

LUCKY LANE swore as he realized he had lost his formation in the billowing gray clouds. He leveled off between two layers of leaden mist and peered about him. The other three of the “Four Lunatics” had been behind his Spad not thirty seconds past. But now he was alone. Not only that, but his gas was running low and he was not even sure of his location.

He circled for a moment and then dived through the cloud bank beneath him. Pug Flanagan and the other two Lunatics of his crazy Devildog quartet might have plunged on without seeing him.

The bullet-scarred Spad ripped on through the cloud. Lucky eased back on the stick as he saw the mists begin to thin. He was down to three thousand feet—and there was a good chance that he was still over German soil.

A flitting shadow appeared through the edge of the cloud as he leveled out. He looked at it sharply and then relaxed. It was a Spad—probably Pug Flanagan, the big Irish Devildog, with the others behind him.

Lucky suddenly sat up, his eyes popping. For the ships behind that Spad were red-beaked Pfalzes! And the Spad pilot was flying at point, leading the formation!

Lucky Lane almost rubbed his eyes. Instinctively he pulled up toward the edge of the cloud again. As he did, the Spad leading the Boche ships whirled into a tight bank. Then he saw that it was not a Devildog ship. On its side was the emblem of a black silk hat. One of the “High Hat” outfit—the stiff-necked aristocrat squadron from Boston and Back Bay.

With a flashing turn, the High Hat ship charged in at Lucky’s Spad. Red flame lanced from its guns and a stream of crackling tracer poured past the Devildog’s head. Lucky backsticked into the cloud, cursing like a mule-skinner. Then rage replaced his first alarm. The Spad screeched back in a mad reversement. Vickers blasting, Lucky Lane pitched for the tail of the High Hat plane.

Like hungry buzzards, the five red-beaked Pfalzes swarmed in with Spandaus blazing. German lead gashed through the Spad’s wings.

Lucky kicked out of one lethal torrent and ringed a pivoting Boche in his sights. The trips went tight under his angry clutch. Two streaks of searing Vickers hate struck squarely into the German’s pit. The pilot fell over his stick and the Pfalze reeled into a dive.

The High Hat Spad rolled up into a snarling Immelmann. Lucky flung to one side as the pilot’s guns sprayed his tail. Death missed him by inches as the spewing Vickers gouged up his turtleback. The High Hat ship flashed by, the pilot glaring across his guns.

Lucky’s lips flattened into a grim line. The damned traitor! Or was that a captured ship the Boche were using for some trick?

It made no difference. It was kill or be killed, with the odds five to one against him. His Spad leaped as a fierce crossfire raked him from two sides. Flying glass filled his pit, scratched across his face. He snapped into a vicious whip and lashed a zooming Boche from beneath.

Then abruptly the battering hail diminished. He saw one of the red-beaked ships pull up in a frantic climb. A Devildog Spad had erupted from the nearest mountainous cloud. Behind it came two more. The rest of the Lunatics had arrived!

Jammed into the pit of the leading ship was the huge body of Pug Flanagan. The big Irishman slammed his ship onto tilted wings and unleashed scarlet death from his chanting guns. The High Hat pilot careened wildly and dropped a hundred feet. The Pfalzes screeched about to meet the newcomers. Mack Tuttle and Benny Sparks split from their parallel dives and charged like madmen into the midst of the Germans.

Lucky rolled out of a slashing Spandau blast and plunged for the High Hat Spad. The other ship had pulled out of its slip. With a sudden chandelle it ripped up at Lucky’s tail. Lucky kicked free and crashed through with a furious burst. He could see the sinister trail of his slugs on the wings of the High Hat plane. But before he could twist the nose to rake the man at the stick, a spinning Pfalze roared down in his path.

He hurled his Spad to one side. The Pfalze grazed

his wing. He flipped into a vertical bank. Suddenly there was a spurt of black smoke from the spinning Pfalze. Without further warning, a terrific explosion blew the German plane to bits.

The hot breath of the inferno scorched Lucky's face. He ducked as fragments of wreckage crashed toward him. Something struck with stunning force against the side of his head. Lights danced before his eyes and he slumped against the pit. Seconds passed, which in his stupor seemed an eternity. He could feel the Spad rocketing down the sky. Weakly he closed the throttle and strove to sit up. Through dazed eyes he saw the High Hat Spad diving, half a mile away. With an effort he pulled himself upright as he saw the desolate ground flash up toward him. He eased the ship out of its plunge. Then suddenly his eyes narrowed.

The High Hat ship had cut back in a glide as though to land. But there was no landing place in sight—nothing but a bush-dotted stretch between two wooded slopes. Between the bushes showed yellow-gray patches that looked like rocks. A ship would come to grief swiftly there.

With a groan, Lucky lifted his aching head and shoved open the throttle. The Hispano sputtered and missed.

"Hell's bells!" he mourned. "What a swell time for that!"

The Spad was dropping quickly. In a few seconds more the engine might pick up—but that would be too late. He had to land or crack up. With a snort, he jerked the ship into the wind. The only place was that scrubby patch where the High Hat pilot had—He stiffened. Then his jaw dropped in blank amazement. The High Hat Spad had vanished!

He stared around the sky. It was empty, save where his three Lunatics still fought furiously with the Boche. The Germans in the red-beaked Pfalzes were working closer to the clouds in the effort to escape from the Teufelhund trio.

Lucky's gaze came back to earth. He started as something odd caught his eye. That stretch of scrubby land—it had a queer look. Those rocks—they weren't rocks at all! They were blobs of

yellow paint over something lumped up on canvas. Papier-mâché rocks!

He seized the throttle frantically as he realized the truth. The bush-covered section was nothing but a clever camouflage net on poles, obviously hiding some kind of a base. That was how the High Hat ship had disappeared!

He jazzed the throttle with a last wild effort as the swaying ship settled toward the ground. A narrow runway became visible, a stretch leading under the camouflage nettings. He was headed straight for it. Underneath it he saw darting Heinies in Feldgrau, springing toward Maxims and Mauser rifles.

The Hispano broke out of its faltering song with a throaty roar, but too late. Flying-speed gone, the Spad stalled and dropped heavily to the ground. Before Lucky could kick it aside he was under the netting.

Two hundred feet away was the High Hat Spad. Fury burned suddenly in the Devildog pilot's breast. He was trapped—but he would finish off that traitor before they got him!

His fingers leaped to his trips. The Vickers rasped eagerly. One gouging burst tore through the tail of the High Hat ship. Then Lucky's Spad veered in a violent arc as something struck against one wheel. A dozen terrified Germans wilted before his spouting guns. A Maxim flamed briefly and went dark as his pinwheeling ship raked its ill-fated crew. Lucky was thrown against the cowl as the Spad began its dizzy whirl.

Instinctively he pulled the throttle. The ship lurched to a stop.

He drew himself up, clawing at his pistol. But a score of Boche were on him in a flash. He was dragged to the ground. A burly Unteroffizier lifted an ugly-looking Luger.

"Pig of a Teufelhund!" he snarled. "You have killed for the last time."

"Wait!" came a sharp interruption. The Unteroffizier dropped his hand sullenly to his side as the pilot of the High Hat ship approached. "Let me see the prisoner."

"He is one of the Teufelhund swine, Excellenz," muttered the subordinate.

“Idiot, do you think I could not see the insignia on his plane when we were fighting?” rapped the other. He was tall, grim, with the haughty, overbearing manner of a true Prussian. His blue eyes were cold as they rested on Lucky. “So my bullets found a mark?” he smiled mirthlessly as he saw the gash Lucky had received.

Lucky eyed him stonily. He understood German without difficulty, but it might be as well not to let the Boche know it.

“Like all Amerikaner rifferaff, he knows only his own uncouth language, Excellenz,” said the Unteroffizier.

The Prussian nodded carelessly. Lucky saw through the partly opened collar of the man’s flying-suit that he wore an American uniform beneath. The German pulled the collar over the uniform as he saw Lucky’s glance, then shrugged.

“After all, what difference does it make?” he said to the other German. “He will soon be dead.”

A stocky German Leutnant came hurrying from one edge of the camouflage net. He had a worried expression.

“Our pilots, Herr von Grohner—they have fled into the clouds! The three Teufelhund. Planes are circling around above us—it may mean a strafe!”

Lucky Lane started. Von Grohner! Then this haughty Prussian with the pale blue eyes of a killer must be the elusive and notorious German agent.

“Don’t be a simpleton, Herr Leutnant,” von Grohner snapped at his aide. “How could they strafe us when they do not know the base is here?”

“But the prisoner—”

“He found it only by accident—he picked it as the only place to land. I heard his engine missing.”

“It was not missing when he came in here,” grunted the Leutnant. He scowled at Lucky. “And even if they do not see the base, they will go back and tell about your plane, Ezcellenz. Our plans will be ruined.”

Von Grohner frowned. “I have already thought of that. They may have seen the insignia—but they will think I was shot down by German pilots. When they dived out of the clouds I was not firing at this verfluchte Schwein. In the battle, I doubt

that they saw me fire that last burst—it was all very quick.”

Lucky’s fists clenched. The damned German was probably right.

“But if they did see you?” objected the Leutnant nervously. “The Allies G-2 would give much to know where to find you.”

“I will take care of them—as I did that meddling fool from the French escadrille. Now, take this information—see that it is in the Kommandant’s hands as soon as possible.”

Von Grohner opened his wallet and withdrew several franc notes as he spoke.

“It is written in the new Z ink,” he said crisply. “Be careful not to expose it long to the light—”

He broke off, the money still in his hand. The drone of the circling Spads above the camouflage nets had changed to a loud roar. At the same moment a frightened German came running from his observation post near the edge of the nettings.

“They have seen the wreck of the Pfalze which was shot down, Herr Excellenz! They must think it is der Teufelhund—”

The Leutnant dashed to the opening through which the man had been looking. Lucky tensed, his eyes on his idling ship. It had groundlooped so that it was pointed almost toward the entrance. If only he could make a break!

“Herr von Grohner!” yelled the Leutnant. “They have mistaken the nettings for solid ground. One of them is going to land—”

Lucky froze. One of his Lunatics was going to risk his life in a dangerous landing in what he thought a rocky, bush-strewn field. The plane would crash through that netting, perhaps killing the pilot. He looked around desperately. A Maxim crew stood gaping upward a few yards away.

Suddenly his eyes lit up. Near the Maxim was a box of hand grenades. He threw a swift glance at his nearest captor, one of two stalwart Germans who had seized him and snatched his pistol. Both of them were looking fearfully toward the spot where the plane was approaching.

Von Grohner’s harsh voice rang out as Lucky steeled himself for the leap.

“Get back from the center. Let him crash through, the Dummkopf! Gun-crews, be ready to shoot down those two behind him.”

With a vicious swing Lucky jerked free and drove a smashing uppercut into the jaw of the closest guard. The man reeled back. Lucky’s fingers flashed to the Boche’s Luger just as the second German struck. The Luger flamed. The man fell.

Lucky dived headlong for the box of grenades. A Maxim gunner charged at him, cursing. Lucky drilled him through the head. A gun cracked above the sound of the gliding Devildog Spad. One of the netting poles splintered and sagged. Canvas looped over the Maxim gun as Lucky snatched up the first grenade and pulled the safety-pin. One of the gunners hurled it aside and whipped the machine gun around.

Lucky jumped to his feet. The Luger barked again. The gunner slumped as the Maxim began its chattering roar. A stream of lead scorched above Lucky’s head. With a prayer he hurled the grenade up at the camouflage net. If he had timed it wrong—C-r-a-s-h! The air was filled with flying splinters of iron as the bomb exploded. A gaping hole appeared in the canvas net. Through the hole a Devildog Spad became visible, twenty feet in the air.

An enormous red face loomed behind the guns of the Spad—the face of Pug Flanagan, filled with astonishment as the apparently solid ground opened before him. The Hispano bellowed under suddenly wide-open throttle. The Spad settled sluggishly, while the terrified Germans broke and ran from beneath that threat of crushing death.

A Mauser rifle blazed across the camouflaged area at Lucky. He felt the slug nip at his shoulder. Hot blood flowed down his arm. He struck out at a plunging Heinie with a gleaming bayonet. The sharp knife ripped through his flying-suit sleeve as his fist connected with yielding flesh. He snatched the rifle and whirled. Above his head the Spad flashed with a deafening roar. Lucky gasped out a cry of relief. It was clear. Pug had held his ship in the air.

A face distorted with rage came into Lucky’s view as he streaked for his idling Spad. He saw von Grohner’s pistol whip toward him. With all his strength he hurled the bayoneted Mauser into the Prussian’s face. Von Grohner flung himself back in terror, one arm lifted to ward off that slashing death. The stock of the gun struck him a glancing blow and the bayonet passed above his head. Lucky snarled a grim shout of triumph as he saw the German sprawl to the ground.

He reached the idling Spad. A glaring Heinie clutched at his arm as he vaulted for the pit. Lucky struck the throttle with one hand, kicking back savagely as he seized the stick. His boot caught the German squarely in the face. The man tottered backward and went to his knees. Lucky dropped into the cockpit. He bent low and hurled the riddled plane for the narrow entrance.

A murderous Maxim fire cut through his wings. His compass flew to pieces under the first savage burst. He crouched low and pointed the ship for the narrow entrance. An engine thundered somewhere behind him. He flung a swift look back and saw von Grohner stagger toward the High Hat ship, his face streaked red with blood.

Ahead loomed the opening between two wide-set poles that held up part of the canopy. Lucky raced through and into open air. The Spad lurched around, crosswind, under the touch of his booted feet. It bounced twice and lifted into the air.

He zoomed swiftly as the ship gained speed. The three Lunatics swept down beside him. Pug Flanagan waved a mighty paw in salute, and even the mournful visage of Mack Tuttle held a suspicion of a grin. Lucky kicked around at the top of his zoom and stared downward.

Yellow smoke was pouring from the hidden base through the hole he had made with the grenade. As he watched, a Maxim began to stutter through the aperture. The canopy parted in another spot farther on, and a second machine gun began to blister the air, then a third.

Lucky smiled grimly. He wagged his wings and pitched down toward the spouting guns. The Spad roared down steeply. Just then a rocket went flaring up from the entrance of the base. He craned

his neck for a hasty glance. The next instant he was pulling up madly, the strafe forgotten.

The three red-beaked Pfalzes were back—and with them came seven Fokkers, all roaring down the sky.

Nine Boche butchers—on top!

“This is no place for four Devildogs,” muttered Lucky. “Lunatics or no Lunatics.”

Once at the same altitude, or on top, they might make it a different story. But there was little chance of getting there just now. He signaled the others as he zoomed for the lowering clouds. The three Devildogs raced up behind him. Spandaus were shredding the air as he reached the first fringe of swirling mist. He saw Benny Sparks twisting frantically under two probing blasts from right and left. With a screech of protesting wings, he threw the Spad on its wing tips and hammered in a vengeful fusillade. A plunging Fokker continued its plunge—with a dead man at the stick. Benny whipped in for a kill as the .second German pulled up.

A third Fokker cut across Lucky’s path as he ducked back for the clouds. He stabbed with a single, vicious blast and then raced into the friendly cloud, while behind him a stricken German rode his death-ship down to ruin.

Lucky’s breath was coming in gasps as he slacked the Hispano’s speed. Things had come too fast. It was a miracle that they had been able to get clear. Now for a swift run to the Devildog drome with word of the Prussian spy!

He groaned as his eyes rested on the wrecked compass. He had not the slightest idea of the right direction—and his three comrades were already lost in the gray skies. He climbed hurriedly and found an open space, but no Devildog ships met his anxious gaze. There was only one way out. He would have to hedge-hop back over Germany.

He flew ahead for several minutes, then went down on a wary glide. As he broke into clear air he saw a highway beneath. A German supply column was moving sluggishly along. A few Mausers cracked as he sped on, but the shots were wide of the target. He edged up again to the bottom of the cloud. That highway must lead to the Front. If he

followed above it, he would be able to cross somewhere, though it might be far from his base.

Ten minutes went by. An archie battery spotted him as he neared the rear lines. In a few moments the crumf of German archie filled the air. The Spad rocked as a shell burst almost under one wing.

Another shell burst, and then to Lucky’s astonishment the guns went silent. Only for a moment did surprise hold him. The next instant a line of significant black holes magically appeared in his left wing. The Spad shook under a violent pounding.

He came about in a scorching bank, then he rasped out an oath. It was von Grohner!

The obnoxious High Hat emblem swam before Lucky’s sights as he charged in at the Boche. He tripped his guns. The belts danced and thrashed for one greedy burst—then the Vickers choked into silence.

A little chill ran down Lucky’s spine. Empty guns—and a coldblooded butcher at his back. He swerved hastily as von Grohner let loose another series of chopping blasts. He was almost to the Front. If he could hold out—

With a metallic clank something cracked against the cowl as the Hispano began to miss. There was a frightful roaring as the propeller went to pieces. Lucky snapped off his switch as a puff of smoke came from the racking engine. Another Spandau burst gouged into his tail. He swore. The German seemed to be everywhere. Then his eyes dilated. It was not a High Hat Spad on his tail now! It was one of the red-beaked mob, and even as he looked he saw two more drop out of the clouds. Von Grohner was signaling them to finish the job.

Lucky gave a cry of pure rage. The Prussian was not even bothering to finish him off. He was calling in his scrub team for the job!

Then as he saw von Grohner’s ship turn west and merge with the gray mists, he realized the truth. The German was afraid of being spotted by Allied gunners, who would report seeing a High Hat squadron ship attacking a Devildog.

Lucky gritted his teeth as he madly darted out of a withering fire from his left. At last his luck had run out. He was finished. Then a battling light

flashed back into his eyes and his bruised jaw set hard.

“No, by God!” he snarled. He glared after the vanishing Prussian. “I’ll get you yet, you damned skunk!”

He threw the Spad into a dizzy spin. Tighter and tighter became its breathless whirl, till sky and ground melted into one spinning mass before his eyes. Something cracked ominously back in the fuselage. He eased the rudder gingerly. The altimeter was gone, its dial in ruin, but he estimated his height at two thousand feet.

No-Man’s-Land lay directly beneath him, gutted with shell-holes, marked here and there with tiny bundles he knew were the dead.

Two of the Pfalzes shrieked in at him as he fought the Spad out of its wild dance. He kicked under one with a whirlwind slip. A strut sagged as he pulled out. A thudding at his tail told of German fury loosed once more. He dropped the left wing and slashed down swiftly. He was going to crash in No-Man’s-Land. And he would be lucky even to reach there alive. Lucky! He cursed the word. Who in hell had ever given him that name?

Back came the stick as a maze of barbed wire and shell-holes whirled before his eyes. The Spad went up on its tail. Then the wing collapsed and the wreck somersaulted onto its back.

Lucky dazedly found his safety-belt and jerked it open. Bullets were cracking into the smoking plane—Spandaus above joining German fire from the trenches. He dropped headlong into a muddy crater and lay like a log.

An ugly red beak appeared above him as one of the Pfalzes dived. Instantly bedlam broke loose from the Yankee trenches. Springfields filled the air with a terrific din. One burst spat from the guns of the diving ship. The mud jumped in little heaps near Lucky’s hand as he crouched. Then the Boche ship suddenly went onto its back. There was a crash. The firing died out.

“Thanks,” grinned Lucky Lane, in the direction of the Yankee trenches. “I’ll return the compliment some time.”

He made no effort to escape from the crater until the waning light had changed to darkness. At

last he crawled from the hole and began to worm his way toward the American trenches. A star-shell flared suddenly above No-Man’s-Land. He froze. The light died out. He was within fifty feet of the first Yankee trench when another star-shell bloomed in the sky. As he stiffened into corpselike stillness, there came an ominous chattering from the German trenches. An eagle-eyed German machine gunner had spied him. Bullets spat into the ground beside him. With a frantic leap he slid headlong into a small shell-hole ten feet away.

The light from the star-shell died and the firing stopped. Instantly he was on his feet, running for the Yank trench. A nasal voice gave a sudden shout ahead of him.

“Hold it” yelled Lucky as he dived for the edge of the trench.

He rolled into the ditch, breathless. Startled doughboys closed around him.

“Well, for Pete’s sake!” exclaimed a husky sergeant, “If it ain’t that Leatherneck. I always said th’ Marines carried horseshoes.” He grinned at Lucky. “We thought yuh was dead. But we nicked that Kraut. He seemed kinda anxious for your hide.”

“I heard him hit,” said Lucky. “It was damned good shooting. I’ll come up tomorrow and dust off some Heinies across the way for you and make it even.”

“Now yuh said something,” grunted the sergeant. “There’s a lousy machine-gun nest over there we could do without.”

“I’ll look into it first thing in the morning,” Lucky said with a grin on his blood-stained and grimy face.

“We’ll be watchin’ for yuh. But right now yuh better go back to th’ rear and get yourself fixed up.”

“I’m all right. But I’ve got to hit it back to the 28th Marine field.”

“Th’ 28th?” repeated the sergeant. “Say, ain’t that ‘Cyclone’ Garrity’s outfit?”

“Right,” said Lucky. “And he’s probably raising hell this minute because I haven’t shown up.”

Just then the company captain appeared. Lucky identified himself. The captain assigned a doughboy to guide him through the communication trenches to the rear. Half an hour later he was in the sidecar of a motorcycle, headed for the Devildog drome,

A sentry challenged him as he stepped from the sidecar near the entrance to the drome. Then he almost dropped his rifle as he recognized Lucky Lane.

“Good Lord, sir—they said the Krauts had got you,” he cried.

Lucky grinned and went on. The Devildog mess lay between him and the Operations office. He paused as he heard voices within, then quietly opened the door and slid inside. For a moment he was unnoticed. The Devildogs were grouped around the bar. He could feel the gloom that rose above their efforts at forgetting his supposed demise. In the middle of the group was Pug Flanagan. The big Irishman downed a stiff drink and reached for an almost empty bottle of cognac.

“Th’ Devildogs lost th’ best man they ever had,” he said mournfully. “when they lost Lucky Lane. There never was th’ likes of him—and there never will be.”

“And to think he got it knocking a damned Kraut off my tail,” muttered Benny Sparks. “From now on I’m laying for red-nosed Pfalzes. I’m going to..”

He stopped, his jaw hanging as his eyes fell on Lucky standing inside the doorway. His glass fell from his hand, “Hell’s bells!” he howled. “Is it you or a ghost?”

The remaining Devildogs whirled around. Pug gave a bellow that shook the rickety walls. Yelling like madmen, the Devildogs surrounded Lucky, clutching at him as though to make sure of what they saw, slamming him on the back, pumping his hand.

“For the love of Mike,” he gasped as his trio of Lunatics dragged him enthusiastically to the bar. “You birds are worse than the Germans. Look out for that arm—”

“Give him a drink,” Pug bawled at the Marine behind the bar. “Step up, all of ye—th’ liquor is on me.”

Lucky poured down a glass of cognac and followed it with another. Life became more rosy. A mess attendant brought him some food while he described his escape from No-Man’s-Land after his crash.

“But I thought you were knocked down right after you took that Boche off my tail,” said Benny Sparks. “We got into clear air and missed you, so we went back for a look. We saw a crate on fire—”

“It must have been one of the Boche,” said Lucky.

“Well now ye can explain what th’ devil was under that camouflage,” broke in Pug. “In all me life I have never known such a feeling as came over me when th’ very ground seemed to split in front of me eyes. I suppose it was some of your doing, and ‘tis a lot I have to thank ye for, though ye all but blew off me prop.”

“As I have previously mentioned,” said the solemn Mack Tuttle, before Lucky could reply, “you must have been in a most inebriated condition not to perceive the difference between solid ground and painted canvas.”

“I was looking back to be sure th’ two of ye were not landing on me tail,” returned Pug with dignity. “I had but a drop or two before we took ff.”

“Which you left me to pay for, you big bum,” said Benny Sparks. “And if that’s a drop, then I’m a ring-tailed monkey.”

“Now that I observe ye, there is a slight resemblance,” roared Pug. “Perhaps th’ matter of a tail—”

He stopped short as the door violently burst open. Into the mess strode the powerful figure of Cyclone Bill Garrity, C.O. of the Devildogs, followed by a major in army uniform.

“Where’s Hick Jones?” he bellowed. “When I send for a man, I’ll be damned if—”

Then his gaze fell on Lucky Lane. Blank amazement came into his weatherbeaten face, followed by what might have been construed as gladness and relief. But this last quickly vanished.

Cyclone Bill bent a stormy look on his returned hellion.

“Where in Hades have you been?” he roared. “And why didn’t you report when you got back?”

“I was so weak I couldn’t get any farther,” said Lucky, grinning. “I barely managed to crawl in here. I fainted and the gang just revived me. I was coming to see you—”

“Lane, you’re the biggest liar in the A.E.F.,” snorted Garrity, “and the most impertinent young ass in this whole damned mob—and that’s saying plenty.”

The Army major looked at Lucky with sudden interest.

“Then this is the other one of the four—the one you thought was dead?” he said to Cyclone Bill.

“I ought to have known he was too tough to get killed,” rumbled the Devildog chief. “Yes, this is Lieutenant Lane—his first name’s Theodore, and if you look it up, you’ll find it means ‘gift of God.’”

The Devildogs snickered, but the Army major only smiled dryly.

“Come along to Wing,” Garrity snapped at Lucky Lane. “I want to hear this story—I’ll bet it’ll be good.”

Lucky followed Cyclone Bill and the major into the operations shack.

“This is Major Barnes,” Garrity introduced the Army officer tersely. “He’s from Intelligence—came up here to fix up another little jaunt like last week’s mix-up—and I’ve just told him what happened to Flanagan and those other idiots.”

The major reddened slightly under Garrity’s gruff tone. Cyclone Bill’s dislike of G-2 men was one he never took pains to conceal. Whenever, Intelligence had a dangerous mission, the Devildogs were always picked first. It was a raw spot with the hard-boiled Leatherneck major.

“Flanagan told me about that camouflaged base and the Pfalzes with red noses,” said Barnes, turning to Lucky. “From what he said, you must have been captured for a few moments. What did you learn about that base?”

“Plenty,” said Lucky Lane. “I can tip you off to a hot one—there’s a Boche spy in the High Hat squadron.”

Barnes started. “You’re sure of that?” he exclaimed.

“And not only that,” pursued Lucky, “but he’s somebody you birds have been trying to nail for a long time—von Grohner.”

Cyclone Garrity bit down hard on his pipe stem. “How do you know that?” he snapped.

Lucky explained. Barnes and Garrity listened in tense silence. As Lucky finished, Cyclone Bill gave a grunt.

“Well, if that isn’t a good one—those lily-livered Percivals letting von Grohner put it over on them like that. Wait till that gets around the A.E.F.”

He looked sourly at Barnes. “Well, what are you going to do—sit there and take a chance that the Kraut will be tipped off? Why don’t you call the M.P.s at Fiemes and have him grabbed?”

Barnes got up and began to pace the floor nervously. “How can I?” he demanded. “I don’t know him—and Lane’s description might fit several men.”

He wrinkled his brow as he went on.

“It’s clear enough that von Grohner is the source of the strange leak we’ve been trying to trace. Time and again, information has reached the Boche in some mysterious way. And at least five times it has been followed by a raid by those red-nosed Pfalzes. Von Grohner has obviously been flying over on cloudy days when he could land without being spotted by any Allied pilots who were also flying over Germany. The High Hat squadron has been given advance information several times. That’s the leak, all right. They’ve had some important jobs—”

“And they’ve muffed all of them,” rasped Cyclone Bill.

“Von Grohner might be back of that, too,” muttered Barnes. He gazed at Lucky for a second with his keen dark eyes; then suddenly his thin face brightened. “I’ve an idea that might work,” he said quickly. “First, is there a two-seater plane on this field?”

Garrity nodded. “A Nieuport. Why?”

“Lane can fly me to Fiemes—that’s not far from the High Hat squadron base. I’ll get an Army

uniform for him and make out an order for him to report there as a replacement—a rookie from Issoudun. Von Grohner must have other German agents working with him, either on the field, or in contact with him. We want to capture all of them, if possible, and destroy their system. I'll help Lane change his appearance enough so that von Grohner won't recognize him. He won't be looking for a Devildog ace in an Army shavetail uniform, anyway.

"Lane, you must keep your eyes open and work fast. Be sure the man doesn't get a chance to escape, if he suspects you. It may be possible to get false information over to the Germans before we capture von Grohner, if you learn enough of his plan."

Cyclone Bill looked at Lucky. "How about it? You think you're able to do this trick? You look to me as though you ought to be in a hospital."

"Who—me?" said Lucky indignantly. "I never felt better in my life. With two more drinks—er—that is"

"All right," grunted Garrity. "And remember—if you need any help, we might be able to break out a few crates."

He followed Barnes and Lucky out to the hangars.

"There's only one thing I don't like about this business," observed Lucky. "I never thought I'd be chucking the old Marine uniform in this man's war. What if I meet up with somebody that knows me?"

"You won't," said Barnes. "We'll work fast. You'll be on the High Hat drome as Lieutenant Smith by morning."

Leatherneck mechanics rolled the Nieuport two-seater out to the line. When the engine was warmed, Lucky climbed into the pilot's pit. Barnes put on a borrowed flying-suit and helmet and took the observer's seat. A minute later the Nieuport thundered into the night and headed for Fiemes.

Lucky climbed mechanically, watching his landmarks. He was halfway to his goal when he felt Barnes touch his shoulder. He twisted around as the major prodded him again, insistently. Then his body went rigid.

He was staring down the muzzle of a gun!

For several seconds he sat dazed, flying without thought, while he stared over the snout of the gun to the grim face back of it.

It clicked at last in his stunned brain. Barnes was no G-2 agent. He was a German spy. The whole thing became clear with ugly significance. Von Grohner had taken no chances. He had sent one of his agents to the Devildog drome, posing as an intelligence officer, to learn what the three returning pilots had seen, and whether the fourth had been killed or not.

He had played right into Barnes' hands. And unless he misread the look on that grim face, death was not far away. There was one chance—the Boche might not be a pilot.

But before he could make the move to kick the rudder and throw Barnes' gun aside, the German rammed the muzzle against his head.

"Cut the throttle," he shouted. Lucky obeyed, tense with fury. "Don't make any sudden move, or I'll shoot you," warned Barnes as Lucky nosed the Nieuport down. "I can land the plane if necessary, so don't think I need you."

Lucky faced partly toward the front again. The spy went on fiercely.

"Fly down toward the left bank of the Meuse. There is a deserted French drome two miles from Bessonol. Land there."

The muzzle of the gun was still tight against Lucky's back. He obeyed, cursing bitterly to himself. He had not even brought a gun, thinking that Barnes would supply him with whatever he needed. at Fiemes. What a long-eared jackass he had been!

He crossed the Meuse and glided down toward the field near Bessonol. Suddenly a searchlight flared up at them. Lucky instinctively threw the Nieuport into a bank. Out of the corner of his eye he saw Barnes throw up one hand to shield his eyes from the blinding light. For a second the pressure of the gun at Lucky's back relaxed.

Like a flash, Lucky kicked into a terrific slip. Barnes gave an angry yell. The butt of the gun cracked glancingly along Lucky's jaw as he whipped about. He dropped the stick and struck out with all his might. Again the pistol butt crashed

down. Lucky felt his senses swim. He grasped at the side of the ship to keep himself from slumping onto the stick. The Nieuport screeched downward at a mad pace.

Barnes reached over and seized the stick as it thrashed about the front pit. Up came the nose of the plane. A dark something flashed past the left wing as Lucky pulled himself up. There was a crackling sound as the wing tip raked through a tree. The Nieuport zoomed crookedly under Barnes' frenzied touch, but he was too late.

Another vicious smash of breaking wings, and the Nieuport plunged through the trees to the ground. Lucky Lane tore the stick from the terrified German's fingers and jerked the ship into a slanting stall as the earth leaped toward them. Then the two-seater hit and stopped with a grinding roar, its tail in the air.

Lucky clawed his way out of the wreckage. Barnes, the spy, had been thrown clear of the battered ship. Lucky seized a splintered strut and advanced toward the man on the ground. He bent over. Barnes did not move.

The German's head moved queerly at Lucky's touch, and in a few seconds Lucky found that the fall had broken the spy's neck. He went through the dead man's pockets. There were several papers he could not read in the gloom. He lit a match and scanned them briefly. They were identifications of Major Randolph Barnes, G-2, and orders Lucky knew must be forged. One of them assigned the false Major Barnes to special duty on Intelligence work at the 75th Pursuit Squadron at Fiemes.

Lucky started. The 75th was the High Hat Squadron. But this order was dated only today. There was no endorsement on it. Evidently Barnes had not yet reported at the drome, but had been reached by another agent or by a code message from von Grohner, sending him to the Devildog field.

Lucky's jaw set grimly. He bent over and began to take off the spy's uniform. In a few minutes he was attired in the uniform of an Army major. He was about to start toward the adjacent highway when he heard the sound of an approaching ear. The car's brakes squealed. He swore. Someone had

seen the plane fall and had heard the crash. And it would be difficult to explain his switching of uniforms just now.

Quickly, he forced his bedraggled Marine breeches over the spy's legs. He was leaning over, trying to get the dead man's arms into the blouse when men came running through the trees from the road. He bent over as though examining the dead man. A flashlight lit up the spot for a moment.

Lucky stood up as an excited lieutenant reached him.

"No use," he said soberly. "He's broken his neck."

"What happened, sir?" the lieutenant asked breathlessly.

"He lost control—blinded by a searchlight beam, I think," said Lucky.

"He's a Marine," muttered the lieutenant. He looked curiously at Lucky Lane. "I suppose you want us to take care of the body, sir?"

"Uh—yes," said Lucky after a brief pause. "But I've got to get on my way—important mission at the High Hat Squadron. Can you help me out?"

The lieutenant agreed quickly. Lucky followed him through the trees toward the road, while a number of doughboys remained about the wreck.

"You can have my motorcycle," said the lieutenant as a soldier with a side-car came into view behind a battered Dodge. "Jenkins, take the major to the 75th's field, near Fiemes. Then come back to the base. I'll go on back with the body, major."

Lucky hardly heard the last. He climbed into the side-car, jammed the spy's overseas cap on his head and nodded to the waiting driver. The motorcycle sputtered down the dark road.

As they neared Fiemes, Lucky told the driver to stop. "Want to make fifty francs?" he asked the man.

"You can have anything but the motorcycle major" the doughboy returned with a grin.

"I want a pair of tortoise-shelled glasses—even a pair of sun-glasses will do. One of those dinky shops ought to have something—"

The driver disappeared. Lucky wiped his face as free as possible of traces of his latest escapade

and cocked his overseas hat well over the ugly scratch on his head. In a minute or two the motorcycle driver returned.

"They didn't have any in the shop—but I run across a Frog with a pair of cheaters he didn't need."

Lucky took the glasses and asked no questions. Probably the method of their acquisition would not bear too strong scrutiny. He hid a smile as the driver hastily got his machine into motion and sped on toward the drome. He was not sure, but he thought he heard an angry yell from somewhere behind.

There was activity on the High Hat field. Several planes were idling on the line as the sentry halted them at the edge of the drome. Lucky displayed his orders. The sentry snapped to attention.

"Captain Ware was expectin' you, sir. He's down to the Operations shanty"

Lucky climbed from the side-car and strode toward the office. His hand rested close to the butt of the gun he had picked up near the fallen spy.

Tensely he pushed into the shack.

A small group of pilots was assembled in the bull-ring of the office. In the center was a haughty-looking captain, immaculate from head to foot.

"Stoddard will lead the raid," he was saying. "And remember that you will be covered by—"

He stopped as he saw Lucky. One quick glance had showed Lucky that von Grohner was not in the room. He did not wait for the haughty captain to speak.

"I wish to see the C.O. at once," he snapped.

The captain's brows went up several degrees. "The commanding officer is in Fiemes at his quarters," he said. "If there is anything important, I can take the message. I'm Captain Ware, the adjutant."

"So you're Ware," jerked out Lucky. He decided on a long shot. "I'm Major Barnes—perhaps you knew I was coming."

Ware unbent a trifle from his lofty manner. "Stoddard told me about the message from G.H.Q.—"

The jangle of the telephone cut him short. He picked up the phone. For a moment his bored expression remained; then suddenly he stiffened.

"German spy?" he exclaimed. "Major's uniform—"

Half a dozen pairs of eyes leaped to Lucky Lane as the waiting pilots whirled. Just then the door opened. Lucky's eyes darted to the man who entered. He felt his pulses pound.

It was von Grohner, in a captain's uniform!

Ware had slammed down the telephone. His hand went to the gun at his hip.

"So you're Major Barnes, eh?" he snapped at Lucky. "Well, I'll soon find out—"

Von Grohner had halted, staring at Lucky. A quick, almost imperceptible gleam came into his eyes as his glance met Lucky's. A glance of warning—not of recognition.

"What is wrong here, Ware. What is the matter with you?"

"I just received a message from G.H.Q. to be on guard against a German spy in this sector. They said he was wearing a major's uniform—"

"And so you proceed to insult the first major you see," said von Grohner.

"Then you know this man, Stoddard?"

"Certainly—I met him in G-2 headquarters, not two weeks ago. This is Major Barnes."

Lucky breathed a little easier. Then von Grohner had not known the real spy by face.

"All right," said Ware awkwardly. "I guess I was wrong. I beg your pardon, major."

The roar of a taxiing plane drowned the rest of his apology. As the sound died, Ware turned back to his men.

"Get to your ships. Stoddard, you're sure you can find the place in the dark?"

"Certainly. But first, I wish a word with Major Barnes. You men can wait in your ships."

The pilots started out. Lucky stepped to one side, As he did, he bumped against one of the men. The overseas cap fell from his head, exposing his red hair and the jagged cut he had received.

Von Grohner drew in his breath sharply. Lucky saw recognition, hate, and murder in a single flash of the German's cold blue eyes. Before the German

could move, Lucky snatched at his gun. With one leap he placed himself across the bullring from the astonished pilots. "Get 'em up, all of you!"

There was no way of knowing how many others on that drome might be working with the famous spy. He dared not take a chance.

Consternation filled the faces of the High Hat pilots, but their hands went into the air. Von Grohner had hesitated for the fraction of a second.

Then he, too, raised his hands, as he saw the hard light in Lucky's eyes.

"My God," he said hoarsely to the others. "I have been tricked—it is not Barnes at all!"

"Shut up, you rat!" snarled Lucky. "Listen, you stiff-neck birds, this guy is a damned German spy. He's Karl von Grohner—if that means anything to you."

"Liar!" screeched von Grohner. "You are the spy! Don't let him trick you, Ware. He may be von Grohner himself!"

His voice rose in a scream as he spoke. Suddenly the door burst open behind him. A gun roared as a pasty-faced man in mechanic's garb filled the doorway. A bullet snarled past Lucky's head and thudded through the thin wall. Lucky's gun spurted flame at the same instant. The pseudo-mechanic went down with a groan, but his work was done. With a swift scoop at the pistol in his holster, von Grohner fired wildly across the room and then dived out onto the drome.

Before the dazed pilots could recover, Lucky had followed.

Von Grohner was racing for the nearest ship, a High Hat Spad. Lucky fired but missed. The German turned for a last shot as he reached the Spad.

Lucky flung himself to one side and emptied his pistol. The German's gun fell to the ground, but with a quick jump von Grohner was in the pit, his engine blasting.

Lucky sprinted for the next idling Spad. The drome was a bedlam. Confused, frightened mechanics dashed for safety as von Grohner kicked his ship down the line at Lucky Lane. Lucky threw himself prone as the Spad's nose jerked around and the Vickers burst into life. A torrent of hissing lead

streaked above him. He rolled frantically as the trundling wheels bore down on him. The Spad raced past.

He was up in a twinkling, yelling madly at the mechanics of the closest ship. At sight of his insignia and his waving gun, one man sprang to the chocks. Lucky tumbled into the ship and the Spad hurtled after the spy.

Up in a scorching zoom, Lucky pointed the roaring plane. Von Grohner pitched around from a steep chandelle and dropped like a rock, guns murderously ablaze. Lucky could feel the hate back of that bitter fire. Von Grohner's scheme was ruined. All the baffled fury of the famous spy drove him to one fierce resolve—to kill the man who had wrecked his plans. It would be a fight to the death.

Below, the High Hat drome blazed with light. Above the field charged the two shrieking ships, in a dizzy, reckless whirl. Lucky closed his eyes to grim slits as the buffeting wind beat back. Something black flashed in his sights for a second. The High Hat emblem—the black silk hat which stood for that haughty mob.

Lucky tripped his guns. Fabric tore from the German's ship. Around came von Grohner in a vicious bank. Red eyes glared across at Lucky as the flame-bathed guns cut loose again. Steel nipped fiercely at his moaning wings. He could smell the tracers as they whipped past with their evil tendrils of doom.

A savage kick, and Lucky was out of that flaming stream. Down went his wing as the tail of the German's ship lanced past. Back came the stick, hard to Lucky's chest. Bent over his sights, he watched the frenzied German try to flee from the creeping death at his back. Closer and closer came the sparkling stream from the spurting Vickers guns. Wilder and wilder became the frantic darts of the terrified Boche's Spad.

Straight to the pit of the Boche crashed one streak of scarlet doom. The Vickers rolled out a dreadful song and then were silenced. Von Grohner slipped slowly forward, as though bowing his head to his Fate. Down plunged his ship, to strike with a frightful roar.

Lucky Lane pulled out of his turn and stared about him. There were other ships in the air—a whole squadron of them piling down at him. He felt a shiver of apprehension. What in hell had those devils come from?

Then he gave a yelp of pure joy.

Cyclone Bill and the rest of the Mad Marines! But what had brought them here?

He cut the gun and landed. Half a dozen High Hatters started out toward him, but ran back as Cyclone Bill roared down to land. In a few moments the field was filled with Devildog ships. Cyclone Bill jumped from his plane and strode toward where Lucky stood in his major's uniform.

"You yellow skunk, I'm going to break every bone in your body," howled Cyclone Bill. "You got Lucky Lane, but—"

"Say, are you crazy?" yipped Lucky. "Or what is this!"

"Good God!" said Cyclone Bill weakly, staring at Lucky's face. "Twice in the same day! If they've got to report you dead, why in the devil can't you live up to it for once?"

"Who said I was dad?" demanded Lucky Lane.

"Some shave tail phoned in—said Barnes had left him with the body. He found some paper with your name"

"Most likely a bill," said Lucky.

"Never mind that," snapped Cyclone Bill. "I want to know what happened to Barnes."

Lucky told him. Garrity grunted.

"Well, that's that. He certainly fooled me. I never suspected him till I got a warning from G-2 to be on the lookout."

The Devildog chief paused, looking at the bewildered faces of the High Hat pilots. Captain Ware had lost his haughty look.

"Would you mind explaining this, Major Garrity?" he said forlornly. "I begin to gather that Stoddard must have been a spy, though he seemed such a gentleman. And he knew all the best families in—" he caught himself and reddened. "But I don't understand—"

Garrity eyed him.

"I'll write you a letter about it," he said. "Come on, Lucky—get on out of here before you start any

more trouble. I'll be hanged if I'll stand for your getting bumped three times in one day.

