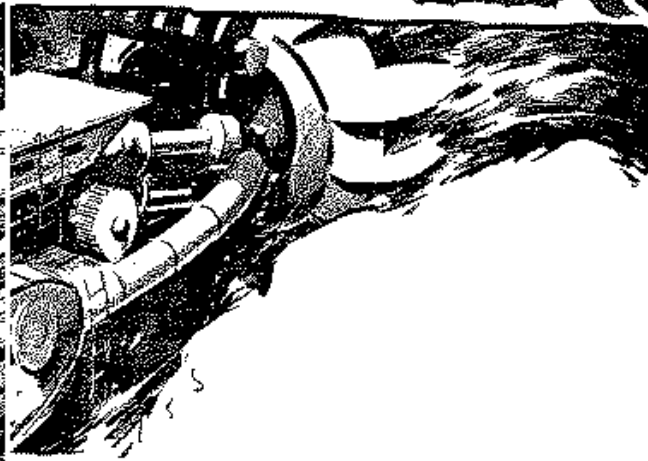
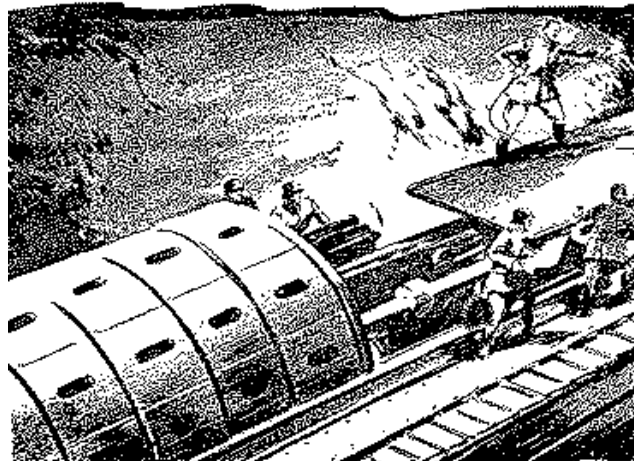
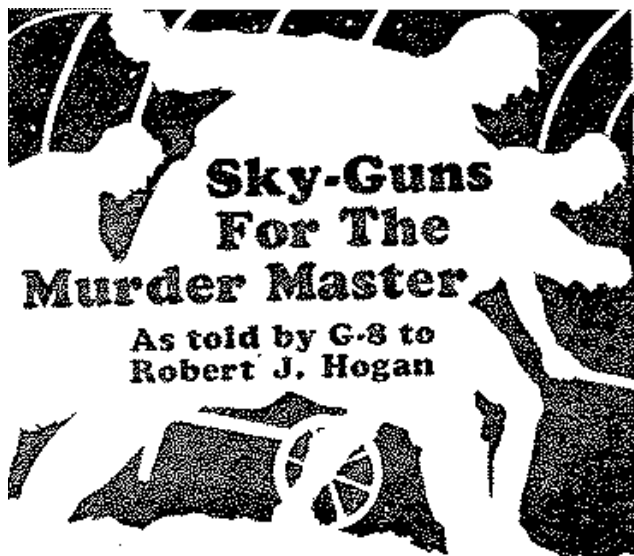


# SKY-GUNS FOR THE MURDER MASTER

As Told by G-8 to Robert J. Hogan

*Death was no stranger to the Master Spy. He had met the ghostly form on many occasions, as the gaunt specter rode the flaming wings of a ship that was filled with lead. But here was a problem that taxed every atom of his courage and his intelligence. Death had gone underground! The Mole was at work! The Mole—the foster brother of Murder—a maniac with a brilliance second to that of but one man. And that man was G-8, upon whose willing shoulders descended the problem of saving the Allied cause once again!*



## **CHAPTER ONE**

### ***Death Will Wait***

G-8, the master American flying spy, dropped flat on his stomach and lay still. He could hear the heavy boots treading the earth no more than two yards away. His face half buried in the pine needles of the Black Forest, he heard the sentry move on, the tread of his feet like the measured beat of a mechanical man. The steps returned, came closer.

It was so dark that G-8 had not been able to see the advancing enemy, and it was a fortunate thing that he could hear him.

The German sentry's boot snapped the end of a dead branch that lay on the ground. G-8 anxiously and silently hugged the earth. The German's measured tread became less audible after a few more steps. It was dying away. But in two or three minutes, he would be back.

G-8 had been lying there for some time, listening as the sentry walked back and forth along his beat. By now, he had the German's routine well fixed in his mind. He knew that he trod down to the end of his post, spoke a few words of German to the sentry he met there, then returned.

G-8 lay there for almost another minute until he heard the sentry greet his fellow guard in a low voice. With extreme precaution, the Master Spy crept forward. It was imperative that he make no noise. The rustling of leaves or the snapping of a twig might cause the sentry to come running.

He could see that between the edge of the woods where the sentry walked and Maulwurf's Castle beyond, the ground was more open. The castle was surrounded on all sides by an ill-kept lawn, dotted with towering trees that all but hid the castle from the air.

There were a few lights coming from the window slits in the castle, lighting the ground just enough for a sentry, who had his wits about him, to see any human form slithering across the grass.

G-8 heard the sentry humming some German war song to himself. The thud of the sentry's feet grew louder, and G-8 could feel the ground shake beneath him. The sentry was passing him again, his steps somewhat faltering. A great boot trod on the edge of G-8's sleeve. The sentry stopped.

G-8 lay absolutely motionless. His fingers closed over the butt of his automatic pistol. But he knew that if the sentry saw him, a bayonet could be plunged through his back before he could turn and let go with a killing shot.

Suddenly, the Master Spy detected something that threw a new light on the awful suspense. The air that he breathed reeked with alcohol. Apparently, the sentry had gotten a drink from his fellow guard at the other end of his station. Perhaps he had two or three drinks. The guard was making strange sounds in his throat. Suddenly, he hiccupped. "*Gut gemacht*," he grunted and began striding on.

G-8 waited until he had heard the sentry take six steps. Then he wriggled off toward the nearest large tree, keeping in the shadow of its great trunk.

On each trip the sentry made, with his back turned, G-8 crawled a little closer to the castle, which loomed high above him. To his left, he saw the lights of a car drive up to the front end of the castle.

Low shrubs grew along the edge of the castle. In their protection, the Master Spy was able to rise to a crouching position and move ahead. He met no interference now. Coming to a door, he paused before it, then rapped on it with his right fist four times in accordance with the instructions he had received before undertaking this adventure.

He waited, his ears keyed to the slightest sound. At first, no sound came to him. That was, according to instructions, to be expected. Again he rapped, slowly. One, two, three, four.

There was about a full second between each rap. None of the blows was loud enough to be heard by the guards surrounding the castle wall.

Listening, G-8 heard soft footsteps inside. Slowly, a bolt was slid back and the door opened. The room, or hallway, or whatever was inside that door was dark, but in the doorway the Master Spy made out a stately figure. The man was obviously a German, for he was dressed in the uniform of a general of the Imperial army.

Without a word, the general took G-8's arm, led him inside, and closed the door. They stood facing each other in the darkness and the general was whispering to him.

"No doubt you think it very strange that I should send for you, G-8," he said.

"It is rather unusual," the Master Spy admitted. "However," the general continued, "I am delighted that you have successfully passed the guards. I must tell you further that one in this castle, Count Maulwurf by name, is the cause of my request to you. I represent a faction of the army heads. Naturally, we desire Germany to win the war. However, we do not wish to gain our victory under the tactics that are about to be put forth under the leadership of this Count Maulwurf who has just returned. For that reason, *Herr* G-8, I had the message dropped to you. I am glad you have come. I shall now tell you our problem. Let me assure you that it is your problem even more than it is ours, for if this Count Maulwurf is successful, it may mean the destruction of all humanity."

"Who is this Count Maulwurf?" G-8 asked. "I do not believe I have ever heard his name before."

"He is known to most of us as *The Mole*," His Excellency answered in the same low tone. "Few in Germany are certain of his exact position. It has been hinted that he has some connection with the royal family, but that cannot be proven. However, because of his grotesque nature and appearance, his family, whoever they may be, were ashamed of him. He was, you might say, banished to our colony in German East Africa. But he returned recently and he has plans which I will describe to you now, in detail."

That last word had just left the lips of the German when suddenly there came a flash of light and a series of shots. The general pitched over dead at G-8's feet.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### ***The Murder Master***

STRANGE happenings had led up to the mysterious visit of G-8, the Master Spy, to the Black Forest.

In the great banquet hall of Maulwurf Castle, situated deep in the foreboding Black Forest, seven men were assembled. Six of them were German *offiziers* of the highest ranks. They represented a preponderant display of German military power.

The seventh man stood out as the unusual one. He was a grotesque fellow, more than six feet and six inches in height. At first, his body gave the impression of being flabby, but that was only because of his peculiar physical construction. His legs were powerful, and his hips were broad. He was heavy about the middle. But his shoulders, although massive, were not broad. They were, on the contrary, rather narrow, sloping shoulders, although immensely thick from front to rear. His arms hung like the long, beastly arms of a gorilla.

Perhaps the most grotesque part of him was his head, below which there seemed to be no neck. His head was small, not much larger than that of a half-grown child. His mouth and his nose seemed to take up practically all of his face, but his eyes were tiny, like the eyes of a pig.

The top of his head was almost flat, as if there were little or no room left for a human brain. But for anyone to guess that this weird man did not have a brain, and an unusually cunning one at that, would have been a great mistake. His keen, darting little eyes gave a hint of the brilliance and mental power that lay behind them. There was not one of the six generals standing before him who had not heard of this person. Throughout his life he had been spoken of in awed tones as Count Maulwurf. It had been whispered about Germany that he had some strange connection with the royal family, and, because they had been ashamed of him, he had been banished to the German colony in East Africa. No one had been quite sure of this fact. Nevertheless, it had seemed rather strange that if there were no such connection why Count Maulwurf should be granted such an authoritative position as he had held in the African colony. He had been there, so far as anyone could remember, for the last ten or fifteen years. No one knew his age, but it was thought that he was perhaps thirty.

But now he had returned and was standing before them, holding in one large, puffy hand a paper bearing an official seal. He raised it now before the generals.

His voice was thick, deep, and guttural as he spoke, yet his words were perfectly distinct and understandable.

"I have assembled you, *meine herren*," he began, "as advisers upon military matters. I have here in my hand a special order from His Majesty, the Kaiser. I will pass it to you now so that all of

you may read it. You will see, *meine herren*, that it is a command. It means I shall have at my disposal all machinery and other equipment that I feel is necessary for the winning of this war for the *Vaterland*."

The paper was passed from one general to another. Each read it and remarked solemnly, "*Jawohl*."

"It is good," Count Maulwurf went on, "that I have returned from German East Africa at this time instead of coming too late. I have seen the ridiculously inadequate military tactics that are being used." He shook a great index finger in their faces. "You *dummkopfs*," he roared.

"You have conducted this war like children. It should have been won long ago. I propose to win it now in a very short time. To let the French, British, and the *Amerikaners* run over you as they have, is the most ridiculous thing I have ever heard of."

He stopped to smile at them with smug satisfaction. It was an ugly grimace as it spread across his small, grotesque face.

The generals were all listening intently. This paper, signed by the *Kaiser* himself, had made a deep impression upon them. His Excellency, General von Schmidt, who had an important military bearing, was the only one who dared ask a question.

"How do you intend to win this war, Count Maulwurf?"

The grotesque man answered in a bellow of wrath, as though he were deriding a child for asking a silly question.

"I am coming to that in my own time. First, I shall explain that I have already been home long enough for my assistants and myself to finish construction of a machine. This machine is hidden in the forest, a half mile from the castle, and has been so secretly constructed and so heavily guarded that not one of you has known of its existence. I will now show you the blue prints of this machine and explain its functions."

He passed blue prints to the generals. There were some remarks of awed amazement before His Excellency, General von Schmidt, asked the question that was in the minds of all the other generals as well.

"It is most interesting, Count Maulwurf," he said, "*aber* may I ask what is the purpose of this machine?"

Instead of becoming angry, Count Maulwurf chuckled and shrugged his thick shoulders.

"I knew you would not have intelligence enough to read the blue prints and understand the use of this machine," he chortled. "Altogether you have had little or no success in the air or on the ground, but one good success has been ours. That is the submarine. By means of traveling under the sea, we have rendered the waters of the world a most uncertain place for enemy ships. Now I have a machine which goes underground. My machine digs tunnels wherever it is directed. The tunnels are large enough to permit trucks to pass through."

"*Jawohl*," General von Schmidt admitted with reluctance, "*aber*, suppose these tunnels cave in after they are dug?"

"*Dummkopf!*" the Count guttured. "Do you think I have failed to take that into consideration? My machine not only digs its own tunnels almost as rapidly as a man can walk, but it also seals the tunnels in concrete as it moves into the earth."

AGAIN His Excellency, General von Schmidt, was the only one who had nerve enough to ask the question, "What, may I ask, is done with the dirt that is taken from the tunnel?"

Once more, Count Maulwurf chuckled. "You have perhaps heard of prison labor?" he asked.

The heads of the German generals nodded.

"I propose," Count Maulwurf went on, "to use prisoners for the heavy labor. Now to go farther with my plan. With my machine, I shall be able to tunnel all the way to Paris. I shall, if necessary, be able to tunnel under the entire city, although I do not think I will have to do that. We can place our armies anywhere in France to trap those at the Front, or, better still, we can mine any regions we see fit and blow them up from underground."

"*Eine minute, bitte*," General von Schmidt interrupted again. "You speak of using prison labor. I grant you we have taken a few thousand Allied prisoners, but a tunnel to Paris—*Gott im Himmel!* The human labor incurred would be—"

"*Dummkopf!*" Count Maulwurf roared.

"The Allied prisoners we have in our camps now are mere beginning. As we proceed, I shall take what prisoners I like from the front line trenches." He began laughing, as though it were a joke. "I have devised a method for that also. You shall see how it works out. My prisoners shall not be merely prisoners working in the tunnels. They shall be prisoners turned into slaves. They shall work like mechanical men until they drop dead of exhaustion."

General von Schmidt opened his mouth to speak, then closed it again. Count Maulwurf gave a short nod. "You may take the blue prints with you," he said, "and retire. Remember, you are merely my advisers. You may go to get your immediate work in shape so that your commands may be turned over to others. Then you will return here to Maulwurf Castle."

When they were alone, the six generals discussed the strange situation. Von Schmidt stated his view point.

"*Meine Herren*," he began, "to me this shift of policy of the forces of the *Vaterland* is ridiculous and appalling. Never before has it been necessary for us to call upon one whom even the royal family is ashamed of for help. This plan is brutally insane. We Germans are a proud people and, so long as I have my way in the matter, we shall continue to conduct our war in a gentlemanly and, so far as is possible, humane fashion."

Another general spoke up. "Your Excellency," he said, "you must remember that we are powerless. We have been ordered to act in an advisory capacity to Count Maulwurf. That, I presume, means advisory only so far as military tactics are concerned."

"*Jawohl*," came the answer.

"Then," said the second speaker, "would it be wise to oppose Count Maulwurf? His Majesty, the *Kaiser*, has commanded us. We shall be slipping our necks into nooses should we try to oppose this man who looks like a mole."

General von Schmidt gave a short nod.

"The Mole," he said. "That is exactly what he looks like to me. And now he proposes to tunnel underground like a mole. And he proposes in some way to capture Allied soldiers and beat them into submission so that they will work as slaves in constructing the tunnel."

"But what can we do?" another general asked. "His Majesty, the *Kaiser*, is supreme. Complaints will not help. They will only place us in front of firing squads as traitors."

"I see only one chance," General von Schmidt said, "and I propose to take that chance upon my own shoulders. Wish me luck, gentlemen, for I may need it. *Aber*, I feel I am doing the right thing."

He got into his car and ordered his driver to take him to the nearest *jadgstaffel* airdrome. There he wrote a note, sealed it in an envelope, and gave explicit orders to a waiting pilot.

"See that this message," he said, "is dropped directly in front of the end hangar at Le Bourget field."

IN the living room of the apartment connected to the end hangar at Le Bourget field, G-8, the Master Spy, set aside a magazine and stifled a yawn. Battle, his gaunt, English manservant, and master of the make-up kit, appeared in the kitchen doorway.

"Would you care for a midnight snack before you retire, sir?" he asked.

G-8 smiled kindly and shook his head.

"I don't think so, Battle," he said, "but I do think I'll turn in any minute now."

From a comfortable chair, Bull Martin, the iron-jawed former all-American halfback, looked up and grumbled, "You might have said yes for my sake, G-8."

Bull Martin was a true human fighting machine. He feared only the things that he couldn't comprehend. Stretched out on the davenport, little Nippy Weston, the terrier ace, turned his head to look with his usual disgust at his big pal, Bull.

"Some day, I'd give a lot to see you in a position where you wouldn't feel like eating, you big ox," he chirped.

That was like Nippy Weston, throwing jibes into this Bull Martin who was almost twice his size. Nippy, who flew Spad number thirteen, in defiance of superstition, was the sort of youngster who could laugh in the very face of death.

G-8 smiled tolerantly at the two. "At it again," he chuckled. "Don't let my lack of appetite influence you, Bull. Go out and raid the ice box if you want—"

The Master Spy's voice ceased abruptly. A sound had come to his ears—the sound of a droning, throbbing motor. Long service at the Front had trained G-8 and his Battle Aces to recognize instantly the sound of any airplane motor they heard. Because of that training, they knew now that an enemy plane was about to pay them a visit.

In less than thirty seconds, G-8, Nippy, Bull, and Battle were out on the tarmac. As they stood there, close to the wall of the hangar, a Fokker dove down out of the night. A flare dropped from the plane and burst into brilliance, illuminating Le Bourget field. In the light they saw a message streamer come fluttering down. The Fokker zoomed away and thundered back toward Germany.

All four of them made a dive for that message streamer, and Nippy was first to reach it. They filed back into the living room of the apartment where G-8 tore open the sealed envelope. They began reading the message together.

TO G-8; MASTER SPY OF THE ALLIED FORCES:

MEIN HERR: A MATTER OF THE GREATEST IMPORTANCE HAS ARISEN. I BEG YOUR PRESENCE TONIGHT AT MAULWURF CASTLE TEN MILES NORTHEAST OF FREIHOF IN THE BLACK FOREST. THE CASTLE IS GUARDED. IT WILL BE NECESSARY FOR YOU TO PASS THROUGH THE GUARD UNNOTICED.

WHEN YOU REACH THE CASTLE WALL, PROCEED TO THE REAR DOOR AT THE NORTHEAST END OF THE CASTLE. I WILL BE THERE, WAITING FOR YOU. KNOCK SOFTLY FOUR TIMES UPON THE DOOR. IF YOU DO NOT HEAR ANY RESPONSE, KNOCK AGAIN.

I GIVE YOU MY WORD AS A GENTLEMAN THAT THIS IS NOT A TRAP. I WILL EXPLAIN FURTHER WHEN WE MEET.

MOST SINCERELY, OTTO VON SCHMIDT, GENERAL.

"Holy Herring!" Bull thundered. "The nerve of that guy!"

But G-8 was already stripping off his coat. "Come on, Nip," he said. "Get ready to play aerial chauffeur for me."

Even the terrier ice was astonished. "Jumping Jupiter!" he cried. "Are you really going to take him up?"

"Certainly I am," the Master Spy nodded.

"I'll bet you dollars to doughnuts it's a trap," Bull thundered.

The Master Spy smiled at him. "I have been in traps before," he said. "I'll have to take my chances on this."



### CHAPTER THREE

#### *Satan's Path to the Grave*

THROUGH the many months of the war, G-8 had tried to prepare himself for any event. He had told himself that he must not be surprised at anything that happened. But this event that had just taken place had come with such startling abruptness that it had caught him almost completely off guard.

It seemed scarcely a split second ago that the German general had stood close to him in the darkness, talking in a low voice. Then had come a flash of light and the report of a pistol exploding. The general had fallen dead at his feet. Now, with baffling suddenness, the room had become totally dark.

In the flash that had occurred with the report of the pistol, G-8 had seen the general fall, but now that the flash was ended and the general had gone

down, the Master Spy could see absolutely nothing. Instinctively, he dropped to a crouched position, and as he went down, he drew his automatic.

He remained motionless during the awful silence that ensued. It was so still that he could have heard a pin drop. He raised his automatic, ready to fire in the direction of the first sound that might come to him.

Of course the general was dead, but he knew there must be some living person in that room who had killed him. G-8 even tried to stop his breathing so that he would not attract attention.

He thought of trying to crawl away from the place where the general had fallen, but the room was so deathly still that even the slightest movement on his part would make a sound. It seemed that each second was as long as an hour.

Then, from across the room, he heard a noise. It was a stealthy noise, scarcely audible. It came to him as the slight scraping of a shoe or boot upon the floor.

He turned the muzzle of his automatic in that direction. Then a voice came to him. It seemed to emanate from several parts of the room at once. The room echoed with the queer rumble of that voice.

"I can see you quite clearly, *mein lieber freund*."

G-8 suddenly realized how a cornered beast might feel. He had a sensation of being absolutely helpless, even though he had an automatic in his hand. Yet it occurred to him that perhaps this speaker might be bluffing.

As if to answer that question in the Master Spy's mind, the voice continued, "You do not believe that I can see you? You are crouched over the body of His Excellency, General von Schmidt. You hold in your hand an automatic, but you cannot see me so it is of no use to you."

G-8 sensed a chilly feeling along his spine, as though his backbone had suddenly turned into a refrigeration plant.

The voice continued, "I would advise you to drop your automatic at once. A gun of that caliber is very heavy to hold long in your hand. Since it is useless, you may as well let it go."

There was absolute truth in that statement. G-8 realized this full well. He let the gun slip from his grasp.

"I can see that you are a very wise individual," the strange, rumbling voice echoed on. "But permit me to add to your comfort. You are in a crouched position and that is not so easy. You would be much more comfortable if you were standing, *nicht wahr?*"

G-8 rose to his feet.

"Now," the voice commanded, "step over the body of His Excellency, General von Schmidt, and walk straight ahead. I will guide you when you reach the other side of the room."

G-8 fumbled with one foot and felt the body of the fallen general. He walked across the room in the darkness. He didn't know why he counted the steps that he took, but he did. He had gone twelve steps before an iron-like hand laid hold of his arm. His back muscles stiffened instinctively in response to the gun muzzle which he expected to be jabbed into his back at any instant. But it was apparent that this man with the strange, rumbling voice was a big, powerful brute. His grip on G-8 attested to his strength, and his voice sounding above G-8's head, verified the suspicion that he was tall.

"We go this way, *mein lieber freund*."

He propelled G-8 to the right, where a door opened before the Master Spy. Although the light was dim in the corridor outside, G-8 blinked momentarily.

He had taken a dozen or more steps down the corridor before his eyes became sufficiently accustomed to the light for him to see. Now he turned his head sidewise to glance at the man who held him captive. But the glance gave merely a suggestion of the man.

G-8 realized that he was grotesquely huge. But he wasn't able to scrutinize him thoroughly until they were in a small room some sixty or seventy feet down the corridor.

Apparently, this room was a sort of den, with book cases covering the walls for the most part. A heavily carved library table stood in the center of the room, with several comfortable chairs gathered around it.

G-8 was stopped before one of the chairs. The German with him took the nearest chair, a large, overstuffed piece of furniture.

NOW, for the first time, G-8 had a chance to study this strange human being who, it seemed, could see in the dark. He was, the Master Spy realized, one of the most repulsive human beings he had ever seen. His gigantic shoulders and his small head that sat upon them almost like a peanut on a barrel, gave the Master Spy a strange feeling of unreality. Then there was the large mouth and nose that almost covered the man's face and the tiny, close-set eyes and the flat forehead. It was all very repugnant to look upon.

The man was smiling now, a grimace which made him look even more horrible. He seemed suave in speech and acts, as though he had been accustomed all his life to associate with gentle folk. Yet G-8 was to come to realize that this man was a brute in the most intense meaning of the word.

"I," the man rumbled, "am Count Maulwurf. And by whom am I so honored with this visit?"

There was no reason why the Master Spy should reveal his true identity, particularly at this moment. He noted that Count Maulwurf had holstered his pistol and in that he saw a possible escape. It might even be possible that he could talk his way out of this situation, although he had his doubts about that. At the moment he was disguised as a German infantry *leutnant*. He even had his record book in his pocket.

And so, passing his hand into his pocket, he drew out the record book, got up, bowed before the Mole, and said, "May I present my credentials,?"

The Count scrutinized his record book, then nodded, and handed it back to G-8.

"So you are *Leutnant* Oskar Hartung."

G-8 took the book and hesitated as though he expected to be released. The Mole nodded again.

"You may take your seat for further questioning, *Herr Leutnant*. First, I must ask you what business you had with His Excellency, General von Schmidt, that necessitated your meeting him at the rear door of the castle."

"I am one of his staff *offiziers*," G-8 lied. "I came from his divisional headquarters to bring him the information that he was sorely needed there."

Count Maulwurf shrugged his massive shoulders.

"So?" he said. "And why is it that I was not notified by the guards that you had passed?"

The Master Spy shrugged his own shoulders in return.

"That, Count Maulwurf," he said, "is beyond my knowledge. I know nothing of the reason for the guard's failure to report my presence. I had received orders from my commander, His Excellency, General von Schmidt, to report to him at the rear door of the castle anything that might arise concerning his command."

Count Maulwurf's eyes almost closed with suspicion.

"Do you mean to tell me," he roared, "that you, one of his staff *offiziers*, did not know that he had been relieved of his command to act as one of my advisers?"

G-8 was thinking fast. He must keep ahead of the Mole if possible. "I was aware of that fact only through unconfirmed rumor," he answered.

"Bah!" Maulwurf roared. "You are a *dummkopf* to try and lie to me. I have suspected all along that General von Schmidt was working against me. That is why I killed him. I have been trying you out to see how much of a lie you could tell. But you did not know that my keen sense of hearing caught every word that Von Schmidt told you after the rear castle door had closed." His voice rose to thunderous proportions. "You are not one of his staff *offiziers*. I do not believe you are even a German. Who are you?"

As the Mole asked that question, he reached for his gun.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### *The Monster of the Black Forest*

A SPLIT second before the Mole's hand had dived for his automatic, G-8 realized that he could



not possibly talk his way out of this mess. It would mean a fight, and the Master Spy had been left weaponless. He must seize hold of any other weapon that he could lay his hands on.

On the table near his right hand was a piece of bronze statuary. The images in that statuary depicted a German lancer astride a horse, spearing a great, wild boar. The statuary was heavy and mounted on a solid bronze base. The instant that Count Maulwurf reached for his automatic, G-8 lunged for the statuary. He drew back his arm, and flung the heavy object. He aimed that statuary, not at the head of Count Maulwurf, but at the hand that was drawing the gun.

As the Master Spy let go, the Mole whipped the Luger from its holster. There was an explosive roar, a pinging sound, then a scream as the bullet from the Luger struck the flying piece of statuary and the lead slug ricocheted off.

Almost immediately, when the Luger had exploded, the heavy bronze statue struck the Mole's powerful gun hand. Count Maulwurf uttered a groan of pain, and the Luger slipped from his grasp to the floor. On sudden impulse, he gripped his injured hand with his immense free paw.

By now, G-8 was upon him, fists flying. The Mole swung backward with one arm, caught G-8 on the side of the jaw with his elbow. It was a terrific blow that sent the Master Spy backward.

But G-8 was not dazed by that blow. In fact, he had been going away with it and it had merely knocked him off balance. He was on his feet almost instantly, bounding up like a rubber ball. Again he hurled himself in a death struggle against the Mole.

Count Maulwurf had dived to pick up the automatic from the floor. A perfectly timed kick from G-8's left boot sent the gun sliding under the huge chair. The overstuffed chair was built so close to the floor that it would be necessary to move it or tip it over to get at the gun.

Now the Mole, with his injured right hand and G-8 faced each other, man to man, hard fist to hard fist. G-8 swung from his belt in a smashing uppercut, straight for the jaw of the other man. He connected. His arm stiffened and his whole body contorted into a battering ram behind that blow. A thrill of immense satisfaction swept up his right arm as his fist connected, full on the point of the Mole's chin.

The Mole tipped back just a little on his feet, took a half step backward to catch his balance. That was the only effect that G-8's terrific blow had upon him.

The Mole's gun hand seemed not to be injured as much as it had at first, for he thrashed out with it now and countered with his left. They were clumsy blows, these punches that Count Maulwurf threw. One struck G-8 on the shoulder and spun him half around. Another flailing fist caught the Master Spy in the chest and hurled him backward.

It was easy to see that the Mole was not an experienced boxer, but his enormous strength made up for that deficiency.

As the Mole's left fist struck G-8's chest, G-8 felt as though his ribs were caving in. All the wind went out of him as he was hurled back across the room.

The Mole was lunging for him. He made a horribly grotesque picture as he leaned forward, his long, gorilla-like arms extending from his barrel shoulders.

G-8's breath was coming back to him but he was still on his back as the Mole lunged at him. In the split second that he lay there, before he could even begin to rise, he realized one thing. He realized that he had hit the Mole full on the button with everything that he had, but it had been almost like hitting a stone wall. His fist still felt numb from the shock. Perhaps he had broken his hand. He didn't know. At any rate, he decided that the small face on the front of the little flat head was next to impregnable to any blows that he could strike.

That flabby-looking stomach was something else. It was much more easily within his reach. He would try that if he got another chance. But even now, G-8 was still lying on his back, and in the next second, the Mole would drop upon him with giant hands to crush the life out of him.

G-8 recalled what he had learned in wrestling, particularly the French style, where the legs are used to excellent advantage. He had no time to rise, and even if he had, he would have been at a distinct disadvantage for he had landed in a corner of the room. A cornered fighter would not be able to stand up against the Mole at all.

Therefore, G-8 reacted in the only way left to him. He shot out his legs, gripped the giant legs of the Mole in a scissors-like vise and, with all his

strength, twisted. The Mole lurched to fall upon him. But G-8, still clinging to the Mole's legs, wriggled out and sent the Mole crashing to the floor at the side.

Now G-8 had a chance to get up and escape being cornered. He sprang to his feet. Count Maulwurf, roaring with rage, also arose. He came tearing in at G-8 with his enormous fists like battering rams slashing the air in front of the Master Spy's face.

G-8, ducking and weaving, managed to get under those blows. With all his strength, he worked lefts and rights into what seemed the flabby middle of Count Maulwurf. But even as G-8 struck his first blow, he realized that Count Maulwurf's middle was far from flabby. It was as though he were pounding a solidly packed punching dummy.

Count Maulwurf pounded him on the back with his fists and G-8, working in close, was keeping his head down. Now G-8 aimed a final right at where the Mole's solar plexus should be. He was in an excellent position to deliver a hard blow.

He drove his fist into the Mole's middle almost up to the wrist. The Mole gave out a grunt, as if at least half the wind had left his great lungs. For an instant, he stopped beating G-8 on the back with his fists.

G-8 HAD him going. He had found the Mole's weak spot. He executed a quick shift, ducked to the right, buried his left in the solar plexus, then, weaving to the left, sank his right once more. The Mole grunted again, but he wasn't giving ground.

Somehow, G-8 realized that a furious rage had taken possession of Count Maulwurf. Punches ceased to have any effect on this enraged beast of a man. G-8 felt himself being picked up bodily, as though he were a rag doll. Held in the powerful hands of the huge German brute, he was lifted above the man's head. Then he was sailing through the air across the room. He landed with a crash against the great, overstuffed chair.

The force that the Mole had used in throwing him had been terrific. G-8 knew as he lay there, half out of breath, that the padding of that chair was the only thing that had saved his back from being broken. He struggled to regain his feet, believing the Mole would now attempt to crush him with his great weight.

But he saw suddenly that Count Maulwurf had a more sinister idea. On that portion of the wall where bookcases did not occupy the full space, the den was hung with hunting trophies and relics of ancient wars. There, within reach of the Mole, hung a medieval battle axe with a horrible broad blade and a thick handle. The Mole was now making for this axe.

G-8 leaped to his feet to stop him, but the Mole snatched the battle axe from its hook, tearing out half the wall as he did so, and whirled on the Master Spy with the cruel weapon held ready to strike.

The axe was coming down with terrific speed and force. It was aimed at G-8's head or neck. It mattered little what part of his body it landed on, however, because, at the speed with which it was descending, the Master Spy would be cut to ribbons wherever the cleaver struck.

There was no protection for G-8 against this horrible fate except to get out of the way of the axe. Remembering his old football tactics, G-8 lunged, his left shoulder tilted forward so that it would strike the Mole full in his solar plexus.

Never before had G-8 made such a terrific charge. He felt the axe graze his back as it came down. The force of his shoulder striking the Mole dead center sent a shock through his entire body. But the very ferocity of his attack permitted G-8 to send the Mole crashing back against the wall.

The Master Spy didn't stop there. He charged on as if he were a football player making a desperate attempt for a touchdown. He aimed straight for the closed door and his body went crashing into it. But the door was locked. It shuddered before his attack, but it didn't give way.

Out of the corner of his eye, he caught the Mole catching his balance and getting back his wind. He was raising the axe to strike again. This time, he would have G-8 at his mercy. If the Master Spy couldn't get that door open, he was done.

It is said that sometimes desperation gives a man the strength of insanity. So it must have been with G-8. This was no time for the Master Spy to keep cool. He must crash that door open. He remembered as he lunged at it that the door had opened into the hall. That meant that he would have nothing to break but the lock. At least that was something in his favor. But he didn't know how much the lock or the door itself would stand.

Wildly, acting like a brute animal in a mad effort to escape and salvage his life, G-8 tore into the door. For the moment he was blind to everything else. The door met his assault with an echoing boom.



THEN there came a shattering crash as the inhuman strength that desperation had forced into his movements came into play. As if from the result of a blast, the door burst open before him. He heard the axe sing and bury itself into the casing at the side of the door. This came to the Master Spy's ears as he charged out into the corridor. Wildly, he dashed up the corridor, while behind him, he could hear the thudding feet of the pursuing Mole.

But the Mole, although a man of brute strength, was slow of motion. He had shown that in the fight. Now that fact gave G-8 some hope.

Down the hall, he came to a stairs that led to the second floor of the castle. He turned and dashed up the steps. When he reached the second floor, he heard the Mole thundering after him. He was in another corridor on the second floor.

There were doors opening off that corridor. He chose the second one on the left. Running to it on tiptoe, so that the Mole could not follow the sound of his footsteps, he quickly opened the door, stepped inside, then softly closed the door again.

Now he turned and stared about to take stock of the room he was in. A dim light burned in a

lamp. He was in a bedroom. Two doors beside the one through which he had entered opened off this bedroom.



He heard Count Maulwurf running about the hall, opening doors. Stealthily, G-8 opened a door off the bedroom which led into a clothes closet. Closing it, he tried another one, and found himself facing a set of narrow stairs.

On the wall he saw something glistening—a short, ugly-looking dagger. A quick deduction told him this was probably the room where Count Maulwurf slept. He judged this from the fact that the bed was unusually long, and from the dagger on the wall. The stairway was there so that the Mole might use it in case he were trapped and wanted to escape.

It took G-8 only a split second to draw the dagger, then tiptoe up the stairs. The steps were long, dark, and winding. He felt a trap door above his head when he reached the top. Below, he heard the Mole opening the door to his bedroom.

G-8 reached the trap door and clambered out on a sort of platform that had been built on the roof of the castle. He stopped suddenly. At the other end of the platform, he saw a queer-looking machine, resembling a large edition of an old-fashioned Gatling gun. But there were valves, small tanks, and tubes about the barrels of this big gun, which, he saw, was pointed off toward the flat of land some distance from the castle.

It was growing daylight and G-8 could see things quite plainly. A man in a German uniform crouched behind the gun, his back to the Master Spy. The gun emitted a hissing sound as G-8 watched. From this point he could see the flat ground below the mountain where the gun was pointed, and something met his eyes that struck terror to his heart.

There a gigantic machine was at work. It was an enormous thing, a sort of rotary digger, that was beginning to excavate a tunnel in the ground. In fact, it had already half buried itself.

Men stripped to the waist were working like slaves, carrying back the dirt that was dug from the tunnel. On either side of the line of workers were men with whips, lashing their bare backs, driving them to swifter effort. For a moment, all this held G-8 appalled. Only dimly did he hear the sound of the Mole coming up the stairs. He had been so fascinated by the machine he had seen that he had forgotten nearly everything else.

Suddenly, with a roar, the Mole, battle axe in hand, burst through the trap door and came lunging at the Master Spy. Holding his dagger ready, G-8 whirled to face him. The broad, ugly-bladed battle axe was upraised. G-8 knew his only chance would be to lunge in close, so that the battle axe would miss him, then he could plunge his dagger into the heart of Count Maulwurf and finish him for all time. He started his lunge to duck the blow of the cruel axe.

Then there came a crash in his ears as might come from the collapse of a glass factory. Everything grew dim and he was abruptly plunged into complete darkness.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### ***The Hatchet of Doom***

COUNT MAULWURF stopped the terrific descent of his axe just in time. He had seen G-8 rush him with the bared dagger ready to plunge into his heart. He had seen something else, too. His trusted servant and aide, little Zoki, had appeared behind the slave gun. He had come rushing up behind G-8 with a raised club.

Count Maulwurf realized that without Zoki's help, G-8 would almost certainly have been able to duck under that axe blow and stab him to the heart. The Mole had tried to step backward so that there would be time to bring down his great, broad-edged battle axe before he himself should drop dead. But Zoki had come in with his surprise attack, and the Mole saw his club crash down on the Master Spy's skull. G-8 dropped with all the life gone out of him. Count Maulwurf stopped the downward descent of his axe lest it should carve Zoki in two.

Zoki, the little brown aide, stood grinning up at him. In those eyes was a keen look of delight. There was, too, an almost hypnotic fascination in Count Maulwurf's eyes.

During their long association as master and slave, Count Maulwurf had never been quite sure just what Zoki was. He could be certain of one thing, however. Zoki was not a brown pygmy from Africa. His skin was more the color of an exceptionally dark Hindu. Perhaps Zoki himself did not know what his nationality was. If he did, he had never admitted it to Count Maulwurf.

The Mole stood glaring down at Zoki. "Why did you interrupt this fight?" he demanded in his rumbling voice.

Zoki just grinned for another long moment, then said, "I see you cannot escape the dagger, Master. This man I hit on the head is much too quick."

"*Unsinn!*" the Mole snorted. "Nonsense! If you had not interfered, I would have slashed his head from his shoulders with my axe."

The little brown man was still grinning.

"Excuse, Master," he said. "Zoki does not agree. He would have killed you. Who is this man who attacked you?"

The Mole let the argument drop. His better judgment told him that Zoki was right, but he would not admit it. He looked down now at the still form lying at his feet.

"I have been trying to figure that out," he said in his guttural voice. "There is something very strange about this fellow. He is unusually clever. Never have I encountered anyone who fights so ferociously, even against unconquerable odds."

Then the Mole shrugged his huge shoulders, bent down, and picked up the Master Spy as if he

were a child. He carried him down the narrow staircase to a room on the first floor of Maulwurf Castle where he laid him on a couch. Blood was still trickling from a wound in G-8's scalp. Zoki had followed them down, and now the little brown man stood looking thoughtfully at the Master Spy.

"It's a funny thing," Count Maulwurf said, "but I have an idea that General von Schmidt ordered this fellow to meet him here."

Little brown Zoki bent over the body of G-8 and Count Maulwurf saw him raise his hand to his forehead. He touched it with the tips of all four fingers.

"What are you going to do, go into one of your trances again?" the Mole demanded.

Zoki closed his eyes, but did not answer. He stood there, leaning over G-8 as rigidly as though he were a statue. Then, without opening his eyes or removing his fingertips from his forehead, he said, "He is American."

"What?" Count Maulwurf roared.

Zoki seemed not to hear him. He spoke again as though he were talking to himself. "He is most dangerous. Must not leave him here."

Zoki's voice was low in tone, but rather high in pitch. There was something uncanny about the way he spoke his words now.

"Can you tell who he is?" the Mole demanded. "What's his name?"

"Name," Zoki repeated and again, "Name."

It was as if he had heard a command from far off and was trying to contact some phase of the universe that the average human being did not understand.

"Name," he said a third time. There was a long silence, while the Mole paced up and down the room, glancing now and then at G-8 on the couch and at Zoki, bent in his trance-like silence.

Then Zoki said again, "Very dangerous. He will live. Must get him in place of safe keeping."

Zoki suddenly straightened. His piercing eyes were glistening and his fingertips were no longer on his forehead. He was grinning once more at Count Maulwurf. The Mole glared down at him.

"Well," he demanded, "what's his name? Don't you know?"

Zoki shook his head slowly.

"No, Master," he said. "His mind not open now for me to read. Later maybe can tell you when the black curtain is lifted from him."

"Look here," the Mole flared, "if you're such a clever mind reader, why didn't you tell me that this fellow was coming to meet General von Schmidt?"

Zoki kept on grinning.

"Can not tell everything always," he said, "but whatever I tell you is right."

"And you think we had better chain him up in the dungeon?" the Mole demanded.

Zoki hesitated. He grinned down into the still, white face of the Master Spy.

"My advice is to kill him now," he said.

THE Mole hesitated. Slowly, his hand crept to the butt of his automatic. It lingered there for a long moment. He released his hold on it and shook his small, ugly head. His lips broadened into a hideous grin.

"Not yet, Zoki," he said. "I want to find out who he is and how he managed to get by my guards. Then, when the time is right, perhaps I shall have the pleasure of another duel with him and I shall have the satisfaction of feeling my axe slash its way through his neck."

The grin left the little brown man's face.

"You will be sorry, Master," he said. "You will be sorry if you do not at least chain him in the dungeon."

The Mole nodded. "We'll do that all right," he said. "We'll see that he has no chance to get away. When I'm ready for him, we will bring him out."

The Mole tossed G-8's body over his shoulder and clumped off down into the dungeon. There in a low-ceilinged store room, he dropped the Master Spy like a bag of meat upon the hard floor beside the back wall of the cell. Iron chains clanked as he drew them out and placed irons about the Master Spy's wrists. Zoki watched his operations with satisfaction. "There, that ought to hold him," the Mole said when he had finished.

"It would be better, Master, if he were killed now," Zoki argued.

"He will be killed soon enough," the Mole said. "Now we will find out who he is."

Back in the den that was lined on two sides with bookcases, the Mole guttured a curse as he scrutinized the broken door.

He picked up the piece of bronze sculpture that G-8 had hurled at him and put it back on the table. He nodded to Zoki.

"Tell the five generals to come in," he ordered.

Zoki bowed and went out. After several minutes, the five generals entered the room. They came almost like automatons or slaves. Three of their faces were rather white. The faces of the two short, stocky generals were florid. Their eyes were glued to the face of the Mole, that ugly countenance that was made still more horrible by the grin that he wore now.

"*Guten morgen*, Excellencies," he said. "I trust you had a restful sleep."

"*Jawohl*," said one.

"*Ziemlich gut*," said another.

The attitude of these five generals fairly filled the room with electric tension. A third general spoke up. His voice was somewhat apologetic.

"*Bitte*, Count Maulwurf," he said, "we have heard a queer report concerning the death of His Excellency, General von Schmidt,"

"That is one of the reasons why I have summoned you," the Mole told them. "I followed General von Schmidt to a basement room that opens through a door at the rear of the castle. A man dressed as a German *leutnant* came in. Listening in the darkness, I heard General von Schmidt conspiring against me. It was necessary, therefore, to kill him immediately. Now I have this *leutnant* locked in the dungeon and I wish to identify him." He strode toward the corridor. "You will all follow me, Excellencies."

Like sheep, the generals trailed after him. In less than five minutes, they were in the dungeon cell, staring down at the body of G-8 where Count Maulwurf had left him.

"He appears to be dead," one of the generals observed.

Count Maulwurf nodded.

"*Jawohl*, but he is not. He is merely unconscious. How soon he will regain consciousness, we do not know, nor are we particularly interested. I wish to know his identity."

Furtive glances passed among the generals, then one said, "I do not recognize him."

"Zoki, my servant," Count Maulwurf said, "advises me that he is an American."

"*Himmelkreuzdonnerwetter!*" another general exploded. "Could it be possible?"

Count Maulwurf's body grew suddenly rigid.

"Could what be possible?" he demanded.

"That this man before us could be the *verdammter kerl*, G-8."

Count Maulwurf's tiny eyes knit almost together in a scowl.

"*Und* who is G-8?" he demanded.

"*Bitte*," the general answered, "he is an American spy, the most dangerous spy on either side of the lines."

The Mole was still scowling.

"Of course," another general explained, "you have been in our African province and therefore you have not heard of him. He has, in one way or another, been instrumental in putting a stop to every great offensive we have planned in the last year or so."

"Are you sure of his identity?" Count Maulwurf demanded.

The generals crowded closer about G-8 as he lay stretched out at full length on the floor. They nodded their heads solemnly.

"*Jawohl*," they agreed, "he is the same size as the *verdammter kerl*."

Another hideous grin contorted the face of the Mole.

"Then we have apparently settled that fact," he said. "Come, *macht schnell*. I have other business. Today we start the machine digging to Paris."

Once more, the generals exchanged furtive glances, but none of them seemed to have courage to advise Count Maulwurf concerning the danger of permitting G-8 to live. They strode back up the stairs and into the den.

From a large drawer in the library table, Count Maulwurf produced a map. He spread it out before them.

"Now, *meine Herren*," he said, "this is a map of the entire area from the Front to Paris."

HE TRAILED his finger along a line at first straight, then curved, as it came to the point where the tunnel passed beneath the American front line trenches. Here the line turned sharply and ran parallel to the trenches for a distance of perhaps a quarter of a mile, then it swerved from the Yank trenches straight toward Paris.

"Already you have seen from your windows the demonstration of my tunnel monster," the Mole said. "Within an hour, the machine will be moving under its own power toward the Front. It will begin digging in shortly after noon. As it excavates the tunnel, it will automatically build concrete and steel walls. Within forty-eight hours, we shall have a tunnel to the Yank front trenches and also this lateral tunnel running directly under the trenches. Also within that time, we shall begin our digging operations along this last straight line from the American trenches to Paris. Of course, we shall need much more labor to aid in clearing the dirt away from the tunneling machine."

The Mole grinned horribly.

"With the special construction of the tunnel beneath the American trenches at the Fonteil sector," he continued, "it will be possible to cave in the American front line trench for a quarter of a mile. Our tunnel will be directly beneath it. That area of American trenches is packed with soldiers. Several thousand will drop into our hands, then the top of the tunnel will be closed again. These prisoners—the ones who live—will be forced by whips to carry on the hand work that is necessary."

Timidly, one of the generals asked a question. "*Und* at what time will the tunnel be opened so that the Americans in the front line trench will drop into it?"

"That will come," the Mole told him, "at the exact hour of noon, the day after tomorrow. At twelve o'clock, Excellency, we shall have ten thousand slaves."

He ended his speech in a rumble of laughter.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### ***Last Chance for Glory***

G-8 came to the slow and painful realization that he was alive. His heart was beating laboriously. Every pulsation of his heart seemed to increase the pain at the back of his head. Then, slowly, the pain subsided somewhat, and in his troubled thoughts he reviewed the chain of events leading to this moment. He recalled his terrific struggle and flight from Count Maulwurf. He remembered rushing into the bedroom, then finding the stairs that led up to the platform. He saw in his mind's eye the dagger hanging on the wall, then there had been the fight—a fight so brief that it could scarcely be called by that name.

He wondered who had struck him over the head from behind. Perhaps it had been the German operating the queer gun at the edge of the platform or, perhaps it had been someone else hiding there. Then, as he rushed Count Maulwurf, the end had come.

The blow on the head had not been so painful. In fact, G-8 had only sensed a sudden jar, a crashing sound in his ears, and then oblivion.

He wondered where the dagger was now, then he wondered where he was himself. He thought perhaps he might still be lying on the platform. But that couldn't be true, because it was pitch dark here. Of course, it might be night outside, but there would be stars, the heavens, clouds. A sudden panic seized him and his heart began pounding faster. Maybe that blow on the head had paralyzed his vision! He had heard of such things happening. He blinked his eyes shut and opened them again. Now he thought he could see something.

Then he realized that he must be in some underground room. If he were still on the platform, the air would be fresh and clean. The air that reached his nostrils now was stagnant and moldy.

He moved on the floor to sit up. But chains rattled at his sides as he raised his arms. He felt the iron bracelets about his wrists. One chain clanked. He managed to reach a sitting posture and one chain rattled eerily as he brought his hand up in front of his face. He moved it back and forth in front of his eyes. He could actually see it. His heart beats ceased their rapid tempo and he took a long breath.

He proceeded to rise to his feet, but he had to bend over because the chains attached to the iron bracelets were so short. He sat down again. Now he began to examine those iron rings about his

wrists. They were old and rusty, like the chains attached to them. At the back of the bracelet was a hinge. On the other side a padlock was fastened through two holes. The bracelet on his other wrist was the same.

He felt one of the locks. It seemed to be a simple little device, not the sort opened by a flat, saw-tooth edged key, but rather an old fashioned one.

He began fumbling about on the floor for a possible piece of wire, but he found none within the radius that the chains would permit him to move in. He managed to get his hands in his pockets to search for something that he could use to pick these locks, but there were no instruments small enough.

Now he felt of the lock on his left wrist. That was the same as the one on his right, but in examining this second lock, he found something else. It was his wrist watch. The buckle on the strap had a fairly long tongue. He might possibly use that.

Quickly he took off his wrist watch and began working at the lock. Again and again, he tried to pick that lock with the long, slim buckle tongue. Each time he seemed to be gaining on it, only to have the whole thing slip. Then suddenly he managed to free the lock. A moment later, he had it pried open.

His heart began pounding faster as he released his wrist. With the tongue of the buckle, he began working on the other lock. This ancient fastening device seemed rustier and older than the other.

His watch had stopped and he had no idea of time or even of the day that it might be. Probably his watch had been damaged when the bracelet had been snapped about his left wrist.

He worked on with that right padlock during what seemed hours of time. Once he thought he felt the lock give, but it was only the tongue of the buckle bending. Suddenly, with a rusty squeak, he unfastened the lock and pried it open. He slipped his right wrist out of the iron bracelet and rose to his feet. Fortunately, they had not shackled his legs. He could not see any better in the dungeon than at first.

Turning, he faced the wall and began groping his way along it. The stones were damp and

clammy cold. He moved on to the corner of the room and felt his way along that wall. Moving ahead, foot by foot, he stumbled against a pile of debris. He heard something click sharply as it rolled on the floor. Then something else was dislodged by his foot and thudded hollowly against the stone paving. It sounded like a human skull rolling off a pile of bones.

He managed to step over that pile and went on. Coming to another corner, he moved along the next wall. Surely there must be a door somewhere in this dungeon cell.

ALONG, in the center of the fourth wall, he found that door. It was built of solid oak. He put his shoulder against it and leaned heavily. The door yielded to his pressure no more than if he had charged a stone wall.

No sound came from outside. He had no way of telling whether a bolt of a lock of some kind was holding the other side of the door. There was no window in that door through which he could poke his arm and feel the outside of it. He drew back and lunged at the door, right shoulder first. There was only a dull thud. The door was hard enough to bruise his shoulder.

He felt grains of fine stone and plaster fall on his head and roll down his neck. He drew back and looked up, but everything was so dark that he could see nothing.

Again he charged the door, but this time his attention was centered on the falling particles that the jar released from above. Plaster and small pieces of stone showered down upon him. His hopes rose again. He raised his hands up to the stones above the door casing. He felt crumbling particles fall away from his fingertips.

His hand closed over a loose stone the size of his head. He began moving it back and forth and the loose plaster continued to shower down upon him. He worked at the stone with both hands, until at length, it came out of the wall.

He was beginning to make an opening, but in order to work at this it was necessary for him to stand on tip toe and stretch his arms at full length. If he could get something to stand on, his efforts would be much more successful.

He fumbled about the dungeon cell, then came up against a half-rotted wooden frame. He



could tell by running his hands over it that it had been a torture machine of some kind and was now rotted by the dampness. Laboriously, he dragged it toward the door.

When he finally got it in place, he climbed up on the rack. Standing upon it, he could work to much better advantage. He found other stones from which the plaster had fallen away and moved them back and forth until they were loose enough to draw out.

He had cleared out a hole almost a foot square over the door. That was not large enough for him to squeeze through. He continued his work.

Suddenly, some of the stones above settled, then he felt them falling. He darted back to keep from being crushed under that avalanche of rocks. His footing gave way and he sprawled on the floor. In crashing down, the stones made heavy, thunderous sounds. G-8 struggled to his feet and stood listening. If those rocks, crashing to the floor, had been heard by anyone in the castle, it would not take them long to come down and investigate.

There was only silence. He climbed back on the rack and felt the opening. Enough rocks had fallen away so that there was room for two men his size to crawl through.

He could hear the distinct tread of heavy feet. No time to lose now. He heaved his body up into the opening, wriggled through head first, then caught hold of the outside of the door casing and shifted so that he could drop on his feet in the corridor.

Far down that corridor, a dim light burned. The footsteps were growing louder. The owner of those feet was hurrying down the stairs into the dungeon chamber.

G-8 had just time enough to reach the door across the corridor and slip inside another dark room before the approaching one came into view at the other end of the passage. But the Master Spy had taken time to pick up a stone that was about twice the size of a baseball.

The door of this room that he had just entered was closed and there was no window in it so he could only trust to his ears. The man outside was running now. Suddenly he stopped in front of the dungeon cell.

"*Himmelkreuzdonnerwetter!*" he gutturalled.

It was not the voice of the Mole, but was probably some German guard, G-8 thought.

The latch clicked in the door behind which G-8 stood. The door was thrown open abruptly and a flashlight beam penetrated the darkness.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### ***The Mole Strikes***

G-8 still clutched tightly the rock that he had picked up. Noiselessly, he slipped behind the door as it opened. He waited, every muscle of his body tensed. He heard the German guard mumbling to himself, "The swine must be here, somewhere."

The guard took one step inside the doorway, but the door was still between them. The Master Spy didn't even dare to breathe.

The German took another short step inside the room. It was easy to see that he was moving with extreme caution against any surprise attack. He flashed his light beam about the room ahead of him. G-8 saw wine casks lined against the wall, racks of champagne bottles with their corked ends tipped down. This was the wine cellar.

The next half minute seemed like an eternity. If the guard turned the flashlight beam behind the door, G-8 would have to let go with the rock. But the Master Spy preferred to wait and make sure. If he should miss his first blow, he would receive a blast of lead.

He saw the revolver in the German's hand. The flashlight and the revolver were the only things that extended beyond the door. The gun was big with a barrel of ample length and large bore. One bullet from that gun would plunge G-8 into eternity.

The Master Spy found himself wondering momentarily where that revolver had come from. German guards and *offiziers* generally carried automatics. As he glanced at this gun in the light from the electric torch, it looked somewhat like a British service revolver. Perhaps this German had taken it from some captured British officer.

G-8 had no more time to think about the gun or where it came from. The German took another step into the room. G-8 crouched behind the door. At any moment now that flashlight beam would be

turned and shone behind the door, catching the Master Spy in its glare.

Tense, his muscles like tightly-coiled springs ready to be released, G-8 waited. One more step would place this German guard exactly where he wanted him. If that flashlight beam did not shine back of the door, it would be quite an easy matter to bash the fellow's brains out with that rock he clutched in his hand.

Now the step came. It was quick, and the movement placed the German guard well inside the open door. The German held the light in his left hand and the gun in his right. With a swift movement, he whirled around. If he were permitted to finish his turn, the light and the gun would be pointed at G-8 behind the door.

The Master Spy could wait no longer. His tense muscles drew up. His whole body shot forward. He realized that he could not reach the head of the German guard in time to knock him out in one blow. If he tried that now, the big revolver would go off in his stomach. Even if the bullet from the gun did not strike him, the bellowing roar of that big revolver would bring others running to the scene. Better a fight to the finish alone with this man than that.

So as G-8 leaped, he brought the rock down with all his might on the wrist of the gun hand. The German had just time to grunt, "*Himmel!*" when the blow struck. The revolver slipped from his grasp. His right hand went limp momentarily. He tried to raise the flashlight to strike G-8, but now the Master Spy swung up with his left fist for the point of the German's chin. He connected.

As the German fell back, he dropped his flashlight. It clattered to the floor, but remained lit. The guard, in falling backward, caught hold of G-8's right hand in which he held the rock. He had a grip of iron. Although he was half dazed from the blow, he managed to twist G-8's wrist so that he was forced to drop the rock. The German dragged the Master Spy with him to the floor.

As G-8 fell, the German was struggling to his feet again. G-8 leaped up. In the dim light reflected from the flashlight beam, they faced each other. With an angry growl, the German rushed G-8. It was easy to see that he possessed far less boxing skill than the Master Spy, but he had an overabundance of strength.

As the guard lunged like a mad bull, G-8 tried to step out of the way. It was obvious that the German was not trying to strike any telling blows with his fists, but was attempting to crush G-8 against the stone wall of the cellar.

Even while he was dancing away from him, G-8 got in two good blows, one to the chin and one to the solar plexus of the German. But now the German's fire seemed to be at fever heat. He came lunging on in spite of the pile driving thrusts. His heavy body carried G-8 up against the wall.

For a moment, the wind seemed to go out of G-8. He couldn't get his breath. The German was trying to get his throat, but G-8 had him tied up in a tight clinch. The Master Spy was being wrestled about and the rough stones of the wall were digging deeply into his back muscles.

G-8 crouched suddenly, shot in a short left, then a right to the German's middle. The guard grunted as some of the wind went out of him. The power of G-8's blows swept him back.

Panting for breath, G-8 rushed out into the center of the room once more. The German was coming at him again, fists doubled. It was apparent that he realized he had failed to crush G-8 against the stones and he was going to try to beat him with his fists until he could get a hold on his throat.

IT WAS lucky for G-8 that the flashlight continued to glow. From the reflection of the little light that was shed across the floor, he could see well enough to make his blows reach home and to guard against the German's furious onslaught.

So G-8 dived under a haymaker, sunk his left into the middle of the German, and threw a terrific right uppercut to the chin. That blow had not only all the speed he possessed, but the weight of his whole body behind it.

He felt the satisfactory jar to his fists. The shock of the perfectly-timed blow traveled up his arm with thrilling satisfaction. He knew he had connected squarely and there would be telling results.

The German's head snapped back and his whole body was thrown toward the stone wall as though he were catapulted by a giant spring. He crashed down on his back, bounced. His head hit the stone wall with terrific force, making a cracking sound as of a coconut being broken open on a

hard pavement. All the life went out of him. He went limp. Not a muscle moved.

G-8 dove for the flashlight and revolver. He turned the light upon the German. A trickle of blood began to flow from the back of his head where it had cracked against the stone wall. He was finished.

G-8 turned to the door that was still open. He was about to run out into the corridor, but when he was almost in the doorway, he stopped suddenly. From far up the corridor, toward the stairs down which the German guard had come, he heard the clatter of running feet, the rumble of angry voices. That retreat was already cut off. There were too many of them for G-8 to fight his way through. From the sounds that he heard, he judged the oncoming German guards had reached the bottom of the stairs that led into the dungeon chamber. They were coming along the passage.

He heard one say, "If the *verdammter kerl* has escaped, we must prevent him from leaving the castle."

"*Jawohl*," said another. "The giant machine is about to be moved to the Front. He must be kept from reaching it."

G-8 remembered the monster digging machine on the flat below the castle grounds. He had seen it from the platform above the chateau just before he had been knocked out in his fight with the Mole.

Gently the Master Spy closed the door into the wine cellar. There was no lock on it. Sooner or later he would be cornered here unless he could find another way out. The Germans were already running down the corridor toward his hiding place.

He swept the flashlight beam about the room. He thought, there must be some other means of entry into this wine cellar. Usually every wine cellar in a large chateau like this one had a stairs leading directly into the kitchen. But there were only the great wine casks and racks of champagne bottles. There was no place for him to hide.

Suddenly, in the dark recess of a far corner of the cellar, G-8's flashlight beam stopped on a narrow door, half hidden behind a great keg.

The Germans were already outside the door to the corridor. On tiptoe, the Master Spy hurried behind the cask to the narrow door in the corner. He tried the knob. It turned, but the door did not

open. It must be locked. Already he heard someone trying the latch of the corridor door.

A booming voice said, "Perhaps he is in here."

With all his might, G-8 yanked on the narrow door. It came open. Apparently it had been closed for a long time. It fitted very tightly to the casing. Because of the dampness of the cellar it had probably swollen to the point where it had stuck and therefore had not yielded to his first tug.

He dove through the opening, not knowing what lay beyond. He could hear the door opening at the other end of the wine cellar. Instinctively he had turned out his flashlight. He closed the narrow door gently behind him. He could hear men coming into the wine cellar from the corridor. Now he felt about with his feet and his hands. Half a dozen Germans were talking excitedly, and he listened. "*Himmelkreuzdonnerwetter!*" he heard one guttural. "Here is Wasesrlich."

G-8 knew they had found the dead body of the first guard. He began climbing the stairs without the aid of his light. He moved as rapidly as it was possible to move without making a sound. Below, in the wine cellar, he could hear men running around and talking in deep gutturals.

His groping hands touched a door at the top of the stairs. He opened it gingerly and peered through. He was, as he had guessed, in a kitchen. A cook with a white coat, apron, and hat was working at a long table in the center of the room. He was apparently alone.

G-8 seized the barrel of the revolver. As silently as a great cat stalking his prey, he crept into the kitchen and, step by step, slipped up behind the cook.

The cook half turned as the blow fell, but he didn't have a chance. The heavy butt of the service revolver crashed against his skull. He dropped to the floor but G-8 caught him as he fell. Hurriedly, he stripped off the apron, white coat, and hat, and put them on himself.

The door leading outside was in front of G-8. In spite of the fact that it was daylight, there would be guards about the place. He took a look at the face of the German cook to see if he could tell what sort of individual he was. He looked like a sour person. Perhaps that was just as well. G-8 could go on that basis.

A pan of scraps was on the table. G-8 slipped the flashlight into one pocket of his uniform and the big service revolver into its holster at the side. All these were hidden by the apron and the white coat. He pulled the cook's hat well down over his face, picked up the pan of scraps and stepped outside.

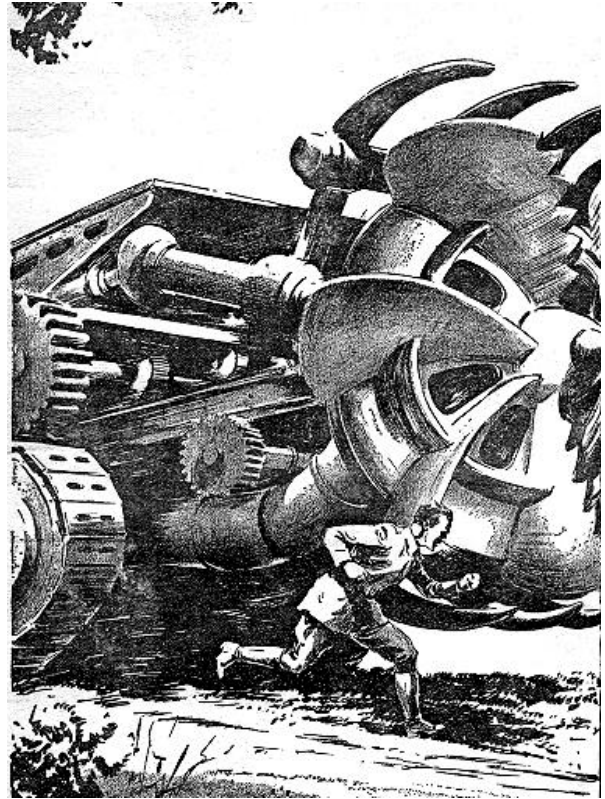
For a moment, he hesitated there. Then he saw the dim path across the lawn under the trees that led straight off into the woods. With head down and the pan of scraps under his arm, he struck off along this path.

OFF at the edge of the trees, he could see guards walking their beat. He kept his head down, his eyes on the path a few feet ahead of him. At the moment, neither of the nearest guards were within a hundred feet or so of the path where it crossed the guard line.

The nearest one called out to him, "What are we going to have for dinner, Herman?"

G-8 guttured something deep down in his throat about, "*Dummkopf!* You should wait and see!"

Then he passed on and the guard laughed. Apparently, G-8 had judged the cook correctly. He had based his decision, too, on the fact that the cook worked alone in the kitchen. With all that retinue to feed, it would ordinarily require two or three cooks, but this man must have liked to run things himself. Hence, he had done all the work himself rather than be bothered by assistants. And so once more, the Master Spy had made a correct guess in judging human nature.



He walked on into the woods. More than a hundred yards beyond the line that the guards occupied, he found a heap of scraps. Two young wild boars snorted and romped off into the woods at his approach.

He was long since out of the guards' sight, for he was deep in the woods. Quickly, he took off his white apron, coat, and hat and hid them with the scrap pan under some brush. That done, he struck off down the mountain with the woods to shield him.

From the direction of the castle on top of the mountain, he heard men shouting, "*Himmel!* Stop him! He has escaped! There was the far-off pounding of running feet above him. G-8 began to run. The area was still thickly wooded when he reached the flat below the mountain. He remembered well his glimpse of that giant tunneling machine. It had been on an open space below the castle surrounded by woods on the north, east, and west.

To the south, other fields joined it. On the east side of the field, the woods came within fifty or a

hundred feet of the monster machine. He headed for that spot, traveling as fast as he could run.

Men were coming from the castle behind him. He could hear them yelling and pounding through the woods. He broke out into the clearing and there, a hundred yards away, he saw the machine. It was already beginning to move up toward the Front. He walked boldly toward it. He could see two or three Germans about the machine, apparently in control of the tunneler's clattering movements. But all three of these men were situated so that G8 could not get a good shot at them.

Off to the north end of the field, he saw Germans breaking out in the open. He saw two or three more breaking out into the open on the west side. They were yelling as they came.

G-8 reached the machine, sprang up a narrow ladder to the platform. He guessed he had just time enough to finish off these three Germans, stop the machine, perhaps by throwing a monkey wrench into the works, and get away before the guards could reach him.

He took quick aim with his revolver. The gun bellowed twice and two Germans dropped with bullets in their heads.

The Master Spy heard a roar of rage from the other side of the machine. Expecting a shot from that quarter, he dropped flat on the platform. The third German leaped for him. G-8 pulled the trigger of his revolver while the German was in mid-air.

The Master Spy jerked his head around in time to see the form of the giant Mole. He heard the roar of an airplane engine, but had no time to look for it now. There beside him, towered Count Maulwurf, the great battle axe raised to strike.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### ***A Desperate Plan***

G-8 WAS at a distinct disadvantage due to the fact that he was lying flat on his belly. If he should try to leap up, it would mean that the axe would slash him in two that much sooner. He had, therefore, only one alternative. He must roll as rapidly as possible out from under that deadly blow.

He whirled his body toward the edge, away from Count Maulwurf.

The Mole roared out in rage as he brought down his axe. G-8 felt his body falling over the edge of the platform. As he fell, he pulled the trigger on his automatic. Even as he dropped through space toward the ground, he couldn't tell whether the bullet had struck the Mole or not. He landed on all fours.

A shot from the Germans who were running from the woods screamed over him, missing him by scant inches. G8 got up and began to run. He expected at any moment that the broad, cruel-bladed battle axe would come sailing through the air to sink into his neck. He shot a glance up at the edge of the platform. No one was there. His bullet had probably finished Count Maulwurf. Yet he couldn't be sure.

As he ran toward the front of the machine, G-8 took stock of the position. The three running German guards were well out on the field. More were coming behind them. G-8 figured that if he ran straight ahead of the machine it would keep that great mass of steel between him and his pursuers.

On the other hand, there was Count Maulwurf to consider if he were still alive.

Perhaps, after his failure to slice G8 in two with his axe, the Mole had ducked behind the machine so that G-8 could not get a shot at him.

There was no time to investigate, for the running Germans were almost upon him, firing madly. Bullets whistled through the air. They pinged against the great machine beside him and ricocheted off. They breathed in the ears of the Master Spy as they sped past.

G-8 had never run faster, but he couldn't move in a straight line, at least until he had the big machine between him and his pursuers. He must continue ducking and weaving in the hope of dodging the bullets. There was some consolation in the fact that men on the dead run could not shoot as straight as if they were crouched.

G-8 ducked around the forward end of the machine. Now he was safe from bullets for the moment. His boots fairly flew over the ground. He had gone perhaps a hundred yards ahead of the machine when bullets began crackling at him from the other side of the monster tunneler. No time to look back.

He was running off the field at an angle toward a point of trees that jutted out into the field two hundred yards ahead. He was running at a crazy zig-zag, as though he were carrying a football for a touchdown through a field of men who were waiting to tackle him.

Half way to the patch of woods, slugs began tearing past him and he knew that the Germans had reached the machine and were firing around it. He went dashing on. Only a lucky bullet could strike him. The Germans were trying long-range shooting with their pistols. It was some consolation to realize that there was no crackle of rifle fire. Breathlessly, G-8 reached the point of woods and plunged in among the trees.

There were three courses left to him here. He must, of course, remain in the cover of the woods. He could swerve to the right and follow the edge of the woods where it continued to skirt the open spaces. He could swerve to the left and take a chance of tricking the Germans by coming back like a fox on his own tracks. But there was the chance that the Germans might enter the woods at a closer point than he had taken.

In his running across the field, he had noticed that none of the German pursuers seemed particularly fleet-footed. Even running a zig-zag course, he had drawn away from them. So he decided to plunge straight ahead into the woods and put as much distance between himself and his pursuers as was possible. He did, however, slow his gait to a long, loping stride such as a cross country runner might use for long endurance.

The Master Spy had covered what he guessed to be a mile when he heard far-off shouts to the right. He knew by that that the telephones had already been busy. The Germans were trying to surround the area completely where he was known to be. The Master Spy continued loping along, veering to the west. Gradually, the shouts died away. He broke out of the woods finally and came upon a road leading generally north and south.

He had managed to brush his uniform off so that it appeared to be in fairly good shape. But one thing in his disguise was lacking. He was bare-headed. He needed an *offizier's* cap.

He walked rapidly along the road, heading north. After perhaps five minutes he heard a car coming behind. Looking back, he saw that it was a small staff car such as a low ranking *offizier* might

ride in. The car was empty except for the driver. Boldly, G-8, stepped out and hailed it. The driver drew up beside him and saluted.

"*Was ist, Herr Leutnant?*" he asked.

"I must reach the *offiziers'* club in the next town as soon as possible," G-8 told him. "It is of the utmost importance."

THE driver opened the door of the tonneau and G-8 climbed in. Swiftly the car picked up speed. G-8 had seen the outskirts of the town just ahead. They drove into the main street and the driver stopped before a big, old storehouse set in the middle of a block. G-8 stepped down to the sidewalk.

"Are you on duty now with your car?" he asked.

"I am just returning from delivering three *offiziers* to the Front," the driver told him. "Can I take you anywhere?"

"*Jawohl!*" G-8 said. "Wait for me here."

Two *offiziers*, a *leutnant* and a *Hauptmann*, were coming out of the club as G-8 entered. They glanced sharply at his bare head, but neither made any comment. The Master Spy entered a large hallway. He could hear the voices of *offiziers* inside. There would probably be a bar at the back or in a side room.

In the hall, there was a long rack of pegs nailed to the wall. On these pegs hung several hats. G-8 selected a *leutnant's* cap that matched his uniform, took it off the peg and carried it in his hand. He took time to saunter through the rooms of the lower floor as though he were looking for a friend.

"I wonder if they've caught the *verdammter kerl*," he heard one *offizier* leaning against the bar say.

"It won't be long," said another. "I understand they are surrounding the whole territory. He will have a hard time getting out."

"He is a clever fellow, that G-8," another offered.

The Master Spy went out into the hall again. He put the cap on his head at a jaunty angle and went out to the car. The driver noticed his cap and smiled.

"I see you have found your cap, *Herr Leutnant*," he observed.

"*Jawohl*," G-8 said without cracking a smile. He climbed into the car again. "Take me to staff headquarters at once."

"At Freiburg?" the driver asked.

"*Jawohl*."

The car spurred ahead.

Ever since G-8 had talked with General von Schmidt in the dark little room at the rear of the castle, he had been certain that there was natural antagonism in the German high command against this queer-shapen giant Count Maulwurf. Perhaps it was jealousy, and again, perhaps it was the inborn desire of men to fight their own battles without the help of this weird slave-manipulated tunnel machine to aid them.

He had tried to the best of his ability to stop the giant machine and had failed. He hadn't thought he could do a great deal to stop it, yet he had succeeded in holding it up momentarily. Now he was going to German staff headquarters at Freiburg. Before he died, General von Schmidt had solicited his help in trying to stop this mad machine of death. It was very possible that the high command at Freiburg might be glad to have his services.

G-8, in attacking the machine, had a brief chance to look over the monster mechanism. It had turned out to be so gigantic, so impregnable that he knew aerial bombs would not hinder its progress to any great extent. Certainly it was too huge for the average aerial bomb to disable. He must begin working against the earthworm-like monster from inside the German command.

It was late when the car drew up before a large, prepossessing stone building in Freiburg. The driver got down and opened the rear door. There were guards outside. They blocked G-8's passage as he started to enter.

"I wish to see the chief of staff," G-8 said.

"*Bitte*," the corporal of the guard said, "he is not here."

"Then I wish to see the next in command."

The guard led the way into the building and G-8 followed. In an outer room, he confronted a *Hauptmann* serving as contact *offizier*.

"I am here on a secret mission from Intelligence," G-8 said. "I must see your commanding *offizier* at once."

The *Hauptmann* scrutinized him.

"I will see if he has time to talk to you," he said. "What is your business?"

"*Bitte*," G-8 said patiently, "I have already told you that I am on a secret mission."

The *Hauptmann* hesitated, then shrugged.

"Very well," he said. "Wait here."

The *Hauptmann* disappeared into an inner office. He came out presently and nodded to G-8.

"General von Kronk will give you five minutes, no more," he announced. "He has instructed me to look over your papers."

"You must take my word," G-8 said. "I have no papers at the moment."

The *Hauptmann* blinked.

"*Aber*, you said you were from Intelligence."

"*Jawohl*," G-8 admitted, "but I still tell you I have no papers." He lowered his voice to a confidential tone. "You see, this matter is of such great importance that it was deemed best for me to carry no papers of identification."

With a quick move, the *Hauptmann* jerked G-8's big revolver out of its holster.

"In that case," he said, "I shall disarm you until you return."

The Master Spy had no alternative.

"Very well," he said.

HE stepped aside and G-8 passed into the private office of General von Kronk and closed the door behind him. The general appeared to be a nervous little man. He wore glasses on the bridge of his short, stubby nose. His hair was close-cropped and gray at the sides.

"I can only give you five minutes," he said.

The Master Spy clicked his heels in salute.

"*Jawohl*, Excellency," he said, "I shall be as brief as possible. Are you by any chance acquainted with General von Schmidt?"

General von Kronk blinked and nodded.

"I know of him," he said.

"I presume he is reputed to be a most patriotic general of the German army, *nicht wahr!*"

"He has a very good reputation," General von Kronk admitted, "if that's what you mean."

"It so happens," G-8 continued, "that I am from Intelligence. General von Schmidt, of his own accord, called me to meet him at Maulwurf Castle to discuss certain facts about this giant tunneling machine that Count Maulwurf has constructed."

General von Kronk frowned.

"What do you know about it?" he snapped.

"I know," G-8 said, "that General von Schmidt believed that the whole affair, the arrival of Count Maulwurf in this country from Africa and his development of this brutal machine, is an utter disgrace to the German army."

"*Himmelkreuzdonnerwetter!*" General von Kronk spat.

"To show you the high-handed methods of Count Maulwurf," G-8 went on, "General von Schmidt was shot as he stood talking to me."

"What?" von Kronk barked.

The Master Spy bowed.

"He was shot and killed at my feet by Count Maulwurf himself."

General von Kronk glared at G-8.

"Who the devil are you?" he demanded.

"Perhaps," the Master Spy said, "I should have introduced myself before. I am an American. I told you I came from Intelligence and that is correct. I am from American Intelligence. I am known as G-8."

## CHAPTER NINE

### *Trapped*

THE eyes of General von Kronk popped wide and his mouth dropped open.

"*Got in Himmel!*" he gasped.

He blinked through his glasses and took another look at the Master Spy. G-8 stood smiling down at him.

"Let me assure you, Excellency," he said, "my only intention in this call is to inform you of what is going on. It occurred to me that if General von Schmidt were patriotic enough to ask my

advice and help, that perhaps you and the general staff here at Freiburg might feel the same way."

General von Kronk seemed to be in a fog for a moment, then he nodded slowly as if his brain were clearing.

"*Jawohl!*" he said and again, "*Jawohl!* I believe what you say may be true. So His Excellency, General von Schmidt is dead." He clucked his tongue against his teeth. "That is too bad. Perhaps you would care to give me further information on the plan of this Count Maulwurf."

"I don't know a great deal more than I have already told you," G-8 answered.

General von Kronk said, "*Jawohl!*" again rather dazedly. Then, strangely enough, he hummed softly to himself. "Perhaps," he said, "I have something here that will interest you, *Herr* G-8."

Quite casually, he drew out the top drawer of his desk. G-8 waited expectantly. Suddenly, the general flashed up an ugly-looking Luger.

"This, *mein freund!*" he said. "should hold you for some time. Let me assure you that this gun is fully loaded. If you make one false move, I shall pull the trigger and put you where you belong."

The Master Spy smiled back at him.

"It appears, General von Kronk" he said, "that I have trusted the German high command a bit too far."

"It is quite possible," von Kronk grinned. You realize by now, of course, that General von Schmidt was acting on his own initiative. It so happens that we received General von Schmidt's report before he died. We of the general staff are in complete accord with Count Maulwurf and whatever he may plan to do that will bring the war to a swift and victorious end for the *Vaterland!*"

"I assume then," G-8 said with the smile still set on his face, "that I am to consider myself your prisoner."

"You were not so wise in coming here," General von Kronk sneered, "but I can see that you have sufficient Intelligence to recognize at least that point."

"Thank you," G-8 said. "I'm flattered, I'm sure."

General von Kronk was laughing at him now.

"It is indeed a pleasure, *mein freund!*" he said, "to have you as a guest. How long you shall stay, I



do not know. Probably until the firing squad can be organized to handle your situation properly."

G-8 could not by any means mistake his danger now. He was looking straight into the muzzle of that Luger. If he had his revolver, there might be a chance for him to shoot his way out. He might be able to duck to one side so that the bullet which would come would miss him, draw his own gun, and fire a fatal slug into the heart of General von Kronk. But he had no gun or any other weapon.

He was standing almost six feet away from the general's desk. There were only large chairs about the office and they were too far away to afford any protection. There was not even a paper weight on the table that he might seize and hurl at von Kronk.

At this very moment, General von Kronk was pushing a button in the top of his desk. That button would bring aid. The door opened behind G-8 and the *Hauptmann* came in from the outer office. He clicked his heels, took in the situation at once.

"*Bitte*," Excellency," he said, "I did my best to keep this fellow out. I went so far as to disarm him before I permitted him to enter."

The general chuckled.

"By letting this man into my office, *Herr Hauptmann*," he said, "you have done me a great favor. Do you know who he is?"

The *Hauptmann* looked at G-8 and shook his head.

"I am afraid I do not recognize him, Excellency."

"He admits that he is G8, the *verdammter kerl*."

Already the *Hauptmann* had his Luger in one hand and the big service revolver he had taken from G-8 in the other. They were both leveled at the Master Spy. With three guns trained on him, G-8 knew he was helpless. There was a touch of sarcasm in his voice as he spoke.

"When I subject myself again to the treachery of the German high command, Excellency, there will probably be snow and ice in the place where buzzards like you go after death."

"*Halt's Maul!*" the general snapped. "You must remember that this is war. Let me remind you of the old saying, 'All is fair in war'. Had you forgotten that?" "The creed that you and men like you follow

is very obvious," G-8 said coldly. "It needs no further explanation."

The general laughed as he got up out of his chair.

"We shall be delighted to spare you any possibility of making an error like this again, *mein lieber freund*."

They marched G-8 through the outer office into the corridor and down into the basement of the big stone building. There they pushed him into a cell and clanged the door on him.

Long hours passed while G-8 paced his cell like a caged beast but when it grew light outside, he had not yet found any possible means of escape.

## CHAPTER TEN

### Aces to Ashes

IT was morning, two days after Count Maulwurf had decreed the cave-in of the Yank trenches. Back at Le Bourget field, Nippy Weston and Bull Martin had found themselves living a very lazy existence. Nothing worth mentioning had happened at the Front.

During those two days and a night that G-8 had been gone in Germany, not a word had come back from him. From a physical standpoint, the Battle Aces had been having an easy life. They had eaten three meals a day, read, kidded each other, and listened continuously to the wireless for a chance message from the Master Spy. But their nerves were growing tense as the strain began to tell on them. Nippy and Bull and even Battle were becoming irritable.

That morning, Battle stood attentively by after he had served breakfast. He shifted from one foot to the other and walked about, occasionally glancing at G-8's vacant chair.

It was Bull Martin who broke the silence. Around a mouthful of nicely browned sausage, he yelled, "Holy Herring, Battle, will you stand still? You make me jumpy just to look at you."

Usually cheerful, Nippy Weston looked up from his plate of sausage.

"Why don't you practice a little self control, Bull?" he cracked.

"Self control, my eye!" the big fellow flung back at him. "I've got as much self control as anyone here. But Holy Herring, what's a guy going to think? If this day goes by without a word from G-8, I'll be nuts."

The terrier ace shrugged.

"Maybe you think you're the only one who likes G-8 and wants to hear from him."

"Certainly I'm not the only one. Anybody would like G-8 if they knew him as we know him. I'd like to meet the bird who doesn't like him."

The big left hand of Bull Martin clenched into an iron fist.

"Well, don't look at me, you big dumb ox," Nippy snapped.

"I'm just telling you I think as much of him as anybody else does."

"All right," Bull thundered. "Shut up then."

Battle bowed beside the big fellow.

"If I may say so, sir," he said, "I believe I have as much affection for the master as either of you. That is why, if I may say so, I have what you Americans call ants in the trousers this morning. I'm as jumpy as a kitten, sir."

"Oh, shut up!" Bull roared. "Can't we talk about anything else but G-8 being gone?"

"We're not going to talk about anything else until he's back," the terrier ace announced. "I've got an idea that we're going to do something about it before this day is out. In fact, last night, I got out the maps and looked things over and I've got it all planned."

"You've got it all planned!" Bull flared. "Holy Herring, who gave you the right to take over the command of this outfit in G-8's absence?"

The terrier ace shrugged his slim, strong shoulders.

"Well, I haven't noticed you bringing out any bright ideas. All you do is worry about whether you're going to get three mountain-size meals a day and whether G-8 is coming back. I'll bet you haven't thought up any way of getting him back. For all we know, he is probably being held prisoner over there somewhere in the Black Forest."

"Yeah," Bull nodded. "If he's just a prisoner, he's lucky."

"You're a lot of help," Nippy flung at him. "Why don't you say you expect to find him dead and be done with it? Get this straight, you big ox. G-8 has been in some of the toughest scrapes that a man ever got into. Up to the time that he left here, almost sixty hours ago, he was O. K. I'm going on the assumption that he's still alive, but he may be in trouble and need our help."

"O. K., O. K.," Bull grunted. "Go on. What's this smart idea you've got?"

"Well, here's the dope as I see it," Nippy explained. "Almost sixty hours ago, G-8 left to go to the Black Forest. He was going to meet a general at Maulwurf Castle. We both tried to tell him that it was probably a trap. We haven't heard a word from him since we last saw him. If it wasn't a trap and this general wanted G-8 to give him some help or expert advice, we would have heard from G-8 before. But we haven't, so he's probably over there in the dungeon of Maulwurf Castle, waiting for us to come and get him out. I say, Bull, that you and I ought to go over dressed as a couple of German *offiziers*."

"That suits me fine," Bull nodded. "If that general was lying and trapped G-8, I'll break him in two."

"Never mind what you're going to do to him," Nippy cracked. "Concentrate on what you're going to do to help G-8."

Battle bowed beside them.

"If I may be so bold, sir," he said, "might I suggest that you take me along, too? I might be of some help to you. I have been in the past, you know."

"You sure have been a lot of help," Nippy said. "You've saved our necks more than once. But on this job, I think it will be just as well if you stay here. We all may need your help before we get through."

"Sure," Bull nodded. "You stay here and be sort of an ace in a hole."

"An ace in a hole, sir?" Battle asked. "Oh, but I say, it looks more as if you aces are the ones who are going to get into the hole, sir."

"Holy Herring," Bull boomed, "won't you ever get anything straight, Battle? Did you ever play poker?"

Battle grinned sheepishly.

"Well—er—once, sir, but I found out much to my dismay that it would cost me entirely too much to learn the game, so I gave it up."

"You weren't so dumb," Nippy grinned.

"Yes, sir, I know, but what was this about the ace in the hole that I don't understand?" Battle asked.

"Well, you've played cards, haven't you?" Bull demanded.

"Oh, yes, sir. You mean cards with an ace and a king and all that sort of thing? Like bridge, whist, cribbage? Oh, quite."

"O. K.," Bull agreed. "You know there's four aces in a regular pack of cards."

"Yes, indeed, sir."

"Well," Bull went on, "if you're playing poker and you've got an ace in reserve, we say you've got an ace in the hole."

Battle chuckled.

"Oh, I say, I'm beginning to learn about poker already," he said. "It must be something like golf. Do you really have a hole? Fascinating game, eh, what?" "Of course you don't have a hole," Bull boomed. "You don't have a hole in golf, either. You have a cup."

Battle looked blank for a moment.

"Oh, but I say," he exploded, "I've heard of people making a hole in one in golf."

"That will hole you for a while," Nippy grinned. "Lay off this American slang lesson with Battle, will you? G-8's in trouble and we've got to get him out."

"Oh, but do you really know that he's in trouble?" Battle demanded.

"Of course we don't know for sure," Nippy chirped, "but we haven't heard from him in over two days and we're assuming that he's in trouble. Now look. Here's the way I've got it figured out."

The urgent ringing of the telephone bell interrupted Nippy's further conversation. He was out of his chair and bounding into the living room before Bull could lay down his fork. The general's voice crackled into Nippy's ear.

"Is G-8 there?"

"No, sir," Nippy answered. "He left almost sixty hours ago and we haven't heard a word from him since."

"Good heavens!" the general exclaimed anxiously. "What do you suppose happened to him?"

"That's what Bull and I can't figure out," Nippy said.

He heard the general take a long breath.

"Well," he said, "we'll have to do without him if he doesn't return in time. I have some important conferences on all during the morning and afternoon with military heads. We're charting a new drive to begin very shortly. I want you and Bull Martin in my office at Paris at three o'clock this afternoon to discuss these plans. If G-8 returns by that time, bring him with you."

"Yes, sir," Nippy said.

"Now understand," the general barked.

"This is important. I don't want any excuses, Weston. You and Martin be down here at three o'clock. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir," the terrier ace repeated.

He heard the general's receiver click, then he hung up his own. Bull was coming in from the dining room.

"Who was that?" he demanded.

"That," said Nippy, "was our very good friend, the general. He's got some drive or something up his sleeve and he wants us in his office at three o'clock this afternoon to talk it over."

BULL'S face flushed. "That would be our luck," he said. "Here we're planning to go after G-8, but instead we have to go down to Paris and listen in on some dry military tactics. Nuts! This fighting a war in somebody's office gets my goat."

"You heard your orders, you big ox," Nippy told him. "You'll be down there all right with me or the general will give you a headache that you won't get over for a long time."

For almost two hours, they sat about the living room. Again and again, they checked the radio. Occasionally, Bull went out on the tarmac. A steady downpour of rain was falling. He grumbled about it to himself and to Nippy each time he came back indoors.

The last time he came in, he found Nippy pacing the floor. This was an unusual procedure for the terrier ace. Usually he could laugh in the face of death and take everything in his stride. But G-8's

long absence was beginning to wear him down. He was getting worried. They both made a dash for the telephone as it rang in mid-morning. Nippy was first to reach it this time, too. A strange, far-off voice reached his ears.

"Hello! Hello! Is G-8 there?"

"Who is this speaking?" Nippy asked.

"This is Major Freidel," he heard the voice say. "I'm at the Front in the Fonteil sector."

"The Fonteil sector?" Nippy repeated.

"That's right," the major said. "There's something strange going on up here. Who are you and who is there with you?"

"I am Nippy Weston, one of G-8's assistants," the terrier ace said. "Bull Martin is here with me."

"All right," the major said. "I think you'd better look into this situation. Come up to headquarters on the Fonteil sector at once."

"It will take us almost two hours to drive there," Nippy told him.

"Can't you fly?" the major barked.

"Not with the ceiling at a hundred feet," the terrier ace cracked. "We'll be there as soon as we can."

He hung up the receiver and turned to Bull.

"Well, big boy," he said, "there's a dumb job for us. Some Major Freidel wants us to come up to the Fonteil sector. He didn't tell me what was going on, but said there was something queer."

Bull Martin was pulling on his raincoat.

"Well, come on, squirt," he said. "What are you waiting for?"

"I was just wondering if we had time to get up there and back to Paris by three o'clock. The general will carve our ears off if we aren't there on time. What time have you now, Bull? My watch is broken."

Bull Martin glanced at his wrist watch.

"It's almost ten o'clock," he said.

"That ought to give us time," Nippy said. "If we get up there before twelve o'clock, we can have about an hour to look over things and a couple of hours to get back to Paris by three. Come on."

He pulled on his raincoat. They went out into the storage end of the hangar, got into G-8's long, powerful roadster, and went speeding toward the Front.

They reached headquarters, at the Fonteil sector and asked for Major Freidel. The major met them with a troubled expression.

"It's getting louder," he said. "Come on up to the Front lines."

THROUGH communicating trenches, they wound their way up to the very front line trench of the Fonteil sector. There they stopped. There was the rumble of big guns from the artillery placements behind the lines. Intermittently came the crackle of machine gun fire. Occasionally, there was rifle fire. Yank troops lined the trenches.

"What are all the doughboys up here for?" Nippy asked.

"I know there are more than usual," the major said. "Some special order from G.H.Q. They may be planning a surprise attack. But forget that now."

"Hey," Bull demanded, "what's that funny sound I hear?"

"That's what I brought you up here for," the major explained. "There's something going on beneath our trenches."

"Jumping Jupiter, that's right," Nippy said. "I can feel vibration in the soles of my feet."

"That isn't all," the major told him. "There's a rumbling, clanking sound, too. Wait until there's a lull in the firing and you'll hear it."

Bull Martin sensed a strange, chilled feeling running up his spine. He stepped back a few paces.

"You can hear it over here, too," he said.

"Yes," the major said. "It was louder a while ago. It's quieted down."

Suddenly, the major's voice was more distinct and both Nippy and Bull sensed that there was a lull in the firing.

"There we are," Major Freidel said. "Now listen."

They could hear the sound plainly. It was, as the major had said, a roaring, clanking sound that seemed to fill the air as though they were standing in a great, hollow drum.

"It seems to come from over there," Nippy said, pointing toward the west.

The major nodded. "It was almost deafening when it passed under us," he said.

"Passed under you?" Bull demanded. "You mean that some machine is moving along underground?"

"That's what I brought you fellows up here to tell me. Do you know anything about it?"

Nippy started down the trench in a westerly direction.

"Come on," he said. "I want to hear this thing where it's louder. Maybe we can tell more about it."

With the terrier ace leading and Bull and the major following, they went tearing over the duck boards in the bottom of the trench.

As they ran, the sound under their feet grew louder. Nippy stopped.

"Jumping Jupiter," he cracked. "This is the craziest thing I ever heard of."

Bull's face was white.

"Yeah," he agreed. "Holy Herring, what do we do now?"

"I've got a hunch," Nippy said, turning to the major. "You'd better get your men back to the rear. They may be mining this whole area."

Quickly he turned to Bull and asked, "What time is it?"

The big fellow looked at his wrist watch quickly.

"It's exactly twelve noon," he said.

The words had no more than left his lips when there was a trembling of the earth beneath their feet. The duck boards began settling and the whole trench seemed suddenly to be enveloping them.

## **CHAPTER ELEVEN**

### ***Rifles in the Dawn***

IN HIS cell, the Master Spy was trying futilely to find some way of extricating himself. General von Kronk had mentioned the fact with unmistakable certainty that he would become a target for a firing squad. It was natural to assume that General von Kronk meant G-8 would be shot at dawn. Now the first gray light had already appeared.

At any moment, the guards might come to get him.

Yet the Master Spy didn't give up. Once more he went over his entire cell. The front of it consisted of heavy iron bars and a barred door with a double lock. He had already explored the possibilities of picking that lock with the tongue of his wrist strap buckle. But the lock had turned out to be too large for that. He had removed one of the springs from the cot and had bent it for the purpose of picking the lock. But that lock seemed impregnable.

When the *Hauptmann* and General von Kronk had placed him in the cell, he had caught a glimpse of the key. It was an old but very complicated affair. The side walls and the ceiling were of hard plaster and stone. The floor was of reinforced concrete. There was no chance of getting out through one of those walls or the ceiling.

There was, however, the one small window left to him. It was a double-hung style. You could raise the lower sash up and you could lower the upper sash for ventilation. There was no screen outside the window, but there was a series of bars which had been built in the form of an outer door over the window. It had been designed apparently by some fastidious architect who felt it would be more convenient if the window grating could be swung back in order to wash the window panes from the outside of the building. This window grating was held in place by a large and solid old lock. G-8 had already tried to unfasten it by a picking process. He had used first the tongue of his wrist watch strap buckle, then later he had tried the bent piece of bed spring. But both of those things had failed.

Now, after another complete round of his cell, he went back to his window again. He had begun to wonder suddenly just how that back of the grating gate was fastened to the stone wall outside. Up to now, he had naturally assumed that the hinges were held by stout iron rivets.

Since this appeared the only possible chance left to him, he determined to investigate. He ran one hand out through the open window and felt along the wall until he came to the lower hinge. His heart leaped as he found that the lower hinge was held in place, not by rivets, but by heavy bolts.

There were three bolts holding the lower hinge and all three of them were tight. He tried to move each of them in turn with his fingers. He felt of the

ends of the bolts that protruded through the holes in the nuts.

Next he lowered the upper sash and, extending his hand through the bars, felt the upper hinge. The first nut he touched was tight. He groped about, feeling for the next one. His heart began pounding swiftly. Perhaps some prisoner who had been confined here in the past had fooled with the nut until he had managed to get it loose. But apparently the rest had defied his efforts.

Now G-8's fingers touched the third nut of the upper hinge. That nut was loose. It yielded grudgingly when his fingers put pressure on it. Swiftly, the Master Spy unscrewed it.

Now there were only four nuts to unfasten before he could liberate himself, but they were rusted hunks of iron that would come off with difficulty, even though he had a wrench. However, he must have a try at them. He began looking about the cell for something he could use as a wrench. There was the iron cot with its braces. Feverishly, he began to remove one of the hinged braces from the cot.

He got it off and turned to the window once more. Clamping the brace over the one remaining nut of the top hinge, like a reverse pair of pliers, he exerted his strength upon it. The improvised wrench slipped off the nut. He managed to get it back on again.

Slowly, grudgingly, the nut yielded. It began to turn. He twisted harder. It was coming loose!

SUDDENLY, there at the window, G-8 froze. He heard a clatter of feet in the corridor. He turned quickly away from the window and hid the brace under the thin mattress. Then he turned back toward the window and stood staring out.

He didn't even turn when the guards stopped in front of his cell. They were obviously coming to take him before a firing squad. He resolved to put up a good fight after they got him out of the cell. There might be a bare possibility of escape from two guards.

One of the guards spoke and G-8 turned from the window.

"See, what did I tell you, Otto," the guard said. "He is still here."

The Master Spy pretended to look frightened.

"Here?" he repeated. "*Ach du Lieber*, did you think I would be anywhere else but here? How could I get out?"

"You see Otto," the same guard said, "even this clever G-8 cannot escape from our cell. I told you he was all right."

Otto shrugged his blocky shoulders,

"*Jawohl!*," he said. "I guess you're right."

Then Otto spoke to G-8.

"You'll have only a few minutes to say your prayers," he announced, "then we'll be back with more guards to lead you out to your execution."

"It's nice of you to tell me," G-8 said. "Now I need not wonder how much longer I will live."

"Don't mention it," laughed the guard.

The Master Spy watched them march away down the corridor. He couldn't wait to get back to his task. When they had gone, he snatched up his hinge brace from under the cot mattress, leaped to the window, and went to work again. He removed the last nut from the top hinge.

He began working desperately at the three nuts that held the bottom hinge. In the desperate clamp of his crude wrench, the first two nuts started fairly easily. He managed to get them off without difficulty, but the last one seemed to defy all his effort. Again and again, he clamped the nut between his hinged brace and turned, but each time, his wrench only slipped around the nut and refused to hold.

Suddenly, he realized he had been working in a spurt of panic. He forced himself to calmness and clamped the hinged brace about the nut for another try.

He made sure that the brace was in place, then he clamped on it with both hands, held it tight, and turned slowly. Suddenly, the brace moved. The nut seemed to be coming with it. He twisted it farther. Yes, the nut was turning. It squeaked eerily as it came loose. Again he clamped his wrench and turned. The nut weakened and yielded.

He was beginning to unscrew it with his fingers when he heard the tread of heavy boots in the corridor. Savagely, he spun that nut off its bolt. The nut clattered to the pavement below.

G-8 threw up both window sashes to the top and pushed with all his might on the grating. The grating fell back, turning on the padlock hasp. He

glanced down the hall in front of his cell. He could hear guards coming—but as yet they had not turned into the main corridor, from where they could see him. He must hurry.

He realized that he must work quickly, surely. He dropped out of the window, clung to the ledge with both hands. Then he hung with one hand, for a moment, and swung the grating shut again until the hinges were back over their bolts. This would keep the guards guessing for some little time as to how he had escaped.

HE HEARD the guards turn into the corridor in front of his cell, and at that moment he dropped to the pavement, a matter of ten feet below the window. He landed lightly and ran around to the side of the building. He saw a guard walk past the front of the building. Shrubbery grew close to the side of the stone wall, and there he would hide. When the alarm was given, all the Germans in and about the building would figure that he had gotten as far away as possible.

He crouched low in the shrubbery, and the leafy branches covered him so thickly that he could scarcely peer out through them. There he remained, motionless.

From the open window just above him, he heard voices. General von Kronk was speaking.

"These are your papers of identification, *Herr Oberst*," he said. "You will proceed to the entrance of the tunnel near the ruined town of Hochmeister. You will become the representative of staff headquarters here, in contact with Count Maulwurf below ground."

"*Jawohl*, Excellency," a deep, guttural voice answered.

A moment later, G-8 heard a cry and the sound of running feet. "He has escaped!" someone yelled. "The *verdammter kerl* has escaped! G-8 has escaped!" There was instant action about the place, and men came running from every direction.

"Which way did he go?" a commanding voice barked.

"I saw him from the window of his cell. He was going off to the east, making for the edge of town."

G-8 heard the voice of General von Kronk through the window above order, "After him, men! He must be recaptured at all costs! *Macht schnell!*"

G-8 crouched lower in his hiding place and waited. Guards from the front of the building came running past, some racing by within a couple of paces. They were all headed for the rear of the building. That section of Freiburg would certainly receive a thorough search. G-8 smiled to himself as they went by.

But now the Master Spy was not so much concerned with his escape and his own safety as with what he had overheard through the open window of General von Kronk's office. An *oberst*, a German colonel, was being dispatched immediately to Hochmeister with papers of identification. Somehow, G-8 must waylay him; must, if possible, change places with him.

It was getting quiet in his immediate vicinity. All the guards had gone off to the east side of town to search for the escaped Master Spy.

G-8 raised from his crouched position and peered out through the leafy branches of his shelter. There was no one in sight. He walked calmly along the side of the building, keeping close to it so that he would not be spotted from any of the windows. When he reached the sidewalk, he peered around at the front entrance. There was no one about.

There was a large staff car directly in front of the building, a driver sitting at the wheel. He was the only person that G-8 could see at the moment. Behind that staff car were other vehicles—two light cars, then a fairly large, powerful car. None of them were occupied.

Casually, G-8 stepped out on the sidewalk and strode at a jaunty gait down toward the largest car. He slid in behind the wheel as though he had owned that car for years.

There was no key in the lock, but he knew the make quite well, and his knowledge of the car's electrical equipment came to his rescue. He got out, raised the hood, and in a moment had shorted the electrical wiring so that the ignition was turned on. He lowered the hood and got back behind the wheel.

The motor purred as soon as he stepped on the starter and he let it idle slowly. In less than two minutes, an *offizier* came out of staff headquarters. G-8 could see that he was a German *oberst*. He was a man of medium build and strode across the sidewalk with an air of importance.

The driver of the big staff car leaped to the curb and opened the door for him. The *oberst* got into the rear seat, and as the driver started the engine, the car moved away from the curb.

G-8 let that car gain about a block, then he, too, pulled out from the curb and followed it.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### *Hell's Workshop*

AT THE moment that Nippy and Bull felt the ground giving way under their feet, the noise of the great tunneling machine was loud in their ears. Running along the trench, they had come close to where it tunneled beneath them. Now, with the bottom of the trench caving in, men everywhere were struggling to get to higher ground. The air was filled with yells and shouts. There were cries of terror and bellowing blasts of rage like the one Bull Martin let go.

At first, the earth crumbled slowly—slow enough to permit some of the men to leap to the rifle step at the front of the trench. But even that was only momentary security. Now the whole bottom of the trench was giving way.

Nippy Weston found himself shooting down, the earth caving in all about him. Bull Martin grabbed hold of him and tried to shove him up out of the danger, but it only made Bull's heavy body drop that much faster. Earth slid in over them, muddy and slimy.

The terrier ace's first thought was that he had been smothered. Therefore, he gave up all hope of trying to save himself from the fall. He clapped both hands over his mouth and nose and tried to keep his eyes free. He had the sensation of dropping straight down through space. How far he fell, he did not know, but when he struck the ground, his legs collapsed and he landed in a heap. A heavy body landed half on top of him.

Then he was almost completely smothered with the debris. He kept one hand over his nose and mouth and tried to fight his way up through the mud and dirt that had fallen on him. He opened one eye in an effort to squint about. He realized that he was in an underground chamber of some kind so

full of dust and dirt that he could hardly see. He only knew that his legs were still in the debris but that the rest of his body was, except for the dust, free.

He heard a grating sound before him, then a noise as of a great metal door being shut. He heard those same clanking sounds off in the distance, and he wondered what they meant. Then his brain began working out the answer. Realizing that he was in an underground chamber or tunnel, it was quite easy to understand that the clanking roar they had heard underground had come from some gigantic machine—which had dug this tunnel. The tunnel had apparently undermined the bottom of the Yank front line trench. But still Nippy could not figure out the answer to those clanking, slamming sounds, as of doors being shut.

The air had begun to clear a little, and Nippy managed to suck some of it into his lungs—his hands over his mouth and nose to keep out as much dust as possible. But even as he breathed, he could feel the dirt entering his throat.

He heard spasmodic coughing start up. He saw Bull Martin heave his big carcass up out of the debris, hacking and coughing as he tried to clear out his eyes.

Even in the midst of this ghastly situation Nippy Weston could not keep back a laugh. Bull looked so funny standing there, clawing at his face. But the laughter only made Nippy begin to cough as the dust took effect in his lungs. When he finished that first fit of coughing, he laughed at Bull again.

"Why didn't you keep your hands over your face you big ox," Nippy chuckled, "instead of trying to grab for a sky hook all the way down?"

Bull sputtered and choked, and between the hacking gasps he managed to say, "Shut up, squirt!"

Then the big fellow managed to get one eye clear and squinted at the terrier ace. All of which made Nippy Weston laugh all the harder.

"What happened?" Bull growled. "Where are we?"

Nippy was blinking and glancing about. "Looks like we're in a tunnel," he said. "It's shaped like a big pipe, with walls reinforced with steel and concrete."



Bull got something in his one open eye and closed it again. "What are you trying to do, squirt, kid somebody?" he boomed.

"Not this time," Nippy cracked. "Get your peepers open and take a look around and see for yourself."

Bull continued to snort, cough, and dig at his eyes. He managed to get both of them open this time and he glared through the dust at the little terrier ace. "There," he said, "that's better." He grinned for the first time. "Boy," he boomed, "are you dirty!"

"You don't look like you had just come out of a Saturday night tub yourself," Nippy flung back at him. "Take a look up above—the way we came in—and you'll see where we don't get out."

Bull looked up at the top of the tunnel. Great, sliding steel doors that had apparently been opened to let the front line trench cave in had now shut again.

THEY stared about the interior of the tunnel. Everywhere, men were floundering about, hacking and coughing and scraping the mud from their faces.

Dim lights burned along the sides of the tunnel, and they could see quite far in either direction. Far down the tunnel, they could make out masked men in dust-covered gray uniforms moving toward them. There were a half dozen, and they carried whips in their belts, and each had a hand machine gun.

They heard one gun rattle out in a short burst of five or six shots, and a nearby khaki figure fell over.

"Why, the dirty buzzards!" Bull growled. "What's the idea?"

Nippy grabbed him by the arm. "Listen, Bull," he said, deadly serious now, "this is one time when you've got to hang onto yourself."

"Hang onto my eye!" Bull growled. "What do those Heinies think they're going to do, trap us down here, then shoot us?"

"They won't clean out everybody," Nippy cracked, "You can be sure of that. Shut up, now. Here they come."

The six Germans with their gas masks, machine guns, and great whips came striding on.

They were still a hundred feet away, stopping here and there to give orders to the doughboys as they passed them.

Suddenly, Bull crouched. Nippy saw Major Freidel struggling in the debris. He was coughing and hacking and trying his best to get up. Bull lifted him to his feet but the major tottered, slipped, and fell again.

"I guess it's no use," he managed to get out through the dirt in his mouth. "I seem to have broken my leg."

The six Germans were bearing down on them. They stopped at each doughboy and one of them guttured a command in English. After a few minutes, the Germans reached the spot where the major sat on a heap of debris beside Nippy and Bull.

"Get up!" the German barked.

"I've broken my leg," the major said.

One of the other Germans stepped forward, pointed his machine gun at the head of the major, but the German who spoke English knocked it up.

"*Nein*," he said. "Would you shoot a man because he has a broken leg?"

The German brute shrugged. "He is no good to us here."

"*Dummkopf!*" the other German said. He turned to Nippy and Bull. "Carry him back along the trench. You will meet others of the German army. Turn him over to them for hospitalization."

The Battle Aces turned to lift the major, but the German stopped them.

"*Eine minute, bitte*," he said. "You see the way your comrades are dressed?"

Nippy and Bull both looked down the tunnel. They could see that all of the captured Yanks were stripping off their clothes so that they were bare above the waist.

"Take off your coats and undershirts and throw them on the floor."

Bull Martin stood rigid for a moment, facing those six machine guns, and Nippy Weston stared up into his face. That iron jaw was set firmly. He nudged his big pal,

"Come on, Bull," he said. "Don't be a *dummkopf*." Nippy already had his coat off. "Come on. We've got to get the major back for medical treatment."

Bull grumbled something under his breath and proceeded to strip to the waist. The German who spoke English grinned at Nippy.

"I can see, *mein freund*," he said, "that you have good sense. You will be glad later on, when the work begins, that you wear no clothes above the waist. You will be much more comfortable that way."

He grinned, then he and his five companions passed on.

Bare to the waist, Nippy and Bull picked up the major and began lugging him back. After they had traveled perhaps an eighth of a mile, the tunnel swept in a wide turn.

"This tunnel must start back of the German lines," Nippy said.

"Yeah," Bull agreed.

"It's apparent," the terrier ace went on, "that this tunneling machine dug under our front line trench for the purpose of caving it in and trapping all of us down here."

"They won't catch any of our men again," Bull barked. "Next time anyone hears the tunneling machine going under, they'll move back so they won't be trapped when the cave-in comes."

THEY were passing hundreds of Yank troops standing along the side, waiting for further orders. All of them were stripped to the waist. Some of them looked frightened; others looked ugly.

They marched for a long distance down the lateral tunnel that led toward the north. Then they began to see the Yanks in action. Men with wheel barrows were trundling dirt toward the rear. Germans placed at intervals had their long whips ready.

Once, when a slim young Yank set down his wheel barrow to rest, the whip lash of his guard cracked across his back and raised a welt. Bull Martin almost stopped.

"Why, the dirty—" he began.

"Bull!" Nippy cracked. "Shut up." Then, under his breath, he added, "For the love of Mike, don't get the idea you can lick the whole German army down here with your bare fists."

"I'd give ten years of my life for just one sock at that Heinie," Bull growled.

A moment later, they passed the same German with his whip. "Come on, get going!" he ordered.

He grinned with fiendish delight as he raised his lash. *Crack!* It came down on Nippy's back. The pain of that lash almost paralyzed the terrier ace for a moment, but he tried not to pay any attention to it and went trudging on.

Almost two miles from the turn in the tunnel, they came upon a group of Germans standing at one side. They seemed to be the commanders here. One of them, Nippy noticed, was a great, powerfully built brute with a peculiar body. His shoulders were not so broad, but his chest was thick and heavy. He had a small, flat topped head and pig eyes. He was talking to the others in the group.

As he passed, Nippy heard him mumble, "I'm glad to know the *verdammter kerl* has been recaptured. So he is held at staff headquarters at Freiburg, eh? *Gut*. He will not escape from there."

One of the generals laughed. "He will not escape for the simple reason that he has probably been shot already."

The hearts of Nippy Weston and Bull Martin began pounding at double time. They couldn't mention the subject now, but each one realized his duty. They must get to staff headquarters at Freiburg and save their chief.

They plodded along past the same endless rows of wheel barrows. A long line of Yank troops stripped to the waist were wheeling dirt to the rear, and another line was coming up with their empty barrows. The German guards stood with their long whips, using them occasionally on the Yanks' bare backs.

The dust inside the tunnel was suffocating at some points, and there was a continual din of hacking and coughing. Up ahead, a big fellow wheeled his load of dirt and a rather small but stocky guard plied his whip to the big fellow's back, as if he had always wanted to be able to beat up a big man. The big Yank suddenly turned on the German, and the guard drew his Luger as the Yank lunged at him. The Luger blast echoed through the tunnel. Two shots exploded and the Yank fell dead at the guard's feet.

"Hang on, big boy," Nippy muttered. "You see what you get down here for losing your temper."

Bull didn't answer, nor did he even glance at the murderous guard as they carried the major past him. He didn't dare look at him for fear of letting go.

The tunnel began sloping upward.

"We'll be out of here before long and have you in a hospital, Major," Bull said.

Up ahead, they could see daylight through the opening in the tunnel. When they had carried the major to the entrance, guards stopped them.

One of them asked in English, "What have you got there?"

"A man with a broken leg," Nippy answered. "We were ordered to carry him to an ambulance."

The guard pointed to an ambulance a hundred feet from the entrance.

"Over there," he said. "Remember, you will be watched closely. One false move and you will be shot dead."

The Battle Aces started toward the ambulance with their burden. Men bared to the waist, many of them with welts across their backs, were wheeling the dirt upon a ramp, where they dumped it into trucks which would haul it away to the rear.

As they carried the major on toward the ambulance, Bull Martin said in a low voice, "Hey, Nip, I've got an idea."

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### *Oberst von Siegel*

AFTER G-8 saw the *Oberst* step into a car and drive away, he waited until the *Oberst's* car had gained about a block on him, then he swung out from the curb. Now the first auto was speeding through town toward the village of Hochmeister.

G-8 knew that Hochmeister would be a battered village, for it was located very near the Front. He knew something of the road that led to it. He remembered it was comparatively narrow, and that here and there were narrow bridges with concrete parapets on either side. Already he had his immediate plans in fairly good order.

The *Oberst's* car sped through the streets of Freiburg and on toward the suburbs. As long as G-8 was in the traffic, he followed quite closely, but

now that he was breaking out into the open highway, he fell back.

Another big staff car drove swiftly past G8, and he saw two generals in the rear seat. They took no notice of the Master Spy as they passed. G-8 speeded up behind them until they went sweeping by the *Oberst's* car. Then G-8 maintained a steady speed, with perhaps a quarter of a mile separating him from the car ahead.

Here in the Black Forest, the country was mountainous and the road wound and twisted considerably. G-8 was forced, in some places, to hang pretty close to the *Oberst's* car so as not to lose it. But when they got out of the mountains, the highway straightened and the first car quickened its speed.

G-8 speeded up as well. He was coming to the section that he knew, with its small bridges. They passed one, then another, and finally made a turn in the road and came out upon a straighter section.

Far down the road, G-8 could see the low concrete sides of a small bridge. Instantly, he jammed the foot accelerator to the floor and his car shot ahead. He began gaining rapidly on the *Oberst's* car.

The bridge itself was narrow. There would be room for two cars to pass if the drivers were very careful. But G-8 had no intention of being careful here. He realized that he must time his act to perfection. The accident that he was about to cause must be neatly done.

His car was within fifty feet of the other, and G-8 raced on and blew to pass. It was a dangerous spot. There was just room to pass and cut in ahead before they should reach that narrow bridge. Holding the wheel tightly with both hands, the Master Spy swept along even with the *Oberst's* car. He saw the man in the back seat and the driver shoot a glance in his direction.

The bridge was right there ahead of him, practically in his lap. That stout reinforced concrete parapet on the right side would do the trick. The *Oberst's* car could not possibly avoid hitting it.

Still traveling at high speed and almost completely past the *Oberst's* car, G-8 jerked the wheel to the right. He heard the squeal of brakes as the *Oberst's* chauffeur tried to stop.

The Master Spy held his position. He felt the right rear fender on his car crumple as the bumper of the *Oberst's* car crashed into it. G8's brakes were on, too. He was forcing the *Oberst's* car into the concrete rail at the side, and he heard a shout from the driver.

"Get out of the way, you *dummkopf!*"

Then the crash came and G8 released the brakes on his car and tramped down on the accelerator. He shot across the bridge, pulled off to the side of the road, and stopped. The *Oberst's* car had crashed into the parapet, all right. It had sheered off the left wheel of the car, had driven the engine back. Then the car itself had crashed down the incline. It tipped over at the edge of the stream.

Both the driver and the *Oberst* were lying unconscious. The driver was safe enough, so G8 stretched him out on his back on the grass of the deep ditch and hurriedly dragged the dead *Oberst* off into the brush.

There G-8 worked with lightning speed. His first act was to quickly remove the *Oberst's* clothes. He exchanged them for the uniform he wore. Then, from where some adhesive plaster held it in place on his body, he drew out the tiny make-up kit and began working over his face. The *Oberst's* face was not too difficult to imitate. He had fairly high cheekbones and a long, sharp nose. G-8 worked furiously, for he knew that if someone came along that road, they would stop at sight of the accident. He finished his job in double quick time and went back to the overturned car.

THE driver had not moved from where G-8 had left him. For one brief moment, he considered killing this chauffeur, but it had always been against the Master Spy's policy to take a life unnecessarily.

Then, too, he heard a car coming. There in the ditch beside the overturned staff car, he heard the squeal of brakes. A military car with a lone driver stopped on the road above.

"Was *ist?*" he called. "An accident?"

"*Jawohl,*" G-8 answered. "I was just looking it over. This car must have hit the side of the bridge and run off the road."

"Is anyone hurt?" the other asked.

"Just the driver," G-8 told him. "I will take him to a hospital."

"Very good," the German above him nodded. "Then I will drive on."

The Master Spy looked down at the still unconscious driver. He knelt and felt of his pulse. There seemed to be no heart action at all. G-8 left him lying there on the grass and began searching the car. He found a briefcase stuffed with German army blank forms, but there were no papers of identification. However, he took the briefcase under his arm.

As he hurried to his car, he began going through the pockets of the *Oberst's* uniform. In the inside pocket, he found the identification papers. They stated that the bearer, *Oberst* von Siegel, was being sent to Hochmeister as technical adviser for the underground maneuvers.

G-8 put the papers back in his pocket and got into the car. Hochmeister was still a long way off. He drove rapidly toward his objective. From now on he would be *Oberst* von Siegel.

FOR the first hour or more, there was little activity along the highway toward Hochmeister, but later on, he saw plenty of traffic. There were trucks along the roads, and troop transports and staff cars. Still nearer the Front, he passed trucks that were carrying dirt, and others traveling in the same direction as himself, empty or with light loads of ammunition.

Now and again, G-8 was forced to stop his car because of traffic tie-ups. At length, looking far ahead, he could see a platform where trucks were being loaded. The whole area was screened with camouflaged wire, through which branches of trees protruded. Under this, G-8 saw men with wheel barrows rolling their loads of dirt up onto a ramp and dropping the dirt into trucks. A circle of armed guards stood watching them, bayonets fixed.

When he came to a point in that circle, G-8 was stopped. He showed his credentials, and the guard who examined them nodded.

"*Bitte, Herr Oberst,*" he said, "wait here."

G-8 saw him go into a little building at the right under the camouflaged wire. Long minutes passed and the guard did not reappear. Probably he was waiting to see his commanding *offizier*. At last, he came back.

"Run your car over there," he said, pointing to a muddy flat at the side of the road. "*Bitte*, follow me, *Herr Oberst*."

G-8 followed him to the little headquarters shack. Inside, he faced a *leutnant*, quite a young man. He appeared to be scarcely more than a boy of sixteen, but of course he was older than that. He accepted the Master Spy's papers and scrutinized them carefully. Finally, he handed them back.

"They seem to be all in good order," he said.

A telephone bell jangled and the *leutnant* reached to answer it. "*Bitte, Herr Oberst*," he apologized to G-8.

He clamped the earphones close to his head and G-8 could not hear what was said from the other end of the line.

He tensed as the *leutnant* said, "*Jawohl?* He is here now."

The *leutnant* listened for a long time, then he said, "*Jawohl*, your Excellency," and hung up the receiver.

He turned to G-8. There was a tense expression on the *leutnant's* youthful face. "May I see your papers again, *Herr Oberst?*"

G-8 reached for his papers, then suddenly he saw a swift movement on the part of the *leutnant*. The man's hand was diving for the Luger butt at his side.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### *Twenty Lashes*

NIPPY WESTON and Bull Martin had been carrying Major Freidel to the ambulance outside the tunnel entrance. When they were midway between the guards and the ambulance, Bull Martin had hissed, "I've got an idea!" There were no Germans closer than fifty feet at the moment.

"O.K.," Nippy mumbled. "What is it?"

"We'll get in that ambulance and beat it," Bull whispered.

"Sounds like a swell idea," the terrier ace admitted. He nodded toward the ambulance. "Look. The driver is standing off to the side."

"Sure," Bull nodded, "and take a look at something else. The front of the little compartment opens right onto the driver's seat. We'll pull the major on a stretcher, then you and I will hop right on through to the front seat. I'll grab the wheel and we'll show these Heinies how an ambulance should be driven."

"Swell," Nippy hissed. They trudged on, carrying the major. "I wish my leg wasn't broken," he said, "so I could give you some help. You fellows had better just forget about me and get away as fast as you can."

Big Bull Martin grinned at the major. "Why forget about you?" he asked in a low voice. "You can ride right along with us. Maybe all three of us can escape."

"I'm afraid I'll be so much dead wood on your hands," the major said. "You'd better skip me."

"Not on your life," Bull cracked. "Listen. Darkness is only four or five hours ahead of us. If we can get someplace where we can hide until it's dark, then we can sneak over to the nearest airdrome, swipe a plane, load you on board, and head for home."

"Hey," Nippy cracked, "what about G-8? Don't forget we've got to save him."

"Yeah," Bull growled bitterly, "if he hasn't been shot."

"Nuts," Nippy cracked. "We've got to go on the assumption that he *hasn't*. He's gotten out of tighter spots than this. We've got to get into German uniforms and reach Freiburg as soon as we can."

"Just as I advised before," the major said, "don't bother about me. I may as well spend the next couple of months in a German hospital. With this broken leg of mine, I wouldn't be any good to my own forces."

"We'll keep you with us as long as we can," Nippy promised.

"Right," the major nodded, "but get G-8. He's more important to our cause than a thousand like me."

They were at the rear of the ambulance now.

"Quick!" Nippy hissed. "Here comes the driver. Let's get the major in and hop up to the front seat."

"Right," Bull answered.

The big fellow was already on the rear step of the ambulance. He looked up ahead at the simple instruments and pedals of the ambulance.

"Hey, Nip," he said, "this ambulance hasn't any starter. You'll have to crank her."

"O.K.," the terrier ace said, "but here comes the driver. Hurry."

They heaved the major into the ambulance. "O.K.," the major hissed. "You'd better get moving."

The voice of the ambulance driver sounded from outside. He was apparently coming around to the back of the ambulance to peer in.

"You have someone who has been hurt?" he asked in German.

NEITHER Bull nor Nippy answered him. The terrier ace was now sliding across the front seat and hopping to the ground. He bent low along the short hood and leaped to the crank at the front of the car. Bull Martin reached over the seat and flipped on the switch. Twice Nippy spun the crank. The engine sucked in gas, then it sputtered.

"*Was gehts los?*" the ambulance driver yelled from behind.

He leaped to the rear step as Bull Martin slipped in behind the wheel and the ambulance began moving ahead. Suddenly, there was shouting all about them. A shot rang out, then another. The ambulance driver was on the rear step, climbing into the stretcher compartment. But the major, lying on his back, was ready for him. As the driver came within reach of him, the major drew up his good leg and drove his boot into the driver's middle. The driver was hurled back, lost his balance, and fell backward out of the ambulance.

The car was already in motion, and Nippy had leaped to the seat beside Bull. Rifles clattered and steel slugs began hailing all about them. Bull jammed the accelerator down to the floor.

Germans, hearing the commotion, ran out to the edge of the road to see what had taken place. They yelled and waved their arms and one of the soldiers got in the way. A fender struck him and he was hurled off into the ditch.

"They asked for it!" the major yelled from his stretcher. "Let them have it!"

They went tearing on, and more Germans came out to stop them. Already, a car was following them from behind. Looking back, Nippy and Bull could see eight or ten Germans on that car. They were standing on the running boards, firing with their Lugers.

Bull guided the ambulance around a dizzy turn in the road, and the vehicle careened on two wheels. For a moment, it looked as if they were going to tip over, but the big fellow managed to pull it down again on all four wheels. They went racing along, plunging on in their mad flight for freedom.

Up ahead, they saw a fork in the road. They must decide which road to take and do it quickly, for there could be no stopping to read signs. That car behind with the ten Germans blazing away at them was rapidly gaining.

"Jumping Jupiter!" Nippy groaned as he looked back. "This is the slowest ambulance I ever saw in my life. Step on it, Bull. They're catching up with us."

"She's doing all she can," Bull grunted.

"I'll bet we're doing almost thirty-five miles an hour. Holy Herring, a guy would die in one of these things before they ever got him anywhere!"

CAREENING around a turn, they realized suddenly that they had taken the wrong fork. The road ahead of them was blocked by great trucks and marching soldiers coming toward the Front.

The major had raised himself on one elbow as he lay on his stretcher and was taking in the situation quite calmly. "You fellows had better stop the ambulance," he said, "and run for it on foot."

Bull Martin still held down the accelerator. "Yeah," he said, "fat chance we've got. There's open country on either side of us."

"Oh, me!" Nippy chirped. "Lady Luck, where are you hiding!"

"I can't see on either side of the ambulance," the major cried, "but if it's open country as you say, you'd better give up. They'll riddle you with bullets before you've gone a hundred feet. Look at those troops up ahead. They know something's up. They're already loading and getting ready to fire."

Bull Martin yanked on the emergency brake, and the little ambulance skidded to a stop. The two Battle Aces leaped out, each on his side of the

vehicle. It was easy to tell that they would make their last stand here. The car that had trailed them was drawing to a halt just beside the ambulance. They didn't even have a chance to run into the fields.

The Battle Aces raised their arms in surrender, for there was nothing else to do. Immediately, they were surrounded by German troops with drawn guns. A *Hauptmann* faced them. He wore an amused expression on his face and he seemed to be not a bad fellow.

He chuckled as he said in passable English, "I must admit that I admire your courage to try such a daring escape. Perhaps you will have better luck next time, *nicht wahr?*"

"Let us hope so," Nippy grinned back, Bull Martin only glowered morosely.

The German *Hauptmann* shrugged and chuckled. He had apparently come up with the marching troops and supply trucks.

"So it is in war," he said.

The Germans from the pursuing car crowded closer and the *Hauptmann* looked at a *leutnant* in command.

"I believe, *Herr Leutnant*," he said, "these are your prisoners." He bowed stiffly from the waist. "I turn them over to you. They are brave men, both of them. They should be treated with due consideration."

The *leutnant* was a hatchet-faced, narrow-eyed fellow. "*Jawohl, Herr Hauptmann*," he said with a sarcastic sneer, "you may be sure they will be treated with due consideration." He jabbed his Luger muzzle hard into Bull Martin's naked back. "*Macht schnell!*"

Nippy marched beside Bull back to the car, and the major called out from inside the ambulance, "I'll see you fellows in Times Square after the war."

"Right," Nippy chirped, and Bull just glared straight ahead of him.

They climbed into the car, and Germans swarmed all about them on the running boards. The driver turned the car around and they hurried back toward the mouth of the tunnel. There again, guards crowded about them as they were yanked out of the car.

The hatchet-faced *leutnant* seemed to be in command of the guard. He was a wiry, arrogant little *offizier* who made up in egotism what he lacked in real importance.

"Now, you swine," he said, "we shall teach you a lesson. You should be shot for trying to escape, but we have something for you that will be much more unpleasant."

He yelled to his guards. "Tie them to the whipping posts! They shall receive twenty lashes apiece."

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### *Death in the Tunnel*

POWERFUL guards seized both Nippy and Bull and rushed them toward two posts that were buried in the ground. Big Bull Martin began struggling. He threw off two of his heaviest guards and lunged forward, but a Luger butt descended on his skull from behind and he dropped.

Nippy couldn't see whether Bull had been killed. They were tying the terrier ace to one of the whipping posts with his wrists above his head, his face against the pole, and his bare back exposed.

He heard the *leutnant* shout, "Drag him over here and tie him up anyway. When he regains consciousness, we will begin the whipping."

A stocky, brute-like guard who looked more like a butcher than a soldier peered around at Nippy Weston. The terrier ace turned his head. Beyond the man with the whip, he could see the guard dragging Bull to the whipping post next to his. The butcher beside Nippy laughed. He sounded like a madman.

"So," he said, "you want a taste of my whip. *Jawohl*, you shall have twenty tastes of it."

He stepped back, and Nippy tensed as he heard the lash whistle through the air. Then it struck the first blow. It slashed across his back like a dull sword. Again Nippy heard the whistle and grew rigid. Again the whip lashed across his bare back. His slight, wiry body quivered.

"Eighteen more to go," he muttered through clenched teeth.

He wondered if he could keep his sanity through eighteen more of those lashes. His fists were clenched and his jaw muscles bulged. He must keep from crying out. That would not do any good.

Again the lash whistled and cracked viciously over his back. There came another and another and another. The lashing went on and every time it struck, Nippy's body jerked like an old rug being beaten on a clothesline. The terrier ace had lost count. His back burned as if it were on fire.

The brute with the whip yelled at him, "So you think I can't make you cry out? We shall see."

"Go on," Nippy taunted. He was screaming those words. "Make me yell, you ugly-looking buzzard."

But that only brought more sting in the lash—almost more than he could bear. His brain was in a flaming torment of hideous pain. Again, again, and again that lash fell, then all grew dark about the terrier ace. He didn't know just what had happened. He didn't know anything. Unconsciousness had mercifully taken possession of him.

He began to realize that he was being carried. He could feel the jogging motion. He thought only one man was carrying him. Next, he sensed the burning pain on his bare back, but that seemed fairly numb, now, compared to the way it had felt each time the lash had struck.

He heard the sullen mutter of voices from men they passed and he heard a bellowing command, "Work faster! *Macht schnell!*" Then he heard the crack of a lash.

Nippy Weston opened his eyes. Looking straight ahead of him, he saw a broad, powerful back ridged with red welts. Farther below, he saw Bull Martin's legs as he walked along.

Then the terrier ace remembered. He must have fainted at the whipping post, and now Bull was carrying him along the tunnel.

Nippy felt himself growing stronger. His head was clearing rapidly. "Let me down, Bull," he said. "I can walk."

Another bellow came from a guard up ahead—a command for the men to work faster.

"Shut up," Bull said out of the corner of his mouth. "Wait until we get past this next guard."

NIPPY closed his eyes. If Bull were going to continue to carry him, he must pretend to be unconscious. Two minutes passed, then a guard beside them called out, "Bring that man back to consciousness and put him to work."

Bull quickened his pace. He strode on for perhaps five minutes, then he said to Nippy, "O.K. You can walk now if you feel like it."

He set the terrier ace on his feet. "How do you feel?"

Yanks stripped to the waist were moving past them in either direction, some with empty wheelbarrows, some with full loads.

"O.K.," Nippy said. "How do you feel?"

"I'm all right," Bull growled. "I'm just waiting until I get my hands on a couple of these guards. How's your back?"

"Well, I don't feel any pleasant thrills of joy rippling along it," Nippy announced. "It feels more like that guy had been whipping me with barbed wire."

"We'll get him," Bull growled. "Wait and see. Come on, we've got to keep moving."

Nippy's legs wobbled as he walked, and Bull took him by the arm and helped him along. They passed two more guards standing along the side of the tunnel with their whips ready to lash at any lagging workers. Far ahead through the dust that filled the air, they saw where the tunnel made a turn to the right.

"Hey, this is where the tunnel goes under our trenches, isn't it?" Nippy asked.

Bull Martin gave a savage nod. "Yes," he said. "I saw something on that turn that will help us. We're in luck."

"What do you mean?" Nippy demanded.

"Listen, Nip," Bull said as they trudged on, "before we get through, you and I are going to be guards instead of workmen. We're going to be armed guards, see? Up at the turn, I saw a guard who's about your size. You're going to take his place."

The terrier ace grinned. "That, my big, fine-feathered friend," he said, "will be a pleasure."

They plodded on. The turn was wide, and it was apparently difficult for the great tunneling machine to make a sharp turn.



Two minutes later, they came into the turn and could begin to see around it.

"Yes," Bull said, "he's still there. Change places with me, Nip. I want to be on the outside. I'm going to get this guy before he knows what hit him."

"Don't forget he's armed and he's got a whip besides," Nippy reminded him. "I don't want to taste one of those lashes again very soon."

"He won't be able to use anything," Bull growled, "if I lay my hands on him first."

Already the big fellow's huge paws were opening and closing in anticipation. Nippy had exchanged places with him so that the big fellow was walking toward the curved outside wall.

"Now here's what you've got to do," he hissed. "You've got to hold onto my arm as if you were helping me walk. I'll stumble along as though I can hardly keep on my feet. I don't think there are any other guards in sight."

"And if we need any help," Nippy cut in, "there's plenty of Yanks who will drop their wheel barrows in a second to give us a hand."

"Don't worry, kid," Bull said. "I won't need any help with this buzzard. Hang onto me now. I'm going to start wobbling."

Nippy hung onto Bull's arm. The big fellow's knees appeared to buckle. The terrier ace grinned. "This is a hot one," he said. "I can just about stand up myself. Imagine me trying to hold you up."

"It will work," Bull promised.

He was swaying and staggering like a man almost ready to drop from exhaustion, and Nippy saw the spiteful little guard ahead. He barked a command to one of the Yanks to hurry and cracked his lash across the unfortunate man's back.

Together, Nippy and Bull gradually bore down upon him. He was apparently going to pay no attention to them, for he took a step backward to let them pass.

Bull was swaying and his knees were wobbling as if he were out on his feet. His head was down and his eyes were focused stupidly on the ground.

"He's got his Luger in his hand," Nippy hissed. "Watch out for it."

"I'll break off his arm," Bull grunted.

THE guard was six feet away. Two, three more steps and Bull would be even with him. He leaned on Nippy for one step, then, as he took the next one, he leaped toward the guard. It was a sudden, surprise move that took the German completely by surprise. In a flash, Bull's left hand had seized the right wrist of the German. He twisted the arm in a quick jerk and the gun slipped from the guard's hand.

The German opened his mouth to cry out in pain, but no sound ever again left his lips. Bull's huge right hand crashed to the guard's throat and his fingers bit into the flesh.

In one terrific lunge, Bull forced him to the tunnel floor. The guard struggled, but he was powerless in Bull's iron grip. Both of the big fellow's hands were on the guard's throat, fingers biting in, cutting off all wind.

The German's face turned from white to purple. His body gave one weak, convulsive jerk, then sagged as the life went out of him.

Nippy was looking about, but there were no other guards in sight. Yanks passing by cheered softly.

"Thataboy," said one. "Give it to him!" said another.



A big, powerful sergeant stopped. "Listen, let me have the pleasure of tearing the arms and legs off that guard," he said. "He's hit me twice with his whip already."

Nippy Weston shook his head.

"Don't stop," he said. "If there's a gap in the line, the next guard will notice it and come to see what's wrong. We're working this out our own way and we'll get the rest of you fellows out as soon as we can. Keep moving."

The sergeant unwillingly picked up his wheelbarrow handles and moved on.

"O. K.," he said, "but if you birds need me, holler."

"Hey, wait," Bull said quickly. "Step out of line. We do need some help." He was rising from the dead body of the guard. "Come here, Nip, and give me a hand. Sergeant, you break out of line and the rest of you fellows fill up the gap. Hurry up."

The sergeant stepped out of line and the Yanks with their wheelbarrows behind him hurried to fill up the gap he had left. Nippy and Bull were quickly stripping the German uniform from the guard. Nippy took off his own breeches and his boots and quickly put them on the guard.

"O. K.," Bull said as he stuck the fallen Luger into the holster at Nippy's side. "Now stand up with your whip and play your part. I'll join you at any minute."

He rolled the dead guard's body back out of the way. Then, to the big Yank sergeant, he said, "Dump your load of dirt on him."

The sergeant grinned.

"It's a pleasure," he said.

"It's not much of a grave," Nippy said, "but it's more than he deserves."

The guard was hastily covered with dirt.

"Now," Bull Martin said, grinning at the sergeant, "you and I are going to have some fun. There's a big buzzard down here about halfway to the entrance. He's all alone and he's as mean as they come. You and I are going to get that Heinie."

The sergeant grinned back. "Swell," he said. "When do we start on this little trip?"

"Now," Bull said. "I'll get in your empty wheelbarrow. You fall in line, and we'll pretend that I've dropped dead and you're wheeling me out to the entrance. When we come to the big Heinie, let your conscience be your guide, Sergeant. I'll be in the wheelbarrow, so I'll take his legs. You get his gun. We'll give that buzzard a working over that nobody ever dreamed of."

Bull Martin dropped his big carcass into the wheelbarrow, his arms and legs spilling over the sides.

"Jumping Jupiter!" Nippy said as he took his position as guard. "I never thought you had it in you, Bull."

"I've got plenty of ideas in this dumb skull of mine," Bull said. "All I have to do is get mad enough to bring them out. O. K., Sarge."

The big sergeant picked up the handles of the barrow, and the Yanks in the line knew what was up. They made a gap for him and the sergeant pushed his cargo of human dynamite into the space and went trudging along with the rest.

Bull's head was lolling back as if he were dead. He looked up into the grinning face of the hard-boiled sergeant and chuckled.

"Boy, this is going to be more fun than I've had in a dog's age," the sergeant said.

"Yes, but there's one thing you've got to do," Bull said. "When you get in front of the guard, don't look at him at all. Look up at the ceiling of the tunnel above him. Now don't yell this so loud that some of the other guards will hear you, but say, 'Holy Gee! A cave-in!'"

The sergeant nodded. "I get you," he said.

THEY plodded on down the tunnel toward the entrance. They passed two more guards, but neither of them paid any particular attention to Bull and the sergeant.

The big sergeant suddenly frowned. "Hey, what was that I was supposed to say when I look up over the guard's head?" he asked.

Bull grinned up at him.

"Well, you could say, 'Oh, what a pretty butterfly!'"

The sergeant glared down at him. "Hey, what are you trying to do, kid me?" he demanded.

Bull shrugged his broad, bare shoulders. "No, but what's the difference? That Heinie guard won't be able to understand English. You could say almost anything, just as long as you sound surprised. Don't worry. He'll think of the cave-in himself."

The sergeant grinned again. "O. K.," he said. "I get you."

As they went on, Bull dragged his hands in the dirt along the floor of the tunnel and grabbed some in his right hand. That would be on the other side of the wheelbarrow from the big German guard.

A few minutes later, the sergeant asked, "Hey, is that guy down ahead the one we're after?"

Bull raised his head just enough to look down the dust-filled tunnel. "Right," he said. "That's the guy."

The sergeant grinned. "O. K., buddy," he said. "Here we go."

Bull dropped his head back limply again. He must look dead when they reached the guard. Abruptly, the wheelbarrow stopped. He heard the

sergeant speak with emphasis on the first word that he uttered.

"What a lovely moon, sweetheart!"

Instantly, Bull raised his head and opened his eyes. At the same instant, he flung the fistful of dirt at the roof above the German guard's head. He saw that the guard had turned to look up. There was an expression of sudden fright on his face.

The handful of dirt struck the round ceiling of the tunnel, and before the German could turn his face away, some of the earth had dropped into his staring eyes.

By now, Bull was moving like lightning. One leap brought him out of the wheelbarrow in a flying tackle for the big German's boots. He heard the guard sputter as he was going down, then he heard a sharp snap as of a bone breaking. Bull saw the Luger that the German had held in his hand drop beside him.

Bull tried to climb along the struggling body of the fallen German to reach his throat, but the big sergeant was there ahead of him. He had both hands in an iron grip over the guard's throat. As he pressed in, he said through clenched teeth, "Not this time, sweetheart. You choked the last guy. It's my turn now."

Bull let him have what pleasure he could get out of it. Even as the last quiver left the body of the brutal guard, Bull was pulling off his boots and breeches. In two or three minutes, the big fellow was completely dressed in the German's outfit, the guard's Luger in his holster. His own breeches and boots were on the dead German.

"Now what do we do with him, cover him up with dirt?" the sergeant asked.

Bull shook his head. "Not now," he said. "You've got to be lugging a load when you get out to the entrance, sergeant. You might as well carry this bird. If they ask you any questions, tell them that he dropped dead from heart failure."

"O. K.," the sergeant nodded.

Together, they picked up the big German guard and dropped him into the wheelbarrow. The sergeant moved on in the line.

With the lash in his hand and the Luger in his holster, Bull strode back to the tunnel's turn. He hoped nothing had happened to Nippy. He quickened his step. He had two guards to pass, but that would be easy. As he came to one, he

cracked his whip over the back of a Yank in a manner that would not hurt him and yelled, "*Macht schnell!*" He repeated the same apparently vicious procedure in sight of the next guard.

When he was halfway around the turn, he saw Nippy standing against the wall. The terrier ace's hand tightened on his Luger as Bull came toward him, then he recognized him.

"Well, I see you made out O. K.," the terrier ace said in a low voice.

"Right," Bull nodded.

"What do we do next?" Nippy asked.

"We're going to stay right here," Bull told him, "at least until I can figure out something better. Every high ranking officer that goes by is going to get it."

"Boy, it will be fun pumping lead into the buzzards that are running this lowdown show," Nippy said.

Bull shook his head. "We aren't going to shoot them," he explained. "You could hear the report of a gun almost from one end of this tunnel to the other. If anyone comes along, you step out and halt them at the point of your gun, then I'll crush in their skull with my Luger butt."

"O. K.," Nippy agreed.

## **CHAPTER SIXTEEN**

### ***Death Points a Finger***

G-8 had not been caught unaware. He had been ready for trouble the moment he heard the *leutnant* say over the telephone, "*Jawohl*, he is here now."

That had been his cue to loosen his own pistol in its holster. He turned slightly sidewise so that the *leutnant*, after hanging up the phone, could not see whether he was drawing his gun or not. Now the *leutnant* had hung up and was asking to see his papers again. That meant he was either trying to get the papers from him or throw him off guard. In either case, G-8 had no intention of being unprepared.

As the Master Spy reached for his papers at the request of the *leutnant*, his automatic flashed

into view. The Master Spy had the *leutnant* covered. Before the young German *offizier* could do more than draw his pistol half out of its holster, the Master Spy smiled.

"Now what did you hear concerning me in that telephone message?" he asked.

The *leutnant's* face went white. "It was nothing at all, *Herr Oberst*," he said. "The general was merely calling to see if you had reached here yet."

G-8 frowned for an instant. Perhaps he had acted too hastily. He decided that he must retrace his steps a little.

"Why did you try to draw your automatic?" he demanded.

The *leutnant* was trying to look surprised.

"Draw my automatic, *Herr Oberst*?" he repeated. "*Aber*, you must be mistaken."

"I'm keeping you covered now," G-8 said, "because I, *Oberst* von Siegel, have taken all the orders I ever expect to take from *offiziers* who are merely young boys. Understand that I intend acting upon no orders from you. You have examined my papers. You have found them in order, *nicht wahr*?"

The young *leutnant* nodded. "*Jawohl*," he admitted. "Very well," G-8 nodded. "Then get this. You will give me the pass that I require immediately."

The *leutnant* gulped. He moved toward the chair at his desk.

"First," G-8 said, "come toward me."

The muzzle of the Master Spy's gun was held steady, pointed at the middle of the young *leutnant*. Now, as the *leutnant* came closer, G-8 flipped the automatic from his holster.

"There," he said, holding both guns trained on the *leutnant*. "Now you will sit down and give me the pass that I require."

The *leutnant* sat down at his desk. He scribbled out a pass, tore the card from the book, and forced a smile as he handed it to G-8.

"There, *Herr Oberst*," he said. "Is there anything else I can do for you?"

The Master Spy glanced down at the pass card. As he did so, the young *leutnant* moved swiftly. He made a wild lunge directly for the Master Spy. He knocked down his own gun in G-8's left hand. But the *leutnant* was smaller and

lighter than G-8 and the Master Spy flung him back in his chair.

"All right," he said. "This pass seems to be O. K. Now you are going to tell me something else. What did you learn over the phone?"

The *leutnant* saw that he was licked. He became surprisingly calm.

"It will be impossible for you to carry out any of your plans, *mein Herr*."

"*Mein Herr!*" G-8 barked. "Do you realize you are speaking to *Oberst* von Siegel? Address me hereafter as '*Herr Oberst*.' "

The *leutnant* sat back in his chair, bravely facing the two gun muzzles. He shook his head slowly.

"In the first place, *mein Herr*," he said. "I know you are not *Oberst* von Siegel. His dead body was found only a few minutes ago near his wrecked car. The driver regained consciousness and told what had happened."

Even now, the Master Spy had no regrets for permitting the driver to live. He had things running pretty well his own way, at the moment.

"Then if I am not *Herr Oberst* von Siegel," G-8 taunted, "who am I?"

The young *leutnant* shrugged. "How do I know?" he said. "I must admit that you look like *Oberst* von Seigel. I have had the pleasure of meeting him." Suddenly, the young *leutnant's* face went white. "*Himmelkreuzdonnerwetter!*" he exclaimed. "Are you—could you be the *verdammter kerl*, G-8? He is famous for his clever disguises and make-up."

The Master Spy smiled. "*Herr Leutnant*," he said, "you are a very good guesser."

HE WAS looking straight into the young German's clear blue eyes. This youngster was a brave lad, and the Master Spy hated to think of having to end such a promising career.

"What are you going to do to me?" the young *leutnant* asked. He smiled now. "I can be sure of one thing. If you are G-8, you will not shoot me. You are too wise for that. You know that the report of your pistol would bring guards immediately to investigate."

"Again you are a good guesser," G-8 said. "I have no intention of shooting you." He nodded to a

closet in a corner of the room. "I think you will be very happy, nicely bound and gagged, and locked, in there."

The *leutnant* stared at him for a moment. "You are not as bad as they say you are, *mein Herr*," he observed.

"I would have to be pretty brutal to be that bad, I guess," the Master Spy answered. His eyes had caught sight of a box tied with tight rope standing in one corner of the room. Already, his plans were made.

"Get up," he commanded, and the *leutnant* rose.

"Walk over there and place your face against the wall."

Again the *leutnant* obeyed, standing with his face against the wall and both hands behind him to be tied. It was obvious that he figured this would be an easy spot to get out of. G-8 had been thinking of that, too. Locked in that closet, the *leutnant* could kick against the door until he attracted attention. He could, that is, if he were conscious.

G-8 drew a large handkerchief out of the rear pocket of *Oberst* von Siegel's breeches. Quickly, he wound the handkerchief about the butt of his automatic for padding. There was no need of killing this youngster.

"Now," G-8 said, stepping up behind the *leutnant*, "cross your wrists."

The *leutnant* crossed them, unprepared for what was to come. With one swift, sure blow, G-8 brought his padded automatic butt down on the *leutnant's* skull. The *leutnant* sagged and G-8 caught him. He laid him out flat on the floor, then he went over, cut the ropes that were tied about the box, and bound the *leutnant's* ankles and wrists.

Next, he shaped a gag from the *Oberst's* handkerchief and tied it securely in the *leutnant's* mouth. When that was done, he locked him in the closet, then, slipping the extra automatic in his pocket, he strode out of the office.

He saw the entrance to the tunnel. Guards accepted the pass that the young *leutnant* had written out. G-8 strode into the tunnel with a quick stride. He saw the lines of Yanks stripped to the waist, pushing their empty wheelbarrows in and their full ones out.

About a hundred yards inside the tunnel entrance, G-8 saw a big, burly Yank wheeling a

dead man in his wheel barrow. The man had probably dropped dead from exhaustion, yet it struck the Master Spy as strange, because the dead Yank was one of the biggest and apparently strongest men in the tunnel. He passed the big sergeant with his dead cargo and went on.

His eyes tried to pierce the dust ahead of him. He was looking for the Mole. If he could finish him off, that would be something accomplished. But perhaps the Mole's death alone would not halt this hideous plan.

G-8 could hear the coughing of the men as the dust began filling his own lungs, and he saw the guards with their great whips, lashing the men as they stumbled by. The Master Spy wanted to whip out both his automatics and pump lead into those guards, but there were more important things to be accomplished. Perhaps he would find Count Maulwurf in the great digging machine.

He knew he had walked a considerable distance when he saw that the tunnel made a turn to the right ahead of him. The dust was stifling, and grew thicker as he strode deeper into the tunnel.

Part way around the curve, he saw two guards standing at the side. At sight of him, they began cracking their whips over the bare backs of the laboring Yanks. One of these guards was a big man, and the other was a slim, wiry, little fellow.

Perhaps those two guards would tell him where he could find Count Maulwurf. With rapid strides, G-8 bore down upon them. The two guards stopped cracking their whips and seemed to be talking over something in low tones. Their German trench helmets were pulled down low over their faces.

As G-8 came up, the little wiry guard stepped out in front of him.

"Halt, *Herr Oberst*," he commanded.

G-8 stopped.

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

### *Out of the Grave*

THE little German guard looked up into G-8's disguised face. "*Who bist du?*" he said, and instantly, the Master Spy realized two things. He

knew that the big guard beside him was raising the butt of his automatic to strike him on the skull. He saw that out of the corner of his eye. G-8 realized also that the wiry little fellow dressed as a German was Nippy Weston. He would recognize that face anywhere, through all the grime and dirt in the world.

The Master Spy leaped forward as Bull Martin's blow descended toward his head. He caught Nippy around the waist and hugged him close. Then he laughed in the terrier ace's ear and said, "Your German is as lousy as ever, Nip."

From behind, he felt the iron grip of Bull Martin's hand on his shoulder, trying to yank him away from Nippy so he could get in a clear blow at his head. But Nippy was speaking now.

He cracked out, "Bull! Lay off! Don't hit him."

Laughing, G-8 flung his hands up over his head and turned. He was grinning into the amazed face of Bull Martin. The big fellow still held his Luger poised. "Hey, what goes on here?" he demanded.

Nippy Weston quickly stepped in between them. He pushed Bull back. "Listen, you big dumb ox," he chirped, "don't you realize who this is? Have I got to yell it out so all the Heinies within a mile will hear me?"

It was then that Bull Martin's mouth dropped open. "Holy Herring!" he exploded. Then he pointed at G-8 and asked in a lower tone. "You mean this is—G-8?" He whispered the last.

The Master Spy nodded. "Sure," he said. "And, boy, am I lucky to get out of this as well as I have. You were certainly all set for the kill, Bull."

"My, my," Nippy chirped, "fancy meeting you here. It's a pleasure. I'm sure. We heard you were about to be shot."

The Master Spy shrugged and grinned. "As usual," he said, "it was just one of those things. But how did you get here? What's going on?"

Bull nodded to the bare-backed, sweating men who were pushing wheelbarrows to and fro constantly.

"You know what these men are?" he asked.

"They look and talk like Americans," G-8 said. "They're wearing the breeches, puttees, and shoes of the Yank forces, too. How did all of them get here? And how about you two?"

Hastily, Nippy and Bull explained in low tones about their being called up to the Front to investigate the rumbling of the machine, then the cave-in of the frontline trench.

"In that case," G-8 said, "it's going to make the problem easier."

Bull frowned. "It's going to make what easier?" he demanded.

The Master Spy shrugged. "That's obvious, Bull," he said. "How far is the digger from here?"

"Plenty far," Bull told him. He nodded to the Yanks who were pushing their wheelbarrows. "Look at those fellows. Some of them are about all in."

He spoke to the nearest Yank as he was passing.

"How far is the machine from here?" The Yank dropped his wheelbarrow and stared.

"Holy Gee!" he said. "You talk like an American."

BULL grinned. "Listen, keep this under your hats, all of you birds," he said, addressing all the Yanks who were within earshot. "This is G-8." He jerked his head toward the Master Spy. "We're his two assistants. We're going to get out of here."

The men near enough to hear his voice dropped their barrow handles. "O.K., let's go," cried one. "When do we start?"

"Not so fast." G-8 countered. "Keep moving with your wheelbarrows. We've got to make it appear that everything is all right. We'll try to save all of you. How far is the machine from here?"

One Yank turned to the man back of him as he moved along in the line. "I'd say about two miles, wouldn't you, Charlie?"

Charlie coughed, then he said, "Yeah, about two miles. It seems like a million with this load of dirt. Of all the lowdown crust, making us work like this to help dig a tunnel under Paris."

"Under Paris?" G-8 repeated.

"That's where they say they're going," the Yank replied.

"O.K.," the Master Spy said. "You'd better get going now."

The line moved on, the men pushing their wheelbarrows of dirt like slaves. G-8 turned to his

Battle Aces. "Where was it that this cave-in took place?" he asked.

"Up around the turn," Nippy said. "The whole bottom of the front line trench fell out into the tunnel."

"How did they work it?" the Master Spy asked.

"Well, as you see," Nippy explained, "the top of the tunnel is sort of dome-shaped. They seem to have built in sliding doors at the top so when they open them up, the earth will cave in. We came in with the dirt."

"Boy, did we come in with the dirt," Bull growled. "I don't think I'll ever get my eyes, nose, and mouth completely clean again."

"There you go again," Nippy jibed. "We're caught in a German tunnel, and you begin worrying about your looks."

"Never mind the kidding," G-8 cut in. "We haven't time. You say you dropped into the tunnel around this turn? That means that beyond here, the tunnel runs under the front line trenches, or rather what *were* the front line trenches. Right?"

"Right," Nippy said. "For about a quarter of a mile. Then it turns."

The Master Spy looked into the dust filled space. "Come on, we're going to look this over."

"You'll find guards every so far," Nippy told him.

"O.K.," G-8 nodded. "We'll take care of them as we come to them. Bull, keep your Luger ready to sock them on the head. We must not do any shooting until we're sure we have enough of the guards cleaned out."

"This is going to be my meat," Bull growled.

They strode on around the turn into the short stretch of tunnel, a quarter of a mile long, that ran under the front line trench of the Yank forces. Glancing up, G-8 saw the first sliding door, then he saw more of them. The whole ceiling in this stretch of tunnel was made of these sliding doors.

Ahead, he saw a guard and heard the crack of the whip as he lashed the back of a Yank. Nippy and Bull were following behind G-8. "O.K.," the Master Spy said out of the corner of his mouth. "Get set, Bull. Here's the first one."

Arrogantly, G-8 marched toward the guard. He stopped directly in front of him and faced him.

Seeing the *Oberst's* uniform, the guard drew up to attention.

"You must make the men work faster," G8 snapped. "*Dummkopf!* Do you think you have been stationed here to humor these prisoners?"

The guard's mouth dropped open. It was then that Bull Martin, who had taken his position at the side of the guard, brought his Luger butt down on the German's skull. The guard's mouth stayed open as he fell. He lay still and they marched on.

A little more than a hundred yards ahead, they came to another guard. G-8 stopped in front of him and proceeded to bawl him out. Again, Bull's Luger butt crashed to his skull.

They met three more guards before they reached the turn at the end of the quarter mile stretch. Each guard was swiftly disposed of in the manner of the others.

As they reached the turn, Bull Martin grinned and said, "Boy, this old right arm of mine hasn't had so much fun since it carried a football."

THEY rounded the turn, and now there were no more trap doors at the top of the tunnel. It was obvious that those strange, sliding doors had been placed only in the lateral passage beneath the Yank lines—so the trench would cave in and drop down the many Yanks needed to drag the dirt out of the tunnel.

They disposed of the guard they found at the turn and moved on. They had gone less than a hundred yards when G-8 stopped suddenly.

"It's going to be tough if this tunnel keeps descending into the earth at the rate it is now."

"Yeah," Bull ventured, "I've noticed that, too. We're going down hill pretty fast."

"Right," the Master Spy nodded. "I was hoping that this monster tunneling machine would stay at about the same distance under the ground. In that case, we could get out of the tunnel and follow it from the sound, but if it goes down very deep, we won't be able to hear it at all."

"Yeah," Nippy said, "I've been thinking about that, too. We won't be able to tell where it's going."

"We've got to stop this machine," G8 said. "We've got to blow it up. I figured we could find out where it was going from the sound it made, then bury a mine ahead of it so it would be blown up

when it crossed the mine. I'm sure that's the only way to stop it. Believe me, I know because I've looked it over."

"O.K., I'll bite," Nippy said. "What do we do next?"

"We've got to find out definitely what they intend to do," G-8 said. "We might be able to get their plans if we can reach the machine."

They marched on past the working, sweating, coughing Yanks. As they came to each guard, G-8 halted in front of him, proceeded to bawl him out, then Bull finished him off in the usual fashion.

They had gone almost two miles from the last turn when Bull Martin, squinting through the thick haze, said, "Holy Herring, look! There's the digger up ahead."

"Yeah," Nippy said, "I see it, too. Boy, that thing really makes time as it digs through the earth."

"Yes," G-8 said, "and that's why there's no time to lose. You fellows stick behind me now. I'm going up and get those plans."

He marched on. Through the dust, they could see dimly the rear of the tunneling machine belching earth for the wheelbarrows to cart away. It was Bull who spoke of the more ominous aspect of the whole affair.

"Look," he said. "If you think you're going to get something for nothing out of that machine, you're crazy. They've got six machine guns on the back of it."

"Yes," G-8 nodded. "I can see them. They're taking no chances on anyone sneaking up and throwing a monkey wrench in the works."

As G-8 approached, a *Hauptmann* got down and came to meet him.

"*Was ist, Herr Oberst?*" he demanded.

"I have come for a copy of the plans for the tunnel from here on," G-8 announced.

The *Hauptmann* shook his head. "*Bitte, Herr Oberst,*" he said, "there are no plans here as yet. We have orders to proceed along one compass course. I believe that very shortly Count Maulwurf is to hold a meeting with his military advisers in his castle to chart the exact course of the tunnel as it approaches Paris."

"*Danke,*" G-8 said.



He turned about and walked back along the tunnel. Nippy and Bull followed him, and when they were far from the clanking of the tunneling machine, G-8 said, "That settles one thing. We've got to go back to Maulwurf Castle in the Black Forest."

"Swell," Bull growled. "Maybe I'll get a crack at this guy they call the Mole."

"I wouldn't be surprised if you did," G-8 said. "But first we've got to get these Americans out of here."

He strode on, deep in thought. When they reached the first turn that brought them back under the Yank trenches and the sliding trap doors in the tunnel ceiling, the Master Spy stopped.

"That ceiling is about ten feet up," he said. "Even if we get the trap doors open, we've got to get up to the opening and through it. How thick is the ground between the bottom of the trench and the trap door?"

Nippy Weston shrugged.

"About two or three feet," he guessed.

"That won't be impossible," G-8 said. "We can make ladders by piling the wheelbarrows, one on top of another. It's the best we can do. First, let's see if we can get some of these doors open."

He scrutinized the door over his head and at the side discovered a big lever. He pulled the lever down and bent his weight against it. As he did so, the trap door slid back. Several cubic yards of earth tumbled into the bottom of the tunnel, but then they were looking up into daylight.

Of course, the Germans had placed many guards in this space to prevent anything of this kind happening, but G-8 and Bull had taken care of them.

The Master Spy addressed the Yanks. "You fellows will have to spread out," he said. "Make your line thinner, and pile up your wheelbarrows to make a ladder to the top of the tunnel. We'll open all of these trap doors that we can, and you can climb up into your trench again. At the last, those that are left will have to make a rush for it. Pass the word along. We're going back to the entrance. We'll take care of the guards as we go."

### ***The Castle of the Damned***

AS THEY strode around the next bend, heading for the entrance, Nippy Weston said, "Listen, chief, there's one thing I can't get straight. As soon as we get out, we'll be O.K., but what about these poor Yanks in the tunnel? If they stop showing up with loads of dirt for any length of time, the guards outside the entrance will get suspicious and come to investigate."

G-8 nodded. "I've been thinking a lot about that," he admitted. "If my plan works, they'll be O.K. Before we get through, we'll be in more trouble than they are."

Already G-8, Nippy, and Bull had opened almost half the trap doors that ran beneath the Yank trench. The enslaved Yanks were piling up their wheelbarrows.

G-8 strode on, and in a few moments, a guard appeared ahead of them. Again, the Master Spy stopped. Bull stepped around to the side of the guard while he stood rigidly at attention. A moment later, the guard fell under the blow of Bull's Luger butt.

As they marched forward, two more guards were disposed of. There were fewer men near the entrance, and they were all taken care of, yet not a shot was fired to warn those outside of any trouble. When the last guard in the tunnel was finished off, G-8 began holding up the Yanks.

"O.K.," he said. "Drop your wheelbarrows and go back to the tunnel under the trench. Hurry."

He passed the word along as he came nearer the entrance, and one Yank said, "Sure, but won't the Germans outside suspect that something is up if we don't come out with our loads of dirt?"

"I'll explain that," the Master Spy promised.

With his faithful Battle Aces behind him, he emerged from the entrance. To the first German he saw, he barked, "We must have two cases of dynamite at once. The machine has struck bed rock and we cannot move without explosives. That is why no dirt is being brought out now. I must have the two cases of dynamite at once. We will take it to the men. You won't have to bother."

"*Jawohl!*," said an *unter-leutnant*. He ordered two guards to bring the dynamite. Presently, they appeared with it. The Master Spy gave a short nod. "My men will take care of the dynamite," he said.

## **CHAPTER EIGHTEEN**

Nippy and Bull took the two cases of dynamite from the Germans and hoisted it to their shoulders.

"The earth will begin to come out again," G-8 announced, "as soon as we can get the machine to move."

"*Jawohl*," said the *unter-leutnant*.

The Master Spy and his Battle Aces went back into the tunnel with the dynamite. They proceeded far enough inside so that they could not be seen from the entrance, then G-8 stopped. "This will be as good a place as any," he said.

Wheelbarrows full of earth stood where the Yanks had left them, and the line of returning soldiers filed on past them.

"O.K.," G-8 said. "Get caps hooked to the dynamite and a long fuse. We'll want about five or eight minutes to get away. The rest of you men move back and get out as quickly as you can."

The Yanks hurried past, for the news of the plan for escape had spread like wildfire. They all knew what they were to do.

When the last of the Yanks had gone by them, G-8 lighted a match and touched it to the end of the long fuse,

"There," he said. "That ought to give us five or six minutes anyway. Come on."

Again they went out to the entrance, and G-8 went straight to the *unter-leutnant*. "The dynamite is being carried back," he announced. "Before long, the dirt will begin to move once more."

THEN he and his Battle Aces marched off. They found staff cars parked along the road, and G-8 chose a big, powerful machine that had a key in the lock. He got into the rear seat. Nippy and Bull sprang up front, with the terrier ace at the wheel.

"O.K.," the Master Spy said in a low voice. "Now we've got to move fast. We've got to be plenty far away from here when that dynamite goes off."

Nippy grinned back at him as he shot the car in gear and pulled out onto the road. "That was a cute crack of yours, Chief," he said, "when you told the *unter-leutnant* the earth would begin to move again in a few minutes."

"Boy, there will be plenty of earth moving when that dynamite goes off," Bull grinned.

"I hope so," G-8 nodded. "I hope it will cave in the whole entrance to the tunnel so that the Germans outside won't be able to get in until our men have had a chance to escape."

They had been speeding along the road for three or four minutes when, far behind them, they heard a low, rumbling sound.

"There she goes!" Bull boomed.

The Master Spy nodded. "I sure hope it did the trick. Now we've got a real job on our hands."

"Yeah," Nippy nodded, "I've been thinking about getting those plans from this Mole guy. That isn't going to be any cinch."

"What do you intend to do," Bull asked, just barge in and tell him you want the plans?"

"I suppose that's what you'd do," Nippy cracked.

Bull drew back as though he were going to slap the terrier ace's face. "I don't have to take cracks like that from you," he growled. "After all, don't forget that it was me who thought up some pretty clever stuff there in the tunnel."

"O.K.," Nippy nodded, "I'll have to admit you're right there."

"It's about time," Bull grunted. He turned to look back at G-8. "No fooling, Chief," he said, "what do we do when we get to the castle in the Black Forest?"

"I'm trying to figure that out," G-8 admitted. "Of course, we may be late and the meeting may be over."

"Yeah, but there ought to be some plans around there somewhere, even if they have held the meeting," Nippy argued.

"That's what I'm hoping," the Master Spy said. "Keep quiet for a while and let me think, will you?"

"Sure," Bull rumbled. "Shut up, squirt, and let a man think that *can* think."

"O.K.," Nippy parried, "and that goes for you, too."

THEY drove along in silence. It was growing dark, but they could still see the dark, foreboding mountains of the Black Forest ahead. Soon Nippy turned on his headlights, and at G-8's directions, they began to wind through the mountains. The

heavy evergreens skirting either side of the highway made the whole prospect ahead look dismal.

The road grew steeper and steeper, then presently they came out on a plateau of level fields.

"We're getting close to the castle," G-8 said. He pointed to the right. "Over there is where Count Maulwurf almost chopped me in two with an old battle axe. The machine was parked there before it started for the Front."

After the level space of several miles, they began winding up the mountain again.

"What do you think?" Nippy asked. "Had we better duck the car and sneak up on the castle? Wouldn't that be the best method?"

"No," G-8 said, "I think we'll be better off if we barge right up there. *Oberst* von Siegel, whom I'm impersonating, has been found, so I'd better go under the name of *Oberst* von Stramm. We'll go to the castle and I'll ask to see the Mole. I'll say that I've just come from the tunnel on a matter of vital importance. If Count Maulwurf is in the meeting with the high commander, we won't get a chance to see him right away. In that case, we may have an opportunity to slip around and see what we can find out."

"It sounds good to me," Nippy ventured.

A few minutes later, the terrier ace stopped the car in front of Maulwurf Castle. There were other staff cars about the place.

"The generals are still here," G-8 said softly.

Guards approached as they got out of their car.

"I must see Count Maulwurf at once," G-8 ordered. "Tell him *Oberst* von Stramm waits."

"Follow me," the guard said. He led them inside the castle to the entrance hall. There were chairs there. The guard clicked his heels and presented arms.

"Count Maulwurf is in conference," he said. "I shall tell him you are here as soon as the conference is over."

Then the guard left and closed the door on them. G-8, Nippy, and Bull sat close together.

"Well, we're inside the castle," G-8 hissed.

"Yeah," Nippy nodded, "but how about sneaking around and seeing if we can find out just where this session is going on? What do you know about this castle, G-8?"

"I think," the Master Spy said, "the meeting is being held in the Count's library. If that's true, we may be able to listen to what is going on."

The Master Spy stopped. "Wait a minute," he said. He listened intently. "I guess the coast is clear," he said. He nodded toward a door on their left. "As I remember, that door leads into a corridor and the corridor goes down past the library."

The three got up and moved noiselessly toward the door. Quietly, G-8 opened it and peered down the corridor. "Come on," he whispered. "The coast is clear."

He shut the door behind them and they moved down the passage on their toes. G-8 found the door to the library closed, and they gathered before it to listen.

The Master Spy heard Count Maulwurf say, "Then I believe we have agreed upon the plan of the tunnel procedure. It is all shown on this map. Thank you, *meine Herren*, for your assistance."

"The meeting is breaking up," G-8 hissed.

Suddenly, a thin, high, menacing voice behind them said, "Do not move, gentlemen, or I will kill every one of you."

G-8's body grew rigid. He turned his head slightly and saw the little brown man who was aide to the Mole. He wore only a loin cloth about his middle and he held a Luger trained on them.

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

### *Prisoners of the Mole*

IT was at that very moment that the door in front of them opened. A high-ranking German general had opened that door. They could see inside the room, now. A half-dozen other generals were there. They saw Count Maulwurf also, standing in front of his chair. At that particular moment, he was in the act of slipping a folded piece of paper into his pocket.

G-8, Nippy, and Bull backed into the corridor toward the strange little brown man as the generals came out. They took no particular notice of G-8 or his Battle Aces, or the brown man behind them. They each said goodbye to the Mole and hurried down the corridor.

The great, grotesque Mole came out into the hall, now that his advisers had gone. He looked at G-8, Nippy, and Bull.

"Was ist!" he demanded.

At that very moment, Nippy Weston leaped at Count Maulwurf. The terrier ace's feet left the floor and he planted a very nice right on the chin of the Mole. Count Maulwurf caught him in mid-air and hurled him back against the opposite wall.

"What is going on here?" he bellowed.

G-8 and Bull stood their ground. Nippy was picking himself up from the floor. Count Maulwurf now saw his little brown aide behind them.

"What is going on, Zoki?" he demanded.

The queer, dwarfed little Zoki replied, "I found these three standing outside your door, listening."

Suddenly, G-8 realized that the weight of his Luger in its holster was gone. Zoki had slipped up behind and was now snatching Bull's automatic from its holster. Next, he went over and picked out Nippy's automatic.

The Mole's small, narrow-set eyes were fixed on G-8. "Himmelkreuzdonnerwetter!" he spat. "Can it be possible?" Then, with one sweep of his powerful right hand, he ripped the *Oberst's* tunic that G-8 wore wide open and plunged his hand into the inside pocket. He brought out the papers of identification and the record book of *Oberst* von Siegel.

"So," he said. "Again I have as my guest the *verdammter kerl*, G-8 .

The Master Spy glared back at him. "I am not G-8," he said. "I am *Oberst* von Stramm. It is I who succeeded in capturing the *verdammter kerl* in your tunnel just after he had blown it up. I have come here to bring you the papers of the late *Oberst* von Siegel, together with his record book."

It was a desperate attempt on G-8's part, but the Mole only laughed at him. "You are a *dummkopf*," he snarled, "if you think you can make me believe that. Here in the castle I have faced you before, you swine. Although you have changed your face, you are still of the same build and carriage as G-8. This time, *mein lieber freund*, you shall not escape. "

To his little brown man, he ordered. "Bring me two of the best guards I have."

Then he whipped out his own Luger and backed G-8, Nippy and Bull against the wall. Zoki went running down the corridor. The Mole, his evil eyes bent upon them, grinned hideously.

"This is going to be good fun," he said.

"It will be wonderful to see you all put to death in my own fashion. Within an hour or so, I shall start for the tunnel. Bound and gagged, you shall be taken with me. We shall stop the digging process of my machine. All three of you will be thrown in front of it, then the machine will begin again. You will be ground to a pulp."

Zoki appeared, grinning. Behind him were two huge German guards. The Mole commanded them, "Take these prisoners to the highest room in the castle. Lock them in and guard the door. I shall have other guards on the ground a hundred feet below. If you try to escape by jumping out of the window, you will most certainly be dead before you ever reach the ground."

He glared at G-8 and sneered, "You were successful, *mein lieber freund*, in escaping from a dungeon cell. Now we shall see if you are clever enough to get out of the room in the castle tower. There will be but one window and one door, and stone walls five feet thick all about you."

THEY were marched up one series of stairs after another, and on the top floor, they passed the Mole's bedroom. That would be of little use to G-8 now. When they reached the tower room, they saw that it was a round, cell-like enclosure. At one side of the circular room was a window some six or seven feet long and perhaps two feet wide. A dim light glowed in the bulb in the high ceiling. A heavy oak door boomed shut behind them and they heard a key turn in the lock.

Bull Martin took a long breath and growled, "Well, here we are, and there are two guards outside that oak door."

"Yeah," Nippy said, "and those two guards are ready to shoot us down even if we should manage to break through that door."

G-8 took a long look at the heavy door and shook his head. "We aren't going to be able to break through that," he said.

"If that lock ran all the way through that door," Nippy said, "I might be able to get a piece of wire and pick it."

"Yeah," Bull argued, "and, as you said, the guards would shoot us the minute we came in sight."

"Just what good do you think escape from here is going to do us?" G-8 asked.

"We might save our necks," Bull said. "Of course, maybe that doesn't mean anything to you, G-8."

The Master Spy smiled a little wearily. "Don't worry," he said. "I'm just as anxious to stay alive as either of you. But the thing that gets me is the fact that we came here for the plans, and so far we're farther from getting them than we were back in the tunnel."

Nippy Weston grinned suddenly. "Oh, the plans," he said. "Yeah, I forgot to tell you."

He plunged his fist into his pocket and brought out a large, folded sheet of paper. Handing it to G-8, he asked with a mischievous grin, "Is this what you're looking for?"

Rather dazedly, the Master Spy took the paper and unfolded it. There were lines, compass directions, and distances marked on it. In one corner was a sketched map of Paris, showing the Seine River and the exact point at which the tunnel was to pass under it to come up on the other side of Paris. In that way, German troops could pour through the tunnel and surround that great French capital.

"For heaven's sake!" G-8 exploded. "Where did you get this, Nippy?"

The terrier ace chuckled.

"Oh, that was easy," he said. "Maybe you forgot that I used to pull a few magic tricks on the side. Remember when I jumped in the air and took a sock at Count Maulwurf's jaw? Well, I wasn't dumb enough to think a little guy like me could knock him down with one blow. But that sort of detracted everybody's attention while I slipped my hand in his pocket and got out this folded map that I had seen him put in there a second before. I had quite a job hiding it while he was throwing me against the wall."

"Holy Herring!" Bull exploded. "Then we've got everything we want."

The Master Spy's eyes narrowed. "Yes," he said, "I believe we have."

"Except getting out of here," Nippy reminded them.

"Yeah," Bull agreed, "how are we going to pull that one? Have you got any more tricks up your sleeve, Nip?"

G-8 pointed to a narrow door at the side of the tower room. "I'm just wondering where that door leads," he said.

Hesitating no longer, he strode over and threw open the narrow door. Immediately, the smell of cedar reached their nostrils.

"Holy Herring, it's a cedar closet," Bull said.

"Yes," G-8 nodded slowly. A smile was dawning on his face. "This seems to be the place where Count Maulwurf keeps all his special uniforms so the moths won't get at them." His smile broadened. "I think we'll have use for most of these uniforms. Come on, give me a hand."

He began dragging out the uniforms. Some of them he rolled up and stuffed into the legs of a pair of breeches. Then he rolled up other neatly pressed coats and breeches and stuffed them into a fine parade coat.

"Know what I'm doing?" he grinned.

Nippy and Bull had been helping him a little dazedly. "You're making a dummy," Bull said, "but beyond that, I'm just as dumb as the dummy you're making."

G-8 drew them to the center of the room.

"Listen," he said in a low whisper, "if we smash that window over there and pitch out these three dummies with enough noise to attract the guards out in the hall, they'll think we've jumped out of the window. They'll hear the guards outside supposedly shooting at us as the dummies fall. Don't forget it's dark outside, and if anything comes tumbling down that looks like a man, they'll think it's us. If the guards think we're jumping out of the window, they'll unlock the door and come in to stop us, won't they?"

"Sure," Bull said, "but don't forget that the guards are armed."

G-8 grinned even more broadly. "I've still got an ace up my sleeve," he said, "and I believe I can take care of them very nicely."

"We haven't got any time to lose," Nippy reminded him. The Mole said he was starting to the

Front with us within an hour. They'll be in before then to tie us up for transportation to the tunnel."

"I've been thinking of that," G-8 said, "but things will have a chance to quiet down while we're getting set. Don't forget that even if we get out of this tower room, we've still got a long way to go before we're free. Come on now. Let's finish making these three dummies."

Nippy Weston chuckled as he wadded up a fine dress uniform to stuff inside a pair of breeches. "Boy, wouldn't Count Maulwurf have a fit if he saw what we're doing to his pet harness?"

"He'll have a fit when he finds out what's happened," G-8 said. "I only wish we could finish him off before we leave. We may be able to get him yet, later on."

"Holy Herring," Bull said, "you've got more plans, G-8, than a conniving old maid!"

One dummy was finished and lay by the window. Hurriedly, they finished the other two.

"O. K.," G-8 said. "Bull, you stand by the window. When I give the signal, kick out the glass. Then we'll begin heaving the dummies out one by one."

"Yeah," Bull said, "but how are you going to take care of these guards when they come in? Do you want me to tackle them the minute they open the door?"

G-8 shook his head. "No, Bull, I don't think it will be necessary. I'll take care of both guards myself." As he spoke, the Master Spy wedged his hand down into the top of his boot.

## **CHAPTER TWENTY**

### ***Race for Freedom***

EVERYTHING was ready. G-8's hand came out of his boot. In it he held a Luger.

"Jumping Jupiter," Nippy hissed, "where did you get that?"

The Master Spy put his fingers to his lips.

"Ssh!" he said. Then he whispered, "I've had it in there for quite some time. I'm glad to get it out. It was making my leg sore as I walked." He gave one more bit of instruction to his Battle Aces. "After

you kick in the window, Bull, and we throw out these dummies, we'll all run back to the door so we'll be behind it when it opens."

"Right," Bull growled. He poised with his foot aimed at the glass, and G-8 gave him the nod, then he yelled, "O. K., Bull. You go out first!"

Bull's foot smashed through the glass. There was a crash, and G-8 and Nippy had picked up one of the dummies. Now they pitched it out through the smashed window. Bull kicked more of the windows, and G-8 and Nippy picked up another dummy and sent it hurtling out. As the dummy fell, they were yelling their heads off to attract attention of the guards in the castle.

"Now the last one," G-8 said. Then, in a lower voice, he added, "Quick! The guards are unlocking the door."

They hurled the third dummy out of the window just as they could hear the key turning in the lock. Running on their toes, they raced for a position behind the door that was now opening. G-8's Luger was ready.

The two powerful German guards who had been outside the door came plunging in. They were oblivious to everything else about the room but that smashed window.

As they came into view, G-8 began pumping lead into them. He must not waste any bullets. Two apiece was all he dared spare. One of the guards pitched over and went down, and the other was just about to peer down out of the window when G-8 shot him. He pitched over headfirst and fell through the opening.

"Come on, we'll toss out the other one, too," G-8 said.

All three of them heaved mightily on the body of the second German guard and saw his boots vanish through the window. They didn't wait to hear the sodden thud of his body far below.

"We've got to get out as fast as we can," G-8 hissed. "All the guards around the castle will be up here to find out what's happened."

They ran out into the hall. G-8 closed the door, locked it, and dropped the key into his pocket.

"That will keep them out of there for a while," he said.

On their toes, they went running down the stairs, and soon they came into the narrow corridor of the top floor. Below, they could hear shouts and the pounding of running feet. They passed Count Maulwurf's bedroom door, and G-8 stopped. He opened it noiselessly and poked in his Luger, but the room was empty.

"Come on in here," he said.

Nippy and Bull crowded into the room with him and he closed the door. He stood there with his Luger held ready, as the pounding of feet grew louder. Perhaps two dozen shouting Germans went running past the closed door, and G-8 could hear them clattering up the stairs that led to the tower room.

He opened the door and listened. He could hear them banging on the door of the tower room, trying to break it down. No sounds came from the lower floors of the castle. They stole out into the corridor, closed the door softly, and made for the stairs that would take them closer to the ground.

They were moving along the corridor of the floor below when another commotion came to their ears. Again they ducked into a room that fortunately was empty, and they waited there until the next contingent of running Germans had passed. Then, outside again, they made for the ground floor and the exit.

They met no one on the lower floor, and it seemed that all the guards inside the castle had gone up to the tower room.

CALMLY, G-8 and his Battle Aces walked out of the rear door and came around toward the front. The only light they had was what little came from the castle windows. There were no guards walking their posts. Around at the front of the castle, they saw flashlights blinking.

G-8 looked above the spot where they were congregated, and he smiled and nodded up to the tower room. Three German heads could be seen peering down through the smashed window. The guards below were yelling up at them. There seemed to be some doubt as to just what had happened. The three dummies and the two dead German guards were very confusing.

"What's the idea of hanging around here?" Bull Martin whispered.

"We're not going to hang around," G-8 told him. He pointed over into the darkest shadows. "There's the car that brought us. We'll start it rolling down the mountain, but we won't start the engine until we get a good distance away.

G-8 got in behind the wheel and in the darkness Nippy and Bull pushed the car gently along the drive in front of the castle until it was headed down the mountain road. Then the two Battle Aces hopped on the running board and climbed in. The car gathered speed. G-8 held it back with the brake, for he dared not turn on his lights so near the castle. Almost at the bottom of the mountain, where the road leveled out, the Master Spy started the engine and switched on his lights.

"Where to now?" Bull demanded.

"A German airdrome that I know of," G-8 answered.

"What kind of a field is it?" Nippy asked.

"It's a pursuit field," G-8 said, "and that's going to make it tougher. If we could get to an observation field, we could steal a two-seater and all go back in that. But this way, we'll have to steal at least two ships."

Nippy Weston grinned. "Let's swipe three," he said. "We'll do the enemy air service that much more harm."

"It's O. K. if we can get away with it," G-8 said. "We'll have to see how the land lies."

But when they reached the field, after having parked the car and walked for some distance, they found that there were no ships on the line. It was still dark and dawn was some time away.

"We can't go in there and swipe three ships just like that," Bull ventured.

"No," G-8 agreed, "I'm afraid not. We'll have to wait until the mechanics wheel the ships out on the line, just before dawn, and get them ready to take off."

They lay at the edge of the field while the hours dragged by. There was no great rush. The plans were safe in G-8's pocket, and that digging machine wouldn't come near Paris until morning, and perhaps not then.

So they waited until just before the first gray light of dawn streaked the east, they saw lights

bobbing out on the tarmac. Mechanics were rolling out the Fokkers for the dawn patrol.

AS they saw the ships being wheeled out, they began sneaking across the airdrome. Mechanics were working about the nearest three ships. Gasoline was being poured into the tanks and they were checking instrument controls. Finally, just as the first light came, they started the engines. There was a mist rising from the field.

G-8, Nippy, and Bull, crawling on their bellies, became wet with the heavy dew, but they moved on. They reached the first plane.

"O. K.," G-8 said, "You take this one, Nip."

The mechanics had passed on, letting the ships warm by themselves. G-8 took the next ship and Bull the next. As the big fellow climbed into the cockpit, a mechanic yelled. But the roars of the three Mercedes cut out all other sounds. The three Fokkers waddled over the chocks and thundered into the air as mechanics and pilots came running, to gape into the mist that enveloped the escaping ships.

G-8 and his Battle Aces climbed and turned toward their own lines. It grew light and as they droned over No Man's Land in the German planes, a flight of Nieuports came romping down from above.

G-8 stood up in his ship and signaled wildly, but the Nieuports, coming from the east where the French held the lines, paid no attention to his waving.

Machine guns rattled. G-8, Bull, and Nippy dived, ducked, and zigzagged to escape those slugs. Three Spads joined in the battle.

Suddenly, G-8 saw a puff of black smoke belching from the side of Nippy's Fokker. They were well behind the lines now, and Nippy was slipping down with a conked motor to try and land before fire broke out.

G-8 looked back, saw that the terrier ace had gotten down all right. The three Spads landed in the same field that Nippy had chosen, but the Nieuports stayed aloft to harass and clatter away at G-8 and Bull.

G-8 felt for a handkerchief to use as a white flag, then he remembered he had used it to gag the young *leutnant*. He signaled frantically to Bull as slugs from the Nieuports crashed through his wing

and tail covering. He shot up his fist in rapid dot and dash signals.

The instrument board in front of G-8 vanished. He didn't dare fire back at the Nieuport for fear of shooting them down, yet it was most important that he and Bull should live.

Suddenly, Bull Martin got the idea. He yanked out his handkerchief and began waving it in the air. The Nieuports stopped firing and dropped in behind them. They were still with them when G-8 and Bull landed back at Le Bourget field.

Battle greeted them at the door. "I say, gentlemen, I'll have breakfast ready in a jiffy. But where's Mr. Nippy?"

"He's all right," G-8 said. "He went down on our side of the lines."

"Yeah," Bull added, "he'll be along pretty soon in a truck or something."

To Battle's query about breakfast, G-8 answered, "There isn't time for breakfast, Battle. We're going to Paris at once."

"Yeah, but you can bet your life I'm going to eat on the way," Bull said. "Give me a loaf of bread, a butcher knife, and a jar of jam, Battle, and I'll make breakfast while we're riding. It'll be better than nothing."

So while G-8 drove the long, low roadster at top speed toward Paris, Bull Martin sat beside him and cut thick slices of bread which he spread with jam. Their pangs of hunger were satisfied to some extent.

Then they were in the office of the great Yank general and G-8 was telling his story.

"You see, General," he said, "we've got this plan." He spread Count Maulwurf's plan on the general's desk. "Right here, sir," he said. "You see they even have the street marked where the tunneling machine will dig under the Seine River."

"I see that," the general nodded. "But this tunneling machine isn't making any noise, you know. We can't be sure of its location or speed. We can't blow up that area until the machine gets there, and we won't know when it has passed because we won't be able to hear it. It will be too far down."

"That's it exactly," G-8 said. "That's why, at this point, we'll sink a big mine. We've got to work fast. This mine will go down into the earth maybe a



hundred and fifty feet. When the tunneling machine reaches the mine that is buried below the Seine River, the mine will explode. It will not only blast the machine, but the river will flow into the tunnel and render it useless for all time."

The general frowned over the plans for a moment, then he looked up.

"By heaven, you're right, G-8!" he said. "We'll begin work on it immediately. We'll get that shaft down below the bottom of the Seine just as fast as it's humanly possible to drill."

"Good," G-8 nodded.

## **CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE**

### ***Hallway to Hell***

NIPPY WESTON landed his smoking Fokker behind the lines, leaped out before the fire could get him, and waved to G-8 and Bull, who were racing on. Three Spad pilots were landing close to the terrier ace, and now they came running toward him with drawn guns. Nippy only laughed at them, but they were very serious.

"Listen, you birds," Nippy cracked, "just because a guy is flying a Fokker and wearing a German uniform doesn't necessarily mean he's a German."

"And who do you think you are?" demanded the biggest of the three pilots.

"I am Nippy Weston, one of G-8's Battle Aces," the terrier ace told them. "Do you want to make something of it?"

"We'll make something of it if we don't get identification."

"O. K.," Nippy nodded, "so you want to argue."

"Listen," said one of the pilots, "this guy speaks like an American."

"Certainly, because I am an American," Nippy chirped. "You see those other two Fokkers? Well, G-8 is flying one of them and Bull Martin is flying the other. We've just gotten out of a tower room in a Black Forest Castle. We risked our necks to swipe three Fokkers, then you had to come jumping down on us."

They stood there, arguing back and forth. Nippy was kidding part of the time, but the three Spad pilots remained very serious. At length, the terrier ace made them a proposition.

"I'll tell you what we'll do," he said. "One of you birds carry me back on your wing to Le Bourget field. I'm not apt to jump off on the way. When we get back there, if I can't be identified, I'll shoot myself."

The pilots agreed. Nippy climbed on the wing of one of the Spads. Soon they were in the air, churning toward Le Bourget. In a few minutes, they landed at the great French airdrome and, at Nippy's direction, taxied toward the end hangar. Battle came out to see what was up. The three Spad pilots climbed down from their cockpits. With guns trained on the terrier ace, they marched in the door.

"Battle," Nippy said, "tell these buzzards who I am." He was grinning.

"Oh, Mr. Nippy," Battle said, "I'm delighted to see you. You're just in time for breakfast."

"Swell," Nippy nodded. "Maybe these three bozos who have been trying to kill me will sit in and have a bite—that is, if they're satisfied I'm not a German, by this time."

The three Yank pilots had already lowered their guns.

"Oh, but I say," Battle cried, "permit me to introduce Lieutenant Nippy Weston, one of the assistants of Mr. G-8. Come in, gentlemen. I'll have breakfast ready in a jiffy."

The Yanks began to apologize, but Nippy only laughed. "Forget it," he said. "We're all whole, and nobody can blame you. I was only kidding, anyway."

They sat and talked. "What's going on at the front lately?" Nippy asked.

"The Germans have started a push on the Fonteil sector," one of the Yanks said. "Do you want to join us? We were going up to give the Yanks a hand when we spotted you coming across."

Nippy turned to Battle. "Where have G-8 and Bull gone?" he asked.

"They went to Paris," Battle told him. "I believe they were going to see the general."

"O. K.," the terrier ace nodded. "Sure, I'll go with you birds. G-8 and Bull won't need me now. I can stand a little fresh air and fun."

TEN minutes later, four Spads were in the air. One was old number Thirteen, flown by Nippy, and the other three ships were piloted by the men who had tried to kill him not so long before. Out across northern France they droned, coming ever nearer to the front.

Suddenly, Nippy Weston straightened in his seat. They had been flying along at about a thousand feet and he had been staring dreamily beneath him. The terrain in that section was rugged. Great rocks jutted up out of the ground. Over to the left rose a low bed-rock cliff.

But it was not the cliff that had attracted Nippy's attention. It was, instead, the sight of a half dozen men in gray German uniforms emerging from a crack between two great rocks. They seemed blinded by the bright sunlight. Hearing the roar of the planes overhead, they turned suddenly and ducked back behind the rocks.

"Jumping Jupiter!" Nippy chirped. "If that isn't something. Maybe that's an entrance to the tunnel."

He signaled the other three pilots to go on, and turned back immediately to Le Bourget. He was flying wide open, and when he had landed, he leaped from his cockpit and ran for the apartment in the end hangar.

"Battle!" he yelled.

The manservant came out of the kitchen. "Yes, sir," he said. "Did you call, sir?"

"I'll say I called!" The terrier ace was highly excited. "Listen. I just saw something between here and the Front—half a dozen Germans emerging from between a couple of big rocks. That means there's a crack that extends all the way down to the tunnel that machine is digging to Paris. I've got to get down in that tunnel, and I've got to keep G-8 posted as to how far the machine has gone so he can blow it up."

"Yes, sir," Battle bowed. "You'll take the portable radio kit with you?"

Nippy nodded. "All right," he said. "I'll keep you posted and you can get in touch with G-8 or the general."

"Yes, sir," Battle said. "It will be a pleasure, sir. And what can I do for you now?"

"You can get me a general's uniform,

Nippy said, "and make my face over so I'll look older and more like a Heinie."

"Righto," Battle beamed.

The manservant and master of the make-up kit was in his element now. He brought out a general's uniform and the big make-up box. Swiftly, he went to work on Nippy's face. When he was through, the terrier ace put on the uniform.

"O. K.," he said. "Where's the portable radio?"

"I'll get it for you from the wardrobe closet," Battle said. "In a moment, he brought it to Nippy. It was a small, compact battery wireless set packed in a suitcase.

Nippy Weston grinned, patted the Luger at his side, and said, "Well, I'm off for the tunnel, Battle. Wish me luck."

"Yes, sir," Battle said. "I wish you all the luck possible, sir. I shall be waiting here at the radio to catch any message you may send."

The terrier ace hailed a motorcycle rider and climbed into his sidecar. He gave him directions and was whisked away at top speed. When he reached a position near the crack in the rocks, got out and walked across the fields toward it. He approached the crack from behind a big boulder, gingerly working his way around it, until he could look down into the crevice. He saw the unmistakable prints of German boots in the earth between the rocks.

The terrier ace hesitated for a moment, then he said to himself, "O. K., Nippy, get going. You've got a job to do."

With that, he slipped in between the rocks and began the steep descent into the tunnel.

## **CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO**

### ***Death's Dead-End Road***

THERE had been no more time wasted in conversation in the general's office. The work on the mine shaft deep into the earth below the River Seine was already well under way. G-8, Bull and

the general had been out watching the progress of the work. Down, down went that shaft through the waters of the Seine, through the river bottom and into the depths of the earth. Finally, the general nodded to G-8.

"Everything seems to be going very well," he said. "That reminds me." He held out his hand. "I must congratulate you, G-8, on freeing all those American soldiers in the tunnel. That was a marvelous job."

"I meant to ask you how they made out," G-8 said.

"I think practically all of them got out of the tunnel," the general said. "Of course, it's very difficult to make a detailed check-up as yet, but we suffered at the most only small losses."

"What did they do after they got out?" G-8 asked.

"Yeah," Bull nodded, "I was wondering about that, too. I figured if they got out, they would drop some high explosive in the tunnel and blow up that whole section of it."

"It appears there wasn't quite time," the general said. "As soon as the American soldiers began coming out of the ground, the Germans made a sudden attack in that area. Most of our men got away, but the Germans succeeded in seizing those front line trenches of ours."

They continued to watch as the work progressed. "I think they're carrying on very well," the general said. "Suppose you men come and have lunch with me."

G-8 and Bull went to the general's hotel and ate a hearty lunch.

"If you care to, you can come over to my office," the general said. "I have a few details to attend to. Then we'll go back and see how they're coming along with the work. They should be just about through by the time we get back there."

G-8 and Bull agreed. At the general's office, G-8 called up the end hangar. Battle answered the phone.

"Let me talk to Nippy," the Master Spy said.

"I'm sorry, sir," Battle said, "but he isn't here."

"Isn't there!" G-8 cried. "Hasn't he come back from the Front yet?"

"Oh, yes, sir," Battle answered. "Quite some time ago. He brought back the three pilots who, I

believe, helped to shoot him down. They all ate breakfast together, then they went off toward the Front. A few minutes after they had left, Mr. Nippy returned. He was in a great hurry, sir. He said he had seen a slit in the rocks not far from Le Bourget, and half a dozen Germans emerging from it. He's positive that this crack between the rocks leads down into the tunnel."

G-8 froze to the phone. "Where is he now?" he demanded.

"Well, sir, to make a long story short," Battle explained, "Mr. Nippy had me make over his face, then he dressed in a German general's uniform, took the portable wireless set with him, and started out. He said you would want to know how far the digging machine had gone so you could tell just where to blow it up."

"Good heavens!" G-8 exploded. "You mean he's down there in the tunnel now?"

"Oh, quite," Battle said. "He left here some time ago."

"Have you heard from him since he left?" G-8 was suddenly desperate.

"Not a buzz, sir."

"We've got to get him back," G-8 said. "He'll be blown to pieces or drowned."

"I'm waiting to hear from him," Battle said. "If I can get in communication with him, I'll tell him to come out at once."

"Do that," G-8 said.

HE SLAMMED up the receiver. Bull Martin's face was white as he demanded, "What's happened to Nippy?"

G-8 related the information he had just received from Battle.

"Holy Herring!" Bull exploded. "The poor kid!" He turned to the general. "We've got to stop this business. We can't let them put the explosive down that shaft."

The general's brows knit together in a frown. "Good heavens, man," he said, "we can't stop now. This means everything to us. I feel as badly about Weston as you do, but we can't risk our entire forces against the life of one man."

Suddenly, Bull Martin grabbed G-8 by the wrist and began dragging him out of the office.

"Come on," he said.

They ran out to the street and G-8 didn't hang back. They leaped into the roadster, and with Bull behind the wheel, went charging to the banks of the Seine River where the shaft was being sunk. Bull raced to the French superintendent in charge of the work. He tried to tell him in French what he wanted, but G-8 had to do the explaining, because Bull was too excited to make his French understandable.

The superintendent shook his head.

"I am sorry, Monsieur," he said, "but already the shaft has reached its prescribed depth. The explosive has been laid there. We are only waiting for the machine to reach it and blow it up."

In desperate rage, Bull Martin drew back his right fist to strike. G-8 caught his arm before it could do any damage, so Bull could only glare.

Bull strode away a few paces, then came back. G-8 caught him by the arm again. "Hang onto yourself, Bull," he said. "I'm afraid there isn't anything we can do."

"Nothing we can do!" Bull yelled. "Don't you understand that Nippy is in there? He's my pal and he's in the tunnel. He'll be drowned!"

"Shut up!" G-8 cracked. "I feel as badly about Nippy as you do, but bellowing around isn't going to help him."

The two suddenly stood frozen. A rumbling sound came from the depths of the earth. Water from the Seine spouted up. Men and women ran back from the shores as clouds of mud rose up and began spattering down again over a wide area. The rumbling continued, then the waters of the Seine began pouring down into the great hole that had been torn in the earth.

A French woman cried, "Look! *Mon Dieu!* The waters of the Seine are flowing uphill."

That was true. The waters were coming back from downstream to pour into the hole.

G-8 turned sick at the pit of his stomach, and Bull Martin was standing there, his jaw clenched and tears rolling down his cheeks. Then the Master Spy took him by the arm and led him like a blubbering child toward the roadster. They climbed in and drove slowly, silently back toward Le Bourget.

When they reached the end hangar at Le Bourget, Battle greeted them with a long, sad face.

"I say, I haven't heard a word from Mr. Nippy yet," he said.

"No," Bull almost yelled, "and you won't ever hear from him. He's either blown up or drowned. He was the swellest kid in the world. Why, it was Nippy who got us the tunnel plans."

G-8 nodded without speaking.

"The kid just wrote his own death warrant when he swiped those plans," Bull choked.

G-8 WAS about to light a cigarette when the sputter of a motorcycle sounded outside. Battle, Bull, and G-8 almost knocked each other over in an effort to get to the door, then they were almost bowled over when Nippy came charging in. He was panting as if he had run all the way from the tunnel.

"Jumping Jupiter!" he cried. "Did I get out of that thing just in time!"

Bull Martin was hugging him, and G-8 was grinning more broadly than he had in months.

"You see," the terrier ace explained, "I got down in the tunnel and started going up toward the front end. There's one good thing. They're not using Yanks to lug back the dirt from that machine, now. They're making their own men do it."

"I wasn't more than ten feet from that passage that led up through the crack in the rocks when I heard a roar and everybody started to run in different directions. The roar came from off toward Paris, and it was terrific. Then I heard Germans yelling, 'Wasser! Wasser!' and I thought to myself, 'Well, this is a lousy place to take swimming lessons,' so I got out as fast as I could."

Then the terrier ace turned on his big pal, Bull Martin. "Hey, you big ox," he cracked, "what was the idea of you and G-8 leaving me flat?"

"Listen, squirt," Bull flung back, "don't be blaming me for anything." Is that so?" Nippy flared. "Well, let me tell you something, you big *dummkopf*. If you and G-8 had stuck with me and come down to land, we would all have been together, and I wouldn't have come close to being trapped in that tunnel."

G-8 was laughing at both of them. "Listen, you two," he cut in, "lay off the argument for once, will you? There's only one man around here who's right at this particular moment, and that's Battle."

Nippy and Bull both whirled on G-8. "What do you mean, Battle's right?"

"I mean Battle has everything on his side in this argument," G8 laughed, "because right now he's started getting us the best feed he's ever turned out."

"Righto," Battle beamed. "Coming up, on the fire, and all that sort of thing."

**THE END**



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