "*Ach Himmel*, if our men believe it, certainly the enemy must be convinced."

The *Hauptmann* turned to him again and said, "*Herr Private*, I believe the end of the war will come before a week is up. In the morning we have a change of operation."

"You refer to the Ghost, *Herr Hauptmann*!" G-8 asked.

"I can say no more at present," the *Hauptmann* countered.

The Master Spy stopped asking questions now, for he could see that the *Hauptmann* was becoming annoyed. G-8 hoped the German would want to lie back against the seat and sleep, but the *Hauptmann* showed no signs of doing so. He sat up straight and stiff beside G-8 as they rumbled down the road to a wider main highway that ran through the valley to the south.

G-8 knew he was headed toward Konighoff. As he recalled, it was a small city of about five thousand people. Once or twice it had been bombed by Allied planes. It was known to be a military center, possibly headquarters for that immediate area. But that was of secondary importance now.

G-8 was convinced of one thing. If these attacks of the sky ghost in spreading its deadly vanishing gas continued, there would be nothing for the American forces to do but ask for an armistice. He was trying to figure out a way by which he could bring his Luger butt down on the *Hauptmann's* head and finish him off in a quick, merciful death. He wanted that uniform very badly.

The *Hauptmann* seemed to remain constantly on guard. He watched every move that the Master Spy made. Then an idea came to G-8 and he decided to try it out. It was still dark, but dawn would soon be breaking. And only ten or fifteen miles ahead lay the city of Konighoff. Knowing that he must act quickly, and realizing that the floor about his feet was dark, G-8 let up on the foot accelerator and stamped his foot on the floor several times, as though he were pushing the

accelerator down and it wouldn't work. On the top of the truck's steering column were two levers, one for the spark and one for the gas. G-8 caught hold of the spark lever as the truck slowed and the *Hauptmann* looked at him searchingly. The Master Spy pulled the spark lever down several times. The speed of the engine changed only slightly.

"*Was ist los!*" the *Hauptmann* demanded. "What is wrong?"

"Something seems to have gone wrong with the throttle, *Herr Hauptmann*," G-8 said. "Perhaps it has become disconnected."

"*Ach Himmel*," the *Hauptmann* grunted. "This old truck should have been put off the road a long time ago."

"It has happened before, *Herr Hauptmann*," he said. "It will take only a few minutes to fix it but I am afraid you will have to help me because I cannot do it alone."

The *Hauptmann* appeared to be annoyed, but he said, "Very well. What do you want me to do?"

"First we shall see what is wrong," G-8 said.

He pulled the truck over to the side of the road and stopped. Lifting the hood of the engine, he peered inside, fumbling about in the darkness. Then he got out a kit of tools from under the seat. He picked out a good-sized monkey wrench and a screw driver and continued to work there until the *Hauptmann* came around beside him.

"I cannot wait all morning," the *Hauptmann* complained.

"Of course not," G-8 said.

He put his end of the screw driver in the groove of one of the screws, then turned to the *Hauptmann*.

"Now if you will kindly hold this screwdriver for a moment while I adjust the wrench," he said.

The *Hauptmann* stepped forward.

"Very well," he said.

It was necessary for the *Hauptmann* to bend over with his head down while he held the screwdriver where G-8 had placed it under the hood.

"*Eine minute bitte*," G-8 said, stepping back. "I will adjust the monkey wrench *und* we will have the trouble taken care of."

He was a little behind the *Hauptmann* now. He made a sound of adjusting the wrench for an instant, then slowly, so as not to make any warning sound, he raised the wrench above the *Hauptmann's* head. With his free hand, he snatched off the *Hauptmann's* hat.

The *Hauptmann* was about to cry out, "*Was ist?*" but he got no farther than the first word when the heavy wrench descended upon his skull.

G-8 caught him as he slumped. He switched off the truck lights and hastily dragged the *Hauptmann* off the road. Then, in the protection of brush, he quickly changed uniforms with the *Hauptmann*. The new uniform, boots and all, fitted G-8 much better than the clothing of the truck driver.

NOW the Master Spy went to work on the face of the *Hauptmann*. He built up his angular features so that he resembled the disguise that he himself now wore. When he had finished that, he began working over his own features, making them appear like the stern, arrogant face of a Prussian *offizier*.

There was plenty of room in the *Hauptmann's* boot tops for G-8's own Colt automatic, plus the Luger of the truck driver. The belt, holster, and Luger of the *Hauptmann* he strapped around his waist. That done, he carried the German's body back into the truck and laid him in the rear. Then he climbed up behind the wheel and drove on.

G-8 had certain plans well fixed in his mind for his future movements, and he proceeded to carry them out. His first objective was to get rid of the truck and the *Hauptmann's* body. As he remembered, the city of Konighoff was nestled in the side of a mountain, and there was a road that ran from Konighoff up into the mountain. That would be the place to wreck the truck.

He drove on down through the outskirts of Konighoff. At this time of the morning the streets were deserted. He found the road that led up into the mountains. For two miles he climbed the truck up that road, then he came to the spot suitable for his undertaking. The road wound sharply around the edge of the mountain, and below was a sheer drop of perhaps a hundred feet down the side of a cliff. He pushed the shift lever into low, pulled the throttle down wide open, stepped to the running board and gave the wheel a yank. Then he jumped.

The truck swerved sharply and headed for the brink of the cliff. G-8, safely on the ground, heard the crashing as the truck rolled end over end to complete destruction.



The Master Spy hurried down the mountain road, keeping well off to the side in the grassy ditch so that his footprints wouldn't show if an investigation were made. No one met him along the road until he was walking down the main street of Konighoff. His never failing memory recalled that the Allied Intelligence had a contact man in Konighoff. He was a little man who for the past twenty years had been a tailor, and for reasons of his own, had been more friendly to the Allies than to Germany.

G-8 sought out the tailor shop. Like the other shops and stores, it was dark and locked up at that hour of the morning. He rapped gently three times, and then when he got no response, he repeated the knocking. That was the signal that a secret agent

needed aid. Still no answer. He knocked again, louder this time.

Suddenly, G-8 became aware that he was being watched. A German police *offizier* strode from the dark shadow of a house across the street and was coming straight toward him.

"Who do you want to see?" the policeman asked.

"This is a tailor shop, is it not?" G-8 asked.

"It was a tailor shop," the police *offizier* said. "But perhaps you do not know. The proprietor of the shop was arrested two days ago. He was caught giving aid to the enemy. *Und* you, *mein freund*, are under arrest on suspicion of being an enemy spy and trying to contact him."

G-8 looked down in the light of the dim street lamp and he saw that the police *offizier* held an ugly looking Mauser pistol pointed straight at his heart.

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

### Warning from the Skies

G-8 studied the police *offizier* in front of him for a long moment, smiling confidently as he did so. He saw that the *offizier* was an old man, past sixty he judged. He was fat and heavy and wouldn't be able to move very quickly. Nevertheless, that gun pointed at his heart was dangerous.

"Look here, *Herr Offizier*," G-8 said, laughing now. "Do you not think that you're taking too much for granted? I have just come into town and it is necessary for me to present myself before the high commanders of Konighoff. I am here on important military business. But there are bad spots on my uniform and I have a seam that needs sewing. I am to report for duty at headquarters here in Konighoff at dawn, *und* it is nearly that now. I thought perhaps this tailor could make the necessary repairs and perhaps press my suit, so that I would be presentable before my superiors."

"That," said the police *offizier*, "is a very good story but you will have to prove it before I will let you go. Come, we go at once to police headquarters. There you will prove damage to your

uniform. If you speak the truth, we will see to it that a tailor is brought to you at once."

G-8 drew himself up haughtily.

"*Herr Offizier*," he barked, "I am the Baron *Hauptmann* von Bachstein. I have never been arrested in my life *und* I do not intend to be arrested now. Look for yourself at these spots on the front of my uniform. The light is dim but if you look closer, you can see them. I will show you the seam and after that I will show you my pass and identification papers."

He pulled out the front of his uniform, displaying the breast. In order to get a good look at it, the police *offizier* would necessarily have to lower his gun. The old policeman bent down and squinted in the dim light.

G-8 moved with lightning speed. With one hand he brushed the *offizier's* gun hand away. With the other, he reached for his own Luger and in one swift movement, he jerked his automatic from its holster and struck with all his might. It was a hard blow from the side and it struck the *offizier* full on the temple. The Luger butt crunched as it sank through the bone.

G-8 caught the *offizier* and dragged him down an alley to the rear of the building, then stepped out to the street again. He knew now there was no use trying to get any aid from the little tailor. He had probably been shot as a spy already.

The Master Spy walked to the main street and at length found the *offiziers'* club. It was located in the lodge hall of an old Turnverein song-fest club. He entered and found the writing room. At that hour of the morning he was quite alone. With the help of a special ink eradicator he carried in his make-up kit, he changed the name in his record book to Baron von Bachstein. Then in various handwritings, the Master Spy set down fictitious past records for Baron *Hauptmann* von Bachstein. He made it appear that he had been a man of great importance on the general staff. On a blank sheet of paper he drew up an official document with the necessary flourishes in fancy writing. It was a combination pass and order wherein he, Baron von Bachstein, was instructed to proceed to Todberg Castle and make a complete inspection of the equipment and management concerning the activity of the Vosges Ghost. At the bottom he affixed a good forgery of the signature of General von Hindenberg himself.



He studied it carefully and corrected several flaws here and there.

When he was satisfied, G-8 carefully folded the document and placed it in his pocket, together with the changed record book. On his way out of the *offiziers'* club, he consulted a time table to see what time the trains came into Konighoff. He found there was an early train due from the direction of Berlin. It should arrive in half an hour.

The first streaks of dawn lighted the sky as he stepped to the street. He strolled about the town, keeping to the back streets until nearly a half hour had passed, then he walked up the tracks to the railroad station and waited there on the platform.

Presently, a passenger train came puffing into the station. As passengers alighted, G-8 mingled with the crowd and hurried to the front of the station. There were several taxicabs waiting, but G-8 passed all these and strode hurriedly to a staff car waiting at the curb. A driver was behind the wheel. He saluted as G-8 stopped.

"I must ask you to take me to Todberg Castle at once," the Master Spy said. "Do you know the way?"

"*Jawohl*," the driver nodded, "*aber* I am waiting for a major who is expected on the next train."

"I must find transportation at once," G-8 snapped. "Call me another vehicle. I must have a staff car. I come directly from the staff headquarters of General von Hindenberg himself."

The driver was immediately galvanized into action.

"*Jawohl*," he cried.

He leaped out and looked up and down the street. He yelled to the driver of a military car a half block away.

"Come here *und macht schnell!*" he ordered.

The other car turned around in the middle of the block and hurried toward them. The first driver explained to the second, whom he apparently knew.

"This is *Herr Hauptmann* on special duty from His Excellency, General von Hindenberg's staff. He must get to Todberg Castle at once. You are free; take him!"

The other clicked his heels, snapped up a salute and the next moment held open the car door for G-8 to get in.

The sun was well up in the heavens when the car drew up before Todberg Castle and G-8 alighted. He nodded to the driver.

"That will be all," he said.

HE TURNED toward the entrance as the car moved away. G-8 had presented his fake credentials to the guard down the road—the same one he had met a few hours before—and had been passed without question. He wondered now how his luck would hold with these guards and with *Herr Geist* and Baron von Zastrow and the others inside.

With an important flourish, he presented his forged paper. The *offizier* of the guard glanced at it and saluted.

"*Jawohl*," he said. "*Bitte, Herr Hauptmann*, follow me."

G-8 was left in the reception hall of the castle while the guard went inside with his document. Presently he returned and handed the paper back to the Master Spy.

"You will be received in a few moments," he announced.

He left G-8 alone. Minutes passed, then there came the tread of boots. G-8 recognized that step. Baron von Zastrow himself was coming to greet him. The Master Spy bowed as von Zastrow entered and the baron smiled a friendly greeting.

"We are honored, *Herr Hauptmann*," he said. "I trust your trip has not been too tiresome."

G-8 shrugged.

"I got a little sleep on the train from Berlin," he said, "but I had to get up very early to make the change for Konighoff. You are *Herr Geist*?"

Baron von Zastrow shook his head.

"Nein," he said. "*Herr Geist* sent me to keep you company until he is ready to see you. You have had breakfast?"

"Nein," G-8 said. "I hurried to get here as quickly as possible to begin my inspection."

Baron von Zastrow bowed.

"Then may I offer you the meager fare of our *offiziers'* mess? We are eating now. If you will come this way."

In a moment G-8 was sitting down with a number of German *offiziers* of various ranks. A chair at the head of the table was still vacant.

Presently, every man leaped to his feet and the Master Spy rose with them. They stood at attention as *Herr Oberst* Geist entered, strode importantly to the empty chair and sat down. Then the others took their seats again.

Baron von Zastrow spoke to *Herr Oberst* Geist.

"This," he said, nodding to the Master Spy, "is the Baron *Hauptmann* von Bachstein. He comes from General von Hindenberg's staff by order of his Excellency himself to make an inspection."

*Herr* Geist stared at G-8 as though he were looking straight through him. He smiled slightly and nodded.

"It is an honor," he said. "His Excellency has seen fit to send one of his personal staff to see what we are doing. Apparently he is quite interested now in our work here."

"He is taking a great interest," G-8 assured him. "But he is wondering if perhaps you are not a bit too optimistic in your expectations as to how soon your Ghost plane will end the war."

*Herr* Geist laughed derisively.

"He shall learn that during the next week," he promised. "In the meantime, as soon as breakfast is over, you shall be taken through the entire plant. The tunnel to the cave of the Ghost is now completed. Just this morning I made my first attack in daylight. Tell His Excellency when you go back that my Ghost plane will be making raids all day long against the Allies."

G-8 frowned.

"Would you mind repeating that, *Herr Oberst* Geist?" he asked. "Did I hear you say that you have begun daylight raids?"

*Herr* Geist chuckled as he nodded.

"*Jawohl*," he said.

"But *Herr* Geist," G-8 protested, "the enemy will realize that this is a plane and not a ghost at all. They know that, according to the legend, ghosts vanish in the daylight."

*Herr* Geist laughed again.

"Wait until you have seen," he said. "This ghost cannot be seen."

The Master Spy looked amazed.

"That sounds incredible," he remarked. Suddenly he saw the Baron von Zastrow stiffen,

and almost at the same instant, he heard a sound from outside. It was the distant drone of an airplane engine. As everyone listened anxiously, G-8 was sure it was a *Hisso*. The engine was running fitfully. Either the pilot was having motor trouble up there, high above the Vosges Mountains, or the pilot was trying to send a message.

G-8 began catching the dots and dashes of the message that was sent in the secret code that only he, Nippy, Bull, and Battle knew. One of his Battle Aces was in that plane, working his throttle like a wireless key, so that the engine sputtered in long and short bursts. The message came down to the Master Spy as every man at the table leaped to his feet.

G-8! G-8! THE GHOST IS FLYING IN DAYLIGHT. IT HAS MADE ONE TRIP ALREADY THIS MORNING. THE PILOTS AND MEN OF TWO COMPLETE SQUADRONS HAVE VANISHED. IT HAS BEEN IMPOSSIBLE FOR US TO FIND IT EVEN IN DAYLIGHT.

The message was signed in the secret code letter that stood for Bull Martin. G-8, *Herr* Geist, the Baron, and all the rest raced out of the castle. They could see a winged speck high above them, flying over the Vosges Mountains.

Baron von Zastrow carried a pair of powerful binoculars. He stared up through them for a moment, his face becoming grave. He lowered the glasses again and turned to *Herr* Geist.

"*Herr Oberst*," he said, "I regret to inform you that I have very grave doubts that the *verdammter kerl*, G-8, and his assistants were killed in that raid we made on Le Bourget last night. I believe that is one of his assistants up there in that plane now, sending him a message. *Und* furthermore, I believe that the *verdammter kerl* is here somewhere in Germany, alive and working against us. Perhaps he is even here among us at this very moment."

As he uttered those words, the baron's eyes flashed to G-8, and *Herr* Geist read the meaning in von Zastrow's glance.

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

### *Death Waits for Aces*

THERE was a tense moment of suspense; a moment when a hush fell over the assembled *offiziers* of *Herr Oberst* Geist's staff; a moment when only the sound of the far-off Hisso engine broke the silence.

Baron von Zastrow's eyes focused on the Master Spy for a long moment, then he looked up again through his binoculars at the receding plane.

*Herr* Geist snapped out an angry command, "*Herr* Baron von Zastrow, you will go at once to my office and wait for me there."

Von Zastrow lowered his glasses, bowed stiffly, then strode into the castle. *Herr* Geist stepped before G-8 and bowed.

"I beg you to forget this little incident," he said. "Please accept my apologies. The *Herr* Baron von Zastrow speaks foolishly and without authority. Would you care to return to breakfast, or do you wish to begin your inspection at once?"

"I have quite finished my morning meal," G-8 smiled. "Your apologies are accepted, in the name of his Excellency, the general. I believe there is nothing more to wait for, so if it is agreeable with you, I will begin my inspection tour at once."

"Very well," *Herr* Geist nodded. He turned to one of the *offiziers*, a tall, dignified *Hauptmann*. "*Herr Hauptmann* Kammer," he said, "you will conduct the *Herr* Baron *Hauptmann* von Bachstein on his tour."

The *Hauptmann* bowed and stepped forward.

"*Jawohl*," he said, "with pleasure."

*Herr* Geist turned to G-8 for a parting word. "*Herr Hauptmann* Kammer knows all the details," he said. "You may ask him anything you wish to know concerning the Ghost."

"*Danke schon*," G-8 said, bowing.

*Herr* Geist turned sharply and strode into the castle. The *Hauptmann* bowed to the Master Spy. "Shall we begin with the gas factory in the castle dungeon?" he asked.

"By all means," said G-8.

"Come then," *Hauptmann* Kammer said. "*Bitte*, follow me."

The Master Spy followed him into the castle and down the stairs into the dungeon corridor.

ABOVE, *Herr Oberst* Geist strode into his private office where the baron was waiting for him. *Herr* Geist slammed the door shut and glared at von Zastrow.

"*Herr* Baron," he snapped, "I have had just about enough of your stupidity."

The baron stood motionless while *Herr* Geist raved on.

"At a time like this when we receive such a special inspector direct from the staff of his Excellency, General von Hindenberg himself, you take it upon yourself to make such dangerous remarks."

"I am still convinced," the baron said quietly, "that in my attack last night with the Ghost plane upon Le Bourget field I did not kill G-8 or his assistants. That plane that is still flying above the Vosges Mountains has a number seven on the side of the fuselage. That means that it is flown by *Herr* Bull Martin. It also means that he was sending a message to G-8 somewhere in Germany, probably right here on the castle grounds, or—even worse—perhaps in the factory or tunnel or the hidden airdrome of the Ghost plane.

"*Dummkopf!*" *Herr Oberst* Geist spat. "Don't you know that already I have broadcast through the land that G-8 and his assistants have vanished, that the gas spread by my Ghost plane last night killed them? After you returned I sent a signed statement to headquarters at Konighoff, giving the details. In that statement I said that we were positive that neither G-8 nor his assistants would give us any further trouble. It's probably due to that statement that his Excellency, General von Hindenberg, has sent this agent to us. Now that he has assumed that G-8 and his assistants are gone, the general is taking a vital interest in our work. We might get an appropriation from the government for a whole fleet of Ghost planes. Do you know what that means to me? *Ach Himmel*, no. You would not understand for you are a *dummkopf*."

Baron von Zastrow was taking his bawling out standing up. He stared back steadily at *Herr* Geist.

"On several occasions," *Herr* Geist raved on, "you have stated that you did not approve of this method of warfare, that you would like to have

someone else take your place. *Und* now you admit that you are certain that you did not kill the *verdammter kerl* and his assistants. Very well. I have decided already to remove you from your duties. Your assistant pilot will fly the Ghost plane from now on. I shall write a note to your commander who sent you here, telling him that I am sending you back, because you are a worthless, chicken-hearted fool. I shall tell him also that I suspect that you deliberately warned G-8 and his men in some way that you were coming to Le Bourget last night so that they would have time to escape."

Baron von Zastrow stiffened.

"*Herr Oberst*," he said, "that is not true. So long as I hold a post, I carry out my orders faithfully, whether I like them or not."

"Bah!" *Herr Geist* spat. "You are a fool. You have some sort of idea that the *verdammter kerl*, G-8, is a friendly enemy of yours. You have visions of meeting him some day in a hand to hand combat and perhaps killing him then. But even then, if you should be fortunate enough to get the better of him, you would probably turn soft-hearted and let him go."

"You are correct about my feelings concerning this method of killing enemy troops," Baron von Zastrow said. "I can tell you this much. You are a trickster, *Herr Geist*. All your life you have made your living by fooling people. What living I have made I have made honestly. Practically all the fights in which I have engaged, both on the Prussian and the Western fronts, have been against great odds. I have been decorated six times for valor in various encounters. I am proud of my medals for I have won them in open, fair fighting. I did not gain such honors in an invisible ship that cannot be seen clearly even in the daytime, and pours a ghastly death over helpless men, women, and children. That is not the method of fighting that my ancestors or any true Germans have ever used in any war. And now, since you have relieved me of my duties, I feel free to tell you some other things.

"First—and I am positive of this neither the general staff nor the Kaiser himself will sanction this type of mass murder against the enemy, no matter how vitally important it is that Germany win. They will not approve of it when they understand definitely what is going on."

"Nonsense!" *Herr Geist* retorted. "They want to win the war, do they not?"

The baron shook his head defiantly.

"Not so badly that it would make them murderers of helpless people," he countered.

*HERR GEIST'S* face was flushed with anger. He strode over to his desk and began writing. Baron von Zastrow remained standing. When *Herr Geist* had finished his message, he affixed his signature, folded the sheet of paper, and placed it in an envelope. He pushed a button and presently an orderly appeared.

"Have this report taken at once to *Herr Hauptmann Bonstadt*," he ordered. "He is the commander of the *Flieger Abteilung 31* stationed at Metz with von Richthofen's squadron. Tell him Baron von Zastrow will return to him presently."

The orderly saluted and went out. *Herr Oberst Geist* glared at von Zastrow, but he found the baron looking back at him with a peculiar twisted smile on his face. "*Herr Oberst*," the baron said, "since I am already in disgrace, I will tell you a few more things about the *verdammter kerl*. In the first place, if you give me the opportunity of capturing G8, I believe I can prove to you that I gave no warning of my attack on Le Bourget last night." He shrugged. "But that does not matter so much. The fact remains that I am quite positive that G-8 is not only in Germany but somewhere in this castle. You remember how he tricked us before? Well, I believe that he has done practically the same thing here. A short time before the arrival of this inspector from General von Hindenberg's staff, a report came in, as you may recall, that the truck driver who brought the load of chemicals last night was found dead in the wreckage of his truck outside Konighoff."

*Herr Geist* nodded unwillingly.

"One of our *offiziers* rode down with that truck last night on his return. I have reason to believe that G-8 was that truck driver."

*Herr Geist* stiffened.

"*Jawohl, Herr Oberst*," the baron went on. "I believe G-8 changed places with the *Hauptmann*, got his uniform, and returned as an inspector from the staff of General von Hindenberg."

"That's ridiculous!" *Herr Geist* snorted. "You forget that the Baron von Bachstein carried an order

for the inspection signed by his Excellency, General von Hindenberg, himself."

Baron von Zastrow smiled.

"Very true," he admitted. "Aber do not forget this, *Herr Oberst*. In Konighoff this morning the body of a police *offizier* was found behind the tailor shop formerly operated by a man who was arrested two days ago and shot as an Allied spy. And do not forget, either, that the *verdammter kerl* is known to be a most clever forger of important names. I have understood that he can write the exact signature of a dozen high German military officials."

"*Himmelkreuzdonnerwetter!*" *Herr Oberst* Geist spat. "Then you believe that the order from General von Hindenberg was forged? Why did you not mention it before?"

"Because up to that time," the baron said, "I was positive that on my trip to Le Bourget last night I had wiped out the Master Spy and his assistants. But as soon as I made out that number seven on the side of the Spad with my binoculars, I knew that I had failed. I became very suspicious and I saw everything clearly."

*Herr* Geist leaped to his feet.

"We must do something!" he cried. "Right now the one whom you suspect of being G-8 is being conducted through our entire plant. By now he is probably through the tunnel and is being shown the Ghost plane. We must stop him!"

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

### *Murder Monster*

HERR GEIST was right. By now G-8, under the guidance of *Hauptmann* Kammer, had passed through the newly completed tunnel and was about to enter the hidden airdrome of the Ghost plane. *Herr Hauptmann* Kammer had already shown him the details of the gas that caused all living things to vanish from the face of the earth. There was little of interest along the tunnel. G-8 had hurried his guide along and now they came up into a huge enclosure.

The Master Spy glanced about, saw a gigantic, weird-looking object standing some distance away. Although he could see through the strange craft, light shone upon it from all sides. There was a strange, ghostlike quality to the plane that was deceiving to the eyes.

"*Ach Himmel!*" G-8 gasped. There was actual amazement in his voice.

*Hauptmann* Kammer smiled. "It is *wunderbar*, *nicht wahr!*" he asked.

"*Jawohl,*" G-8 nodded. "That Ghost plane must be made of glass. How do you keep it from breaking or cracking?"

"It is not made of glass," *Hauptmann* Kammer told him, "but of a cellulose substance that resembles glass. It is much like the transparent celluloid windshields of airplanes. It is very expensive and this one plane was made at great cost. That is why we have only one. You see, *Herr* Geist hopes that you will take a favorable report back to your staff so that he may receive a direct appropriation from the government to build more of these planes."

The Master Spy moved closer to the ship.

"But as I understand it," he argued, "this plane is supposed to be invisible in the air, yet I can see it quite clearly here in the light."

"That is because these are special lights," the *Hauptmann* told him, "that show it off. We have just tried this plane for day flying and it proved very successful."

"And the motor?" G-8 asked.

"That is the only thing that can be seen in the daytime," *Hauptmann* Kammer said. "That is why it is necessary to fly quite high in our day attacks so that the engine will not be seen. And there is another thing of interest. The motor was muffled for night attacks to make a strange, moaning sound. But for day attacks it has been made so quiet that the noise can scarcely be heard at all."

"*Wunderbar!*" G-8 said. "But as I recall, the transparent cellulose combination of which you say this plane is made is highly inflammable. Is that true? Is it not apt to be destroyed swiftly and easily by fire?"

*Herr Hauptmann* Kammer nodded seriously.

"*Jawohl,*" he admitted, "that is one of the dangers which have confronted us."

The Master Spy frowned.

"I am wondering about my report to the general staff," he said. "If they know how liable this plane is to be destroyed. besides the great cost, they would not be likely to make the appropriation."

"*Jawohl*," *Hauptmann* Kammer said gravely, "that is true. It is because of the plane's inflammability that we are very anxious to get several. It would be well if you did not mention this point in your report."

"I shall consider it," the Master Spy said. "Und this plane is about to make another raid?"

*Herr Hauptmann* Kammer nodded and pointed to the men under the belly of the transparent plane.

"You see, already they are loading glass gas containers in their racks. This plane is due to leave in less than ten minutes."

G-8 shook his head.

"I do not see how it is done," he said. "How does it get out of the cave?"

*Hauptmann* Kammer shook his head.

"This is not a cave," he explained. "We have placed a gigantic cover over this portion of the mountaintop. The upper part of it is camouflaged to look like rocks sticking above the mountain. We have passages running through those rocks to the small field where we have been landing the plane that brought the tubes of glass from the castle."

"I see," G-8 said, "but how does the Ghost plane get out of here?"

*Herr Hauptmann* Kammer smiled proudly.

"The roof lifts up in two great trap doors. On one of them is a ramp. The Ghost plane is shot from that into the air."

He led G-8 next on a tour about the great hiding place of the Ghost plane.

"You see," Kammer explained, "this story of the Ghost coming from a hidden cave is simply to conform with the very ancient legend of the Vosges Mountains."

THEY had almost made a circuit of the place and were back to where the tunnel entered the great hidden hangar. In a niche at the side of the wall, G-8 caught sight of a strange costume. It looked as though it would cover a man from head to foot and appeared to be made of rubber or of some

similar composition. In front of the portion of the garment that would cover the face a gas mask was fastened.

"What's that?" G-8 demanded.

"That is a special suit which *Herr Oberst* Geist has designed for himself to protect him from the gas in case there should be a leakage or an explosion," the *Hauptmann* explained. "He has another suit like it in the castle. It is kept ready at all times for him to put on in case there should be an alarm."

"But suppose," G-8 suggested, "that the enemy should learn of the location of this hidden hangar and come to bomb it."

"There are machine guns and anti-aircraft guns set up here and there about the mountaintop. There is one strategic point in particular that commands an excellent view of the sky and the valley below."

"I would like to see it," G-8 said.

"Come," the *Hauptmann* requested.

He led the way through another passage and soon they were stepping out between two huge boulders—the same place, G-8 realized, from which he had seen the two men appear when that Hannoveraner had crashed. He could get a good view of the field from there. *Hauptmann* Kammer led him on across a corner of the field toward a cliff. From there they took a path that led out to a strange, very high promontory of rock that jutted well out over the field. When they reached it, G-8 saw hidden in the low brush an Archie gun loaded and ready to fire.

"*Aber* there is no one on duty here," he observed.

*Hauptmann* Kammer smiled slightly. "There will be someone on duty at the first sign of enemy planes attacking," he said. "You can be sure of that."

"I see," G-8 said.

He looked thoughtfully out over the great trap doors which would soon open to let out the deadly Ghost plane. It's course, as he remembered, would take the Ghost plane almost straight toward the pinnacle where they stood now. He nodded to the *Hauptmann*.

"I believe," he said, "that your secret hiding place for the Ghost ship is sufficiently protected. Shall we go back?"

*Hauptmann* Kammer bowed.

"*Jawohl*," he said. "It is almost time for the plane to leave. I want you to see how it works."

They returned to the niche between the boulders. G-8 hesitated and bowed.

"You first, *Herr Hauptmann*," he said.

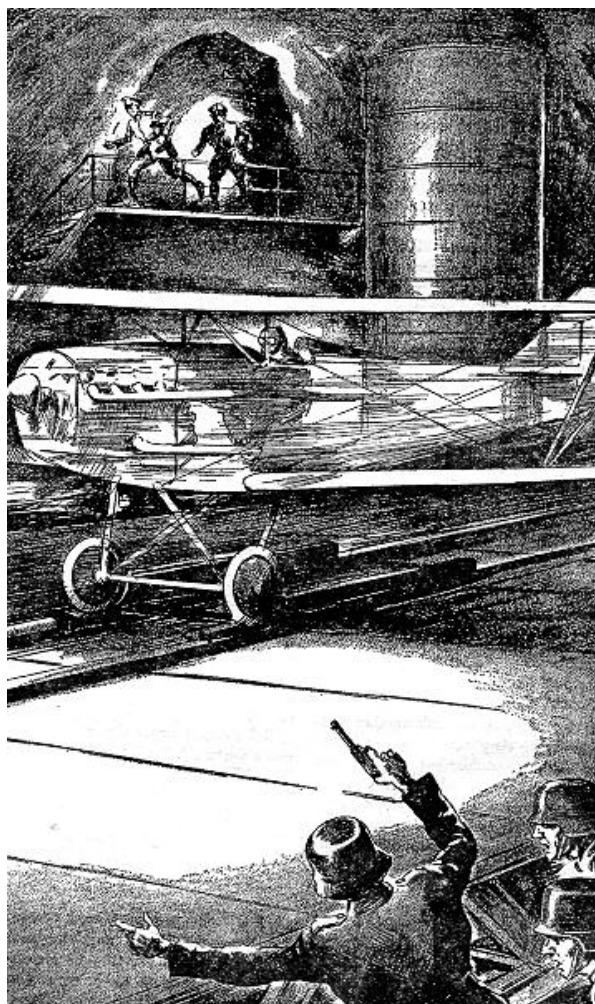
*Hauptmann* Kammer bowed.

"*Nein*, you go first," he said politely.

"*Aber* I insist," G-8 said, stepping back still farther.

The *Hauptmann* bowed again. He stepped forward toward the niche. The instant he did so, G-8 snatched out his Luger, flipped it around in his hand so that he held it hammer-fashion and struck at the *Hauptmann's* head with all his might.

G-8 couldn't know that as the *Hauptmann* fell under his blow *Herr Geist* and Baron von Zastrow were running at top speed along the tunnel to intercept him.



The great trap doors were opened wide as the ghost plane was set in motion.

## CHAPTER TWENTY

### *Glory On Wings*

AS G-8 plunged down the entry way, he heard the hiss of muffled plane engines warming for the take-off. He slowed his pace as he came to the great amphitheater so as not to cause suspicion. Calmly he walked over to the place where *Herr Geist's* life-saving suit hung, removed it from the peg, and laid it over his arm. He went again to the mouth of the tunnel, then hesitated. He thought he heard shouting from a distance, "Stop! Stop!"

He couldn't know that it was Baron von Zastrow and *Herr Geist*, but he did know that men

were coming to warn the crew of the Ghost plane about something they had learned. He suspected strongly that his identity had been discovered. That look the baron had given him just before he had been sent to the castle had told him that. He quickened his step toward the exit passage that led to the boulders at the top of the mountain. Now he could hear giant machinery getting under motion. There came a clanking roar that drowned out all yells as great gears, moved by powerful motors, lifted the camouflaged top of the Ghost drome and opened those huge trap doors.

The Master Spy ran headlong down the passage and reached the out-of-doors. There he drew on the suit. It was made for *Herr Geist*, who was much smaller than he, but the material stretched sufficiently for G-8 to get it on. He fastened it together as he ran toward the pinnacle that overhung the cliff where the anti-aircraft gun was situated. He crouched behind the gun.

By now the great trap doors were almost wide open. Above the clanking he heard a shout of warning, but in the next instant the Ghost plane was in motion. There came a muffled boom and the Ghost plane shot out across the ramp, straight toward him. Even at close range he could see it but dimly. It was a strange looking thing, tainted rather pink in the daylight. But close at hand it didn't seem strange at all. The gas he supposed would be released from the tubes connected with the motor.

G-8 saw men running toward him across the mountaintop. Apparently, some of the crew had seen him and given chase. He knew shots were being fired. But everything was quite muffled inside the special hood that G-8 wore. The Ghost plane was easing on, still coming in his direction. Then he heard other sounds and he recognized the drone of twin Hissos. Turning for a moment to look over his shoulder, he saw Nippy and Bull diving toward the top of the mountain. Apparently they had been flying high and had seen the whole mountaintop open up. But he guessed that they couldn't see the transparent plane at that distance as it took the air. Yet they might be spotting some movement.

But he couldn't wait for them to attack, G-8 decided. Everything was in his hands. With a quick flip of the breech, he made sure that the Archie gun was loaded. Frantically, he corrected his aim so that the gun muzzle was pointed straight at the

oncoming Ghost plane which he could see only at close range in outline, and that very dimly.

Shots were screaming about him. Several ricocheted off the big gun. Then, with one jerk, G-8 set off the gun. There was a grunt and a blinding flash in front of him as the Archie shell struck the transparent Ghost plane dead center. A gigantic blotch of flame appeared in front of him. He saw the motor falling like a meteor down the side of the mountain, surrounded by the burning cellulose of which the strange ship had been made. He saw the men who had come to stop him turn suddenly and race back for their underground passage, desperately trying to get away from the deadly vanishing gas which was spreading everywhere.

Even inside that protecting suit, G-8 felt for an instant a strange sensation, as though he were shrinking. But that was only momentary.

A few of the men slipped between the rocks before it was too late, and as the gas swept over the mountain, fanned by a steady breeze, the others vanished from sight, leaving only wisps of smoke.

Nippy and Bull had circled and were coming back, aiming straight for the Master Spy now. G-8 danced about on the pinnacle, waving his hands as Bull opened fire. Only one short burst came from the big fellow's guns. The Spad zoomed up again and began circling.

THE steady breeze continued to blow the gas away from the mountaintop as G-8 walked slowly back down the path from the pinnacle to the little landing field where the Hannoveraner had crashed. When he was sure that there was no more gas there, he peeled off part of the protecting uniform to test it, then motioned to Nippy.

The terrier ace came slipping down in Spad number Thirteen, made a short landing on the field. G-8 ran to meet him. Nippy stared at him and began to laugh.

"Jumping Jupiter, G-8," he cracked, "where did you get that outfit?"

"These," the Master Spy smiled, "are *Herr Geist*'s pajamas, to be used during a gas backfire. Come on, let's go. I'll tell you all about it afterward."

He sprawled across the wing, close to the fuselage, and Nippy gave her the gun.



Back at the field of the 19th, Battle was waiting for them in the one-room headquarters office. Bacon and eggs were sizzling in the frying pan on the stove.

G-8 peeled off his protective rubber suit. Bull stared at it as he hung it up.

"What do you call that thing?"

"It's a museum piece for the Smithsonian Institute to hang up after the war."

As they ate breakfast, he told them what had happened. When he was through, Nippy cracked, "Well, you can't say that I didn't do all I could to help anyway. I did everything but sock Bull over the head to keep him from going out this morning and sending you that message about the daylight attack of the Ghost plane."

"Well, Holy Herring," Bull grunted a little sheepishly, "I figured G-8 would want to know everything that happened."

"Sure," Nippy nodded, "and by doing it you proved to those Heinies over there that we were all still alive. Why didn't you just drop them a note and tell them that we hadn't been killed as they thought?"

"It doesn't matter now," the Master Spy smiled. "It all came out all right. And I think we've finished our job. How about a couple more eggs and two or three more slices of toast, Battle? I've already eaten one breakfast in Todberg Castle. I didn't have so much appetite then, but I'm as hungry as a bear now."

"Yes sir," Battle beamed. "On the fire, sir. Sunny side up."



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**THE END**