



When This Pair of Wild Aces Get Started, They Ruin Anybody's Old War!

CHAPTER I

Blonde or Brunette

THE stork must have done some hedge-hopping when it was ferrying me, Lieutenant Cyril "Muley" Spink, to where my folks were waiting expectantly. I would lay a bet that it dropped me once when passing over a pool room and that I went down through the roof and landed right behind the eight ball.

Ever since my first squall I have been behind one, else why should I have met Ambrose Hooley? Ambrose is a tough little tomato who likes a fight better than a cat likes smelts, and I bet he prayed every night since he was eight years old for the U.S. to get into a war, just so's he could get a chance to fight.

We are getting enough of it, at least I am, over Mont Sec one day when something happens that almost shakes all the brass hats from the Alps to the Channel out of their skivvies. Me and Ambrose are flying almost wing to wing while Bug-Eye Boomer, who is our flight leader, tries to line up some Krauts. A Boche anti-aircraft gun gets a bead on us and tosses up a shell that busts right under our seats and scatters us all over the attic like we are nothing but dried-up dandelion blossoms. Then seven other smaller shells explode, and there is enough old iron flying around Bagby's Spads to build a stove for every citizen in the U.S.A. I see Ambrose Hooley's crate do some fancy dance steps on its empennage, and Bug-Eye Boomer does three

back-flips with his buggy and kisses a wheel good-by.

I am not sitting very pretty, either, as there are enough holes in my wings to make them look like window screens and half an anvil has washed out two struts. While I am coaxing my Spad down toward the carpet I spare a look to see where Ambrose is, but he is nowhere in sight and I says to myself, "Well, it is a pretty bum wind that don't blow even Muley Spink somethin' good." That is one way of getting rid of the little crackpot, I says, and I laugh. But I should have known that Ambrose could land safe in an iron bathtub if he was put into it and tossed off the Eiffel Tower in Paree. Me, I make a landing that I can just about walk away from outside of Revigny, and I sit down on a rock to wipe big gobs of cold sweat off my pan. I also look into a little mirror to see if I have got any black hairs left on my dome, and just then somebody shouts at me.

"He-e-e-e-ey, Muley!"

I swing my head, and there is Ambrose Hooley getting out of a ditch. Then I see the tail of his Spad sticking up from out of a clump of bushes and I feel worse than ever. "Can't nothin' kill you?" I complain.

"There ain't nothin' that I take up that I can't bring down, Muley Spink," Ambrose grins, and tenderly feels of his dental assembly. A lump is rising on his dome as big as a persimmon and he limps in both legs. "Well, it ain't a rumor no more, huh, Muley? Them Krauts have got a shell that didn't come off no peanut. It is like one of them big Fourth of July bombs that go off and let

loose a bunch of little bombs. No wonder we didn't see no Heinie air wagons. That anti-aircraft gun can do the work of twenty of them Vons. Why don't we invent things, that's what I'd like to know?"

"I left my tools home," I says nasty. "Wonder what happened to Bug-Eye?"

"The last I seen of the fathead," Ambrose says, "he was crawlin' out of his crate so he could substitute for a strut. I wonder who will be the flight leader now? I ain't braggin', Muley, but the Old Man says he's been watchin' me and—"

"That's because he don't want to lose his watch," I cut in sarcastic. "It is a keepsake."

"How would you like a sock in the chops?" Ambrose inquires. "If it is a fight you want, Muley Spink, I can fix you up."

"Shut up!" I tosses at him. "You know I haven't got enough strength in me now to turn over a page in a book with both hands. C'mon, let's go into Revigny an' git a snort of Frog giggle juice, Ambrose. Huh, if I fell into a crater of a volcano, I would find you at the bottom of it roastin' marshmailers!"

Me and Ambrose walk toward Revigny, but do not quite get there. On the outskirts there is quite a flock of doughs, some brass hats, and some Frog taxpayers. We hear some music playing, and when we get in close we see two big A.E.F. trucks. Standing up in the back of one of them is a dame and she starts singing.

"It's a A.E.F. show," Ambrose tells me just as if I couldn't use my own eyes. "Look at the doll, Muley. What pipes! Compared to her warbling, a canary sounds like a moose with gravel in its throat. Is she a knockout like eight grains of cocaine, huh? Boys, I am goin' to git her 'phone number."

Even if Ambrose says so, she is quite a dame. She is a blonde and her eyes are big enough to make even a Scotchman offer her a soda. Ambrose goes up to a big non-com and says: "What's her name? I think I will send a note into her dressin' room."

"It's against the rules of the A.E.F.," the three-striper growls in a very sour voice. "But if ya've got a franc or two that ain't—er—workin' this apray middy, I might tell her that a swell-lookin' flyer will be in town that wants to meet her."

"Nuts!" I says. "Do you want to scare the dame out of her voice? This tomat—"

"Here's five francs," Ambrose says jauntily. "Tell her I will be out in front of the Red Cat Cafe, at wheat oors less cans minoots, oui. Describe me to her so's she will know—"

"If he does," I says, "an' don't lie, it will be no use for you to go there, Ambrose. Anyways, we have got to git back to Commercy an' report that—"

"Let the C.O. think we are dead until tomorrer," Ambrose grins. "I would not mind kiddin' my old man back home a little, either. Just when he thinks he's got ten thousand bucks to spend, he will git a wire sayin' that it was all a mistake and to send the U.S. Treasurer his check back. Ha, ha!"

"You are as funny as a field hospital," I snort. "Well, I am goin' to leave you, Ambrose Hooley, as I will not be a party to such a hoax."

"Go ahead," the crackpot says, "but don't fergit that I am the only one who knows who put the rice in the radiator of that brass hat's car last week. Not that I would tell on you, Muley—when I was myself. But give me three snorts of Coneyac, and I am not responsible."

"You blackmailer!" I yelp. "I—"

"Pipe down, you!" an M.P. yells at us. "Who can hear the singin'?"

"He has got no use for the finer things in life," Ambrose sighs. "He is a low-brow that is only used to burlesque. Boys, is she a pip, huh? Maybe she is Mrs. Hooley and don't know it yet."

"If she finds out, she will jump in a canal," I retort. "Nothin' would marry you unless it was used to crawlin' on four feet."

The show ends when the blonde gets through her song, and me and Ambrose go into town and pick out a grog shop that is not used too much by brass hats. It is dusk when we go over to the Red Cat. The non-com is waiting, and he tells Ambrose that it is all fixed and that the blonde should be there in about ten minutes.

"I'm gittin' out of here," I says.

"I can smell the inside of a Frog klink right now. I wish I deserted last week like that grease monkey of Bagby's. He had sense, Ambrose Hooley!"

Just then a mam'selle walks by, and she is better looking than a receipted bill. She is a brunette like you see on a box of Cuban cigars, and she gives Ambrose the glad eye.

“Uh—er—adoo, Muley,” the little tomato says, “you can have the blonde.” Before I get my breath he goes over to the dame and trills:

“Bum sour, maddy’m’selle. How are voose, non? Didday we meet wan time een Atlanteek City, nest paw?”

The Frog femme giggles and puts her arm in Ambrose’s and walks away with him like he is a human being. It stumps me.

“Well,” I says, “I will wait for the blonde. Sometimes I do git a break that ain’t in an arm or leg.”

The A.E.F. canary does not show up, and I go all over town looking for Ambrose Hooley. I find him when I happen to ankle into one Frog estaminet and spot him sitting with the brunette in a far corner. I sit down at a table near a window and wait. Pretty soon Ambrose gets up and goes to the bar and when he comes back a big brass hat is settling himself in the chair Ambrose had left. I says to myself that there will be work for the gendarmes, also for a hospital in no time at all.

Ambrose says very ominous to the colonel: “You have made a mistake, haven’t you?”

“I don’t think so,” the brass hat comes back. “Get yourself another chair, Lieutenant. They all look alike, ha, ha!”

“Look here,” Ambrose yips, “I will count three! If you don’t git up when I”... Ambrose is an awful double- crosser. He slams the colonel without counting, and the brass hat does a loop out of the chair and slides under the next table. One of his teeth flies through the air with the greatest of ease and lands in my plate. Another brass hat makes a pass at Ambrose then, and misses. Soon he is among the sweet peas, also, and a Frog general thinks a Zep had dropped a sandbag in his lap. Everybody hollers for gendarmes and just before half the A.E.F. comes in, the brunette that Ambrose is with, laughs and chortles:

“Oh, don’t fight over me, boys!” in a voice that does not remind you of lavender and old lace. It is one like you would hear in a lumber camp. The dame takes off a black wig and she is a guy.

“It was ducky to meet you, Lieutenant,” he gurgles. “So nice of you to want to meet me. Ha, ha, I fooled ya twice, huh? First, you thought I was a swell blonde, and—”

Compared to the way he is now, Ambrose has never been mad before. He hands the fake frill a wallop in the lip rouge, and the songbird dives

into a corner and all anybody can see is silk stockings and lingerie. Ambrose has no sooner shellacked him than two Frog brass hats come in.

“*Sacre!*” one howls. “Ze peeg! He heet ze *fleur de belle France!* *Noin du chien, M’sieu!* Garday voo!”

CHAPTER II

Spooner Ain’t Spooner

I can’t look, because I have seen Ambrose Hooley in a brawl before. I take my hands from in front of my eyes when more gendarmes come in. The Frog officers are on all fours and are making passes at the air in front of their mugs and Ambrose is being held by six M.P.s and three gendarmes. But he is still dangerous. The phony skirt is pinched, too, also four Allied brass hats. Then I let out a squawk because a couple of gendarmes have grabbed me too.

“This is an outrage,” I holler. “I was not in it. Ask anybody here. I was just sittin’ at the table here when—”

“Hah, innercent, huh?” a big lantern-jawed A.E.F. cop yips at me. “Then what are ya doin’ holdin’ that tooth in your hand, huh? Lookit that, Colonel. He’s got one of your miss in’—”

“Ambrose,” I squawk, “tell ‘em I was—”

“Ha ha, thanks for helpin’, Muley,” the crackpot tosses out. “I—hey, look, Muley! That fake dame. It is Spooner, the grease monkey that deserted and—oh, you bum! You got us into this. When I git loose I will knock you loose from your camisole!”

“Oh, yeah?” Spooner says as they hustle us out. “Say, did I panic ‘em, huh? I’m an actor and I got dolled up and asked for a tryout with an A.E.F. show. I’m more use to the Allies entertainin’ than cleanin’ spark plugs, but Bagby wouldn’t believe me. So I ducked out.”

The gendarmes and the M.P.s has made quite a haul. In the bastille are two colonels, a major, a Frog general, three looies and the grease monkey, Spooner. Ambrose takes another poke at Spooner, and we all have to sit on him.

“Lemme up and I will kill him,” the little tomato howls. “He is as good as shot now for desertin’. The fathead—lemme hold his hand, huh? And whisper in his ear like—oh, I’ll git him!”

The next morning three different armies send out delegates to pick out the jailbirds that belong to them. Major Bagby walks in and gives me and Ambrose some awful dirty looks. But don't ever sell Ambrose Hooley short. Before the C.O. can toss a syllable, the little crackpot points at Spooner and yelps: "Oh, it is not what you think. I did not start no fight just for fun. I got wise to this cootie last night in the Frog barroom, and I had to put up an awful fight to capture him, sir! He is a deserter, and I am not one to sit around drinkin' coneyac when I can help the Allies. He got dressed up in a dame's clothes and was trying to escape to Switzerland. The other orfisers here thought I was sluggin' a dame, and they got chivalrous and tried to protect her, and, well, here is your prisoner, Major."

"Good work, Hooley," Bagby suddenly says. "You have done the Allies a great favor. Spooner, you fathead, you'll get shot for this!"

All the other officers get off, too, without court-martials being plastered on their fuselages. They are willing to forget all about the whole thing even if they do know Ambrose Hooley is a liar by all the cuckoo clocks in Switzerland. On the way back to the drome I look at him disgusted.

"You could rob a safe and git caught, and the guy that owned it would get twenty years," I say to him very sarcastic. "Listen, it is the last time I will be seen with you anywhere, you halfwit!"

"Oh stop beefin', Muley," the numbskull says. "Don't be a sissy. Stick with me and you will git decorated."

"Yeah," I says, "every year on the thirtieth of May. That is what I am afraid of. Of all the gnat-brained bums! Ha, ha, what was it you whispered in Spooner's ear, Mr. Cassanova?"

Ambrose swings an awful wallop. Some day I will learn not to push the little tomato too far unless it is over a cliff.

Two days after that, some brass hats come into Bagby's drome near Commercy and some of them are Intelligence officers. Ambrose Hooley says they are easy to pick out as they look less bright than the others. We find out that Major Bagby has sent for them, and it is not long before we find out why.

The Old Man has got an idea about Spooner, the grease monkey, and it was not to have him shot. Here is what happened during the pow-wow. It seems that the Heinie who invented the new sky

shell is named von Klunk, and he is a pushover for a good-looking doll. Before the war his pictures were in all the newspapers and swanky magazines because of mix-up with dames. Me and Ambrose are outside the window of the Operations office getting the lowdown on what goes on. They have got Spooner in a corner, and his pan is as white as a cherub's soul.

"Bagby," an Intelligence officer says in a voice that is nice and soft like a bull moose's trumpet, "I think you've got yourself a good idea. This Heinie is a set-up for any frill with a good-lookin' face, huh? So you want to send Spooner over to Germany and drop him back of the lines fixed up like a *Folies Bergere* number? If he doesn't want to do it, he gets shot."

"If—if they catch me over there," the grease monkey quavers, "I git shot, anyway. Why not git it over with here? Then you got some remains to send home to..."

"Spooner," Bagby snaps, "this is your chance to save your name from disgrace. Instead of getting shot, you might get a medal. Now, all you have to do is find this von Klunk and worm the shell plans out of him and—well, the idea is that the Allies will have a pretty spy like those Krauts have got. This—er—Marry Hatta. Maybe you will even get to be more famous than her, Spooner. Maybe you can capture her even. Man, would that get you a medal!"

The brass hats finally get Spooner worked up to agree to do the job, and then they go into a huddle about the new Kraut air bomb. It seems that Chaumont is getting quite jittery about it, and me and Ambrose wonder how they would feel if one busted right under their swivel chairs like it did under the bucket seats of our Spads. The Intelligence officers tell Bagby that the plans of the shell must be lifted from the Krauts at all cost as, if they are not, the Allied air buggies might just as well be put away in moth balls.

"HAH!" Ambrose says, "this is one job they don't pick us for, Muley, ha, ha!"

"Sh-h-h-h-h!" I hiss at him. "I can't believe yet that you didn't go right through that winder and ask for it. Let's get out of here before you do, you homely squirt!"

Spooner goes to Chaumont the next day, and we got word later that he knocks them off their swivel chairs there with his female impersonations, and Bagby says that he heard that

one U. S. brigadier promised Spooner he would poison his wife when he got home if the grease monkey would promise to marry him. They make him an agent of the U. S. Intelligence over night, and then he comes back to the 93rd with a note from Chaumont that says somebody must drop him behind the lines that very night when the time is ripe.

"It can git ripe and rot," I says. "I will not volunteer to do any such thing, Ambrose Hooley!" I say it right out in front of everybody at the mess, and the Old Man sniffs and says: "Who's askin' you to, Spink? There's a two-seater comin' over here to do that work. Anybody'd think you was the only—"

"You had better tell the pilot Spooner ain't a dame," Ambrose advises, "or the guy will elope with Spooner and take him to Monte Carlo, ha, ha! Boys, if he could only cook, I would marry him myself!"

We give Spooner a swell send-off when the two-seater gets ready to take him out over the lines. It is like fattenin' up a pig and patting it on the back before you cut its throat. But Spooner is in good spirits and says he will come back with von Klunk's watch and his life insurance signed over to him.

The spy-dropping crate roars away a little later, and me and Ambrose walk away feeling satisfied with the guerre as there goes one job that was not tacked onto our pants. Ambrose looks like he is disappointed, as he is not happy unless he is flirting with a spade.

"Huh! That is my luck! I was not born with a nice lookin' pan. I would like to meet this Kraut dame they call Marry Hatta as she is a wow. Imagine this Spooner! He kin go right in to her booddoor an' ask her to lend him a hairpin as he is all out of them. The lucky stiff!"

I walk away and leave Ambrose flat after that. There are times when I can't even stand him.

A couple of days later I find myself behind the eight ball, as usual.

Just when it seems that Spooner is crossed off the A.E.F. payroll for keeps, what comes into the drome of the 93rd but a big U. S. limousine carrying a Yankee general. He comes running into the Operations shack waving a photograph around his dome.

"Look here, Major," he yelps, "you're in command here, aren't you? Bagby, isn't it?"

"Yessir, but I ain't an 'it!" the C.O snarls. "What can I do to you—er—for you, sir?"

The general tosses the photograph down on Bagby's desk, and the C.O. takes a swift gander at it. "Er—that's Spooner, yeah. What about it?"

"That is my son, Bagby!" the general howls. "I just found out he was a mechanic here. Where is he? Seven years ago he ran away from home because I wouldn't let him be an actor. His name is not Spooner. It is Homer Gribble, and he is my son. Where is he? Get him here, as Mrs. Gribble has been waiting for word from him for—"

Major Bagby paws at his pan, and beads of worry juice bounce all over his desk before he opens up his face. "General, Chaumont dressed him up as a woman, sir. Spooner is a U. S. woman spy—I mean he's a fake—ha, ha—what I'm getting at is—he is to get the plans of von Klunk's antiaircraft shell. We haven't heard from him since—Hooley, get some aspirin for the general!"

Now when the brats hat comes to, there is quite a to-do around the drome of the 93rd. General Gribble says if Homer is not brought back breathing natural, he will take up the matter with Woodrow Wilson who is the President of the U.S. He says that Homer was under age and grew up too fast.

"You ought to have known he wasn't ready to shave, Bagby," Gribble storms. "No wonder he could impersonate a woman, you fathead. Look here, Bagby, you send every plane you've got to hunt for him. I am a personal friend of the President's, and I call King George by his first name, get that? I go hunting with Poincare when I'm in Paris. That's who I am! Send my boy out to get shot, will you? Well, if he doesn't come back, there will be more court-martials in France than bottles of vin blanc. By cr-r-r-ripes, Bagby, you get him back, you—!" The general's vocabulary fails, and he stamps out and climbs into his bailer.

"I don't feel so good," I says very weak. "Did he leave any aspirin?"

CHAPTER III

Von Klunk's Headquarters

The Old Man sits down in his chair and pulls handfuls of hair out of his scalp lock. Four hours

later word comes from Chaumont that every effort to find Homer Gribble is being made by all the outfits on the front. Intelligence officers come in, and one goes into a huddle with Bagby and tells him that there is a captured Jerry Junker out near Vaubecourt that might prove very handy in case he has a couple of U. S. patriots who want to risk their lives.

Bagby says "Yeah?" and sends for me and Ambrose.

The C.O. glares at the little tomato, and then stabs a finger at him. He laughs, too, but it sounds like a gorilla's cough. "All right, Hooley, you got me into this in a way. You pick yourself a partner and get ready to go over into Germany. This von Klunk has a big shack outside of a place called Kaachem and that is where he might have his workshop. If there is anything left of Sp—er—this Gribble guy, bring it back! Here are a couple of Kraut uniforms to put on."

"Come on, Muley," Ambrose says.

I make out I do not hear the fathead, and Bagby hollers at me. "Uh—er—" I stutter, "did somebody mention my na—"

"Muley Spink volunteers to go with me." Ambrose says. "There is nobody I would rather have at my side, sir. We are ready to give our all for the Democrats and—"

"I would give my right arm for a slice of your liver, Ambrose Hooley," I tosses at him in a very weak voice. "Well, let's go out and git killed!"

Meand Ambrose go over to Vaubecourt, there we get our hands shook by a lot of big officers before we see the Junkers. Ambrose hits a colonel when he sees it.

"It is murder!" he yips. "I will write to my Congressman! Muley, if that will fly, I can crochet a doily with crowbars."

A brass hat hands us our Kraut clothes and says they belonged to the pair of Vons who landed the Junker a week before. Stains are on them that was not made by pork gravy.

"Huh," I says to Ambrose, "they would even give us used coffins."

Me and Ambrose get all dressed and climb into the Junkers. The little crackpot gooses the power plant, and it sounds like somebody is unloading a cart filled with old iron on top of a tin roof. In about five minutes we crawl away across the tarmac like the Kraut ship was filled up with

cement. I lean over and holler at Ambrose: "Can you talk any Kraut, fathead?"

"I did not play pinochle for seven years with two of them back home for nothin'," the tomato hollers back. "You lemme do the talkin', Muley, if we meet any limburger snipers."

"Not that you wouldn't, anyways," I bark at him. "Say, why don't you get this wreck off the ground, huh?"

"What in hell do you think I am tryin' to do?" Ambrose flings at me. "Look back and see if it is tied to a tree."

It is an awful job getting the Junkers upstairs. Keeping it up is almost as tough a job, as it is about as airworthy as a ship's anchor. The motor sounds like somebody sitting inside the nose of the Kraut crate is cracking coconuts. A loose wire keeps trying to wind itself around my ear, and Ambrose points to a strut that is not in communication with the top wing.

A searchlight takes a quick gander at us when we get over the Heinie trenches and I yell "yoo hoo" down at the bums under the coal scuttles. Ambrose gives the Junkers a quick front stick and I come out of the rear pit like a pop fly and land almost on top of the numbskull. He reaches back and bangs me on the side of the dome and hollers: "You want to spoil everythin', Muley? 'Yoo-hoooin'" to Heinies! Shut up or I will dump you in the Rhine when we get there."

I crawl back into the rear office and don't say another word until Ambrose starts toward the linoleum. Then I crawl up to where he is and yell in his ear: "Listen, Ambrose, you're kiddin', ain't you? You don't have to land. We can go back and say we couldn't find—"

"Why, you slacker, you!" the little crackpot bawls at me. "I am surprised at you, Muley Spink! Ha, ha, hold on, as it looks like this crate will fold up like a campstool when we land."

Not far away there is a river, and we know it is the Moselle. Right on its bank is a big Kraut chateau that is twice as big as Finkelman's brewery back home. In a sheep pasture in its backyard Ambrose Hooley lands the Junkers, and it hits like it was loaded with gravel. It folds up all around us, and me and Ambrose feel like two caterpillars that have spent several hours in a cocoon before we are dragged out. Three husky Heinies prop us up against a tree and start slapping our marbles back into place.

“Ach!” Ambrose gulps, banging an elbow against my short ribs. “Vhere ist dast, hem? Donnervetter und a coubla Himmels! Donner mit Blitzen!”

“Wee gates,” a Kraut says, and then he strings off enough Heinie to choke a political speaker. I act like I am still gaga from the washout, but Ambrose nods his bean and says: “Ja, wine froind, Ish bin Loitnant Wilhelm von der Pabst. Mina kornerad ist Rudy von Schlitz. Der verdarnmt Yangkees—” And that is as far as I can follow him.

The Kraut bums takes us up to the big stone shack and tell us that *Herr* von Klunk is in Kaachem with a Frowline, and Ambrose winks and says to one of the Heinies: “Mit der maidken, hem? Ach, der Frowlines!”

“Ja, ha, ha,” cracks back the Heinie, and he adds some more gibberish, and we all laugh, me about two measures behind like the Englishman.

On the way to the house we pass a Kraut two-seater that looks like a Rumpler, and I says to myself that is von Klunk’s private air buggy. Me and Ambrose follow them into a room where they leave us alone with a bottle of Schnapps and a plate of chow that looks like it come out of a garbage pail. Ambrose takes a pull at the Schnapps just as somebody knocks on the door.

“Phew-w-w-w-w!” the little crackpot gasps. “That must be tiger sweat they left us to drink. Who is that?”

“If we open the door we will find out,” I sniff. “I bet it is half the Kraut army. You open the door, Ambrose, as then you will git shot first. I will die happy if I know that I am rid of—”

“Shut up,” Ambrose hisses, and goes to the door. He opens it, and there is a dame with hair as dark as the inside of a black leopard and she had a pair of dark lamps that would wring a wink out of the Sphinx. She is poured into a black dress, and when she walks toward us, she ripples like an eel on a hook.

“Oh boy, Spooner!” Ambrose says suddenly. “Can you git exotic! Ha, ha, this time you ain’t foolin’ Ambrose Hooley. You git the plans from the squarehead, huh?”

The dame’s eyebrows slip up until they almost merge with her hair. “I un’erstan’ nodt, mine froinds. Plans? Ach, Gott—”

“Clownin’ again, huh, Spooner?” Ambrose tosses out and grabs at his hair.

“Ye-e-e-e-ek!” An awful squawk makes our blood curdle, and the doll yanks herself loose and slithers out of the room. I hear a big bolt slide into place. My legs melt right from under my fuselage, and I wail at Ambrose: “He ain’t her—she ain’t him—that was—”

“We’re lost, Muley,” Ambrose yips. “Do somethin’.”

“I could holler for help,” I suggest, “but the dame is doin’ that, Ambrose. Well, I hope you’re satisfied! You would give all for the Allies, huh? You will, Ambrose, you will.”

“I’d like to kill that grease monkey before I go west,” Ambrose growls. “That is all I would ask. Well—let’s die like brave men, Muley. Spurn the blindfold and say go right ahead and don’t tickle!”

An hour later in comes a big Kraut with a head that could have been used for a butcher’s block. Von Klunk looks twice as tough as I thought he would look.

From down around his insteps he brings up: “Ach! More uf der shpies, hem? Idt ist only Vier hours since ye haff shoodt vun. Now ye haff idt two, ja!”

“Cr-r-ripes!” Ambrose gulps. “I bet it was Spooner, Muley.”

“No kiddin’,” I snarl. “I am sure it was Charlie Chaplin, Ambrose. I—look, Ambrose!”

A dame is coming in, and she has got a white dress on that fits like the paint on a water gutter. She is a blonde doll with hair that is plastered close to her dome, and her eyes are nice and friendly like a baby gorilla’s.

“Ha, ha,” she chirps, “*Herr Oberst, das ist der Amerikaner*. Spies, hem? Zo! After der plans, mine froinds? Too badt. Zo young you shouldt die yedt, ja.”

“That’s what I think,” I says. “Maybe we could talk things over. Ha, ha, me and Ambrose wasn’t after no plans. We went in swimmin’ and somebody stole our clothes, and we had to put on the first things we found, and they happened to be these Kraut—”

The blonde dame throws back her cape and we see a Luger in her hand. It is a Kraut hand gun that makes holes in guys big enough to drive a pair of oxen through.

“Mine custom, *das ist*, mine froinds,” von Klunk growls, “to ledt idt der Frowline shoodt der shpies vhat I catch personal, ja! She makes idt der

shport, ho, ho. *Das ist* der honor to gedt idt shot by der peautiful Frawline, *nein?*”

“Ha, ha,” Ambrose chortles, “how can we thank you?”

“Just do me a favor, Frowline,” I says. “Let me shoot this halfwit myself. It would make me happy in my last hours.”

“*Herr Oberst*, you shouldt sendt for der car yedt,” the doll says sweetly. “We do nodt shoodt idt der shpies by der house yedt. Sooch em mess idt makes, ja. Ve take der ride by der country mit und show der nize scenery, Zo!”

“I never was no indoor sport,” Ambrose says. “Don’t be long, Frowline.”

They leave us alone for five minutes, and I glower at Ambrose. “You would laugh and tell jokes with your throat cut from ear to ear, you crackpot!” I says. “Listen, you nitwit, we are goin’ to git shot.”

“Listen, Muley,” he says to me very patient like he was reasoning with a little kid, “where was the brunette that come in first, huh? That one is a blonde that’s goin’ to do the shootin’. What do you bet it ain’t Spooner this time, huh?”

“Why—er—that’s right,” I blinks, staggered by this thought.

“Shake,’ Muley says, “we are saved.”

“Not until I am back in Commercy,” I pipe up. “Right now I do not feel any safer than a mouse stuck in the mud under an owl’s nest.” Two minutes later I am melting from the neck down again. We get taken out of the house and tossed into a big Kraut boiler. The blonde dame gets into the front seat with von Klunk and holds the Luger on us. I says to Muley that if the dame was Spooner he would not have brought the squarehead along with him.

“Y-yeah,” Ambrose gulps weakly, “I guess the grease monkey is playin’ a harp, after all. We will see how good he plays it in a couple of hours.”

“Vun moof maken,” the blonde snaps at us, “und I shoodt itd full mit holes like der cheese, ja! Ve go by where ist der graves digged already, ja. Always ye haben der graves for der shpies vhat coom to steal idt der blans uf der shell. Already yedt ye shoot zix.”

“That ain’t Spooner,” I says. “Ado’o, Ambrose.”

CHAPTER IV

Too Many Spies

We have a very rough ride. We are traveling over a bad stretch when all of a sudden the Kraut hack gives a lurch and tosses the blonde dame against von Klunk. Her dome hit his, and it is no eiderdown pillow. Both of them go out like a light, and me and Ambrose are tossed almost through the windshield. Ambrose grabs the wheel and keeps the boiler from kissing a tree.

“Quick, Muley,” he hollers, “toss the doll out as she is only in the way here.”

It is no time to think of being polite and so I push the blonde out into the ditch while Muley gets his foot down on the brake pedal and brings the boiler to a stop half a mile further on.

“Search him for the papers, Muley, Ambrose says, and he pokes von Klunk one in the chops to keep him from waking up too soon.

I go through the Kraut’s clothes like an army of moths, but he has got no more plans than an old maid. Me and Ambrose heave him out of the boiler, too, and just as he plunks into a mud hole, I get weak all over like all my red blood corpuscles was dried up. Right on the floor of the car is a blonde wig!

“Look at it, Ambrose,” I says weakly, “that was Spooner. We got to get him back. Ohh-h-h-h, start up the jalopi, you fathead, and turn it around.”

“I am gittin’ sick of that bum,” Ambrose snorts. “First it is him, then it ain’t; then once more it is! Rats! Well, we didn’t git the plans. Maybe Spooner has ‘em, huh? Boy, will I slug him if he has! Kiddin’ us again, was he? I’ll—”

We get back to where we had tossed out the blonde dame and there she is running around in circles with a shawl pulled up over her belfry. Ambrose hops out and grabs her. “C’mon, Spooner, you dam’ fool,” he yips. “Take the lead out of your pants. We can’t stop to pick vi’lets. Look at what you got us into, you—you—”

Bang! Bang! Bz--z-z-z-z-z-z-z!

“Hurry, Ambrose,” I yelp, “they’re shootin’ at us. It’s them Krauts comin’ out of the woods over there. Oh-h-h-h!”

“Why, I thought that was a firefly that nudged me, Muley,” Ambrose says very sarcastic. “Come and help me git Spooner into that can as he is still out on his feet from gettin’ tossed on his ear. I ought to leave him here, the halfwit! But he had sense enough to wrap up his dome in a shawl.

Without his wig, the Heinies would spot him quick and—”

We load Spooner into the buggy, and head out of there with all the Krauts in der Vaterland shooting at us. “We’ll never make it,” I moan.

“You don’t know Ambrose Hooley!” the little tomato hollers. “We still got on Kraut suits, ain’t we? There’s a Rumpler waitin’ in back of von Klunk’s house, ain’t there? Well, what more do you want, Muley Spink? Maybe a freezer of ice cream, huh?”

“Are you out of gas?” I wail. “Step on it! We’re crawlin’.”

“Can’t you read? The needle reads seventy, you sap! Look at Spooner. He’s passed out again. Maybe he got shot, Muley.”

“It could happen here,” I admit “Those ain’t wasps that are chasm’ us, Ambrose. Drive faster!”

We drive right into the sheep pasture behind von Klunk’s chateau and pull up right beside the Rumpler. A couple of Boche doughs are standing guard over it, and Ambrose hollers at them:

“*Der Amerikaners haben catch it der Herr Oberst, ja! Ve safe der Frowline. Gate Schnell, Dumpkopff, und shpin idt der brop vunce!*” is the way I get it.

“Twice,” I suggest.

“Shudt oop, Schwein!” Ambrose hollers, and lifts Spooner out of the jalopi like he is a sack of spuds and tosses him into the rear pit of the Rumpler upside down. A Boche dough snickers and says something about the pretty garters that the Frowline wears.

“Raus mit!” Ambrose bellows, and gives the Boche dough a kick in the slats. “Contact! Take the wing, Muley—er—Hopmann!”

“That is all I ever got of any bird,” I snap back. “Once at Aunt Petunia’s I got a neck.”

The Rumpler’s power plant starts purring just as a whole bunch of Heinies come pouring down the hill from the house. They are not armed with slingshots and spitballs any way you look at them. From where I am glued to a strut, I see a bullet take a heel off Spooner’s slippers, and I wish the squarehead had aimed a lot lower. When we get upstairs I find one side of my face filled with splinters, and a glancing bullet has made an awful mess of a chocolate bar that I have inside my pocket. Ambrose keeps standing up and sitting down in the pit, and I am sure a tracer has

scorched his nether region as a couple of Heinie bat flyers are coming up at us.

“Stick with me!” Ambrose howls. “We have saved the Allies!”

The Rumpler gets a booting around before we get over the lines and the only reason the top wing did not cave in was me, as for eight miles I hold it up and learn how it feels to be the Statue of Liberty. We get over the drome with only enough gas left to soak a dame’s handkerchief, and then the doughs in the machine-gun nest near “A” Flight’s hangar start shooting at us.

“He-e-e-ey!” I holler. “I am Muley Spink! Lay off, you bums! This crate couldn’t stand gettin’ sideswiped by a potato chip.”

A lot of bullets finish what the Krauts started, and we go down just as somebody lights a lot of gas and Ambrose puts the Rumpler down right in the bonfire. When it hits, the prop drops off, also a wheel, also Muley Spink.

“It is criminal assault!” Ambrose yelps as the meat wagon rattles up.

“It is arson. We risk life an’ limb an’ you set us on fire. Muley—he-e-e-ey, Muley!”

Out comes Bagby and a lot of buzzards while the ackemmas are dragging us all out of the wreck. When I get up, I hear Ambrose yelping:

“We got Spooner there. Ha, ha, we got back with the bum, and I hope the plans of that Kraut shell are on him. I guess we ain’t heroes or nothin’, huh?”

“Spooner?” Major Bagby repeats. “Why, he’s standing right over there lookin’ at you, Hooley. He came in just three hours before you did. In a nice Kraut ship. Look, it’s right over there!”

“Wha-a-a-a-a?” Ambrose and me grope for each other and hold each other up. “Then what did we bring in, huh? Who is that?”

I look around to see a doll fighting with Bug-Eye Boomer and another pilot. She bangs Boomer in the chin and almost claws out one of his glimmers. “Bummers! Take idt der hands off from me, ja! You t’row idt me, Marry Hatta, oudt by der auto, hem? I show you, bummers!”

“Another dame?” Ambrose groans. “I am sick of lookin’ at ‘em. Cr-r-ripes, Muley, neither of them frills was Spooner. He—”

“Hooley, Spink!” Bagby yowls. “Do you know what you’ve done?”

Don’t answer, Muley,” Ambrose advises me, “until you see a lawyer.”

“Why, you two men have captured Marry Hatta, the Kaiser’s best woman spy. The most dangerous German agent in Europe!” Bagby yips. “What a night! What a squadron! First, Spooner—or Homer Gribble—comes in with the plans of the Kraut shell, and then in you two guys come with Marry Hatta!”

“H-huh?” Ambrose breathes, and limps over to where the Kraut Frowline is being held in check by Bug-Eye Boomer. “So you’re the dame, huh? The one with the black hair first, and then—”

“*Ja*. I coom to pay der visit by Herr von Klunk. He iss oudt mit der blonde. After yedt I findt oudt you ben der *Amerikaners*, I run oudt alzo und lock idt der door und make idt mineself der blonde idt shouldt please him, ja. I—what I shouldt tellingk idt by you, bummers? *Ach, Himmel!* Idt giffs der headpains yedt!” She gets loose from Boomer and bangs Ambrose in the eye. We drag him away from her just as he is measuring her for a haymaker.

“Dame or no dame,” he yowls, “I will knock her loose from her griddle! Nobody can hit Ambrose Hooley and—”

They hustle Marry Hatta away, and then Ambrose ambles over to Spooner. “How’d ya do it, you crackpot? I mean, git them plans?”

“Why, I was the doll that was in Kaachem with von Klunk when you got to his hangout, I guess, ha, ha!” the general’s pride and joy chirps. “I got him to gaga and took the plans off him and then made him get me a crate to fly in. It was a nice pilot I got, and he tried to talk me into goin’ to Berlin for a snort or two. But I stuck a gun into the back of his neck and says maybe I would rather go to Commercy, and wouldn’t he? He did, and here I am. Boys, am I an Intelligence agent or am I?”

“Y-yeah, ha, ha,” Ambrose laughs weakly. “Listen, Spooner, or Gribble, or whatever your moniker is, I got a swell story I heard in town last week. It is about Pat and Mike. Let’s go around the corner of the hut and—”

“I will not,” the general’s son says quick. “I don’t trust you, Ambrose Hooley. You always want to fight. Listen, Bagby, I demand that you give me protection as I am of the Intelligence—”
Whack-o-o-o-o!

“Ha, ha,” Ambrose chortles melancholy, breathing on his knuckles, “does he look very intelligent now, huh? That is for makin’ me call

him my lambie pie in Commercy. Hah, ducky-wucky, he called me and pinched my cheek”

We hold Ambrose while Homer Gribble, alias Spooner, gets up. His eyes look like two windows in a haunted house, and he has a gap in his incisors, and his nose looks like it was stepped on by a horse.

“Lemme see you impersonate any more dames!” Ambrose glowers at him. “Ha, ha, c’mon, Muley.”

“All right, lambie pie!” I says.

Someday I will learn to keep my trap shut, as at the instant I can only eat thin soup with a straw. Also, some day I will kill Ambrose Hooley.