



RAID OF THE UNSEEN

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The C.O. of the 7th Marines Squadron was not new at the fighting game. He'd taken lessons from blood-crazed Moros in the Philippines, from slant-eyed Boxers in China. And he'd learned one thing—you've got to hit what you shoot at, whether you're on the ground or in the air. And because he'd learned that lesson so well—he was faced with a court-martial!

THE COMMANDING OFFICER of the 7th Marines threw down the three-months-old copy of the Photographer's Digest which he had been reading. He looked across the desk at the two replacement pilots who had just reported for duty.

"All of twenty-one years old," he mused. "Green as grass—probably can fly enough to keep from cracking up. Can't hit the side of a barn with twin Vickers at twenty feet—and undoubtedly think they will shoot down von Richthofen at dawn tomorrow."

Aloud he said, "Sit down, gentlemen. My name is Wayne. We are glad to have you with us." He paused for a minute. Unless Colonel Jackson had changed his tactics, these pilots had undoubtedly been told that he, Chuck Wayne, was crazy, that he was cracked on the subjects of gunnery and photography.

The colonel hated Chuck with an unreasoning hatred born of fear. Chuck knew too much about him. Back in Chuck's home town, Jackson was a saloon-owning politician. Because of his political power, he had been appointed a colonel in the National Guard. When the fortunes of war brought them together in France, Colonel Jackson started in to get something on Chuck. He wanted to push him out of France before the Marine captain told some unsavory facts about the colonel's crime-laden past. He was determined to break Chuck, if possible.

These boys had undoubtedly heard Colonel Jackson's story. There was no use mincing words. "How much gunnery practice have you had?" asked Chuck.

A ghost of a smile flickered between the replacements. Chuck had guessed right. Jackson was up to his usual dirty work. "We passed the usual course in gunnery at the pilot's replacement pool, and—" one of the pair commenced, but Chuck interrupted him.

"That's all I need to hear," he said. "I know the rest of the story by heart. You were told that you didn't need anything further. You were warned that your new C.O. was bugs on the subjects of gunnery and photography. Forget the photography—that's only my hobby when I'm not working.

"But, gentlemen, I am going to tell you something, I am a nut about guns, and rightfully so. A lot of new pilots come up to the 7th Marines, believing that they

know all about shooting. And until I changed the orders, and damned near got a general court for doing it. they frequently got a real shooting lesson the next day. Got it from some experienced Jerry pilot. The trouble was that the lesson didn't do them any good. When it was over, they were dead!"

He paused to look at his listeners. The smiles had vanished from their faces. There was something about Chuck Wayne which inspired confidence. "The Marines," continued Chuck, "are not new at this fighting game. We have taken lessons from blood-crazed Moros in the Philippines, from slant-eyed Boxers in China. We have been to fighting school in Cuba and Central America. We have learned that the first function of all soldiers, even flying soldiers, is to shoot and to hit what you shoot at, the first time, and every time. Poor flying is bad, but poor shooting is fatal. I'll be damned if I'll send any pilot over the lines until he shows me that he can shoot. So tomorrow morning you start circling the field and diving at that row of targets at the far end. When you can hit them from all angles, you can start flying with our regular patrols, but not before."

Chuck knew that this order would cause trouble for him. His insistence on gunnery practice delayed new pilots a week or more in getting into action, and that delay gave Colonel Jackson his excuse to hang him. According to the colonel, when pilots graduated from the pool, they were ready for action. He had ordered Chuck to use them immediately. So far, Chuck had ignored the order, but a show-down was inevitable.

A low rumble shook the windows of the headquarters hut. "R-u-u-m-m-p-a-w! R-u-u-m-m-p-a-w!" An uneven vibrating buzz sounded dully in the east.

"The Gothas," said Chuck, briefly. "Never heard them before? No? Well, you will from now on. Every night about this time they come across. You can damn near set your watch by their raids. G.H.Q. is wild about it, too. It's uncanny, the way they are registering hits."

"We heard something about it down at the pool," answered one of the newcomers, as the rumbling grew louder, "There is a lot of talk about spy work being responsible. Only no one seems to have any idea how the spies transmit their signals to the Gotha pilots."

By this time, the roar of the giant bombers was so loud that conversation was impossible. The three officers walked to the door of the hut and looked aloft for the enemy. A myriad of searchlight beams danced up and down the sky in an effort to pick them up. Archie guns blazed away from every conceivable angle. It was a pandemonium of futile effort, for the Gothas rumbled on.

"They've passed us," yelled Chuck, as he noticed the evident nervousness of his new pilots. There is something about night bombardment that turns the bravest men's blood to water. The uncertainty of where the blow will fall, the invisibility of the attacker, the horror of suspense . . . Death in the heavens—the sword of Damocles waiting to fall—where? "From the direction," he added, "they must be after the canal locks at Gravelines."

"*Wh-e-e-e-eee! Wh-i-i-s-s-sh! Bw-o-ong!*" A prolonged crescendo whistle was followed by an infernal crash. A cataclysm of destruction rent the night. The earth trembled as the first Gotha laid its egg. About two miles to the west, the heavens lighted up as if the aurora borealis had suddenly appeared over Flanders. Another terrific explosion followed, and in close succession, two more.

"They carry a single one-ton bomb apiece," yelled Chuck. "Four bombs mean four Gothas." The rumble of Mercedes motors faded out over the English Channel as the night raiders picked the safer water route home. "They're away safely again," growled Chuck. "Damn them! I wonder what they hit this time."

Just then the phone rang in the office, and he went inside to answer it.

"Captain Wayne?" asked the signal corps operator. "Hold the line. Colonel Jackson is calling."

Chuck grimaced his disgust. There was a delay in locating Colonel Jackson, and Chuck asked the operator if he had any news as to the result of the Gotha raid.

"Plenty!" replied the signal corps-man. "And it's bad. They wiped out two canal locks, and that ties up ten supply ships. Here's Colonel Jackson."

"Wayne!" the colonel's harsh voice bellowed over the wire. "In tomorrow's raids you will use those two replacements who reported to you tonight. I'm confirming the order in writing this time, so you can't evade it."

"That's murder, colonel, and you know it," answered Chuck. "There is no reason why you should

let your personal hatred for me get two green pilots bumped off."

"Silence!" roared Colonel Jackson. "Those are my orders, and I don't give a damn what you think. Major Borden is bringing a French Intelligence officer over to see you tomorrow. He is looking for ideas and trying to solve the secret behind the success of these Gotha raids. You're never any good to anyone, so you won't know anything to help him. But you can act as if you were intelligent and treat him respectfully, anyway." A click in the receiver told Chuck that the colonel had disconnected the phone.

Choking with rage at the insults, Chuck turned from the instrument. A look of grim determination spread slowly over his countenance.

THE NEXT MORNING, a clammy ground fog made flying impossible. "That postpones the show-down with Jackson for one day, at least," thought Chuck, as he finished his breakfast.

A mud-smearing touring car pulled up outside the mess hall. Major Borden, wing operations officer, came in, accompanied by a youngish man in the uniform of a captain of French infantry.

"Howdy, Chuck," said the major. "Shake hands with Captain Renault of the French Intelligence. He is gathering dope on the Gotha raids."

"My department, captain," began the Frenchman, in precise English, "has been intrusted with a mission of grave import to the Allied cause. You are, no doubt, already familiar with the fact that the recent night bombing raids of the Gothas have been extraordinarily successful."

Chuck nodded his head and laughed. "Afraid I am," he said. "Saw one at first hand last night."

"We are sure that it is spy work," said Captain Renault, "but we cannot figure out how the spies are communicating with the pilots of the Gothas." The Frenchman paused a second, as if turning something over in his mind. "Captain Wayne," he continued. "I am about to ask the impossible. At least, it would be impossible for any other outfit but yours. I have heard so much about the accuracy of your shooting that I think you might have a bare chance of success. We would like to see one of those Gothas. And a wrecked one will not do us much good, either. We want one here on the ground in an undamaged condition. Can you get us one, captain?"

"That's one big order," said Chuck.

"What do you expect to find, in case they succeed?" cut in Major Garner.

“That is anyone’s guess,” replied Renault. “Your friend, Colonel Jackson,” he added, with a sly smile at Chuck, “seems positive that it is directional radio.”

“If that old—” Chuck began, but checked himself. “I mean to say, if Colonel Jackson thinks that, you have got me interested. Does he know what you are asking the 7th to do?”

“Not yet,” answered Renault.

“All right,” said Chuck. “I’ll make you a bargain. If you will keep it quiet until it’s over, we’ll try to get you a Gotha. It won’t be any bed of roses, either. Those gunners that Fritz is using in the bombers are the cream of the lot. They are mostly picked shots from the old Imperial Army. They are the only gunners at the Front who can compare with the Marines in accuracy, so it will be a hot show.” As an afterthought, he added. “I’m gambling on a hunch. I won’t tell you what I think the method of communication is, because I admit that I’m only guessing. But I think Jackson is wrong when he says it’s radio.”

“*Tres bien*,” laughed Renault. “It’s a good bargain. I’ll say nothing until the show is over. The next time they try a raid in this vicinity, make the attempt. They are aiming at the Channel ports, so it will not be long.”

Chuck spent the afternoon instructing his pilots in their parts in the coming show. There was joy in his heart at this chance to justify his insistence on gunnery practice. If ever a show called for hair-line accuracy, this was it. And if his hunch about the communications method should happen to be correct, well—anyway, if the 7th put this across, Colonel Jackson wouldn’t have a leg to stand on.

Darkness had fallen before the pilots sat down to a belated supper. Suddenly a window rattled. Conversation stopped on the instant. “*Roombaw! Roombaw!*” Very faintly from the eastern horizon came a dull rumbling. The Gothas! Pilots gulped cups of coffee and dashed for the door. They ran into their cubicles and grabbed flight gear. Mechanics streamed from their huts and ran for the hangars.

They were closer now. “*Rumpaw! Rumpaw! Rumpaw!*” They heard the unmistakable drumming of the tri-motored Gothas. Jerry never could seem to get those three motors synchronized. Always their drone surged in waves of sound, like breakers on a distant shore. *Rumpaw—rumpaw—the devil’s tattoo!* Freight trains of the air—the Gothas were coming!

“All clear! Contact!” The sound of motors reverberated down the starting line as the mechanics turned them over. Pilots polished their goggles and

climbed into the cockpits. From the command ship, Chuck gave the “All ready” signal. He taxied onto the field and turned into the wind.

Closer came the Gothas. Fingers of light gyrated up and down the heavens as the searchlights tried vainly to spot the marauders. Chuck kept the 7th sitting at the far end of the field, motors churning slowly in the gloom. He waited until across the rising moon he caught the cross-barred shadow of a Gotha. In a flash, he gave the Camel the gun. He raced madly down the field in a curving, crooked take-off which kept the silhouette of the raider always across the silver circle of light.

A less alert squadron would have been thrown into hopeless confusion by that twisting take-off. But the veteran pilots of the 7th followed the difficult course as a matter of habit. They skimmed the trees and raced across Flanders. They raced to meet the invader—to meet an ever growing shadow over Flanders destruction over France cargo of red death for the Allies!

On and on came the Gotha. Chuck led the 7th in a tight circle as they waited his approach. Half a mile—the moon flashed on a Camel’s wing. The Gotha saw them at last. Slowly, it banked into a ponderous turn in an effort to escape.

The 7th understood their orders. Kill the three gunners—but miss the pilot. That meant shooting at close quarters, hair-line accuracy.

Wires screaming and motor howling, Chuck dived under a huge lower wing. The gunner up front was his meat. He found a blind spot under that umbrellalike overhang. He eased his throttle to avoid overrunning his target. He brought his nose up to rake the front cockpit.

It was no use. He couldn’t get a sight from where he was. He would have to slide over. That would put him squarely in front of the gunner in the rear. There was no other way; he’d have to do it.

HE PUSHED ON a little right rudder, raised his right wing, and slipped to the left. Now! But before Chuck could touch his trigger, a crashing, flaying hail of Spandau lead smashed through the side of the fuselage all about his body.

“*Brat-a-tat-tat-tat.*” It ripped the fabric to shreds. The Jerry gunner riddled the Camel from nose to tail.

Chuck centered his sights on the crouching figure in the front of the Gotha. “*Chig-a-chig-chig-chig!*” The bucking stammer of his Vickers mingled with the

jangling clatter of the Spandau. Chuck saw the figure in front of his guns stiffen, turn—and slump forward on his gun.

For an instant Chuck dived for speed. Then he zoomed upward toward the Gotha again—under the rear cockpit to get that Kraut who had almost ruined his aim, and his neck besides. Up he came, Vickers hammering a song of death. Even as his tracers ate their way into the cockpit, he realized he was too late. The 7th had already accounted for his quarry. A soldier can only die once. And the three German gunners were all dead.

The Gotha pilot attempted to turn to the left. Three Camels closed in alongside—ghostly shadows in the moonlight which came from all angles to cut him off, to force him to straighten out. He tried vainly to turn to the right, but he was cut off there.

Something flashed in the German pilot's hand. A Luger slug crashed into the instrument panel in front of Chuck's face. A brave man, that German pilot—but he would have to behave.

Chuck turned his nose towards the Gotha and squeezed off a burst. The bullets cut a neat pattern in the side of the cockpit, not six inches from the pilot's back. He dropped the Luger. Perhaps he understood; perhaps the Luger was empty. What difference? He was headed for the tarmac of the 7th.

It was a strange parade, a ghostly procession. A bullet-riddled Gotha, with a cargo of dead men. Escort of Camels above, below, on both sides—only inches away, forcing the Gotha down, forward and down—down to the tarmac of the 7th Marines.

The lights flashed on; the huge bomber lumbered over the boundary markers and rumbled to a stop. Chuck rolled alongside as its wheels touched the earth. Unless he missed his guess, that pilot would try to burn his plane.

Yes! There was a flash of flame as he struck a match. Stark bedlam broke loose on the ground. Three machine guns spoke simultaneously from the line of hangars. The pilot crumpled in his cockpit; mechanics rushed over and put out the tiny flame. Chuck smiled. He had figured well.

Captain Renault was waiting. Chuck hailed him, and together they climbed aboard the Gotha. Quickly, the dead Germans were lifted out. With flashlights, they searched the interior of their prize.

"*Nom de Dieu! Sacre bleu!*" growled Captain Renault. "Colonel Jackson is one bad guesser. I see no radio here. Nor for that matter, anything else," he added.

Chuck did not answer for a minute; he was trying to figure out a peculiar opening beneath the pilot's feet. The hole itself was natural enough; most bombers had similar holes so that the pilot could watch his target as it passed beneath him. It was about two feet square, and covered with a peculiar opaque glass. It was that translucent glass which Chuck was studying.

"Captain," he said, "I'm still playing my hunch. We'll take her off, just the two of us. I'll tell you all about it in a couple of minutes, just as soon as we get into the air."

Parachutes were never used in the Camels but there were two of the type the balloonists used in the headquarters hut. These they had been using for experimental purposes. Chuck sent an orderly on a dead run to get them. He dispatched another for two Colt 45's and extra clips of ammunition.

The motors of the Gotha had been idling as they worked. Quickly Chuck searched for leaks in the gas tanks. One was riddled. He found the pet-cock in the fuel line and disconnected that tank. He called for chocks under the wheels; he revved up the three motors.

The orderlies returned with the chutes and pistols. Chuck handed one of each to the Frenchman and told him to don the breeches harness; he climbed into the other one himself. They fitted the balloon-chute cones outside the cockpits.

"Pull the chocks!"

With a roar from the three Mercedes, the Gotha trundled down the field.

"Captain Renault," said Chuck as they taxied. "I may have the answer to all this spy business."

He cut the inboard motor, turned into the wind, pushed the throttles forward. The huge tail gradually lifted from the ground and they gained momentum. They were off!

CHUCK CIRCLED THE FIELD for altitude, then turned the Gotha's nose towards Calais, resuming the same course it had been flying when they forced it down.

"This course should take us over their intended target," Chuck shouted above the din of the motors. "Let's hope we see it. No lights should be showing down below. But watch the ground closely through that window. You may see something just the same."

For perhaps ten minutes they droned across the endless dark fields. Not a flicker broke the blackness of the countryside. For three war-torn years no lights

had burned in Flanders. A light at night meant a spy at work—a spy marking the goal of the Gothas. And a light to guide the Gothas was also a light to guide the *gendarmes*. No spy ever lit more than one beacon. French vengeance was swift and certain. A signal torch for the Gothas meant a grave for a German spy.

Suddenly Renault gripped Chuck's arm. "Look! Look!" Excitement quivered in his voice. "A light! Below us!"

A tiny pin-point of fire glowed steadily through the translucent window. Without changing his course, Chuck spoke into Renault's ear. "Make sure you have its position spotted. Then look over the side and find out if you can see it without looking through that window." The Frenchman peered over the cockpit cowl.

"*Sacre bleu*, captain! It disappears. Incredible! It is gone!" Renault slid back into his seat. "But no!" he cried. "It is there. I see it clearly through the window."

Chuck was exultant. "That's just what I thought," he said. "It's infrared. Photographers have always known that there were infrared rays of light, but they have not known how to make them visible. Jerry has doped out a sending device and a detector. A spy has the lantern there on the ground. Its light is absolutely invisible to anyone who does not have the detector which is that window pane under our feet. Have you got the place spotted? What is it?"

"The St. Jean munitions dump."

"Get ready to jump out! We have the detector. We can nail that spy and his sending lamp. That's why I brought the chutes." Chuck kicked his foot through the glass panel and picked a sizable fragment from the frame. G-2 would need that sample. He slipped it into the pocket of his flying suit.

Brr-up! A hail of lead crashed into the Gotha. Down from the silvery sky rained a stream of tracers. Chuck felt their white hot breath, felt them claw at his arm.

He saw Renault clutch his side, half-spin in his seat—mortally wounded. The dying Frenchman lurched side-wise in the cockpit. He clawed at Chuck's head, and drew his mouth to the Yankee's ear.

"*Chemin de fer*—the train-shed. The light is on the roof of the train-shed. *Vive la France!*" Renault pitched forward on his face.

Spads—the night was alive with Spads. From all directions they poured searing bullets into the helpless bomber. German bomber? Of course it was a German bomber. There were the gaunt black crosses

on its gargantuan wings. Boche meat—carrion for the blazing guns of France.

How could those pilots in the Spads know that this Gotha was different? How could they know it was flown by a Yankee, or that they had killed a French officer? How could they tell that they were wrecking the greatest Intelligence coup of the war? Gotha, night raider, murderer! Lead for a Gotha, death to a night raider, flames for a murderer!

Desperately Chuck kicked his rudder and hurled the huge bulk of the Gotha straight into the heart of the seething mass of Spads. Collision? What difference? Anything else meant death. The suddenness of his move opened a lane between his attackers, and they scrambled to avoid the awkward wings.

In the second of respite, Chuck climbed over the side, and hurled himself into the darkness below. Down and down he plunged; the earth rushed up to meet him; there was a jerk at his groin. For a full second his heart stood still. This was an experimental chute; would it open? It was already clear of the leather cone.

Slowly, the white silk billowed out above his head. With another jerk, his descent was checked, and he floated gently. He looked for the Spads—and here they came. Would they pot him now that he hung helpless, shoot him like a dog? Chuck held his breath. The Spads held their fire. Those French pilots were soldiers, not murderers.

Chuck twisted in his broad webbing harness and worked the shroud lines of his chute around until he faced downwind. He struck the ground with a jolt, and tumbled headlong before he could spill the wind from his chute.

He scrambled to his feet, gun in hand. The most important job was yet to be done. He was within the confines of the St. Jean munitions dump, and in the distance he heard the hoarse cries of sentries and the shuffle of running feet. That spy would grab his apparatus and take to his heels; there was no time to waste.

Chuck glanced hastily about him in the shadowy maze of buildings and loading platforms. He got his bearings, spotted the train shed, beyond and to the right. Noiselessly, he slipped through the gloomy alleyways. Quietly, he crawled the last fifty yards.

The train-shed roof was silhouetted against the moon. A figure scuttled across the light on his hands and knees. Chuck raised his arm. The .45 barked twice.

The stooping man struggled to his feet. He clawed

wildly at thin air, tumbled to the ground. The spy was dead, with his tell-tale lantern clasped in his lifeless arms.

A French staff car carried Chuck to G.H.Q. It was dawn before the astonished general staff finished asking questions and examining the captured infra-red ray apparatus. Numb with fatigue, Chuck did not think to wonder why a gold-braided French general rode with him when the car again took the road for the home field of the 7th. But he did vaguely notice that the entire wing was drawn up at attention when they drew up in front of Headquarters. The major was waiting as they climbed from the car.

“Major Borden,” said the general, “I return to you a great pilot. It is my very great honor to escort a brilliant officer to his own comrades. When our own Intelligence had drawn a blank, his quick thinking and prompt action saved the day.” He turned to Chuck.

“Captain Charles Wayne,” he said, “the Republic salutes a brave man. France thanks you.” The general leaned forward and looped the red ribbon and medal of an Officer of the Legion of Honor about Chuck’s throat.

Major Borden was the first to shake Chuck’s hand. He leaned over and whispered in his ear. “It might interest you to know,” he said, “that G.H.Q. is issuing orders making gunnery practice compulsory for every squadron on the Front.” He paused and smiled, then added significantly, “Colonel Jackson has developed some very mysterious cramps in his stomach. He is being sent home for treatment. I thought perhaps you’d like to know!”