

The Messerschmidts plummeted at the caravan, their machine-guns rattling



## Dark Thunder

By ROBERT CARSE

DAVID LOWE, foreign correspondent, goes to Haiti to expose a Nazi intrigue that threatens the safety of the Caribbean, and to find the girl he loves—the beautiful Margett von Rudvig. Since the time of Christophe the von Rudvigs have dwelt in Haiti; Margett's brother, Ernst, has lately served as a Condor pilot in Spain. According to Lowe's friend, Major John Folsom of Army Intelligence, Ernst von Rudvig is completely in the power of Colonel Count Maxim Spelke, a high Nazi officer now in Haiti.

ARRIVED at the island, David Lowe is invited to Crête à Moulin, the ancestral home of the von Rudvigs. There he finds Spelke and a dozen hard-faced German officers, with Margett and her brother at their service; and Lowe learns quickly what the Nazis are planning. A secret air base has been established at Crête à Moulin, and one night Lowe hears the drone of Messerschmidt planes. That same night Spelke kills Ernst von Rudvig, who is now useless to him, and accuses David Lowe of the murder.

But the Negro servant, Vaubin, can testify to Margett that Lowe did not kill her brother. So at last she understands the full horror of

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this silent Nazi invasion. She agrees to stand with Lowe and the Negro servants in defense of Crête à Moulin against the Germans.

But that night Spelke and a carload of men depart on an unknown mission to Christophe's Citadel, and David Lowe must follow them, leaving Margett at Crête à Moulin.

WITH his tough, faithful attendant, Monk, and a couple of dependable Haitians, David Lowe sets out on an exhausting and hazardous pursuit of Maxim Spelke. At length they reach the Citadel; Lowe enters the ruined fortress alone, to face Spelke and his men. Almost immediately Lowe is cornered by a German—to be rescued an instant later by the miraculous appearance of Major John Folsom at the head of a Haitian guard. . . .

## CHAPTER XVI

### KING'S GOLD

HE SAW clouds first, slow-moving across the high blue clarity of the sky, and then, turning his head a little, he saw the ramparts of the Citadel. You're David Lowe, he thought. You've been hurt, and quite badly, but now you're feeling a lot better. This is the Place d'Armes, the main courtyard.

That realization collected all Lowe's thoughts. He was once more fully aware of what had happened, what was happening. His hands stretched out to the grass-covered stone on which he lay and he tried to lift himself to a sitting posture. But then he heard the shots, the voices.

Men ran across the far end of the Place d'Armes, just within his vision. They were Negro soldiers of the Haitian Guard, and as they ran they fired their Springfield rifles from the hip. Good soldiers, he thought; they're not wasting a shot. But where's Big John, and where's Spelke?

The guardsmen had gone flat behind the rampart embrasures. They shot down at men David Lowe couldn't see. Yet bullets whipped the embrasure edges, and there was the sudden, throbbing blast of a Spandau gun. A grenade exploded some distance away, through its echoes the screams of wounded and dying.

A big, black sergeant of the Guard got

off his knees. He signaled the men at the embrasure to stop firing. "All over," he said. "The last of them went when the major threw that grenade."

He meant Folsom when he said the major, Lowe understood. Then the Germans were licked, chased out of the Citadel. Lie back, he told himself. Look at the clouds again. Your job's finished.

But John Folsom was coming towards him heavily striding, a pistol loose in his hand. Lowe looked into Folsom's eyes, and at once he was sure that Spelke still lived, had escaped.

"*De nada*," Folsom said. "Really a no decision scrap. Spelke had too many men for us, all that lot from the German ship. But I've got Guard scouts out tracking him."

"From what ship did he get men?"

"A big freighter that put out of Ciudad Trujillo in Santo Domingo last week. For the last couple of days, she's been lying off the beach beyond Cape Haitian. That's one reason I got the idea things were becoming pretty hot here. When I reached the Cape, the Guard officers told me about her."

"How did you come south?"

"Marine Corps plane, just as soon as I could after I got your cable. I was on my way to Crête à Moulin to look into that situation. Then I learned about the ship, and Spelke came through town like hell in the Mercedes. So I borrowed a platoon of the Guard and came up here after him. But I didn't think I'd meet you."

There was a concealed warmth, a tenderness of friendship in the last words, and David Lowe smiled at him. "Didn't think I'd meet you myself," he said. "If I had, I'd have saved you a drink."

"But Crête à Moulin has become a German base. They've got at least fifty fast bombers at the field they've built there. Ernst is dead; Spelke killed him. Right after he did, he left for here."

"I have a rather strong belief he was looking for some of the old Henri Christophe gold. Have you seen any signs of his looking for it?"

"Down at the other end, a bunch of fuses have been set leading into the cistern."

"Ernst said it was 'deep, deep'. He told me that when he met me out to sea in the *Hyperbole*. He came over trying to bomb Monk and me and I shot him down. Let's take a look at the cistern."

A COUPLE of the guardsmen helped David Lowe walk. They were going down the steps to the dank, lichen-walled square of the cistern when the hoarse yell rose behind.

Monk stood there at the top of the steps in the Place d'Armes. Hugo and Gros Catulle supported him, and around them were guardsmen who kept their fingers on their rifle triggers.

David Lowe laughed in almost hysterical relief. "Let them go," he told the sergeant of the Guard. "They're men who work for me." Then he called to Monk, "Come on down. We're going to have a little water-works display. Spelke's off in the woods somewhere, taking a sprint for his health."

The fuses along the cistern rim ran to two cases of submerged dynamite, John Folsom found. "What can be under all that muck and water?" he asked.

"Gold, I told you," Lowe said. "Detonate the stuff and then we look."

The dynamite made a rumbling concussion, flung the scummy water upward in greenish cascades. Then the water swiftly ebbed out through the shattered stone flooring. Black mud showed, and broken barrel staves, rusted musket barrels, all the detritus of a century.

"Ain't no fish," Monk said. "And ain't no gold, 'less it's down underneath."

"That's where I think it is," David Lowe said. He reached into his pocket and took out the crumpled scrap of parchment Margett had given him at Crête à Moulin. He studied the old, faded figures again, then passed it to John Folsom. "Looks like part of an old map to me. Margett found it on the floor of the library, up there at her home. Very soon after, Ernst was shot."

John Folsom rubbed his fingers across his brow. Then he turned and talked to the sergeant. "Bring down the lads who're stationed here," he told him. "And I want every shovel and pick and bucket you can find around the place."

There were six men of the regular Citadel guard. They were led by a stocky corporal who had a swollen welt along his jaw where he had been hit by a rifle butt. He looked frowning at the piece of parchment when Folsom held it out to him, and then he turned and talked fast in the Creole to his men.

"These boys were caught in their bunks by Spelke," Folsom told David Lowe. "They didn't have a chance to fight and were locked up in their own quarters. Now they're still kind of dazed, but I think the corporal can make sense."

"No man knows of anything here, Major," the corporal said. "Cistern's always been full of water, but water was too dirty to be used. We never even came down here much."

"There's an old story," David Lowe said, "that King Henri had thirty million dollars hidden somewhere in the Citadel when he died. Did you ever hear of that, Corporal?"

"*Mais oui, m'sieu*," the corporal said, and shrugged a bit. "Folks tell that story all the time. But nobody finds any gold."

John Folsom had been copying the figures on the piece of parchment, checking and cross-checking them. "All right," he suddenly said. "Hop down there in the cistern, every guy who can handle a shovel or a pick. I want that flooring lifted. Pile the blocks to one side where I tell you, and let's see what's underneath."

IT WAS very hot there in the sun. The mud stank, and blue bottle flies and mosquitoes swarmed about the men as they worked. But John Folsom got right down in the stuff, worked himself. He was the one who put his pick through the rotted, mud-covered top of the chest, in the cavity beneath one of the flooring stones.

The pick point made a hollow sound as it ripped the wood, but then it clanged on metal. All of them stopped working. The wounded men on the cistern edge craned forward. "Thirty million dollars," David Lowe said, "was the quoted figure. How much'd you strike, John?"

John Folsom and Hugo and the sergeant were lifting up the chest. It had greened brass handles at each end, and a massive lock. Folsom wiped the lock clean with his shirt-tail. On it was emblazoned the royal crest of Henri Christophe. He straightened, swung the pick high, hit the lock a ringing blow.

The lock wrenched back, hung loose. Folsom knelt and pushed the cover open. David Lowe was unable to see what Folsom was fumbling in his hands, but he could see his face.

It was ruddily flushed, and the mouth lines were taut, the eyes shining. Then Folsom got up, turned and came toward him. "Here," he said, "You're the one to examine these, *compañero*."

They were mostly old Spanish and English coins, doubloons, and pieces-of-eight, and sovereigns, rough-edged and crudely stamped, but all pure gold. David Lowe placed them beside him one by one in stacks on the mossy stone. He made the gesture mechanically, his mind held by a vision of Margett.

She should be here now, he thought. Her courage, her determination to remain at Crête à Moulin, had given him the incentive to make this discovery. If it weren't for her and that fragment of old Captain Johann's will he'd never have followed Spelke to the Citadel. And a great part at least of the gold here was hers by any decision of law. She was the rightful claimant, the last surviving member of the Von Rudvig family.

He looked at John Folsom grinning. "For an intelligence officer," he said, "you're fairly intelligent. But this isn't all. There should be a whole lot more."

"We'll get it," the big man said. "Spelke must have the rest of the parchment giving the location here. Now, though, it's not

going to do him any good. The German treasury will keep on being broke."

They found and hauled free chest after chest of gold during that day. For a time, the excitement of discovering each new chest, of knowing that they handled a tremendous fortune, maintained their energy. But then towards late afternoon they lagged, squatted down mud-stained and panting.

"Thirty million dollars, or very near it," John Folsom told Lowe. "It'd give the Nazis just the financial support they need to start a war. With it, they could make their Reichsbank a real bank again, refinance their entire system. We'll have to get the stuff out of here, down to Cape Haitian and a safer place. I want a lot more men to finish the job, and burros, trucks."

"Talk to Gros Catulle and Hugo," David Lowe said. "They'll give you dependable workers. But when you start the stuff out to the Cape it should be very well guarded."

"I'm not satisfied that Spelke's quit for good. He's too tough a man, and this is too big a prize for him to lose. . . . I begin to understand why Ernst did a bit of gambling in Spain. What's a few pesos to a man who knows he's got thirty millions behind him?"

"It cost him his life," Folsom said. "The gold must have been the threat Spelke kept over him all the time. As a man of German blood and one loyal to the Fatherland, Ernst should have reported this to Berlin a long time ago; he should have seen they got all or most of it."

"But I don't think you're right about Spelke. He can still play plenty of hell unless his base at Crête à Moulin is destroyed. Around here, though, he's licked. What can he do, with the *gendarmes* guarding our burros and trucks?"

David Lowe's eyes had become narrow, thoughtful. "How many *gendarmes* can you get to guard the stuff while it's being taken into town?"

"Maybe fifty more. There aren't a lot who can be taken from their regular duties

at the posts around here. Still, they'll be enough. Spelke's no fool. If he starts another scrap with the Guard, he'll have his country in a real international mess. He can't afford to do that, gold or no gold."

"You don't know the guy as I do," David Lowe said. "You haven't seen him up there at Crête à Moulin, singing the Condor song with his pack of pet mastiffs. Those men don't care anything for international law. It doesn't exist for them. All they believe in is what they call the glory of war. Get more *gendarmes* to guard the gold, will you?"

"I can't, Davey," Folsom said, an impatience of weariness making his voice harsh. "You're exaggerating the situation a bit."

"The Haitian government isn't convinced yet that the country is being seriously menaced by Germany. No word of what's going on at Crête à Moulin has got out to the Guard or any of the other officials. I had a hard time borrowing the platoon I brought in here. Another fifty men will be tops for what they'll let me have."

"After all, the main part of that gold will belong to Margett, and not the government. Now you should get out of here and down to the hospital. You don't look as though you feel too good."

"No," David Lowe said stubbornly. "I'll wait, and make the ride out with you. I want to be sure that the stuff's safe."

## CHAPTER XVII

### BEWARE OF THE SKY

**F**OG came up the mountain at dusk. The men worked by torchlight, but singing, for Gros Catulle and Hugo had brought in rum and food. Monk sat propped against the wall, counting the chests as they were swung from man to man up the steps to where the burros waited.

"Ay de mi," he kept saying. "What a time a fella could have cleanin' out one o' them in Havana. Kill yerself sure, but awful nice. . . ."

"Pipe down," David Lowe finally told him, the pain fierce-burning through his side. "We're leaving now. Get Hugo to help you up onto a burro."

They went from the Citadel in single file. The little, gray burros kept nose to tail, groaning and nickering under the weights of the chests. Along the winding trail, standing at the sharpest curves, were *gendarmes* with torches.

David Lowe was glad to see each one of them. A feeling of dread, of terrific nervous tension held him. It was not the pain of his wound, he recognized, but fear. He was afraid of Spelke; he couldn't help thinking that Spelke was going to come back.

But the dainty, narrow hooves of the burros kept on steadily over the slippery stone. Some of the beasts reached out and chewed at the leaves of wild banana and cane. Then the *gendarmes* cursed, beat them with sticks and the whole line took up a slow trot for a few yards. David Lowe looked down, into the plain and toward the sea.

Fog drifted white, thick over the sea. It was obscured, and only the coastal plain showed in grayish contrast. Then he saw the great, ruined walls of Sans Souci, the palace Henri Christophe had so proudly built.

The walls of it stood bleak against the softness of the mist. The leaves of the trees on the lawns were as black and flat as metal, untouched by any wind.

David Lowe's burro started to trot again, crossing the lawn. Below, on the far side of the terraces fronting the palace, were a lot of men and trucks. The truck motors had a ruffling beat, and the men's voices were loud. They stood in front of the Guard station there, light from the open doorways over them.

It won't be much after this, he thought. You'll find a seat in one of those trucks, ride quickly into town. But Spelke's coming back, coming back right now. There's his planes . . .

The planes flung down screaming from the sky. Their target was the parked



trucks and the men beside them. But they used no bombs. They strafed with the machine-guns. Tracers flickered a wide web of death. Burros reared. Men yelled, tried to get under the trucks, or stand and shoot.

David Lowe slid from his burro, let the animal run. Then he saw Folsom on the steps of the Guard station. Folsom had a Springfield; he was firing with it at the planes. "Get down, John!" Lowe called at him. "Get away from that light!"

Folsom heard him, partly turned. He was half way around when the machine-guns raked the steps, caught the big kerosene lamp on the porch and smashed it. The light then was only the tracer bullet flame. Folsom lay on his face gasping, his hands plucking vaguely at the Springfield sliding down the steps.

DAVID Lowe went to him. He explored the big man's head and body with his hands. Folsom had been deeply grazed over one eyebrow, that was all. But he was dazed, incapable of moving without help. Lowe did his best to get him back into the building alone, stumbled and fell from weakness.

He was there on the shattered steps, shielding Folsom's body with his body, as Hugo crawled up from the line of trucks. Hugo was unhurt, and cursing savagely in a low, slow voice.

"Must get out, *m'sieur*," he said. "We can't defend ourselves against those planes, not with rifles and automatics."

"I know," David Lowe said. "But where's the lieutenant in command of the post, or the sergeant?"

"Both dead," Hugo said "Will you give the order for the men to leave?"

"Yes," David Lowe said. "Tell them to form on you and follow you. I want two men to carry the major; send them straight here."

"Monk is on the other side of the trucks with Catulle," Hugo said. "I'll send them to you with two other men. You're not very strong yourself, *m'sieur*."

"That's right," Lowe said, and was surprised at the quality of bitterness in his

voice. A rage drove through him that made him want to weep. You're stupid, he thought, and futile. You and Big John Folsom contrived to get out the gold all very fine, just so Spelke could take it away from you like candy from a kid.

He picked up the rifle Folsom had fired and used it as a crutch to hobble down the steps. Monk and Gros Catulle were coming around the bullet-battered trucks, a pair of guardsmen with them. They crouched down near to the ground, watching the sky.

The huge German planes circled there at an elevation of about four thousand feet, ready to dive. "Come on," Lowe called. He waved his hand to the rest of the men around the trucks. "We're leaving. Follow Hugo. This is no place for us any more."

He dragged ahead of the little column, Catulle supporting him. The guardsmen and the civilian men who had been handling the gold staggered behind, fascinated by the planes, watching them all the time.

Now the planes were diving once more. But they flattened out over the old palace, released flares. A murky yellow light sprang from the flares, showed the sweep of greensward open and smooth past the terraces. The first plane landed there in a perfect dive. It swung, the propellers slowly slurring, and the pilot and observer leaped out to the ground.

They ran at once to the dead burros and the trucks carrying the gold. They tugged down a chest, ran with it between them back to the plane. Then they returned for another chest, and another.

David Lowe didn't wait to watch any more. He kept stumbling on along the road. Those planes, he knew, could carry two tons of bombs, or two tons of gold. It would tax their flying capacity and their flight distance would be short under such a load. But they would be able to reach Crête à Moulin, there refuel, take off for some further German base.

He gazed out seaward, toward the north and America. The whole world should hear about this, he thought. Here was interna-

tional brigandage on an enormous scale. Spelke's pilots had shot down more than twenty of the Haitian Guard tonight, killed them as carelessly as some cocaine-crazed gunman in a cigar-store stickup.

Sans Souci, the palace in which Henri Christophe had ended his life with a golden bullet, had never seen more brutal violence than this. Old King Henri and Captain Johann would laugh with ironic pleasure if they knew.

**S**ENTRIES with bayoneted rifles held fixed posts all around Guard headquarters in Cape Haitian. Cars bearing the diplomatic license plates of the United States, France, Great Britain and Germany were parked in front. David Lowe quickly noted them as he passed the sentries on the way back from the hospital.

He had left Monk at the hospital, made sure that the black man was made comfortable. Then the doctors had examined and bandaged his own wound, advised him to stay off his feet for two weeks. But he'd just refused to answer them.

He must get back to Crête à Moulin, he repeated countless times to himself. Margett was there defenseless, except for Vaubin, and now Spelke had the gold, was free to move as he wished in any way. There was a great, constant danger for Margett.

In a lower office of the headquarters a smart young captain of the Guard rose from a desk and bowed. "You can go right into the conference, M'sieur Lowe," he said. "Major Folsom has told the ministers you'll present your testimony personally."

"No, I won't," David Lowe said. "But I want to talk with the major right away. Ask him to come out here, please."

John Folsom's fingers were yellow-stained from constant cigarette smoking, and they jerked with nervous fatigue. "Sit down, sport," he told Lowe. "What's on your mind? Why don't you want to testify to these chaps? They're the top men of their various governments in Haiti. Most of them have already sent hot cables back to their foreign offices."

"Proving what?" David Lowe said.

John Folsom shortly shrugged. "Not much. You see, nobody's sure of just exactly what happened. The dead men we found up at the Citadel couldn't be identified in any way. The planes that strafed us down in front of Sans Souci were unmarked. They might've belonged to any one of the score of nations, or have been privately owned. How could we tell?"

"And to make any definite statement now of what we think and suspect might precipitate an international war overnight. Don't forget Haiti's a small country, but an independent one, and can appeal directly to the States or Britain or France any time she wants to for immediate military help."

"Naturally," David Lowe said. "She should. But if I go in that room and start to testify, they'll keep me there for days. I know conferences. It'd be like Geneva, or Evian, and at the end of it nothing would be proved, or done. The next thing you're going to tell me is that I can't even put a story on the cable to Brick Haneagan for the *Courier*."

"I'm afraid you're right," Folsom said, and frowned. "But we have to go easy. You can't just flatly sit down and accuse a major power of armed aggression here."

"Outright murder's the name for it. Why kid around? Up at Crête à Moulin, Spelke told me—"

"Quiet, Davey! Don't use that man's name. Not here, not now. If you won't testify, go buy yourself a drink, get some sleep. I'll try to finish this up as quickly as I can. Then maybe we can make a trip together to Crête à Moulin."

"Maybe, my neck," David Lowe said. "I'm starting for there immediately. I'm taking Hugo with me because he says he thinks he knows how we can get into the place, and because he wants to go. Shake all the diplomats' hands for me, and tell them without doubt they've got good intentions. But the girl I'm in love with needs more than a lot of words."

John Folsom took out his cigarette case, gave Lowe one, took one for himself. He

deeply inhaled before he spoke. "You make it kind of hard for me," he said. "You're right, though; you have to go. I'm a soldier, and I'm under orders. As soon as I can, I'll come up there looking for you. *Salud*. Take care of yourself."

"I will," David Lowe said.

Hugo sat in a cafe across the big square. He smiled as he saw David Lowe. "We go?" he said.

"Right away. Can you get a car?"

"I've got the Delage, *m'sieur*. A Guard driver brought it into town from Catulle's place."

"Then we should be back at Crête à Moulin by tonight."

"*Probablement, m'sieur*. It might take a bit longer this time."

"That gang will be watching the road, you mean."

Hugo calmly nodded. "But there are little side trails," he said, "that no one but a man who was born there knows. You're ready?"

David Lowe touched his pistol in his jacket pocket just to be sure he could quickly draw it. "Yes," he said.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### MAN WITH A MACHETE

LIZARDS left the mountain rocks as the sun lowered and the shadows lifted up the ravine walls. David Lowe was glad the lizards were gone.

It was cooler now, too, and a wind was in the pines; it brought the rich, sweet scent of ripe cane from the plain below. He remembered the plain as something very far away. It was there he and Hugo had eaten last, taken cane stalks from a field, mangos from a roadside tree behind which they had hidden the Delage.

Then they had swerved from the road, followed a river that narrowed to a turbulently descending brook. Its waters dropped from great heights, and they had scaled them, clinging dizzily to roots and rocks. His few hours of rest at the Cape had returned part of his strength. But here he had lost it.

But when Hugo raised a hand and waved, he knew what the gesture meant. He scrambled up to where Hugo crouched, and saw on the immense ridge beyond the criss-crossed black arms of the windmill at Crête à Moulin.

He wanted to yell, to laugh, or weep, and kept completely silent. "Three more hours," Hugo murmured. "Then we're there. You can make it, *m'sieur*?"

He simply nodded. He was thinking of Margett, how her face would light up when he came into the room where she was. She was there, of course, he told himself. She had to be. If she wasn't, why . . . He drove that thought out of his brain. The effort of keeping up with Hugo was enough for him.

The beating of his heart reached upward to his brain. He climbed to the rhythm of it, lifting first one hand and leg, then the other. It can't last forever, he thought. You'll be there soon, with Margett. . . .

Dogs barked when they entered the coffee plantations beyond the crest. "German dogs," Hugo whispered. "They must have brought them here in their planes. We'll have to wait for daylight, *m'sieur*. Dogs like that will bark all night, give us away."

"We'll have to gamble we can get past them," David Lowe said. "Swing out wide and around the other way, to come in from the south."

It took a very long time to do that. They didn't hear the dogs any more, but they almost stumbled into brush-covered strands of electrified barbed wire. "Get set and jump," David Lowe told Hugo. "But be sure you jump high."

He landed in a jarring fall that badly stunned him. But Hugo landed right beside him, helped him to his knees. Then they crawled on, dragged through a softly rustling field of leaf tobacco, through a grove of lime trees. Right past the trees was an anti-aircraft gun emplacement.

Four men sat around the gun. They talked in German as they heated a tin of coffee over a small fire. One of them stood



and grunted in a surly voice when the others asked him to go out and get more wood.

"He's number one," David Lowe whispered. "I'll take him, Hugo. I'll feel better after I've dumped him."

The German wore heavy boots that made a thumping sound, and he smoked a pipe with a tin lid. David Lowe marked him by the little pink glim of light through the pipe lid perforations. He came in from the side, lunged to seize the throat.

He choked the man to death, holding him straining, pitching under him. He was possessed of an abnormal, maniacal strength. The German didn't have a chance, made no noise. When he was dead, Lowe let go of him, but picked up the pipe and the machete the other had carried. It's your turn, he thought. Now be smart.

Hugo's eyes showed pale in the darkness as he saw the pipe and the machete. "What are you going to do with those?" he asked.

"I want to get the rest of the gun crew," David Lowe said. "Kill all of them. I talk German, and I can light this pipe, come back swinging the machete as though I were the guy carrying the wood. Then when I'm close—"

His whispering voice suddenly broke. He was aware that Hugo looked at him almost as he would at someone insane. "*M'sieur*," Hugo said, "there's no reason to kill those three there. We can get past them all right. If we stopped for that, we might awake the whole place, and we'd be two against three anyhow."

David Lowe held himself very still. A cold, sick sweat pricked forth on his skin. He said his name beneath his breath, and through his brain was a dark terror.

You're getting to be like the Germans, he thought. All you're living for is to kill. Now you've got a taste for it. Sure, there's more thrill in hunting men than anything else that breathes and fights back. It's certainly more exciting than pounding out an overnight story for some copy-reader to pull apart on the desk.

It's just lovely, this killing, and you're

drunk, half crazy with the kick of it. In a little while you'll be just as much a brutish mastiff as any of Spelke's crew.

"You're right, Hugo," he said softly aloud. "We've got no reason to stop here. I got carried away a bit by hate, I guess. But I've got myself straight now. Lead the way, on toward the house."

THEY went with great caution, so slowly that at times they moved forward no more than a few inches. But they got around the gun emplacement, came at last to the edge of the freshly rolled flying field.

It was huge. Along the far side and the side facing the house were rows of planes under tarpaulins and a high, square pile of gasoline drums. David Lowe smiled, and his hands stretched flat on the ground.

"They're a methodical bunch of boys," he told Hugo. "They've put all their gasoline in one place. And all their planes are here in nice, tight formation. The gold must still be here, or some of the planes would be missing.

"Spelke's keeping doggo until he finds out what happens at that conference of big-wigs at the Cape. But we'll make up his mind for him. If we burn his gasoline he can't get the gold out, can he?"

"*Pas possiblement, m'sieur*," Hugo said. "He sure can't. But he'll be a damn' angry man."

"Time he got a bit angry," David Lowe said. "I've had my share. Let's slide around to the house side before we try our act. I want to get to see Mam'selle Margett, whether we win or lose with the gasoline."

Men with automatic rifles guarded the planes and gasoline drums. But a spattering, misty rain had started to fall, and they stood huddled, the corners of the plane tarpaulin pulled about their shoulders. Only one of them saw David Lowe and Hugo. He challenged in German, then started to shoot.

Hugo killed him with a swift pistol shot. David Lowe was up and running for the gasoline.

He ripped the bottom of the big tarpaulin loose, jammed it back between two drums. Then he sent a shot into a drum at the base of the pile, flicked a match into the thin splash of gasoline.

A lot of men were shooting at him by then, and he was forced to pitch himself flat, crawl away on his hands and knees. But the drums exploded in a frightful white gust of flame.

The night was seared the shade of molten steel. Cascading bursts of burning gasoline crested over the planes, caught the tarpaulin covers. Men dropped to the ground, held their arms over their heads. It was impossible to look into that fury of flame, to keep your eyes open at all.

David Lowe moved blindly, his jacket and his hair smoking, but toward the house, the memory of its location clear. He butted into shrubbery, into trees, stayed for several minutes under a rose bush, the wet petals clammy against his scorched skin, the smell fragrant and yet faint against the smell of the gasoline.

Men ran past while he stayed beneath the rose bush. They came from the house, carrying extinguishers and reels of hose. He heard their cursing voices, and then Hugo's voice. Hugo was near him, hunching forward from behind a tree.

"Time to get to the house is now," Hugo muttered. "Get in before they get back. What a hell of a fire that one does make. About half their planes are burning up."

"Very fine," David Lowe said. He rose, refilled his pistol clip and started steadily running for the house. Once, around by the rear door, he met a German, but the man ran after he shot at him. Then he was in the house, going up the stairs, standing in front of Margett's room.

A strange indecision claimed him there. He didn't want to knock, for fear Margett wasn't within, or wouldn't answer him. If she's been shipped back to Germany, he thought. If Spelke's given her a beating here, why your life's just all through, that's all. But then he heard her, moving across the softly carpeted floor. He rapped on the door panels, called her name. -

SHE stood with her hands stiff at her sides after she opened the door. She looked into his face with a dull, almost uncomprehending regard. For a terrible moment, he thought she had lost her mind, did not recognize him. Then he saw that she began to smile, heard her say his name, and he embraced her, his head down on her shoulder.

"Margett," he murmured. "Oh, baby, it's been a long time."

"Yes," she said. "But I'm all right. "Nothing's happened to me, David. Come in, and close the door. Spelke may pass in the hall any moment. He suspects me, and he goes by here often to see what I'm doing."

David Lowe was shaking with reaction, could hardly stand. Margett led him across the room to a chair, then knelt beside him, kissing his hands and face.

"I had no idea where you were," she said. "And at night sometimes I'd get the thought that you were dead. When the planes came back with the gold, I was practically certain that was so."

"If you were dead, I thought, I would get a gun and just go and kill Spelke. Then the rest could do what they wanted with me, because my life wouldn't have meaning any more."

He smiled, stroking her pale, tensed face. "I had just about the same sort of thought," he said, "standing there outside the door. It took me quite a time before I could knock, I was so scared you weren't here."

"But what are we going to do, David?" she said. "How can we get out of here?"

"I don't know," he said. "We'll have to talk to Hugo. He's waiting in the hall. Maybe with him we can find some way."

Hugo had been standing just outside the door, the machete David Lowe had taken in his hand. Now he turned, moved into the room and made a warning gesture. "You want Spelke," he whispered. "He's right here."

"Stand back," Lowe told Margett. "This should finish it."

Hugo had gone flat against the wall in-

side the door, the machete lifted shoulder high. But Margett only moved to return to her chair.

Spelke had halted in the hall before the door. He wore uniform breeches now, and field-boots, and there was a pistol belt about his waist. He brought the big Mauser up and out very fast. "Tell the black to get away from that wall, Lowe," he said. "Tell him to drop his machete, and drop your gun. Quick!"

"Drop it, Hugo," David Lowe said. "He knows you're there."

Hugo dropped the machete, but as he let it go he swung forward. Spelke wheeled, leveled the pistol at him. In that instant David Lowe lunged.

He went in a headlong dive right at Spelke's knees. The Mauser barrel cracked his skull, nearly stunned him. But he had Spelke in a furious grip, tumbled him down, savagely kned him unconscious.

"Grab his hair," Hugo said. "I want to cut his head off, to look nice on a platter."

"No," David Lowe said, and shoved Hugo aside. "We'll have to wait before we make a trophy out of him. Now we've got to use him as an hostage. There's no way we can get out of here, with those guys guarding the trail down below."

"The place for us is in the windmill tower until our own guys show up. Where's Vaubin now, Margett? He's a man we could use."

"They've been making him cook for them," Margett said. "He's been beaten by them until I thought they'd kill him. But he has learned to keep silent, and right now he's probably in the kitchen."

"Then take a look for him there, Hugo," David Lowe said. "Collect all the food you can, and meet us at the tower."

"Oui, m'sieur," Hugo said. "Food, that will sure do real good."

DAVID LOWE grasped Spelke by the shirt collar and the hair to drag him out of the house. Margett went beside him, her head raised, her eyes wide, but no longer afraid.

"Bruecken," she said, "the man who sang that night at dinner, is guarding the tower. The radio set is in there on the upper floor, and he has orders to shoot anybody who doesn't show a written pass. But I can talk to him. He was in Ernst's squadron in Spain."

Bruecken stood wide-legged before the tower door. He held the automatic rifle very tight, called loudly to them to halt.

"Listen to me, *mein Freund*," Margett answered him. "This man could have killed Spelke a moment ago. But he spared his life so that justice can be done."

"It was Spelke who killed my brother, shot him because of the gold at the Citadel. I am certain of what I say, and you know I don't lie. Lower your gun. Open the door and let us into the tower. You must help us, take our side, if only for the reason you were Ernst's comrade."

"I believe you, *Fräulein*," Bruecken said tensely, "but I have a greater loyalty, to the Fatherland."

"Don't be a fool, soldier," David Lowe said. "Spelke represents the Fatherland here, and he kills whom he pleases. You might very probably be the next to follow Ernst."

"Ja," Bruecken said. "I can understand that." He was staring down at Spelke's face. In the relaxation of unconsciousness the man's true character showed. The features were heavy, cruel, and the high-rolled eyes held a dim glare of hate. "A man to the *Herr Oberst* has always meant something to kill, or be killed. We die, and he advances, gets more medals."

"Right," David Lowe said. "Now open the door."

They were crossing the broad stone sill when they heard Hugo. He came running from the direction of the kitchen, Vaubin beside him. Both their arms were full of food and water and rum jugs. Behind them, at the corner of the house, were half a dozen of the Condor Legion men. One shouted at the pair of black men to stop, then started to shoot.

"Here it goes," David Lowe said, and picked up Bruecken's automatic rifle,

loosed a burst in an enfilading sweep. The Germans went flat, took cover. But three of them lay out in the open still, spasmodically kicking the turf as they died.

Hugo and Vaubin were already across the lawn, safe against the wall of the mill. They came in breathing hard and laughing.

"*Bien venu*, M'sieur Lowe," old Vaubin said. "I kept telling Mam'selle Margett you'd come back. But you've surely picked the right prisoner."

"He's the one who'll count a lot for us," David Lowe said, and rolled Spelke over into a corner, then lashed him hand and foot. "Close the door. Bar it and barricade it with those cement sacks. Then get upstairs."

## CHAPTER XIX

### STORY FOR THE WORLD

THE Germans attacked with a stubborn and deliberate fury. One by one, in short rushes, they advanced toward the mill. Their companions gave them a covering fire, raked the slit-like windows of the mill with close volleys.

David Lowe grunted cursing in respect for their fighting ability. "They know every trick of the game," he told Hugo. "Look. The men by the house are digging fox-holes for themselves. The others out front, the ones making the rushes, never move together. One runs at a time, and always from a different angle.

"And they've got all the guns and ammunition they want. There's just two simple reasons why they don't bomb this place to the ground. They hope that somehow they'll be able to get Spelke out alive, and their radio set is here.

"If they knock the tower down, they get us for sure, but they lose their *Herr Oberst* and their only means of communication with outside. Now I'm going to take over that. I think maybe I can use it."

The radio was magnificent, immense. David Lowe studied its dials and control panels for twenty minutes before he found

how it worked. Then he pulled on a pair of headphones, squatted at the sending key. He tried various frequencies, widening his range every time.

"Too powerful for anything local," he said to Margett, crouched at his side. "I'm going to try to pick up New York. My old paper, the *Courier*, has a station of its own. If I can raise Brick Hanegan, I'll give him a story that will frizzle his hair at the roots."

He repeatedly gave the *Courier's* call signal, grinned over at Margett when he was answered. "Now we tell the world, honey," he said. "I've got the operator at the paper. Put the cigarettes where I can reach them. Hanegan will want to remake his front page with this."

The *Courier* operator was a former Navy man; he talked clearly and fast. "Come in, David Lowe," he said. "I get you fine. Hanegan's right here, and wants to talk to you."

"Tell him hello," David Lowe said. "But I'm in a hurry. This is a German military set I'm using. The Germans are outside, trying to take it back. I've got to get my story in quick. Get ready to receive."

"Hanegan wants to know," the *Courier* operator sent, "how much of a piece you've got."

"Enough for at least a column and a half. Get off the air. Let me send."

"Okay. I'm ready for you."

David Lowe lit a cigarette. Against the window slits the German bullets made a thin, chattering whine. Hugo and Vaubin and now Bruecken went from window to window, firing down at the men rushing for the door.

In that stone-walled and stone floored place their shots rang with unceasing echo. Smoke drifted the room, heavy and acrid. The gun flame was pale; it briefly flushed the tight, sweaty faces of the defenders.

You're right in the middle of it, David Lowe thought. You should write a piece to make them sit up and think from Tokyo to Rome to Berlin to London and New York and back. This is big, big and hot.

HE SET himself, bent lower over the key: "Nazi Germany has at last struck openly in the Western hemisphere.

"German bombing planes flown by pilots of the Condor Legion last night machine-gunned to death twenty-four men of the Haitian Guard. These men were guarding a sum of thirty million dollars in gold coin taken from the Citadel built by black King Henri Christophe. Before the mass murder of the Guard, the German force now operating in Haiti had attempted to get out the gold themselves.

"They were stopped by Major John Folsom of the United States Army Intelligence Corps. Major Folsom's presence in Haiti is not known outside yet. He is here to do everything in his power to stop the German drive of invasion.

"Tonight at Cape Haitian he is sitting with the diplomatic representatives of the major Western powers trying to decide how to keep the world in ignorance of the mass murder of the Haitian Guardsmen. The representatives of the powers are deeply worried, afraid of international war.

"Tonight, here at Crête à Moulin, where the Germans have set up a fully fortified military air base, nearly fifty of their bombing planes and their entire gasoline supply were destroyed by fire.

"The gold is here at Crête à Moulin. The Germans have it, but lack planes to fly it out to their other bases in South America. At the moment that I write, we are being attacked by Germans who are admittedly members of the Condor Legion.

"Here there is open war. If this piece is not finished, it will be because I have been taken prisoner, or killed.

"Colonel Count Maxim Spelke, a member of the famous Von Richtofen 'flying circus' during the World War and a close personal friend of Air Marshal Hermann Goering, is now our captive and hostage. He has personally and freely explained to me his purpose in Haiti, and the purpose of the German Government.

"It is the direct intention of the German Government to dominate in the Western Hemisphere. German flying bases for

months have been established in South America. German military pilots, men recently trained in the school of war flying for Franco in Spain, are gathered at these fields and have for their use fully equipped bombers of the Messerschmidt, the Heinkel Three and the Junkers J U Eight types. They will fly to attack any place, any people, immediately they receive their orders from Berlin.

"Haiti has already suffered their violence. Now the rest of the world must awaken to an understanding of danger.

"Germany in the hands of its present rulers is absolutely ruthless. International law, the recognition of rights of nations and individuals, no longer has meaning for the Nazi.

"I write now in open appeal. I must.

"There is no other way for me except to tell you the bald truth. At Crête à Moulin and at Christophe's Citadel I have seen the German military machine at work as it worked in Spain. The list of German triumphs will soon contain the name of Haiti unless the world is aroused.

"At Crête à Moulin, the home of the Von Rudvig family for a century, Ernst Von Rudvig recently was brutally murdered by Colonel Count Spelke so that Spelke might get the location of the Citadel gold. The lives of Ernst Von Rudvig's sister, Miss Margett Von Rudvig, and of several others are now—"

Margett touched David Lowe's shoulder. "David," she called to him. "David, stop! Spelke's getting away. He's broken through the door below."

DAVID LOWE lifted his finger from the key. He slid the headphones off and for several seconds sat very still. In his brain, he was writing his story yet, forming and sending the sentences to which he had given all his thought, all his emotion. But then he got up from where he had squatted. He wasn't a reporter any more; he was a man with a gun in his hand, and downstairs escaping was a man he hated.

He ran recklessly down the stairs, right



out in the middle of the curving steps. The door barricade of cement sacks had been dragged aside at one corner, the door bolts drawn. The massive piece of mahogany and iron was ajar. Beyond it, there was the flicker of gun flame.

He didn't see the man who shot at him. The bullets just made a spitting smack off the stone work of the staircase. He flung himself down, started crawling forward to close the door.

A lot of Germans were outside it. They fired in at him, and one man hunkered through, within his sight. He killed that man, but then he heard the metallic thud as a hand grenade was pitched along the floor.

He sprang back, and up around the first curve of the staircase. The explosion gave him the sensation that he was inside a great bell. His ears rang until he thought they would split. Blood spurted from his nose and mouth, and he lay gasping on the steps.

Vaubin pulled him out of there, carried him to the second floor. He gathered his senses enough to talk to Vaubin and Hugo. "Our prize got away from us," he said. "Spelke's gone. Now those guys won't stop for anything. Barricade the staircase. Hold them off. You know what we'll get if they catch us."

"Sure," Hugo said. "This way, we'll at least die fast."

He and Vaubin flung tables, chairs, every piece of loose furniture and planking across the staircase. Then they knelt behind it, fired down at the Germans. But they only had a few rounds left, and the Germans were resolute, daring men.

It became a hand-to-hand fight there at that barricade. Young Bruecken had received a head wound from a ricochet bullet at the windows. He wasn't much good, fought in sort of a semi-stupor. But David Lowe and Hugo and Vaubin kept their places, kept the Germans back.

Lowe hated himself for letting Spelke escape, and he wanted to finish his story. He struck at the Germans with his empty pistol and any object small enough to

throw. He cursed the men he sent tumbling back down the staircase.

"Take your whipping here," he yelled at them. "We're three, and a woman, and you're close to a hundred. What's the matter? Why don't you toss in a grenade? That radio set must mean plenty to you. I'll smash it, though, before you get me. You won't bring in any more planes over that beam."

He was silent then, ashamed of himself for his wasted breath and energy. Margett had advanced to the barricade. She carried Bruecken's short Nazi dirk, and her eyes were great, deep pools of flame. "Kill them, David," she said. "Don't talk to them. We haven't time."

THE Germans came massed, shoulder to shoulder. Now the dead couldn't fall back; there were too many men behind them. The attackers trod right over them, up and in at the barricade. The place reeked of blood, of sweat, pealed with the clash of blows and the cries of the wounded.

David Lowe had passed the point where his comprehension was clear. He simply stood and tried to kill. Margett was beside him; he knew that and nothing else. All the rest of his nature was concentrated in striking at the lurching, grayish bodies and blurred white faces.

When the plane dived down he didn't hear it. Margett had to tell him, grasp him hard by the arms to stop his blows. "A plane," she said. "But not one of theirs. They don't know what it is, and they're leaving us to see."

The shout came from outside. Some man on the front steps of the tower made it. "Amerikaner!" he yelled. "Get out of sight!"

David Lowe went staggering to a window slit. The plane was breaking through high cloud, diving in a smooth rush of power. Then the German searchlights cast their white points of light, crossed, re-crossed until they caught the plane.

It was a Vought Corsair, a United States Marine Corps plane.

David Lowe spread his hands on Margett's shoulders. "Wrong," he whispered to her. "That's suicide. They'll tear it out of the sky."

He had called the turn.

The German anti-aircraft guns were already firing. A burst bloomed red-green behind the plane, made it swerve bucking sidewise. It whirled up, twisting into a climb. But the shells hammered the air around it, came closer, closer.

Margett gasped. "Our last chance—and there it goes."

The star-marked wings trembled in the searchlight glare. It was like a bird over a shooting box, David Lowe thought, and the hunters were too good.

A burst hit a wing, and the wind shredded clean what the shrapnel left. The plane pitched downward, spun crazily. "Too low for parachutes," Bruecken said, craning beside Margett and David Lowe. "Not a chance."

But the pilot kept control for an instant more. He tried to level off, make the lawn. A limb of a great oak tree dragged his tail assembly, and the elevators ripped away like paper. Then the plane crashed, down through the raking limbs of the tree.

The plunge was terrific.

The motor buried deep in the turf of the lawn. Steel moaned, cracked, split. There was the pungent smell of spilling gasoline, but no flame. The light came from a flashlight held by Maxim Spelke.

He moved to the wreckage with a steady stride. The two men who had been in the plane lay yards from it. He played the searchlight over both of them. The nearest was the pilot, and nearly all his bones were broken, and he was dead. The other man was John Folsom. He was conscious still, tried to push up on his hands to face Spelke.

It was a gallant effort, but altogether useless.

Spelke kicked him prone. Then he turned and faced the tower. "I've wasted enough time and men, Lowe," he said.

"Come on out of there within five minutes or your friend here will have a very unpleasant death."

"Don't go, David," Margett said, convulsively squeezing Lowe's hands. "Don't listen to him. He's a beast, but he wouldn't torture your friend. The other men wouldn't stand for it; they respect a soldier."

"I'm not so sure he won't," David Lowe said. "Anyhow, I'm not going out there. We'll stay in this place until we can figure some way we can leave it alive."

After all, there's got to be some way. And then—

"But now I'm going to get on the key again, make Hanegan run off another extra addition. This time, Spelke pulled his stuff on a Marine Corps plane, and that's awfully close to home."

He had tried to make his words sound calm, keep his tremendous emotion out of them. But as he worked the radio key his hand shook so much he could hardly send. The station came in fast.

"A new lead for that story," he told the *Courier* operator. "Major John Folsom has just been shot down here at Crête à Moulin by German anti-aircraft while flying in a Marine Corps plane. With him was an unidentified Marine Corps pilot who is now dead."

"Colonel Count Spelke has made Major Folsom a prisoner, warned me that if I and the people here with me in this tower don't surrender, Folsom will receive a very unpleasant death."

"Put that last phrase in quotes; it's Spelke's own words. So long for now. I've got things to do."

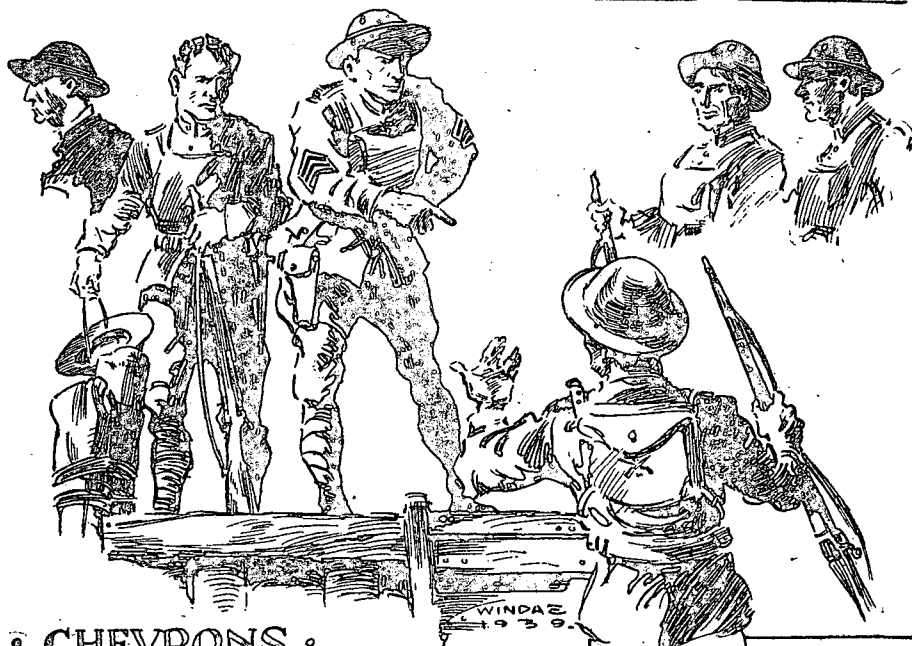
But before he got off the earphones the *Courier* operator came back at him very fast. "Hanegan wants to talk to you," he said. "Hanegan says you must listen to him."

"Tell Hanegan I can't," David Lowe said. He was looking up, and across the room at the barricade. "Tell him I'm sorry, but the Germans are back and coming up the stairs."

**TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK**

# LEGENDS OF THE LEGIONARIES

ORIGINS OF THE CUSTOMS AND SAYINGS OF THE FIGHTING-MEN : BY W.A. WINDAS



## • CHEVRONS •

This device on the sleeve for marking officers and non-commissioned officers (in America, only the latter use it) is derived from an architectural term viz:- "CHEVRE" the French word for goat. It means the forming of two rafters into an apex or roof, and was named for its fancied resemblance to goat horns. In heraldry, the wearer of a "chevron" was the chief supporter of the head of the clan, "the top of the house."

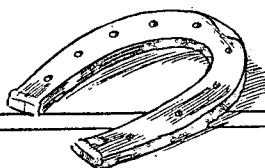


## • WAR PENSIONS •

Early in the 16th. century Britain raised a fund to compensate widows and the families of soldiers who had been killed in action.

## • HORSE SHOES •

Since earliest times, man attempted to protect the hooves of horses, but not until 480 A.D. were the first metal shoes introduced by Byzantine cavalry.



## • ENSIGN •

Today, this is looked upon as a purely naval rank. However, in the United States, it was first the lowest rank of commissioned officer in the army.