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Secret Agent in
STORM

**OVER THE
AMERICAS**

A Complete Novel of Nazi Intrigue
By **CAPTAIN KERRY McROBERTS**

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Vol. I, No. 1

FALL, 1939

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A COMPLETE NOVEL FEATURING



One of the agents put a gun against her

STORM OVER

CHAPTER I
MYSTERY PLANE

By CAPT. KERRY

Author of "Frontier Legion,"

THE sentry on duty near one of the great locks of the Panama Canal was the first to hear the distant roar. He shaded his eyes against the afternoon sun and peered skyward. He had keen eyesight, this sentry, or he'd have never spotted that minute speck high above him. It was a plane—and a big one if the sound of her motors was any indication.

The sentry stepped into a small shed and used the telephone.

"Plane flying overhead, above the banned area," he reported. "Too high to make out her identity."

On hearing those few words, powerful glasses were turned toward the sky. A dozen fast pursuit planes took off and climbed rapidly to intercept

THE EAGLE, U. S. SECRET AGENT!



head. "You will surrender or I will shoot!"

THE AMERICAS

McROBERTS

"The Sultan of Hell," etc.

this plane which flew above territory long barred to any aircraft except military ships. A huge sound device was put into operation. Everywhere, there was activity!

Then, as the fast pursuit ships gained altitude, the unknown craft suddenly went into a bank, nosed back and roared away. An hour later

the pursuit planes came back to their landing.

"Sorry, sir," a flight lieutenant reported to his commanding officer, Colonel Judson Foster. "It got away from us. That ship was probably equipped for stratosphere flying. I caught a glimpse of her and by her design I'd say she was some kind of a bomber. There was no identification on her wings."

"It's damned suspicious," Colonel Foster growled. "All planes in this vicinity know they can't fly over a

barred area and this ship didn't even carry any identification insignia. It smells like trouble to me. Where did that ship come from? Why did the pilot defy military regulations and fly her over the canal? It's a matter for Washington. That's all, Lieutenant."

Ninety minutes later Colonel Foster studied a code message from the Secretary of War. He decoded the message behind locked doors, with a sentry on guard.

COLONEL JUDSON FOSTER,
U. S. A. PANAMA CANAL ZONE:
MESSAGE RECEIVED. AGREE
PLANE HIGHLY SUSPICIOUS. CON-
TACT AGENT JEFF SHANNON AT
HOTEL ARRIDO, PANAMA CITY.

Foster touched a match to a corner of the message, watched it burn to ashes and swept these into his waste basket.

"Jeff Shannon—the Eagle," he muttered. "It must be important if he's down here."

FOSTER called the Hotel Arrido and was connected with Shannon. "Oh, yes, Colonel," a calm, modulated voice answered him. "I received a message, also—to hold myself ready to help. What can I do?"

"A plane, without identification, flew over the barred zone a few hours ago. Looked like some kind of a stratosphere ship. I don't like it."

"It flew south, I suppose," Shannon said quickly. "Yes, I rather guessed that, Colonel. I'm on my way to Caracas, Venezuela, now, on a search for two agents who went there three months ago and vanished. I've an idea your mystery plane ties up with activity down there. Thank you for the tip. I'll try to check on that angle."

"You'll take the next plane, eh?" Foster answered slowly. "Watch yourself. I rather think those foreign influences in Caracas won't relish the intrusion of the Eagle."

There was a chuckle at the other end of the wire. Colonel Foster hung up, leaned back in his chair and stared vacantly into space.

"If what I think is happening," he

muttered, "it will take all the speed, power and ruthlessness of an eagle to clean up the mess."

The officer started up as from outside there came a single shot and a command for someone to halt. Then two rifles opened up. Colonel Foster rushed out of his quarters and found a sergeant lowering his automatic slowly. The sergeant snapped to attention.

"Sorry if you were disturbed, sir," the sergeant said. "A sentry saw someone lurking outside your office, sir. Looked as though he might have been eavesdropping. He got away and from the glimpse I had of him, he seemed to be one of these natives who are always hanging around. Probably nothing to it, sir."

Colonel Foster restrained the impulse to leap into action. Nothing would be gained by showing his suspicions. There might be other spies around. He touched the peak of his cap in a salute.

"As you were, Sergeant. Instruct your men to watch closely for anyone who acts suspiciously. However, it probably was only a native trying to see if he could steal something. Good night, Sergeant."

Colonel Foster walked slowly into his quarters. He barked a summons for his orderly, had all windows closed and the curtains drawn. He stationed his orderly at the front door with instructions that no one was to be admitted. Then he got on the telephone to call Hotel Arrido. But Jeff Shannon had already checked out.

He studied the plane schedule to Caracas, and groaned. The Eagle would be taking off at this very moment. Too late to warn him now.

Colonel Foster replaced the instrument, his throat dry, his forehead moist with perspiration.

"Heaven help Jeff Shannon now," he muttered. "They'll pick up his trail in Caracas. One shot is all it will take—or one stab from a knife."

Colonel Foster knew how spies worked. He had served in the A.E.F. during the entire World War. And his fears for the safety of this crack agent of his country, known as the Eagle, were very real.

THERE were five passengers aboard the night plane to Caracas. The forward seat was occupied by a man of about forty-five, paunchy, pompous-looking and quite at home in the air. Across from him sat another passenger who was as gaunt and thin as the first man was stout. His cadaverous cheeks looked like those of a mummy. He seemed nervous and avoided looking out of the window as much as possible.

Number Three passenger was a young man of about twenty-eight or nine. He was neatly dressed in a blue suit. The collar of his white shirt was immaculate, his tie just the right color. He had healthy looking brown hair and blue eyes that were pleasantly friendly. The newspaper in his lap was opened to the sports page.

Directly across from him sat a tall man with a trimmed Vandyke. A

hurried to the pilot's quarters in response to a signal.

He emerged with a radiogram in his hand. He walked over to the bearded man, bowed, and handed him the message.

"For you, Senor Lachner. Ah—*gracias.*"

He slipped a coin into his pocket and returned to his problem of keeping the obstreperous Number Five quiet. The bearded man who had been called Lachner read the message and frowned. He removed a small book from his briefcase, glanced around with suspicious eyes as he lifted the documents he had been reading, to conceal the little book. He opened it, studied the radiogram and began comparing certain words.

It took but a few moments to decode the message. He growled a low oath as he read it.

WHEN NAZI INTRIGUE MENACES THE PANAMA CANAL, THE EAGLE SWOOPS DOWN ON A SPY RING GUARDING HIDDEN WEAPONS OF WAR!

monocle was screwed into his left eye and he was intently reading lengthy documents that he took from a briefcase. He paid no attention to those around him.

Passenger Number Five had been the steward's greatest problem in the last twenty flights. Number Five was drunk. Not stupidly drunk, nor belligerently, but with just enough alcohol in his system to make his spirits as buoyant as the plane that roared southward.

"M'name's Claney," he told the world at large. "I'm a good guy, I am. Ev'body likes me. I like ev'body. Even you, steward. Say, don't you carry anything to drink on this jallopy?"

The man with the monocle turned and gave the steward an annoyed glance. The steward did his best to quiet the boisterous passenger, then

U. S. INTELLIGENCE AGENT KNOWN AS EAGLE ABOARD YOUR PLANE. IDENTIFY HIM. AT LANDING POINT HIM OUT AND HE WILL BE TAKEN CARE OF. BE CAREFUL. HE IS DANGEROUS.

Lachner replaced his documents and the code book in the briefcase. The message he crumpled into a ball and thrust into his pocket. At the first opportunity he would burn it. He leaned back in his chair and studied each passenger intently, paying particular attention to the noisy celebrant in one of the aft seats.

Passenger Number Five arose suddenly, pushed the steward out of his way and staggered forward, apparently heading for the pilot's quarters. As he passed Lachner, he reeled. Lachner jumped up to prevent the man from falling into his lap, but what happened then was worse.

THE reeling man's legs became tangled with Lachner's and both crashed to the floor of the plane. Evidently under the impression that he was being attacked, the man who had called himself Claney began to fight.

The young man seated in a chair opposite Lachner got up, seized Claney by the collar and jerked him to his feet. The steward took charge of him. Lachner, half stunned by the fall, groaned and sat up. The considerate young man took his arm and aided him to his feet.

"Fool!" Lachner growled, and shot an angry glance toward the protesting young passenger who had upset him. "He should not have been allowed to go up. He is dangerous."

"You're right," agreed the young man helping him into his chair. "Quite right, but I don't think he'll bother us again. The steward's on the job now."

Lachner gazed at the self-styled Claney thoughtfully. His dark eyes narrowed in hate. He folded his arms and allowed his right hand to slip beneath his coat and touch the warm butt of an automatic slung under his arm. Lachner was in a mood to kill.

The neatly dressed young man across the aisle favored Lachner with a warm smile, settled back in his seat and loosened his collar and tie. He closed his eyes and dozed.

Lachner kept staring at Claney, then had a sudden inspiration. His hand shot toward his coat pocket. The code message was gone!

"Ach," he muttered, "he is a stupid one. But he cannot get away and at the landing field we shall work far too quickly to allow his escape."

The plane droned on through the night, and was over the Caracas landing field when the warning signal indicated that it was time for safety belts to be attached. The passengers roused themselves from the lethargy that comes of long journeys. Lachner fastened his belt, turned his head and looked directly at the objectionable Claney who seemed to have fallen into a stupor.

The plane circled the field twice, then nosed down.

It taxied along the runway,

smoothly and rolled to a graceful stop. Lachner quickly unbuckled his safety belt, seized his briefcase and was the first passenger to reach the door. He stepped out, looked around as if he expected to meet someone, then shrugged.

He moved aside, put a cigarette between his lips and held his lighter toward the tip of it.

But he didn't light it until the inebriated passenger was helped out of the plane by the steward. Lachner had carefully watched all the others emerge. The gaunt man had been greeted by two women who escorted him to a car. The paunchy man had shaken hands with a dark-featured South American and had immediately begun talking of margins and profits. The neatly dressed young man had been the third to emerge. He had surveyed the field with the look of a disinterested connoisseur of airports and then walked blithely into the darkness.

Claney, apparently still intoxicated, almost fell out of the cabin door. He stood on the ground, swaying and grinning inanely. It was at that moment that Lachner snapped his lighter into glowing life and nodded his head slightly toward the plane.

THREE men, standing well in the shadows, moved forward. They quickly surrounded the man Lachner had indicated. Two of them took his arms in an apparently friendly fashion, but the drunk winced under the pressure and tried to squirm free. The third man stepped directly behind him. There was a surreptitious movement. Only someone watching intently would have noticed that a blackjack slapped across the captured man's neck.

He seemed to wilt, his head lolling to one side.

The three men increased their pace, hustling their unconscious burden toward a car parked well off the runway. But the young man they had in tow seemed possessed of a unique ability to throw off the effects of a blow. Almost instantly he began to fight. The man directly behind him growled something in a foreign

tongue, whipped a knife from a sheath under his coat and drew the blade back for a murderous thrust.

A single shot roared out. The man with the knife howled with pain and looked down at his hand as the knife fell from numbed fingers. The hand was dripping blood.

Somewhere a policeman shouted. Others came rushing toward the scene.

The three would-be killers jumped into their car and sped away. The bewildered Claney stumbled around, muttering to himself.

And deep in the darkness that surrounded the flying field, the nattily dressed young man in the dark suit who had been one of the plane's passengers slowly put a smoking gun back into his pocket. He opened a crumpled bit of paper and studied the words on it. To almost any other pair of eyes those words would have meant only that one Franz Lachner was to contact his firm in relation to the shipment of certain samples to a customer immediately.

But this young man was a master at codes. Without referring to any code book, he got the true meaning of the message. It ordered Franz Lachner to discover the identity of the Eagle who would be aboard the plane and to signal certain agents who would be waiting at the airport so they would make no mistake and capture the wrong man.

"**BAD**," the neat young man muttered in the darkness. "Very bad. They knew I was on my way as quickly as I did. Means a thorough organization, plenty of men and money to operate it. Looks like the Secretary of War was right. This will be a dangerous job."

He calmly rolled the radiogram into a ball, flicked it into the night and stridled away, whistling softly.

When a problem so difficult as to defy solution presented itself, the Eagle usually whistled. He was sure there was always a loophole somewhere; that the best of spies leave crevices in their plans where he might get a fingerhold and pry open the whole rotten affair.

CHAPTER II

THE EAGLE SHOWS HIS HAND



ETER FARROW, consul at Caracas, Venezuela, was studying code reports from the United States. He was extremely busy. With war ready to break out both in Europe and the Orient, the work of consular officials had become

exacting. Farrow was tired, but there was far too much to be done before he could snatch a few hours' sleep.

He raised his head, listening, as his secretary's voice reached him from the outer office. She was trying to stop someone from entering, for Farrow had given orders he was not to be disturbed. The consul arose and walked to the door. It was opened before he reached it. A tall, immaculately dressed young man was grinning at Farrow's secretary and gently pushing her aside. She stepped away when Farrow appeared.

"Hello there!" The unexpected visitor grinned into Farrow's stern face. "You look like my old geography teacher. Come on, wipe that crusty look off your face and let's sit down and have a cigar."

The visitor edged by the astounded consul, walked around Farrow's desk and dropped into the chair there. He parked both feet on the edge of the desk, found a box of cigars and helped himself to one. He extended the box toward Farrow.

"Please sit down and have a smoke. It's good for the nerves. Oh, yes—you out there in the other office—close the door and don't listen at the keyhole. Also, don't admit anyone else and no phone calls, do you hear? No phone calls."

The secretary bobbed her head and said, "Yes, sir." Then she glanced at Farrow and turned a beet red. She quickly closed the door.

Farrow stepped over toward the desk. The frown on his face died away and turned into a broad grin.

"No need to introduce yourself, my friend. I've been told too often that the Eagle makes himself right at home no matter where he is. Welcome to Caracas—and to enough trouble to keep a dozen eagles busy."

"Tell me all about it," said Jeff Shannon, and sent a spiral of smoke ceilingward. "And— Oh, yes! There's a young fool locked up in one of your Caracas jails by now. He was in the same plane with me and I expect he got himself pinched. Get him out! You see, there was a gentleman named Franz Lachner aboard. He received a code message to the effect that I was to be identified and fingered for some of his men who would wait at the airport to kill me. This young fellow was pretty tight and by his actions he made Lachner think he was the Eagle. All I had to do was sit back and look bored."

Farrow parked himself on a corner of his desk and looked at this amazing young man whose reputation had spread across the entire world. As the Eagle he was known from Tokyo to Berlin; known and hated—and feared.

"Here it is," Farrow said quietly. "A couple of G-Two agents showed up here three months ago. I know they arrived, but they didn't even have time to report to me before they were obliterated. Maybe they are dead—maybe just prisoners. This isn't the United States and I can't be too curious, you understand. And you'll be in the same predicament. Plenty of luck and some good clear thinking helped you get away from their first welcoming committee. You may not be so fortunate next time."

THE Eagle looked up and smiled. "Interesting. What else?"

"What else?" Farrow grunted. "That's all. Absolutely all! And isn't it quite enough—to have a couple of our agents vanish like that? I can't give you the vaguest clue as to what happened to them. But something must be doing here. Some activity is going on that we can't put our fingers on. That's why those agents were sent here."

1. "Have you noticed any odd-looking

planes flying around?" the Eagle queried. "Bombers? Probably equipped for stratosphere flying? Know of any?"

"Stratosphere flying?" Farrow exclaimed, surprised. "Of course not. The only planes I've seen are Venezuelan ones and they're all made in the United States. This man Franz Lachner—I don't know much about him either, except that he seems to be a big shot Nazi. He's supposed to be a trade agent for Nazi Germany, but if he received that code message, he certainly must be a spy. But there is one thing you must get straight right at the start, Shannon. You're entirely on your own. This isn't the United States and you can't call in the army, the navy or the marines to help you. If you fail—that's the end of it. I can't make a formal complaint because the Venezuelan government hasn't asked for your aid."

The Eagle grinned amiably and nodded. "I know all about that—and I also know just how dangerous men like Lachner can be. My job is to find those two missing agents and I mean to do it. If anything else crops up to interest me, I'll take care of that as well."

Farrow's lips compressed tightly. "Don't be too sure. Oh, I've heard of the way you work, how fearless you are and the results you get. But damn it, man, the world is on the brink of war! This isn't a game of tag any longer. It's . . . Oh, what's the sense of me telling you all this? You are as well aware of it as I am. I didn't mean to go off the handle like this. But you're so damned cocksure—so certain you can—"

The Eagle's feet plunked on the floor and he sat bolt upright.

"I'm certain all right, old man. Very certain! Because we're in the right. We're fighting a grim menace of dictatorship, death and ruin. With right on your side you can't lose, if you've the courage to back up your convictions. And you may know this about me also. I always work alone. I have never called for help yet. If help presents itself, very well. I use it. If not, I fight my own battles. Now let's get down to facts. Who

seems to head these Nazis here?"

Farrow sat down with a sigh. "This Franz Lachner you spoke of—he's as high as anyone, I suppose. Anyway, they kowtow to him. There is a German beer garden which he and his kind frequent. I don't know what they do there, but it certainly looks like a good meeting place. Here is another thing. Recently there seems to have been an unusual influx of German tourists. I can't understand it. Caracas is no swanky tourist resort. People of other nationalities don't come here as a rule."

"Interesting," the Eagle repeated softly. "Thanks, Farrow. I probably won't see you again, but if anything vital crops up, I'll let you know. Don't mention my name in reports to Washington. You haven't even heard of the Eagle."

HE WAS gone an instant later and Farrow settled down to a limp degree of calmness.

"Amazing young man," he told himself. "So damned amazing I wouldn't be surprised if he did get through. Luck to him. That's the only help I can give."

The Eagle stepped into a street barren of life. It was the siesta hour. He pulled down the brim of his hat to shade his face from the merciless sun and walked slowly toward his hotel. Saluting the desk clerk, he walked to the third floor and quietly made his way to his room. He paused outside the door and listened intently. When he was certain no sounds came from within, he inserted the key, turned it and kicked the door open. At the same time he leaped back in case some trap had been set.

The Eagle had encountered such traps many times before. And he was well aware that Franz Lachner was no fool. By now the Nazi spy might have realized that the man who had called himself Claney really had been under the weather and not acting; that the quiet young man who had sat across from him was the real Eagle. And the Eagle had already sized Lachner up as a man who would not hesitate to take desperate measures.



The Eagle

The Eagle closed the door, locked it and removed his coat. He flopped on the bed, dead tired, for the few hours he had been in Caracas had been busy ones. During that short period of time he had learned for himself almost as much as Farrow had told him. Also there were clothes hidden in the room that would transform him into a German tourist.

The Eagle was anxious to get started, but he realized that if he went abroad now, he would be regarded with suspicion. No one stirs in Caracas between noon and mid-afternoon unless there is an urgent reason.

The Eagle's pose seemed to drop from him as he relaxed. He was once more plain Jeff Shannon, crack secret agent of G-2, unofficial operative of the F.B.I. He had entered the work with several years of training in the State Department and the code offices. He knew most of the tricks that spies used. He could read ordinary codes almost as easily as he could English and harder ones broke down under his diligent attacks.

Tucked away in his agile mind were facts that would have amazed the investigators of foreign propaganda and sabotage. Jeff Shannon knew many of the more important spies by sight

and he had studied their careers intently and with considerable relish. For Jeff Shannon hadn't become the Eagle until he was as well versed in this grisly business as any man alive.

After a reasonable time he removed his clothes and donned those which he had secretly purchased. They closely resembled those worn by these so-called tourists he had observed. With peroxide he made his brown hair a distinct blond shade and let his disguise go at that. To the Eagle, disguise meant more acting a part than making up for it. He could speak German fluently and was certain he would get by.

He waited until late afternoon before he strolled out of the hotel. There was a row of chairs on the spacious porch. One stolid-looking man occupied one of these, sitting apart, obviously lonesome. The Eagle walked over and sat down beside him.

"IT IS a long way to come for a glass of beer, *mein Herr*," he said sadly. "I do not like this country—the heat and the flies. Nor do I like the lack of discipline here."

"*Ach!*" the other agreed readily. "It never changes, this barbarian land. Once before I was here, as an engineer supervising the building of a bridge in southern Brazil. It was the most difficult task of my life. I swore I'd never return, and now—"

He spread his hands in despair and gave the Eagle a wan smile. The Eagle showed none of what instantly registered in his brain. Here was a man, typically a tourist, who stated he was an engineer, hated the country and yet returned. Why? Was he under orders?

"It bores me," the Eagle answered in smooth German. "Nothing to do but drink beer and sleep. Is that any life for an honor graduate of Heidelberg? Me—an electrical engineer of renown?"

"I know, I know," the other man answered with a sigh. "I feel the same as you, *mein Herr*, but like you I can do nothing about it. Perhaps we can find comfort in a glass of beer now, eh? At least, they saw fit to import plenty of it—direct from Mu-

nich. I am Eric von Maden, and you—"

"Paul Osterode," the Eagle promptly replied. "Let us drink to our meeting."

CHAPTER III MURDER ORDERS



WALKING across the street, they headed north and landed in a typical German beer garden. Somewhere, in a back room, a male quartet was singing a German folk song. Pudgy bartenders were scurrying back and forth with beer steins.

With this German at his side, the Eagle felt reasonably secure. His friend was known and the others would accept the Eagle on the basis of his acquaintance with von Maden. They sat down and ordered beer.

Suddenly the buzz of conversation died away. Two men had entered the beer garden and they were certainly not in the favor of the Germans there, who eyed them with open hate. The Eagle recognized one of the newcomers instantly as an Austrian who had fled his country before the barbed wire of a concentration camp could close about him.

"He has his nerve," the Eagle whispered to von Maden, "showing his *Schwein's* face in here. Something should be done about it."

"*Ach*, but this is not Germany. However, I have heard rumors that he hears the end of his rope."

The Eagle felt a twinge of genuine sympathy for this slender, middle-aged refugee. By force of circumstance he had been driven out of his own land and now, even in a foreign country, he was menaced by the same men from whom he had fled.

He glanced idly around as there came a stir at the doorway. Franz Lachner strolled in, acknowledging greetings with nods of approval. The Eagle tensed. For if Lachner studied his features intently enough, there was bound to be trouble and in this

obvious hotbed of Nazis it might prove extremely dangerous to the Eagle.

Lachner, moving about among the tables, suddenly spotted the two men who had entered only moments before himself. His face grew red in rage. He clapped the monocle to his eye, strode over to their table and looked down at them.

"There is no room here for you!" he snapped. "Get out!"

The two Austrians merely looked up at him and shrugged.

"This is not Germany, Herr Lachner," one of them said blandly. "We have as much right to be here as you, and even though we don't like the people in this café, we do like the beer."

Lachner's right hand rose swiftly to administer a slap. But someone tapped him on the shoulder. A man in a brown tunic and Sam Browne belt saluted, opened his tunic pocket and brought out a sealed envelope, which he handed to Lachner.

The Nazi leader ripped open the flap, read the message, then scrawled something on it and handed it back to the messenger. The messenger started for the door while Lachner turned back to finish his pleasant little interview with the men he considered enemies.

Twice he slapped the older man across the face. In a flash both Austrians were on their feet. Beer steins began flying. The messenger, on his way out, paused to enjoy the fracas and lend his strident voice in condemnation of the two enemies.

The Eagle had hoped for this. He sidled toward the messenger, holding a stein of beer in his hand. Suddenly he flung the contents of the glass into the messenger's face, raised the stein and slugged him over the head with it.

BECAUSE this happened near the exit and everyone else in the room was crowded around the unfortunate refugees, no one noticed it. The Eagle seized the messenger before he slumped to the floor. He extricated the envelope from his pocket, dropped the man into a convenient chair and slipped out of the place,



Joan

He walked rapidly across the street, clinging to the shadows of the low buildings, and thanking his luck that it was a dark night. He was climbing the steps to his hotel when the confusion in the beer garden really became serious. Someone had discovered the messenger, slumped over a table.

The Eagle removed his disguise quickly, secreted the clothing and applied a brown stain to his hair. He donned a bathrobe, lit a cigarette and sat down to study the message. It was in a difficult code. He opened his Gladstone bag, looked up to be sure curtains were drawn and the door closed tightly, and from a cleverly hidden pocket removed a code book. He decoded the message rapidly and the import of that note made the Eagle draw a sharp breath. It read:

To His Excellency Herr Franz Lachner:

Urgent! Plans for stratosphere bomber stolen from War Ministry. Shipped to Caracas care of one James Kirke who may be only a cover address. Investigate! If Kirke is espionage agent, he is to be removed. Obtain plans at all costs. Believe someone will make copy of them, secretly return them and hope they have not been missed. Quick action is imperative.

It was signed by a name that unconsciously brought a chill to the Eagle's spine. For the Gestapo were

taking an active part in the set-up here, whatever it was, these many miles from Germany!

The Eagle sprang to his feet. Lachner had okayed the message indicating that its orders would be carried out immediately. Now, with the messenger slugged and the message stolen, Lachner would act fast. The Eagle had no time to lose.

He was almost ready to go into action when he heard authoritative voices demanding entrance to some of the rooms down the hall. He flung off his clothes, donned pajamas and a bathrobe and propped the pillows against the headboard of his bed. He lay down, picked up a newspaper and began reading. The message he had stolen was already ashes and washed down the sink.

Someone banged on his door. He got up, ruffled his hair and opened the door. Two Venezuelan policemen stepped in, followed by Herr Lachner and the messenger.

"Senor"—one of the policemen saluted respectfully—"we are sorry for this intrusion, but there has been some trouble. This man"—he waved toward the messenger—"was attacked and a valuable diamond stolen from him."

The Eagle nodded in polite understanding.

"And you search for the robber, of course. You may examine me and my room, senors; I have nothing to hide."

Lachner, standing near the door, eyed the Eagle narrowly, something more than a hint of suspicion flashing in his eyes. The Eagle seemed to see Lachner for the first time. He bowed in his direction.

"Greetings," he said. "You're the man who was upset in the plane, aren't you? Don't tell me that diamond was your property?"

LACHNER screwed his monocle in place and bowed stiffly.

"Unfortunately that is so. But of course, *mein Herr*, I do not suspect you. It is only known that the man who committed the robbery originally came from this hotel."

"He is not the man," the messenger broke in. "I am sure of it."

There were more apologies and the quartette bowed themselves out. The Eagle turned quietly back to his bed, slid under the covers and resumed reading. Although his every impulse was to swing into action fast if he wanted to save the life of this James Kirke, he knew better than to give himself away this soon. Lachner would have him watched. The keen, sly mind that was Lachner's had more than guessed at the truth when he had seen Jeff Shannon.

Yet, the Eagle realized that with any delay whatsoever, James Kirke, whoever and whatever he was, might be murdered. The message indicated that the stolen plans concerned a stratosphere ship. That was a tie-up with the mystery plane that had flown over the Panama Canal.

The Eagle swept the covers away, jumped to his feet and transferred a gun from his Gladstone bag to his pocket. Damn the consequences! A man's life was at stake.

He opened the door of his room cautiously, took a quick glance into the corridor and drew back. A burly man was posted near the landing. One of Lachner's men! The Eagle tiptoed over to the window and peered out. It was a dark night and his window overlooked the rear of the hotel. If Lachner had left a guard in the corridor, certainly he must have left one to watch the Eagle's window as well.

Switching out the light he softly raised the window. He would be a perfect target if there were guards out there and they had orders to shoot him, but he had to risk that. But from all he could make out, no one seemed to be watching the rear court.

He ran back to the bed, stripped off the sheets and fashioned them into a rope. Cautiously he let this drop out the window, and waited for a moment. Nothing happened. He swung out the window then and began letting himself down the improvised rope, hand over hand.

Then the Eagle's heart stopped beating for a second. A man was standing just beneath the swinging rope of sheets. He had a gun in his hand and it was aimed straight up,

centering the Eagle in its sights. Apparently this spy had been under cover and had wisely bided his time until the Eagle tried a getaway.

The Eagle let himself down a few more notches, certain that the spy was not aware he had been seen. About a dozen feet from the ground, the Eagle let go. Before the astounded spy could yank the trigger of his gun, the Eagle's body struck him. He went down with a crash, but was up again instantly and looking for the gun which had flown out of his grasp.

Instead of the gun he found a lithe young man crouched and ready to spring. The spy was a powerfully built man with stubby, bowed legs, thick arms and big hands that were clenched into fists. He discarded ideas of finding his gun. What harm could this slender opponent inflict? One smash with his big hands and the result would be practically the same as that of a bullet.

HE growled and started a savage rush toward the Eagle. But he kept on going—for the Eagle leaped aside so agilely that the spy had no opportunity to check himself. When he did, there was a fury waiting for him, a fury that rapped a dozen painful blows to his face.

The spy opened his mouth to roar for help. A fist hit him on the throat and changed the roar into a weird bleat. He spread his big arms, leaving himself wide open, but depending on his ability to take it, so he might get close enough to wrap this dancing, feinting devil in a rib-crushing embrace.

The Eagle knew better than to permit this to happen. He slugged a well placed blow to the face and danced back. In a moment he had the spy groggy. Then the Eagle stepped close and finished it with two blows to the face.

As the spy crumpled to the ground, the Eagle raced toward the rear of the court, scaled a fence and reached the street behind his hotel. Now he had to determine who this James Kirke was and where he lived. Lachner would already be on his way after the man.

CHAPTER IV GIRL WITH COURAGE



JIM KIRKE was bent over a draftsman's desk on which several blueprints were pinned. Tracing paper was fastened in place and he was making a careful copy of the plans before him.

About thirty, he was dark-eyed and chestnut-haired, with a wide forehead and a chin that jutted aggressively. His mother had been a native of Venezuela and from her he derived his dark Latin eyes. His father had been from the United States.

It was well after midnight. He rubbed his eyes and yawned. Another hour and he would be finished with one of the most important tasks of his career. Senor Hernandez, head of the Venezuelan Military Intelligence, would be proud of that work.

Behind Jim Kirke, portieres, masking a window, stirred as if a breeze swept them. Then they were parted, slowly, cautiously. Silently as a ghost, Franz Lachner slipped into the room. Monocle screwed tightly to his eye, cane thrust beneath one arm, he reached under his coat and drew a gun. Treading softly he approached Kirke from the rear. He shoved the gun out as the young man turned his head, and Jim Kirke slowly raised both hands.

"You are wise, my friend," Lachner whispered. "A sound out of you and I shall be compelled to blow your head off. Ah, I see you have the plans for our new plane. It was a clever bit of work, getting them, Senor Kirke. Very clever, worthy of my own agents. But your man fumbled a bit and we discovered he had shipped them here. You, as an intelligence agent for the Venezuelan Government, would have reaped a rich reward if you succeeded. Now remain just as you are while I take back the plans."

He unpinned the tracing paper, stuffed it into his pockets. With al-

most the same motion, he covertly extracted a knife as he placed his cane on the drafting table.

Lachner's lips drew back in a snarl as the knife was upraised, poised for a swift descent. And at that moment Jim Kirke, who had not seen the knife, noticed the shadow thrown across the board. He began to turn his head. The knife came down, but Kirke managed to yell before his voice was abruptly cut off as the blade penetrated his heart.

Like a very tired man his head came down to rest against one crooked arm lying across his drawing board.

Lachner whipped the blueprints from beneath the dead man's body. There was blood on them, but he paid no attention as hastily he rolled the blueprints up. There were others he wanted, and instantly he set to work looking for them. Intent on his search he was suddenly jerked back to actuality by a soft, yet grim voice.

"Don't move! Stand up and raise your hands! I . . . Jim! Jim! Oh, what have you done to him? You've killed him! He's dead!"

Lachner swung around slightly and kept his hands high. A beautiful blond girl was standing near him, with a heavy gun in her fist. Moreover she seemed to know how to use it.

Joan Kirke sidestepped to where her brother lay dead. She raised his wrist gently. There was no pulse. She faced Lachner again.

"You filthy, murderous spy," she accused, her voice choked with emotion. "You killed my brother—knifed him in the back!" We have firing squads down here for men like you. Keep your hands raised and don't move! I'm going to call the commandant!"

LACHNER gulped. To be beaten at all was bad, but to be outwitted by a mere girl would make him a fool in the eyes of his followers. Then Lachner's worries ceased. For another man was creeping into the room—one of his own men, a man with closely cropped hair and thick lips drawn back in a silent snarl.

Joan seemed to sense her danger,

She whirled around, but too late. The apelike invader made a flying leap toward her and Lachner instantly galvanized into action. The gun was wrested from Joan's hand. Her senses reeled as Lachner slapped her across the face. She clutched at the edge of the desk for support, but did not scream.

"Ach," Lachner grated, "you came in time, Otto, but after this you will work even faster. Another moment and this little fool might have shot me."

"If I only had!" Joan groaned. "If I only had!"

Lachner studied her a moment and shook his head sadly.

"It is too bad that one so lovely and young must die. But you would report me to the commandant and have me arrested."

Lachner drew a gun from his pocket, snapped back the mechanism. Joan turned deathly pale. It was coming! She would have no more chance than Jim. In a moment this gun would roar and she'd join her brother in death.

The gun leveled and Lachner showed his teeth in an evil leer. His finger tightened on the trigger. Then the one light in the room went out and an instant later a gun roared. Lachner's hissing breath turned into a scream of pain. His gun flew from his grasp as his hand went numb and dead.

The other spy saw a shadowy form near the door, shouted a guttural challenge and swept forward with knife upraised. But that shadowy form moved so fast it seemed to possess wings. The spy ran straight into a right jab. It smacked against his jaw with a bone-breaking sound. The spy called Otto crumpled and fell to the floor.

Taking advantage of this moment, Lachner spun around and raced for the open window through which he had gained entrance. He dived through it headlong, landed on the dirt outside. But he scrambled to his feet quickly and vanished into the night, leaving a trail of blood from his wounded right hand.

Back in the house, Joan stood tense,

waiting for the final outcome. She couldn't see the man who had saved her life, but she could hear him bending over the spy he had knocked cold. Finally he straightened up, walked over near the door and turned on the light.

"Hello," he said pleasantly. "Looks like I showed up just in time."

Joan couldn't hold back the tears any longer. The Eagle, glancing beyond her, saw the knife protruding from Jim Kirke's back.

"No," he said gently. "I was too late. Much too late. I'm—terribly sorry."

Joan fought back her tears.

"Who are you?" she demanded.

"Why do you say you were too late? Did you know this was going to happen?"

The Eagle nodded somberly. "I knew—and I came as swiftly as I could, but *Herr Lachner* beat me to it. He"—he nodded toward the dead Kirke—"was your brother, wasn't he?"

SHE nodded, mutely. The Eagle walked over to the corpse and made a quick examination. Then he eyed the spy, groaning on the floor. He bent down and administered another punch. The spy went limp again.

"Miss Kirke"—he led her to another room and helped her onto a davenport—"I know you're brave enough to face facts. This is war—if you haven't already guessed it. We're fighting an organized band of spies who stop at nothing to gain their own rotten ends. Killing your brother wasn't necessary. All they wanted were those plans which your brother was trying to copy in order to counteract the deadly uses to which they would have been put. Now they'll try to kill you—before you can get any action out of the local authorities."

"I can get action," Joan said spiritedly. "You have even named the man who killed my brother. I'll identify him, and I know his fate."

The Eagle sighed. "Yes, I know too. A brick wall at dawn—if you can prove it. But Miss Kirke, you



Lachner

must admit that I saved your life and that you owe me a favor."

She looked up at him. Somehow she trusted this clear-eyed young man.

"Go ahead. I'm listening."

"Then forget about Lachner. If he is removed, there will only be a lot of trouble between your country and his. And you would find it difficult proving your case against him. So why not let this gorilla I knocked out take the blame? Say he killed your brother. He's just as responsible, being here with Lachner. Lachner won't dare interfere."

Joan Kirke's eyes blazed. "You're trying to help Lachner out of this. You're a friend of his."

"No, no!" the Eagle insisted. "Lachner would rather see me cooling off in a morgue than anything else I might think of. He hates me as much as I detest him and his kind. But if Lachner is put away, there will only be another to take his place. Plans might be altered. We wouldn't know just where we stood. With Lachner working more or less openly as he does, we have a chance to get him—right. There are other lives than your brother's which are menaced, Miss Kirke."

Joan Kirke raised her head. "I don't know who you are, but you

wouldn't have shot that—that devil and half killed his hireling if you weren't on Jim's side of the fence. I trust you."

"Thanks," the Eagle said softly. "My name is Jeff Shannon. Your brother was a counter-espionage agent for Venezuela. I have a similar job for the United States. You and I fight for the side we think is right. That happens to be the exact opposite of Franz Lachner's ideas. You knew your brother operated against Lachner and his kind. He must have told you something. Can't you help me—in any way?"

"Yes, I'll help you, Jeff Shannon. But I must report my brother's murder to the police. And Senor Hernandez is entitled to an explanation—the



whole truth for him, Jeff Shannon. You will have nothing to fear. The United States and Venezuela are friendly and cooperative."

The Eagle nodded. "Very well. But only Senor Hernandez—and swear him to secrecy. Now—had your brother learned anything significant?"

She leaned toward the Eagle, in her eagerness forgetting everything else for the moment except his question.

"THE plans for this stratosphere bomber," she whispered. "Copies were sent from Caracas to the War Ministry in Berlin. Jim said they had been traced on paper made in Venezuela and were original plans. Therefore they must have been drawn here. That's all I know. Jim didn't tell me too much. But wait—there is something else. Jim was busy watching these German tourists who have come to Caracas lately. I know he was suspicious of them. There is an old yacht club a mile above the har-

bor. Jim was watching that. He said many of the tourists went there and that shortly after they sailed away."

The Eagle held her soft hands for a moment and looked straight into her eyes.

"Hernandez will wonder just who Jeff Shannon is. Tell him he is—the Eagle! I think then he will gladly follow my request for Lachner not to be arrested, nor the civil police told of what actually happened here. Meanwhile, be very careful. Lachner knows you can identify him and he'll not stop at another murder. Contact Hernandez, turn this spy on the floor over to him and then let no one in the house. I'll try to return as soon as possible."

He smiled at her understandingly and was gone. The Eagle's mind was spinning. Somehow these German tourists, these mystery plans for a stratosphere ship and an abandoned yacht clubhouse tied together. Somewhere in that maze lay the clue to the whereabouts of the missing G-2 agents.

And there was more; much more. The plans for that ship had been developed in Venezuela. Perhaps actual ships had been built and tested. But where? Not in Caracas or any of the surrounding towns. Airplane manufacture always requires a great deal of space.

The tourists! The Eagle's mind clicked. It takes skilled technicians to build and plan airplanes. The German, von Maden, was an engineer. The Eagle recalled other tourists he had observed. They all seemed to be of a high type of intelligence. Most of them wore glasses which undoubtedly indicated close, detailed work. They had no women or children with them. Were they here to take part in the buildup of some gigantic and secret war machine? Did they really sail away?

Joan sat immobile for perhaps three minutes after the Eagle's departure. She was alone now—with her dead and a spy who was still out of the picture. But Joan was afraid no longer. In her eyes were smoldering fires. Her small hands clenched. She arose and went to the telephone.

CHAPTER V

CHECKMATE



THE Eagle slipped back through the darkness, watchful lest Lachner had left spies to strike from cover. But he was not disturbed.

As he reached the more important streets of the city, he heard sirens and

knew that Joan Kirke had reported the murder. His thoughts were centered on her during his walk back to the hotel. He had never met a girl like her; a girl who could face facts and still retain her composure so well.

The hotel lobby was deserted. A sleepy desk clerk and a bell-hop looked up and relaxed again when they recognized him as a guest. He walked up the stairs, turned into the corridor leading to his room and there he paused. From beneath his door came a sudden flash of light.

The Eagle drew his gun, snapped the safety off and walked gently toward the door. He didn't open it. Perhaps Lachner himself was there, with a horde of his spies, setting a death trap.

The Eagle listened intently. His room and his possessions were being given a complete frisk all right. Lachner had certainly wasted no time. But the Eagle knew there was nothing among his possessions to indicate that he was an operative of the United States G-2. The Eagle rarely carried identification, depending on his wits to get him out of difficulties.

He backed away slowly, keeping his gun ready for action. There was a supply closet halfway down the corridor and he made his way toward it. The door was not locked and he stepped inside, leaving the door open a crack.

Twenty minutes went by, then three men emerged from his room. By the disappointment evident on their faces he knew that they had discovered nothing significant. They hurried along the spies, passed

within three feet of the Eagle and turned down the stairway.

The Eagle went in careful pursuit. When the spies reached the street, he watched them through the windows of the lobby. They started off, walking fast, choosing the darkest portion of the street to shield them from observation. Although the last of the trio kept looking over his shoulder, he saw no signs of pursuit for, although the Eagle was already on their tracks, he was a master at the art of shadowing.

They turned into a path leading to the rambling front porch of a big mansionlike house. Apparently there was some kind of a warning signal or a guard posted at some inconspicuous place, for the three were instantly admitted without knocking.

From a place of vantage across the street the Eagle estimated his chances of getting inside this spy's nest. It was bound to be a dangerous procedure, but that was no deterrent to the Eagle. He lived for danger.

Transferring his gun to a side coat pocket, he stole through the yard of a deserted house next door. He ducked as a dark form loomed up and a man dressed in uniform, with a gun strapped to his hip, strolled by. A guard! There would be plenty of these without question.

As noiselessly as a cat, he prowled the estate, selecting a means of entering the house. Once a flashlight split the darkness as a guard made a routine inspection of the premises. But satisfied that everything was peaceful, the guard turned back to the house, walked over to a side door and without using a key, entered. The Eagle grinned.

He reached the same door after ten minutes had elapsed. It opened under his touch and he found himself in a small hallway from which stairs led to the floor above. He tiptoed toward them. It was better to be certain that Lachner and his aides were in bed before he began an extensive search of the offices and files.

AT the head of the stairs the Eagle paused to listen. He heard gruff voices below on the other side of the

landing where the main stairway was. Crouching behind the balustrade, he observed Lachner and two aides emerge from a room, line up and formally salute. A fourth man came out, nodded pompously and headed for the main stairway. He turned around just before he started up and saluted.

"Heil," he said with a cold smile.

"You have done well, Herr Lachner. The Ministry of War will be pleased."

"Thank you," Lachner bowed low before this man. "The Baron Wesener is very kind. And mark you, this is but the beginning, Your Excellency. Before we are done, this continent will tremble beneath our wrath."

The pompous man addressed as Baron Wesener nodded, saluted once more and clicked his heels. Then he started up the steps.

It had hit the Eagle like a blow in the face when he heard this man's name. Baron Wesener! High in the Nazi War Office, a confidante of generals and statesmen. His presence alone attested to the importance which the War Ministry placed on this mysterious South American adventure.

The Eagle cautiously tried a door, found it open and stepped into a bedroom. A huge swastika was suspended from the wall over the massive bed. This, then, was probably the guest room and the baron was more than likely headed for it. The Eagle walked softly toward the door, flattened himself beside it and when it swung open, he was concealed from view.

Baron Wesener slammed it shut without looking around, sat down and began drawing off his military boots. Suddenly he jerked erect, for the muzzle of a gun was pressed against the back of his fat neck. A voice, low and ominous gave him orders.

"The baron would be wise and remain healthy if he does as I say. Stand up, walk over to that wall and keep facing it! The slightest deviation from my orders will mean death."

The baron's excess fat began to quiver. These men were all alike, the Eagle thought swiftly. The more

power they held, the more pompous they became and the more they feared death or violence themselves. This Baron Wesener was a downright coward.

The Eagle smiled as he stepped over to the bed, dragged off a sheet and began tearing it into strips. With the strips he bound the baron tightly, gagged him and then pushed him into a chair, binding him to it.

"The baron shows more wisdom than his outward appearance indicates," the Eagle said with a chuckle. "You have saved your own life. Now I must warn you that if you make any noise I'll be forced to come back and kick your fat face in."

The frightened look on the baron's face indicated a numb submissiveness and the Eagle quietly left the room. He went down the corridor to the front entrance.

The house was plunged into darkness now, but a man stood watch at the front door. Not for an instant did he avert his gaze from the tiny window that overlooked the path. Getting him was a simple matter. The Eagle used the butt of his gun and caught the man before he crashed to the floor.

NEXT he sought out the room from which the baron and Lachner had emerged. It was dark, but he first pulled down all curtains, boldly turned on the lights and looked around. Files lined two walls, and there was a built-in bookcase crammed with volumes pertaining to the science of war. He glanced into some of the files and grunted. They were careful dossiers concerning every important South American official.

Then the Eagle found his first significant clue. A map, folded and somewhat worn, was in one of the filing cabinets. He spread this on the desk and studied it intently. It showed various routes to the mountains. Trails were outlined clearly, distances that could be traveled by car were indicated and spots marked to show where the rest of the journey must be made afoot. One circled spot was labeled "Colonia Tovar."



"Don't move—stand where you are and raise your hands"

It outlined certain guard posts. And there was something else. A line had been drawn due north of the circled spot and part of the shores of Lake Maracaibo had been outlined. An attempt had been made to remove all signs of this supplementary map. It meant something, but the Eagle could not figure out just what.

He wanted to examine this house and leave it without making his presence known. Therefore he refolded the map, placed it back in the filing cabinet, then moved toward the big flat-topped desk in a far corner of the room. To reach the drawers he had to pass between a small cabinet that looked like a radio, and a huge wall safe—and the instant he passed by, he sensed that he had cut an infra-red alarm signal ray.

A guard at the rear of the house gave a lusty shout, whipped out his

gun and ran toward the front hall. He saw his colleague slumped unconscious on the floor and shouted this news.

The Eagle raced to the big windows, pulled aside the curtain and swore softly. Two men armed with rifles were parked outside. Apparently Lachner had given explicit orders as to just what should be done if this alarm signal went off.

The Eagle thought quickly, and acted even more swiftly. There was a small door at one end of the room which led, he figured, to the narrow corridor off the side hallway. He raced toward it, and in a moment was silently creeping up the side stairway.

There was confusion below a few minutes later as the Eagle, chucking, stole back down the side stairs and slid through the small door he had

used shortly before. He heard Lachner hurrying down the main stairs. He was shouting orders on his way.

"Perhaps it's that fool of an American! I have been suspicious of him. Guard every door and window. Paul, you come with me—and keep your gun ready. If you see this man, stop him, but do not shoot to kill. I want a talk with him before he dies."

Lachner was halfway down the hall when a cheerful voice called out to him from the living room.

"Hey, Lachner, why don't you come in? I'm getting impatient."

Lachner growled an oath, signaled his men and they closed in on the door. Two of them leaped into the room, rifles poised. Lachner, certain that he was now well protected, drew himself erect and strode importantly into his own living room. He stopped in sheer astonishment at what he saw.

BEHIND his own desk, which no one beside himself could occupy under orders of severe punishment, sat the slender young American. Lachner's box of privately blended cigars was open and he saw at a glance that the intruder had not only lighted one, but had also stuffed his vest pocket full of them.

"Not bad, Lachner." The Eagle surveyed the glowing tip of his cigar. "After I smoke a few of these, I might actually get to like them. Come on in. Sit down. Or don't you know how to receive a guest?"

Lachner's eyes blazed as he rapped out a string of Teutonic oaths. Clenching his hand into a hard fist he strode toward the desk. Two of his men kept the Eagle covered.

"Now, now," the Eagle derided, "you're surely not thinking of starting a fight, Lachner. A man of your age, and with your physique ought to consider the consequences. I'm betting a good sock over the kidneys would put you under. Too much beer, that's what."

"You—you—" Lachner found his voice finally. "You insufferable pig! Get out of my chair! Get away from my desk—or shall I have my men kill you immediately?"

The Eagle shrugged. "It wouldn't do your rug any good and if your marksmen should miss, they'd only bore holes in that nice paneling on the wall behind me. Please sit down, *Herr* Lachner. I've only come for a chat."

"You have come to spy!" Lachner roared. "To steal! To murder me while I slept. You are nothing but a common thief—a murderer."

The Eagle raised his hand languidly and pointed to Lachner's bandaged right hand.

"Mosquito bite, *Herr* Lachner? Or perhaps a bit of lead poisoning? Did you refer to me as a thief and a murderer? I haven't killed anyone—yet. Nor have I stolen. Can you say the same?"

Lachner turned pale, then crimson. He motioned his two guards to stand back, stepped toward the desk and, scowling heavily, sat down on the edge of a chair facing it. The Eagle puffed leisurely on his cigar, shoved his chair back a few inches and propped his feet on the highly polished surface of the desk.

"Shoot, Lachner," he drawled. "Oh, no? Not the guns now, eh? That comes later, doesn't it? You wanted to talk to me about something I heard you say. Well, here we are all nice and cozy. You've got perhaps twenty or thirty armed men to see that I don't harm you"—he grinned dryly—"I've got a little ace in the hole to see that they don't harm me. So why not talk calmly and without antagonism? You wish to learn things from me. I'd like to ask you a few questions."

"Who are you?" Lachner growled. "What are you doing in my house? I have a legal right to shoot you."

The Eagle waved a deprecating finger. "But you wouldn't, *Herr* Lachner. Because if you killed me, there would be complications. Oh, very serious complications. No—don't bother to interrupt me. I'm not referring to what the local authorities might try to do to you. I'm thinking of Berlin and the War Ministry. They wouldn't like it if Baron Wesener suddenly vanished while he was on a tour of inspection and a guest in your own home."

Lachner jumped to his feet. He spun around and howled orders. They were relayed to other men posted in the hallway. Heavy feet pounded up the stairway. A voice yelled back the news. The Baron Wesener was gone!

LACHNER walked over to the desk and slammed his fist down on it.

"Schwein!" he raged. "You shall die for this! What have you done with the baron?"

The Eagle flicked off a good-sized chunk of ash on the rug, returned the cigar to his mouth and grinned contentedly.

"He's safe, for the present, Lachner. And mind who you call 'pig' even in your own language. I've a sensitive soul and I might— Well, it's highly possible the baron won't return. Do you gather my meaning? Now be good enough to send your trained gorillas out of the room so we can talk in private."

Lachner's eyes burned into the Eagle. His lips worked and his hands clenched and unclenched as he tried desperately to stifle his rage. He studied this insolent young man for a moment, then gave the orders for his guards to withdraw. Although this young puppy's words were careless and light, although he taunted Lachner, the Nazi leader had a glimpse of the intruder's eyes. They carried no mirth in them and they made Lachner shiver slightly.

"That's much better," the Eagle said. "Now *Herr* Lachner, there isn't much I mean to ask you because you'd only answer me with a mess of lies. I'll simply tell you a few things. You and your men are trying to build up an empire in South America. An empire ruled by might and violence. In the event of another major conflict you hope to paralyze all industry down here, prevent Brazil from shipping out her very necessary raw materials which will be so useful for your enemies. You hope to bribe and murder your way to a real power in South America. There can be no other reason for your presence here. Well—you can't do it. Hear me? You can't, because I'll stop you."

"You will stop me!" Lachner thundered. "You insignificant puppy! With a flick of my finger I can have you exterminated."

The Eagle laughed heartily. "True—quite true—but you forget the baron. No one but myself knows where he is and if I shouldn't return to him, he'd starve to death. I wouldn't want to be in your shoes if that happened. Let's see. . . . They call them concentration camps in your country, don't they? In medieval days they had a far more vivid name for them. Torture rooms! Well, we've had our little chat. I think I'll be on my way.

"Oh yes, you want to know where the baron is, don't you? Here's what we'll do. You send one of your best men with me. Mind you, he mustn't be armed or I won't like it. He can drop me off at the hotel and I'll give him a written message as to where you will find His Excellency."

"Bah!" Lachner roared. "Am I fool enough to agree to a proposition like that? You would betray me the moment you were out of this house. No! You will tell me first or I shall take care of you. You cannot get out of here."

"And the baron can't get out of where he is. We're stalemate, Lachner. You've got to trust me and you may be sure I will keep my word. Now—shall we go?"

THE bearded German arose and bowed stiffly.

"Very well," he snapped. "It seems that you have outwitted me for the moment. I believe that you will return His Excellency to me, for if you do not there is no way to escape my vengeance. We shall call it, as you say, a draw."

The Eagle rubbed his chin, grinned and put on his hat.

"Of course, *Herr* Lachner. And I hope you will heed my warning because you'll be carefully watched from now on. The slightest show of violence in either Caracas or any other South American city will bring quick punishment directly on your shoulders. You're not fooling me, you know. I've guessed your little game."

Lachner's lips compressed. He screwed his monocle into place, bowed and clicked his heels again. Then, with a gracious sweep of his hand, he escorted the Eagle to the front door. He assigned one man to accompany him.

CHAPTER VI LACHNER'S TRICK



TEPPING out into the night, the Eagle shoved his hat to the back of his head and whistled blithely as he strode down the street. His guard remained close to him.

Lachner watched them vanish into the night and smiled contemptuously.

"Ach, a clever young one but impetuous. Like other enemy agents he has jumped to the conclusion that I am here to establish myself as a dictator. How foolish unless. . . *Herr Gott*, if he has but seen that map!"

Lachner rushed back into the living room, yanked open the filing cabinet and drew a long breath of relief. His map was still there and untouched as far as he could see.

Twenty minutes later the Eagle's escort returned, panting from his fast run. He handed Lachner a sealed envelope, saluted and withdrew discreetly. Lachner ripped open the flap and read the message. There was a prominent vein in his forehead that throbbled out the beat of his heart when he was aroused. It beat so fast now that Lachner felt dizzy as he read:

My dear *Herr* Lachner:

You will find His Excellency rather uncomfortably situated in the closet of his own room with some dirty clothes covering him. I might have taken him away to a safer spot, but he carries around far too much lard to make such a move practical. Why in thunder don't you German agents go on a diet?

That was enough to make Lachner turn gray with rage, but the signature brought rasping oaths to his lips.

"The Eagle!" he roared. "So he was the Eagle! Here—in my very hands and I let him go! But before morning the Eagle will be safe. Otto—Paul—upstairs with you. His Excellency is confined to the clothes closet of his own room. If you were not such dunderheads, you would have searched it carefully. You will pay for your carelessness. Go!"

It had been only a short time before that when Jeff Shannon had waved Lachner's agent-guard out of his hotel room, sat down and laughed until tears rolled down his cheeks. It did his soul good to bring these overbearing, lordly officers down a peg or two. He was remembering Lachner's face. It had been the most ludicrous puzzle that the Eagle had seen in years.

But the Eagle didn't discount Lachner's wily nature. The German agent would attempt something else—and soon. Before that occurred, the Eagle had to know certain things. There were those tourists, for instance. More and more he realized that they were anything but what they seemed.

Then the mystery plane and those plans. Somewhere there had to be a spot where the forces of this undercover war could operate. He recalled the map in Lachner's files. Eagerly he extracted a detailed map of Venezuela from his own briefcase.

He located the section which had been outlined on Lachner's map and his finger pointed to a town with a name all out of proportion to South America. Colonia Tovar. Tovar was the name of an old and respected German family. Then it came to him. Of course, the lost colony! He had heard it mentioned before, often, but it had slipped his mind.

THERE were footnotes with the map and he checked these. The full history of the mountain colony was given. Four generations ago it had been settled by a small German colonist group and since then, by isolation and self-imposed laws, it had remained a true German colony. The descendants of the original settlers were as completely German as the most Teutonic inhabitant of Berlin.

Their customs were retained, the language and the religion.

"Germany is where Germans are," the Eagle murmured softly. "That is the theme song of the Nazi. Therefore, it's possible they have invaded this mountain colony and set up their machinery for war at that spot."

The Eagle went down to the desk. The night clerk was still dozing, but the single bellboy was busy somewhere. For fifteen minutes the Eagle asked questions.

"Si, Senor, it is known as the lost colony," the clerk agreed. "Always we have known of it. The people—they are law abiding and good people. They raise their own crops and live completely alone. There never has been any trouble."

The Eagle was covertly glancing over the desk clerk's shoulder. In the mail slots, he noticed a letter with a German stamp affixed to it. The number of the room was that of the one occupied by one Marenbach, a tourist.

Gazing thoughtfully at a huge map which the desk clerk had spread out, the Eagle pretended he could not see it well. The clerk invited him behind the desk. As he passed by the mail slot, the Eagle's hand flicked out and transferred the letter to his pocket.

Half an hour later, in the security of his room, he worked feverishly over the letter. To all appearances it was nothing but a letter from home and signed, "Your faithful wife, Magda."

Yet that letter intrigued the Eagle. He suspected there was far more to it than appeared on the surface. In the first place it was much too patronizing to be a letter from a wife to her husband. Codes didn't help him any and by checking letter frequencies he determined that it was not code. Therefore the only other alternative solution was that of invisible ink. But heat brought no reaction; nor did acid or alkali help.

The Eagle rubbed his chin thoughtfully, then snapped his fingers, and slipped into his coat and hastily removed his shoes. He opened the door, watchful for any more guards whom Lachner might have sent. Certain he was unobserved, he crept down the

corridor, climbed two flights of stairs and stood before *Herr* Marenbach's room. The door was locked and the key in place.

The Eagle used the small blade of a penknife to worry the key loose. He quietly slid a newspaper under the door, forced the key out of the lock and held his breath until he felt certain that Marenbach's rhythmic breathing indicated that he had heard nothing. He pulled the key under the door, grinned a little and had the door unlocked in half a minute.

Grasping his gun by the muzzle he was prepared to use it as a blackjack if *Herr* Marenbach awakened. Swiftly he turned his attention to Marenbach's clothing. He studied the light gray suit, the white shoes and the white cork helmet.

There was one item of startling contrast. In the breast pocket of the coat was a somber black handkerchief. The Eagle wet his thumb, pressed it against the handkerchief and found that his finger was smudged. Stuffing the handkerchief into his pocket he quietly left the room.

BACK in his own quarters, he quickly drew a basin full of tepid water, thrust the black handkerchief into it and watched the dye run out until the water became black. He dipped the letter into this solution, shook off the excess water, then studied it carefully. The Eagle's knowledge of spy tricks served him well. The dye in the handkerchief was the reagent which brought out the secret writing.

What he found was a map and a few instructions. The map made him whistle softly in surprise. It indicated the trails to the lost colony and showed that Marenbach, an engineer, was expected to smooth out several barely negotiable passageways.

The instructions indicated that Marenbach was to report to his ship before midnight the following day and be prepared to assume his duties at once.

The Eagle glanced at his watch. Four A.M. He was worried about Joan Kirke. Lachner was quite likely to

strike through her. And the Eagle felt that she knew more than she had told him. More than that he found that he actually wanted to see her, even if the visit had no significance so far as his work was concerned.

He guessed she would not be asleep—not after all that had happened. Swiftly donning his clothing, he slid his gun into his pocket and walked out of the hotel. But he had no more than reached the street when he skidded to a halt. Six armed men of the Venezuelan Night Patrol, led by a slender young lieutenant, spread out to encompass him. Rifles were turned his way.

"*Buenos noches, Senor.*" The lieutenant touched the peak of his cap. "You are in a great hurry, *si?* Perhaps you will tell us your name."

"Why not? Jeff Shannon—from the United States. I've some urgent business—"

The lieutenant clapped a hand on the Eagle's shoulder.

"I am very sorry, Senor. You are under arrest for the murder of James Kirke. You were observed emerging from his home and the man whom Senorita Kirke accused of killing her brother has confessed all. You paid him to assist you in the murder so you might steal certain valuables," the officer told him politely.

Stunned, the Eagle offered no resistance. Here was Franz Lachner's fine hand. Cleverly he had fashioned a trap that would take care of the Eagle for an indefinite period of time. There would be a lot of red tape before he could extricate himself.

It was painfully clear how it had been done. Lachner had simply sent the imprisoned man a message that he should accuse Jeff Shannon of being his mentor. Witnesses had been provided to swear they saw Shannon emerge from the house.

Of course Joan Kirke could help clear him by her testimony. But was she available? This open-handed method of sidetracking the Eagle indicated that she might have been kidnaped—even murdered.

The Eagle was aware that the lieutenant was still talking. He jerked back to reality.

"You will come along quietly, Senor. Precede me, please."

The Eagle barely restrained the groan that sought to escape his lips. Lachner had certainly worked fast. His own spy, the man whom Joan had caused to be arrested, would swear that Jeff Shannon hired him. The Eagle knew that eventually he could squirm out of this mess, but he would have to reveal everything he knew. And meanwhile Lachner would carry out his schemes. Joan would undoubtedly be menaced.

THE Eagle shrugged. His shoulders sagged in a gesture of resignation. He turned slowly and took about four steps. Then, as the six-man patrol assembled itself, he whirled on the lieutenant, seized him around the waist and yanked his gun from its holster, jabbing the lieutenant in the spine with the weapon.

"Sorry, Senor. If one of your men even raises his rifle, I shall be forced to kill you. Back up slowly, keep in step with me. Obey and you will not be harmed."

The lieutenant realized the futility of resistance. All his men were in front. If they began shooting, their bullets would strike him first and the menace of that gun digging into his ribs spelled death as certain as the next dawn.

Slowly the two men moved back until they reached the mouth of the dismal alley running beside the hotel. There the Eagle neatly tripped his prisoner, wheeled and raced away in the darkness. A few shots were fired, but the bullets missed by a mile. He passed through several yards, keeping his nose pointed toward Joan's home. The Venezuelan authorities would never think of looking for him there, and he had to see Joan.

When he reached the house, he found it dark and the front door locked. For a moment his heart skipped a beat. Then he reassured himself. Joan was probably on her way to the garrison to be ready to identify the murderer of her brother.

The Eagle sped around the side of the house, kicked in a cellar window and slid through it. Gun in hand, he

made his stealthy way to the upper floor. The silence of a tomb greeted him. He located Joan's room, turned on the lights for a fraction of a second and let loose an audible groan.

Silent evidence pointed to a quick departure. Whether it was forced or voluntary he did not know, but he did know that no matter what Joan did or where she went, Lachner's spies would be on the watch for her.

The Eagle sat down heavily and for the first time in many months felt the depths of actual despair. Finally he forced himself back to some semblance of calmness. He had work to do. Important work! From the look on Lachner's face he had fooled him completely. Lachner thought that the Eagle had assumed, as had everyone else, that his activities were confined to Caracas and the coast line.

But the Eagle knew he must somehow reach that lost colony and do it quickly—before Lachner turned loose his dogs of war. All thoughts of Joan must be thrust aside ruthlessly. Thousands of lives were at stake, the happiness and prosperity of millions. No matter how he felt toward this girl, whom he had known but a few hours, he had to carry on. And to do this he required rest.

The Eagle walked over to the bed and flung himself down on it. In three minutes he was fast asleep.

CHAPTER VII

FOUR IN DANGER



WHEN late morning sunlight awakened the Eagle, he sprang up with an angry imprecation at himself for oversleeping. Then he settled down to do some clear thinking.

He couldn't venture out in broad daylight for every *alguacil* in Caracas would be looking for him. He was positive now that Joan had vanished and could be of no help in establishing his innocence. He simply could not permit himself to be arrested.

Downstairs he found food and ate

it mechanically. He spent the afternoon outlining his plans until they took a definite form in his mind. They involved danger and they undoubtedly would take him away from the place to which Joan had been taken, but with the Eagle, duty came before all else.

He waited until well after darkness before he ventured out and then kept to the quieter streets, tensed for a quick race to safety if an *alguacil*—a policeman—spotted him. He reached the center of the city finally and stole toward the rear of the German beer garden where the fake tourists passed their time.

Several of the so-called tourists were being feted in a back room. The Eagle saw them arise suddenly and raise their glasses in a salute. *Herr* Marenbach seemed to be the guest of honor. So! Then somebody in command evidently was sending Marenbach to assume his duties even though the German had not received official word from Germany. Perhaps they believed the letter had been delayed.

The German bowed himself out the door half an hour later and headed due north along the waterfront. As he progressed, the German seemed to grow more wary and the Eagle discovered his task of shadowing difficult.

Then abruptly, he recalled Joan's story of the mysterious yacht club. Marenbach was heading there! As all the other pseudo tourists did, just before they sailed.

The Eagle darted to the right, made his way over silent streets and kept his eyes open for patrols. For he had the Caracas authorities as well as Lachner to worry about. Then he saw his destination, a low, apparently deserted club.

But was it deserted? The Eagle heard the faint slapping of muffled oars. He dropped to his stomach, wriggled over to a bank and gazed down at the beach. Two dories, loaded to the gunwales with boxes of heavy goods, were being rowed ashore. Men were waiting and the cargo was quickly transferred to a truck. As it rumbled away, the Eagle saw *Herr* Marenbach loom into sight.

Two men stepped out of the darkness, guns in hand and Marenbach stood stockstill while they searched him. He showed them certain papers and was passed on, to vanish into the darkened clubhouse. An eagerness to see the inside of that place gripped the Eagle and only by an effort did he resist the impulse to invade it. Because he realized that if Marenbach got away now, he would have to begin all over again.

The German emerged after almost an hour. He looked around carefully as if he had been warned to watch himself, then hurried back to town. But behind him stalked an unseen Nemesis—the Eagle.

A little later when Marenbach, armed with identification papers and his traveling bags emerged from the hotel, he headed straight for the waterfront. As he passed a narrow, dark street, he felt a light tap on his shoulder. He turned and a fist rammed straight against his jaw. Without a sound the German collapsed.

Working with frantic speed, the Eagle carried him into a deserted shack and rapidly divested the man of his clothing. He donned this, but realized there was no time for further disguise.

WHATEVER happened now rested with Lady Luck. He tied the German securely, gagged him and left him in the shallow cellar below the shanty. It would probably be hours before he was discovered.

Examining the stolen identification papers, the Eagle saw that they were in order, and hurried toward the pier. A fast launch was waiting. He stepped into it, merely nodded to the officer in charge and stood at the prow as he was carried out to the harbor where a liner was anchored. Venezuelan officials, at the dock, had passed him without a glance. His papers were enough.

The ship's captain met him on deck, saluted respectfully and assigned him to a cabin.

"At two o'clock, *Herr Marenbach*, you will go aboard a dory and be rowed back to shore," he informed.

"A car will await you for transportation to the airport. By morning you will be at your destination."

The Eagle paced the narrow quarters assigned him. If Lachner or any of his aides should by any chance arrive with further instructions before time for the ship to sail everything was lost. It was an unaccustomed feeling—and uncomfortable—but the Eagle was nervous, apprehensive.

Aboard ship preparations were being made for a quick sailing. Then, shortly before two in the morning, a knock on the door informed the Eagle that he was to get ready at once.

Ten minutes later he was being rowed ashore by two husky men who said nothing to him. A car picked him up at a broken-down old pier, whisked him through the city, through a narrow lane among trees and let him out in a small clearing beside a transport plane that was poised at the end of a runway for a quick take-off.

The place did not seem to be an ordinary landing field. It was well away from the city, cleverly hidden by surrounding thickets. Men were busy piling crates of goods into the plane and the Eagle discovered he was the sole passenger.

Things were going almost too smoothly. During the flight over the mountains, the Eagle kept thinking of Joan Kirke. Where had she gone? Was she in Lachner's hands, a prisoner?

Then, with the dawn, the Eagle had his first glimpse of the lost colony. Nestled among the valleys of the Andes it looked like a slice of southwestern Germany. It was a quaint and apparently flourishing place. A landing field had been recently cleared away and the plane was circling toward it. The pilot nosed her down, rolled across the field and came to a stop.

Instantly a dozen men in black uniforms appeared. The Eagle, watching them through a window, gaped in astonishment. They were Gestapo agents, operating openly here. They swaggered with each step, hustled other people out of their path and quickly surrounded the ship.

The Eagle stepped out, holding his breath. Lachner must have some means of contacting this colony, he was thinking, and if the real *Herr* Marenbach had gained his freedom, Lachner would have a grim reception prepared for the Eagle.

But there were only salutes and low-voiced instructions from the round leader of the Gestapo.

"The freedom of the village is yours, *Herr* Marenbach, but you will hold yourself ready for further orders," he said crisply. "You know what there is to do and we can lose no time. Until you are summoned then—"

He stepped back and saluted. The Eagle returned the gesture, and began hating that stiff-armed thrust of obedience to a cause he detested.

BUT they had taken him at face value. He was free for the time being, though he realized it would not be for long. Meanwhile, though, if he could locate their ammunition plants, their plane assembling factories, he would at least have something to report.

Glancing over his shoulder he saw that the plane which had flown him here was rapidly being unloaded. One box fell from the hands of a worker. It cracked open and the Eagle had a glimpse of an airplane motor part. Then the Gestapo, surrounding the ship, closed in. The laborer was un-

mercifully beaten before he was driven back to his work.

"This," the Eagle told himself, "would be a bad place to be trapped. Those Gestapo look as though they miss roughing up people—and would they go to town on me."

He strolled through the village, amazed at the exact replicas of German cottages. The people even dressed as German farmers. They were a proud, clear-eyed, blond race, but the Eagle detected signs of covert fear in the women and in some of the men. He began to think that perhaps they resented this invasion of their Fatherland replica in a new world.

Then it was that the Eagle received one of the greatest shocks of his career. As he passed by a small market place, a girl sauntered out. She was dressed like a peasant with a wide, brilliantly colored skirt. Her hair was long, worn in two braids hanging down her back. She smiled.

"Joan!" The Eagle's lips formed the word, but he did not speak.

She took his arm and they walked slowly along until they were well into the hills where the Gestapo rarely bothered to venture.

"How did you ever get here?" the Eagle asked. "What in the world happened, Joan? I can't understand—" He had unconsciously spoken to her as "Joan" because that was the name by which he thought of her in his

[Turn Page]

mind. As simply she called him by his first name.

"It wasn't difficult, Jeff," she said. "I've known of this colony for years. As a little girl my mother used to bring me here for vacations. The people know me and trust me. They resent the intrusion of the Gestapo agents and all this activity. All they ask is the peace and quiet they've enjoyed for more than a century. I come back each summer and visit. When I'm here, I dress and act like the inhabitants. It isn't far by auto if you know the trails. When I told Hernandez what happened, he ordered me up here."

The Eagle looked up sharply. "Ordered you? Then, like your brother you are also a secret agent, eh? Have you discovered anything, Joan? Are there ammunition dumps here—and assembly factories?"

"No, Jeff. I've asked a few discreet questions and I've looked around. There are no factories here. It's nothing but a stop-over. They ship their crates of parts here, then they are transferred somewhere else. Even the inhabitants of the village know nothing and they don't dare ask questions. The Gestapo have been here but a few weeks and they have already established a concentration camp. Men—women, too—just vanish if they so much as criticize any move made by these agents. I saw you get out of the plane. Oh Jeff, it's terribly dangerous here! They'll realize you're an impostor. These men are devilishly clever."

THE Eagle led Joan over to a rustic wall, hoisted her on top of it and sat down himself.

"I couldn't quit now, Joan," he said soberly, "any more than you could. According to my theories, this colony is probably bristling with war planes and factories. I must find out where they assemble those planes and manufacture the bombs. I can't stop until—"

He stopped short with a sudden exclamation. That map he had seen in Lachner's living room! There had been a line to Lake Maracaibo.

"I've got it!" he said tensely. "This,

as you suggest, is merely a stop-over. Listen, Joan. So long as I'm accepted as *Herr Marenbach*, I can go right ahead. They'll take me to this other hidden city where I'm supposed to work in chemical laboratories. You stay here. Somehow I'll manage to get word to you. Is there any way to get a message back to Caracas?"

Joan shook her head. "There's only a radio station, set up by the Gestapo for communication with Lachner. Oh, Jeff, please be careful! I—I can't help but think of what happened to Jim—to my brother. I—I'm afraid for you now."

The Eagle took her hand and pressed it gently. "Joan," he said firmly, "you and I hold in our hands the opportunity for stopping murder, sabotage, and possibly even invasion of this continent. Today the world is crammed with discordant issues. We've got to work for the issue we believe is right. If you and I refuse to risk our lives, later on millions of men will risk theirs with no choice as to whether they want to or not. Can't you see?"

"Yes—yes, I see. I guess it's the only thing that has kept me going since that other night. But Jeff, what can we do? How can we possibly fight all these men? They have all resources at their command, while we have nothing."

The Eagle tapped his temple significantly. "Except for what lies up here. Now listen—you know this country or can find out about it. How far is it to Lake Maracaibo, and where is the trail?"

"It's about thirty miles," she said slowly. "But Jeff, Lake Maracaibo is isolated from civilization. There can't be . . . Wait, Jeff! I think you're right. *Frau Hensinger* told me only this morning that she wondered what tractors were doing plowing their way through the wilderness. Those men are making a road. It must lead to Lake Maracaibo. Jeff, we're on the right track!"

He nodded. "And what to do about it? They'll ship me up there, watch me like hawks and pretty soon I'll be exposed. Then what? Still, I must take the chance. With you here and

able to get back to Caracas without much trouble I've an ace in the hole. Be ready to move immediately, Joan. I'll send word the moment I'm sure of things. Stay clear of these Gestapo, and—"

The Eagle stopped abruptly. From below, in the village proper, came the shrill notes of several whistles. He started up.

"It's an alarm!" he said tensely. "And only one thing could be responsible. They've discovered I'm not Marenbach. They'll have witnesses to show that you seemed to know me and they'll take you, too. Joan, we're going to Lake Maracaibo—and there's only time enough for you to reach your friends in order to get us food. I'll stay here, behind this fence. The Gestapo won't learn of our meeting until later. Hurry!"

She sped away, cutting across the fertile fields toward the outskirts of the village. The Eagle dropped behind the fence, saw to his gun and pumped a slug into the firing chamber.

The Eagle knew how these men from the Gestapo worked. And he knew that once he fell into their hands, hope could be abandoned!

CHAPTER VIII PRISON CAMP



ALMOST two hours elapsed before Joan returned. She carried a basket crammed with food and fear was plain in her face.

"They're searching everywhere, Jeff!" she said in a rush of words.

"They've got patrols out—have even conscripted the villagers to create a ring around the whole area. But I have friends here, as I told you. I've taken them into my confidence and they want to help. We travel due north. There are no Gestapo agents there—only natives. We can slip through the ring. They won't see us because they don't want to, these friends of mine. But we must hurry!"

They beat their way through forest and over towering hills. They saw no signs of the ring of men thrown about the village. The Eagle had an idea that these simple people deliberately avoided seeing them so they would tell no lies if questioned by the Gestapo.

All day long they made their slow progress up the tortuous sides of the Andes. There was food enough and water in plenty. Joan held up well and gradually these two discovered that there was more than friendship between them. Yet neither spoke of it. There was a gigantic task to be done, a dangerous piece of work that might take their lives before it was completed.

They rested by night and with the dawn toiled forward again. A compass, provided by one of the villagers, was their guide. At noon of the second day they topped a high peak and looked down at the smooth, blue water of Lake Maracaibo. They were at the extreme southern end of the huge lake, where primitive wilderness held sway. But did it? The Eagle pointed into the valley. A thin column of smoke arose like some skinny finger seeking to defile the clouds.

"It's there," he said softly. "From now on we must be careful. They'll have guards thrown out, especially since we made good our escape from the village. Joan, you didn't hear anything of two Americans being held captive, did you? I don't believe I told you, but two agents preceded me down here and they vanished."

"There are no such prisoners in the village or I should have known of it," she told him. "Perhaps they brought them here to the lake. Jeff, what are you going to do now?"

"I don't know. First I must have a look at the armaments industry they've created down here. As I see it now, there is only one solution. Outright destruction of the whole place."

They maneuvered warily after darkness set in. Then they moved forward faster until they reached the fringe of forest behind which lay the insidious activity of the foreign spies. Jeff parted a few branches, glanced

through them and drew in a quick breath. He had expected to see a complete picture of preparation for war, but nothing on the scale that presented itself now.

A broad flying field was to the left. Hangars were wide open and more than a score of heavy bombing planes were being inspected by mechanics. There were twice as many fast pursuit ships, with their wings barren of identification.

To the right towered a frame building into which a line of men carried shells and aerial bombs. All about were men in full uniform. Here they had no need to hide their true identity. The grim insignia of their nationality was boldly displayed. Barbed wire fencing hemmed in the entire place and guards armed with rifles patrolled every foot of it.

JEFF SHANNON groaned. "I'd sell my life for one bomber with her racks filled. Getting into that place will be harder than breaking out of Alcatraz. We've got to find the gate and study the guards."

He took Joan's hand and they crept along the protecting edge of the forest until they had made a half circle of the place. The Eagle saw the gate at last. Four guards were posted atop scaffolds that commanded a view of the whole clearing. From each scaffold bristled a machine gun and powerful searchlights were ready to be trained on any invading force. He saw, too, how camouflage concealed the airport and the small factories. A plane flying directly overhead would have noticed nothing unusual.

"It would take a well equipped regiment to attack this place," the Eagle whispered. "Joan, it doesn't look as if there was a way of getting into the place."

"Can you fly a plane?" Joan asked, and when he nodded silent assent: "Then let's try to steal one. Perhaps—"

"Wait!" The Eagle held up his hand. "Joan, look down there just outside the gates. In that little grove. See? Two men—Americans." He almost shouted, "Why, that's Bob Traynor and Frank Bailey! If we

could only get them working with us. They're shackled to those posts, but I can get them free. Come on—there's no time to lose."

With Joan at his side they crept forward. Within the Eagle a tiny voice kept telling him to beware. But he could only see those two men, helplessly staked out like cattle. Two more American men would be of great help, also, and these two would know the ins and outs of this encampment.

"Jeff," Joan said anxiously, "it may be a trap. Why aren't there any guards near these men?"

"I don't know," the Eagle said. "But we've got to chance it, Joan. You stay here. Take my gun. If anything happens, try to shoot a clear path for me. Don't worry—I'll make it."

"Good luck," she whispered.

The Eagle crept on hands and knees until he was within twenty feet of the two stakes to which the American agents were tied. It was gloomy there now, because some of the lights had been turned out. The Eagle drew a pocket knife, opened the largest blade, then darted into the clearing intent on cutting the two men free and escaping before anyone was even aware of his presence.

Suddenly Joan screamed. Her cry was cut off as though a hand had been clamped across her mouth. But the Eagle did not pause. He reached the side of the Americans and saw that each man was gagged with adhesive. They could not shout a warning.

He swung around, crouching. A line of men with rifles were emerging from the darkness to hem him in on all sides. Then he saw Joan being half carried, half dragged between two black-clad members of the Gestapo. One of these agents held a gun against the back of her head as he shouted to the Eagle:

"You will surrender or I shall shoot!"

The Eagle sighed, and raised both arms high. . . .

I T SEEMED hours later when the Eagle stood before a long table behind which sat uniformed officers

of this hidden armaments town. They were resplendent in swords, pistols and medals. Their high-crowned caps were perched jauntily on closely cropped heads. A man of about fifty seemed to be in command, from his insignia, a major-general.

"Now," this man said gruffly, "you will begin by telling us how you found this place. No lies—they will be punished. And remember also that this girl who came with you is likewise a prisoner. Upon her we shall inflict the punishment to be meted out to you in the event that you do not cooperate with us."

"Very well," the Eagle said.

He grinned at the dozen men, walked over to the desk and sat down on the edge of it. Two Gestapo agents rushed up to him, dragged him back and slapped him soundly across the face.

"It won't be so long," he said quietly, "before I return that slap—and my hand won't be open when I do it. Now, if you want me to talk, let go and step back. I don't like the odor of you. Reminds me of a sty."

For a moment the Eagle thought these two meant to shoot him on the spot. But harsh orders from the major-general sent the two agents back toward the door.

"Stand at attention and answer these questions," the Eagle was told. "We have already communicated with Caracas, so you will gain nothing by lies. How did you know this place existed, and how many other persons know of it?"

The Eagle shrugged. "Can't say for sure. I told—let's see—Senor Hernandez and the American consul. Herr Lachner was extremely careless in leaving maps around. I had a look at one of them and— Well, I got here, so I must have known the way."

"And the girl?"

The Eagle made a wry face. "One of the peasants in the lost colony. I was in a spot there and persuaded her to help me get away. After that I couldn't shake her. She insisted on coming all the way. Just a stupid girl who should be milking cows—not mixed up in an affair of this kind."

"We shall soon know," the commandant snapped. "Herr Lachner has been ordered to report here at once. If you have lied, you shall face a firing squad. And Lachner will know who you are."

At a signal the two Gestapo agents dragged the Eagle out of the room, across the entire length of the improvised town and hurled him into a barbed wire enclosed space about twenty feet square. Bob Traynor, Bailey and Joan were there, huddled in a group as far away from the guards as possible.

The Eagle watched the gate close in his face and grinned at the leering grimaces of the Gestapo men. Then he brushed his clothing casually, threw back his head and whistled a lilting tune as he walked toward his companions. He sat down on the ground and looked around.

"Nice little place you have here. Exclusive is the word—and completely away from any curious eyes."

Traynor laughed. "That's right. Boy, it's tough trying to live with sentries watching every move you make. I'd rather be in solitary confinement. Well, you're here—so we might as well know all about you. I suppose you were sent down to look for us?"

"How in the world did you find the place?" Bailey queried.

THE Eagle eyed both of them. They were gaunt from lack of sufficient food and sleep. Their hands were calloused, their bodies dirty.

"Make you work for your keep, eh?" he remarked. "Prisoners of war and prisoners of industry at one and the same time."

"They make us work in a coal mine they found over on that hill. The rest of 'em are too high-hat to do work of that kind, so with a bayonet ready to stick us every now and then, we dig the coal and haul it out. They maintain a nice little electrical system with it. Oh, there's every modern convenience here."

The Eagle hunched himself closer, gave Joan a wide grin and spoke quietly.

"Listen, boys, I'm Jeff Shannon.

Maybe you've heard 'em call me the Eagle. Well—no barbed wire fence ever held an eagle on the ground. I'm going to fly out of here."

"How?" all three asked in a chorus.

The Eagle heaved a great sigh. "I don't know—yet. Have to grow my wings first. But—we don't leave here until this place is obliterated! Wiped off the face of the earth!"

Traynor shook his head slowly. "You don't know the half of it, Shannon. They taunt us with their plans. Listen—they intend to wait until there's a war on the other side of the pond. If the United States tries to help any of the enemy nations, the Panama Canal will be bombed first. Then Mexico and the United States itself, within flying range of these new stratosphere bombers—and let me tell you, that's plenty. If Brazil, Chile, Argentina or any other Latin-American nation decides to take a hand, they get the same treatment. See that big shack over there? It contains enough bombs to blow New York off the map. Over there, behind that camouflage of trees, are long-range cannon. They can be flown, piecemeal, to suitable points and turned on the various cities down here. All hell will break loose if they ever get started, Shannon!"

Joan took both of the Eagle's hands in her own.

"Jeff, can we do anything?" she pleaded. "Is there any hope at all?"

"Tomorrow," the Eagle said, "Lachner comes. When they find out who I am, they may decide to eliminate all of us, or put us to work in the coal mines until we drop of exhaustion. Lachner rather has it in for me, and I don't think his ideas of vengeance are any too kindly. So we must act quickly. Are there guards around here all the time?"

"All the time," Bailey said mournfully. "If we even step toward the barbed wire fence, they aim their rifles at us. Don't think it would take much to make them shoot, either. Day and night they keep four men on duty, watching us."

The Eagle was staring toward the dark sky. Above the prison camp wires were strung, and at one end of

the camp a pole supported them. The Eagle's eyes narrowed.

"Is it possible that when the guard changes, they relax vigilance for a minute or two?"

Traynor answered eagerly. "Yes. Those going off are usually so tired they walk away before the others get here. The whole bunch meet near the gate at nine—well after dark. The guards on day duty work a fourteen-hour shift. I've heard them grumbling about it often enough."

"Then we can do nothing until tomorrow," the Eagle said. "We'll have to risk Lachner's appearance. Joan, you ought to get some sleep. You others, too. We'll need all our energy tomorrow night. For I've a plan."

CHAPTER IX

THE WAY OUT



RAY dawn was just breaking when Traynor and Bailey were aroused and herded out of the barbed wire camp at the point of bayonets.

Joan and the Eagle were unmolested, but he knew that when Lachner

arrived, their time would come.

Shortly after noon they were given a bowl of weak soup and some dry bread. The Eagle nibbled at his chunk of bread and grinned at Joan.

"All the comforts of deluxe hotel service. They even wait on us, Joan."

"Oh, Jeff!" There was a choked sob in her voice. "How can we ever get out of here? When Lachner finds out you're here, he'll order you killed! Even if they don't kill us, we'll be forced to work like slaves. Look at Traynor and Bailey! They're just walking skeletons."

The Eagle's grin died away. "You've got to keep your chin up, Joan, darling," he said. "We're not licked until they throw sod in our faces. I'm hoping for just one break—that Lachner's temper won't run away with him."

An hour later they heard a bugle

blare. All work ceased for the moment and the men lined up, rifles grounded, shoulders thrown back. From the trail came a party of eight with Lachner in the lead, astride a wiry little mule. He saluted the commandant, inspected the small army, then walked over to the barbed wire fence enclosing the prison camp.

The Eagle arose, ambled over to the fence and stopped only when two bayonets touched his stomach. He saluted Lachner with a wry grin.

"So we meet again, *Herr Lachner*. You don't happen to have one of those cigars about you? I didn't get around to smoking all of them, and when we're back in Caracas I'll give you one in return."

"That man"—Lachner pointed an accusing finger—"is the Eagle! The most dangerous of all agents employed by the United States. I shall not rest easy until I see him riddled with bullets."

The Eagle moved his head in acknowledgement. "That's real praise coming from you, *Herr Lachner*. But I'm quite satisfied. Men like you and I expect to die violently some day. This is a little earlier than I had planned it—but who are we to buck Fate? I'd much rather be dead than slaving in those coal mines like Traynor and Bailey are forced to do. Whenever you're ready for the fireworks, just whistle. I'll be along."

One of the Gestapo agents clicked his heels and bowed.

"*Herr Lachner*, it is not for me to suggest, but we need more coal and we do not have the men to mine it. This man might help, eh? Then later on you could take care of him as all spies should be taken care of."

"*Ja!*" Lachner snarled. "Let him work the mines. Work him twenty hours a day. The woman—put her to work in the kitchen. Let her wash the dishes. Feed them swift. Let them suffer."

"*Ja, Herr Lachner.*" The Gestapo agent started for the gate. Lachner stopped him with a command.

"Not now, you fool. First I would talk with this man. He knows much and he will tell. Give me one hour, then bring him to me."

The Eagle whistled again as he strolled back to Joan's side and sat down.

"Nice fellow, isn't he? I thought that by telling him I'd prefer death to working in that mine he'd give me a taste of the mine. Psychology, my dear. An interesting and useful subject."

BUT Joan could stand no more. She broke down, huddled in his arms and he let her cry until there were no more tears. Then he kissed her gently.

"Didn't I say I'd fly out of here?" he reminded her whimsically. "What does an eagle have wings for? Now you won't be bothered until tomorrow, so get all the rest you can. Me—I've an appointment with His Majesty, and if he presses me too much, I'll talk. And what he'll learn! I'll stuff his ears so full of blarney it will make his head spin."

* * * * *

It was almost dark when the Eagle stumbled back to the prison camp after his set-to with the bearded German spy. His guards forced him through the gate and urged him forward with cruel kicks. The Eagle's face was bleeding and raw. The marks of Lachner's big hand were still evident.

Traynor and Bailey started up, to rush to his side. The Eagle pursed cracked lips and whistled again. Joan helped him into a sitting position, moistened the hem of her skirt in a bucket of tepid water provided for them, and gently washed the blood from his face.

"*Herr Lachner*," the Eagle said softly, "is no gentleman. He had two men hold me while he did this. I didn't like it and I told him so—which made him all the sorer. But he and I are not finished, my friends. Gather around closely so those guards won't be able to see what we're doing."

The Eagle thrust a hand under his shirt and took out—one gauntlet. The kind worn by the officers of this hidden town.

"All for that I took Lachner's punishment." He grinned crookedly, for

his face was somewhat out of shape. "One measly little glove which to me looks exactly like a pair of eagle's wings. Tonight's the night, boys—Joan. Lachner's staying over, probably to encourage my coal digging a bit. But my hands are tender. Nothing like my feet. They're quite tough."

The Eagle leaned back and removed his shoes. They had crepe rubber soles and heels. He pried away one sole, ripped it off the shoe and held it against the gauntlet.

"Fits perfectly, eh? Now, Joan, here is where you come in. A woman should weep and sew for her boys in the trenches. Please don't weep. Just sew—this rubber sole onto the outside of the gauntlet. You'll have to use grass—No, wait! Let's all take a stroll around the limits of our prison. There's bound to be bits of wire. Get all you can and don't let the guards see you."

They separated, but thirty minutes later again were huddled in a group. Using pieces of rusty wire, Joan fastened the rubber sole of the Eagle's shoe to the gauntlet he had stolen. The camp was settling down for the night. In about an hour the guard would change.

"Listen, carefully," the Eagle said. "When our charming hosts withdraw from their posts, it must seem to them as if we're huddled together exactly as we are now. But I'll have to leave for a moment or two. The rest of you make it seem I'm still in the party. If things go wrong, you carry out my plan, Traynor. You are the strongest. Ready?"

They nodded. This was desperate work, but no more desperate than was their situation. No one spoke again until the guards, stationed along the fence, withdrew to turn over their duties to the new shift.

THE night was pitch dark and few lights were on. Most of the inhabitants of the town were feting Lachner. The guards had grumbled about their tour of duty preventing them from joining in the festivities.

Suddenly the Eagle scurried away on all fours. The darkness swallowed him up. The others held their posi-

tions so that should any of the guards look back, it would seem that all four prisoners were in one group.

The Eagle reached the pole just inside the barbed wire fence. He wrapped both arms around it and shinned up it like a monkey. He reached the cross piece over which the wires were strung and donned the gauntlet, with the crepe rubber fastened around it.

The wire that Joan had used was carefully pushed deep into the soft rubber so that none of it was exposed. Without hesitation the Eagle grasped one wire. He tested its strength, knew he could not tear it down. Then he dug into his pocket and took out the knife. He had been searched, but only for guns. The knife had not been appropriated.

Holding this firmly with the rubberized gauntlet, he sawed away at the wire. It parted and one end fell to the ground. He held his breath for fear it might touch the fence and create a brilliant blue flame. But it dangled two feet away.

Perspiration poured down the Eagle's face. He had carefully selected a wire leading to one of the small factories, now darkened. If he had cut the wrong one and doused the lights in the other buildings, his whole scheme would have gone awry.

He slid down the pole and rejoined the others before the new guard shift had taken their places.

"Got to work fast," he said. "Here's the dope. Taunt the guards, get them good and mad. Coax them near the fence. Got the idea? Let's go! Spread out—each of you take one guard. Keep his attention."

The Eagle walked briskly over toward the pole he had climbed. In the darkness he slipped on the glove once more, seized the trailing wire and quickly fastened it to the fence. Then he walked over to where one guard rested on his rifle, staring blankly into space.

"Hello," the Eagle said in German. "For a minute I thought you were a tree stump. You smell like one—the kind that are left in marshes, I mean."

"Quiet!" The guard raised his

rifle. "Do not approach closer or I shall give you a taste of my bayonet."

"You wouldn't dare," the Eagle taunted. "You haven't the nerve, I might grab it and turn your own rifle against you."

Deliberately the Eagle walked closer. The guard growled a curse and thrust his bayonet between the barbed wire. The Eagle dodged aside agilely and made a derisive sound with his tongue. The guard lunged



forward, intent on making this American spy squeal. That lunge brought him up against the barbed wire fence. He dropped his rifle and collapsed without a sound, dangling over the fence like some bullet-riddled soldier far out in No Man's Land.

Scooping up the rifle, the Eagle whirled around in time to see two other guards lolling against the fence. The fourth had his rifle to his shoulder and Joan was centered in his sights. The Eagle raised his bayoneted rifle high and raced toward the man.

THE guard swerved his gun, but before he could press the trigger, that rifle was sailing through the air at him. He tried to duck it, but the Eagle had figured on that and purposefully sent the blade in a low line. It hit the man in the middle of the chest.

He fell forward with a groan, and lay still.

The Eagle raced back to where the power line was hooked to the fence. With his rubber-lined glove he quickly untwisted it, wound it around the pole, then raced over to join the others.

"Got 'em!" he said gleefully. "Now, Joan, you make for the hills. Don't

argue—do as I say. Traynor, you and Bailey follow me."

Joan hesitated a moment, but obeyed. On her way she stopped long enough to pick up a rifle. The Eagle smiled, but there was no laughter in his eyes.

Slightly in the lead of Traynor and Bailey, he dodged between buildings, a rifle ready in his hands for quick use. He held up a hand suddenly and the others crouched near him.

"There are guards around the arsenal," he said in a low voice, "but we can't afford to wait. Someone may see those men on the barbed wire fence. Now here's the dope. Bailey, you make a line for that small shed a hundred yards to the right. Traynor, you stay right here. I'm going into that arsenal. I may come out in little pieces and then it's up to you mugs to get Joan away. Do you understand?"

"Listen, Shannon," Bailey said, "Joan's in love with you. Backing that up is the fact that you're invaluable to the service of our country. Me—I'm just a no-account operative who got himself into a mess. Let me go!"

"And have all the fun?" the Eagle asked wryly. "Nope! I got you out of that prison camp and you owe me the privilege of blasting this city of war to the skies. Beat it—and cover me when I start to run for it."

Bailey touched his forehead, grinned amiably and made his dash to a point of vantage from where he could cover the Eagle without exposing himself. Traynor sighted his rifle experimentally, drawing a bead on the guard who stood fixed post at the entrance to the ammunition dump.

"Ready?" the Eagle asked.

Traynor nodded, and his finger grew white against the trigger. Bailey waved encouragement from his position and then leveled his own rifle. The Eagle gripped his gun with strong, eager hands.

The bayonet glistened dully and the Eagle's eyes narrowed to slits. His chances of coming out of this were few. Yet it was his job, and one by which most of the world would benefit. He couldn't fail!

CHAPTER X

RUIN



ALLING into a crouch, he broke into a sprint. He crossed a small parade grounds and was within twenty feet of the sentry when the man realized this onrushing ghost meant no good. He raised his rifle, but its stock

had barely touched his shoulder when two slugs smashed through his head. Traynor and Bailey had fired simultaneously.

Two other sentries came rushing toward the Eagle. He shot one of them through the shoulder. Traynor's gun blazed and the other went down in a sprawling skid. He didn't move again.

The Eagle paused just long enough to yank an automatic from the holster of the nearest sentry. He threw aside his rifle and headed for the entrance of the ammunition dump.

A powerful searchlight was turned on, sweeping the grounds in an attempt to pick out the cause for the shooting. Traynor and Bailey ducked the light, but it held the Eagle in its glare for a fraction of a second. Two of the machine guns at the main gate made the earth dance around the Eagle's feet. But he reached the doorway to the building and the machine gun became silent. It was tantamount to suicide for the gunners if they let bullets smash into the explosives stacked in that building.

Two men emerged, guns ready. The Eagle's automatic blasted the first one, sent him reeling back against his mate. With a leap the Eagle was upon both of them, using his weapon as a club. Then Traynor and Bailey lost sight of him as he entered the doorway.

There were two more shots, reckless shots for they came from within the ammunition dump. An officer, pistol in hand, was heading a squad of four men toward the place. Traynor picked him off and also took care of

one of his men. Bailey shot with methodical calm, and the detail retreated swiftly.

Inside the ammunition dump, the Eagle was forced to shoot pointblank at a burly guard. Then a small man in a white smock tried to interfere. The Eagle rushed him, sent a round-house blow to the face that knocked his man out.

He stopped then to examine the place. Stacked on a bench beside him were the long-handled throwing grenades used by the Germans. He thrust as many of these as possible into his pockets and beneath his belt.

The silence outside worried him. He wondered if Traynor and Bailey were dead, if Joan had escaped. No matter now—there would be no one to harm her.

Just one of the grenades which the Eagle carried would set off a devil's own inferno. Nothing would withstand the concussion once this place went off. He raced up a rickety stairway to examine the floors above.

The upper floor was stacked with huge aerial bombs and shells. He gaped in astonishment at the huge amount of supplies. There was a window near him and he risked a quick look through its dirty glass pane. The hangars were about a hundred yards away and the field was a scene of frantic excitement.

Then a rifle spat and another blended its roar with the first. The Eagle saw a medal-bedecked officer fall heavily. Traynor and Bailey were still on the job.

Near the floor a ray of dim light from outside attracted his attention. He peered down a shaft that was much like a huge shiny box. It was used to pass bombs down to the men who would carry them to the planes. There was plenty of room to accommodate the Eagle's slim form.

Someone was running madly up the stairs. There would be heroic men among these troops stationed here; men who were willing to die for a cause they believed right. A man's figure showed for a second and the Eagle fired from the hip. The intruder ducked back, unhurt. His gun roared and the Eagle felt a slug

smash into his thigh. He tried to back up, but his leg refused to support him and he crumpled into a heap.

The invader, encouraged by no answering bullets, turned on a flashlight. It swept across the Eagle where he knelt, grimacing with pain. With a shout of triumph the German started a rush across the floor. The bayonet on his rifle was pointed downward, ready for a death thrust.

The Eagle raised his gun and pulled the trigger without really being conscious of it. But his aim was accurate. The German's rifle exploded as he fell, but the bullet only plowed through the wall behind the Eagle. The German pitched forward on his face.

Grimly, the Eagle crawled toward the chute, drawing one of the grenades from his belt. He thrust his feet down the slanting side of the chute, gritted his teeth and laid the grenade down gently. He took two more from his pockets and lined them up.

From the sounds outside he knew that the building was surrounded and that once he let go, he probably would come flying out into the arms of a dozen men. That chance he had to take. They were coming into the building, too, egged on by the harsh orders of their superiors from what they believed to be a safe distance. But the Eagle knew that only vast distance would be safe for anyone once this building went up.

He wiped sweat off his face, swallowed hard, then rapidly drew the pin on each bomb and hurled them in three different directions. He gave himself a hard push and went sliding down the shaft. His wounded leg began bleeding faster and darts of agony shot through his body.

The Eagle came out of the chute, sailed through the air for about twenty feet and landed with a thump that almost knocked him out. A dozen men were rushing toward him. He gestured toward the building. The men hesitated, fired a few shots, then turned tail and ran.

The Eagle began rolling over and over, trying to put distance between himself and the ammunition dump.

Then it came. There was a tremendous roar and one side of the building rose into the air as if being carried away by a tornado. A second explosion; then a third. There was a split second of silence while the roar echoed and reechoed over the hills. Then the real explosion came as bombs, dynamite and powder supplies were set off.

The ground trembled. Debris hurtled through the air. And all the while the Eagle kept on rolling. Flashes of fire lit up the night as the explosions continued with renewed velocity. A chunk of board struck the Eagle across the back. He groaned and lay still a moment.

He began inching his way now. One leg dropped off into space. He was on top of a ravine. Men screamed, but their voices were puny above the gigantic crash of the explosions. The Eagle slipped, tried to hold himself in check, but could not. He slid down into the ravine until a small clump of brush stopped him.

The explosions were still going on. The concussions were terrific, but there were no longer any screams. The Eagle sighed like a man very tired. He closed his eyes and waited for the inevitable end. . . .

IT SEEMED hours later when he awoke as someone tried to force cool spring water down his throat. He looked up into Joan's face.

"We're both dead?" he asked, still stupefied.

"We're very much alive, Jeff, I saw you come flying out of that chute and I tried to reach you, but the ravine was too steep. Then you came sliding down to me."

"Traynor—and Bailey?" The Eagle sat up suddenly. "Lachner—and the others?"

"I don't know," Joan answered in a queer voice. "I—I haven't looked up there yet. I—I don't think I want to."

The Eagle tensed. Above them the roar of an airplane motor broke the quiet. The Eagle struggled to his feet, clawed his way to the edge of the ravine and looked out on a scene of complete desolation except for one

small cabin plane which was poised at the far end of the runway. Apparently it had been too far away to be damaged by the explosions.

"Shannon!"

The voice seemed to come from miles away. The Eagle clambered to his feet. His wounded leg buckled under him, but Joan was at his side.

The plane was racing toward them. It slowed and Traynor jumped out. He was waving his arms madly.

"Shannon!" he shrieked as he ran closer. "We made it! Bailey's got a broken arm and a bullet through his shoulder, but he's able to handle the plane. We've done it!"

"Have you seen Lachner?" the Eagle asked steadily.

"Have we seen him?" Traynor enthused. "He headed for this plane the minute he learned you were in the ammunition dump. The commandant went with him. They were going to take off, leave their men to die. They knew you'd blast the whole place to pieces. But Bailey and I shot our way toward the plane and before she took off, we put a few slugs into her. One of us got Lachner who was at the controls. He's dead—so is the major-general. When the building went up, we were far enough away to avoid the concussion and the debris. Here—let me help you. Man, oh man, won't this make the headlines!"

The Eagle took Traynor's arm.

"Nothing has happened here, do you understand? Nothing! Before these men came, there was only wil-

derness here. That's all that remains now. We'll fly back to Caracas. Hernandez is entitled to an explanation, and so is the War Department, but other than that—we're mute. Do I make myself clear? News of this kind would only inflame people who might otherwise never think of war and bloodshed. The Germans will never make a complaint—not even an investigation, I'm betting."

"BUT gosh," Traynor protested, "you risked your life to do this! I'm not seeking any glory for myself, but, Shannon, they pin medals on men for the kind of stuff you did."

"And they pin tombstones on doughboys who die in battle," the Eagle said. "Don't forget that. Our job is to stop this mad business of war making. If we do it secretly, so much the better. Give me a hand to that plane, will you? My leg feels as though it weighs a ton."

Joan was hastily bandaging his thigh when the plane took off. Bailey circled the ruins twice. Nothing stirred except a little smoke that came from between the piles of debris. She shuddered and looked up at Jeff Shannon. "Where do we go from here?" she asked him.

The Eagle's eyes softened and his lips spread in a smile.

"We' is right, darling. Where do we go? First, back to the States. After that—who knows? But let's forget all that, and concentrate on just us."

*Next Issue: NETWORK OF HATE, a Complete Novel
Featuring THE EAGLE, by CAPT. KERRY McROBERTS*