

THE SPY NET

by ARED WHITE

CHAPTER 25

Elton Borrows A Light

The sturdy black hole underwent a swift transformation as Elton opened his trunk, brought forth a large flashlight, a pad of scratch paper, the two bottles of ancient cognac, and drew a suitcase in front of the trunk to serve as a seat. A workable office, and one that would escape the vigilant eyes of the German secret service. The only place in Switzerland where he might work in security, since he had no doubt that even a flashlight in his sleep room would draw prompt attention from the shadows.

The letter to Farnham had met with small damage by its immersion in Lake Geneva. He examined it critically. The type-written message was only slightly blurred, a fact of no consequence. But the blank spaces were unsolved, the water having had no effect upon the unsuspected invisible inks of the Germans.

He opened the two cognac bottles and, using a rubber bathing cap as a container, mixed the developing chemicals, into which he dipped the German letter. Two minutes of the immersion slipped by, and on the yellow surface of the paper grew a following rash. Another two minutes and the rash

took form, becoming numerals. He watched the development under a strong glass until the figures were clear enough for copying, then corked the cognac bottles, rekindled the flashlight, and stole back into his bedroom to empty the bathing cap and fill his lungs with fresh air.

Upon returning in a few minutes to his improvised office, Elton sat feverishly at work upon the symbols. A brief message, he estimated from the number of figures, perhaps not more than thirty words. He took the first group and laid them out for testing, dividing them into two on the theory that they followed one of the ciphers he had previously broken. Two numerals representing each letter of each word. On a separate sheet of paper he wrote down from memory the several secret keys that back in France had cost him long, sleepless days and nights of incessant labor. This one finally elicited:

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33

In this key each two figures of the cipher message identified immediately, to those holding the

key, a letter of the English alphabet, the first of each two numbers fixing the column, from top to bottom, in which the letter was located. The second figure indicated the row, from left to right. Hence, given the figure 91, the German agents throughout the world, would carry the key in their minds, need only seek out the 9 column in the key and move downward with pencil or finger until they encountered the row at the left which stood the figure 1. Therefore 91 deciphered into A.

Von Kuhl had complicated his cipher further, however, as Elton had good reason to know from his racking struggle to break the cipher in the first place. It was a cipher to defy the high frequency tables of the Allied cipher experts. Use of the English alphabet confounded the best French experts at the outset. Use of a variety of symbols for letters used most frequently in the making up of words deepened the puzzle even for the best English experts. For while 91 represented the letter A, so did 32 and 93; and each letter of the alphabet likewise had three symbols in the key, while the letter E, the highest frequency letter in English, bore nine different symbols in the key—51, 52, 53, 41,

42, 43, and 31, 32, 33.

Elton wrote down the first line of German numbers, divided into two, and applied the key. They broke promptly into a startling message:

47 33 16 42 93 24 10 21 17 10 14 99 17
S E N D A M . F . O . N O .
15 84 15 52
N I N E

One by one he wrote down the letters of the entire German message. When the 'blank' spaces of the innocent letter to Captain Farnham had yielded its secret misadventure to von Strindheim's rendezvous under Paris, Elton extended the abbreviations, and sat back to read it in its entirety:

"Send American Field Orders No. 9 instantly by courier. Berlin commands your outline, but commands entire order as placed together from the Americans be furnished. Learn date of attack promptly to facilitate our counteractions. His Excellency's Paris inspection delayed for time being. (Signed) No. 1.

Elton, with infinite care, memorized the message, reduced his work sheet and Farnham's letter to powdered ashes, disarranged his office, and returned silently to bed. But he had no thought of sleep. The fatigue that had gripped him earlier in the night, after his day's adventures, was gone entirely. Though the meaning of that letter flashed upon him with the first deciphered line of the German message, he studied it out now, weighing the words.

Field Orders No. 9. The words set his pulse pounding. There was no escape from its meaning in that message. He knew, before he had

left headquarters, that the great American attack to be staged in France by the American army was reduced to a carefully guarded secret of telegraphed papers, under the title 'Field Orders No. 9'—the pending attack of the first army to reduce the German salient at Saint-Mihiel. And he knew now that these orders were in the hands of von Strindheim at Paris, that von Kuhl commanded his symphony of the French fleet to send these orders forward instantly by courier.

It was with an effort that he contained himself against the urge for action, an impulse to get this critical information to Colonel Rand. There was no reckoning the consequences of a betrayed battle order. The Americans would be robbed of the whole weapon of surprise. Terrible counter-attacks could be prepared against the American artillery preparation fire. German concentration could be centered to crumble the main effort of the American infantry. Such a betrayal might cost ten thousand lives, or fifty thousand, and cast disaster upon Allied morale.

The day and hour of attack alone had escaped the German intrigue. Probably because it had not been fixed, Elton guessed. But the hour would be set, would be sent out to corps, to divisions, to brigades, even to regiments, well in advance of the H hour of M day. It was von Strindheim's orders to learn that secret, report it to the German high command. Whether through lack of proper American precautions or because of the skill of von Strindheim's secret agents in France, Elton reasoned that the

leak which had given to the Germans the battle plans for Saint-Mihiel might also give them the hour of attack.

Daylight was in at the windows before Elton had decided upon his course of action. He slipped back into his sanctuary, got from his trunk the bottle of shaving lotion, stripped the wrapping from an American cigarette, and with many references to the little Service Bible he had brought from France, filled the cigarette paper with minute figures in invisible ink. His figures were not cipher, but an inscrutable code he had memorized for his own use and given the original key to Colonel Rand. The figures he jotted down indicated pages, paragraphs, and word sequences of passages in the tiny Testament. Rand alone would be able to read what he had written. When he had checked his message, he encased it in black sticking plaster and embedded it in the butt of a long black cigar. This done, he went back to bed and turned his mind to sleep, in the knowledge that he was helpless to make a further move until night came again.

Monsieur Za broke upon his slumber shortly after nine o'clock, immediately after he had admitted the sleep little German agent, Elton was aware of a restraint in the fellow's manner. Za had all of his cold assurance about him, but there was an unfathomable, sinister light in his black eyes, the hint of an unspoken taunt in his manner, suggestion of devilry which he was keeping strictly to himself.

"There are many letters today, monsieur," said Za. "You will

please to direct as quickly as possible."

"A devil of a night I've had of it," Elton complained. "Not until daylight was I able to sleep, and I'm not going to do anything without having my breakfast."

"An easy conscience, monsieur," smirked Za. "It is the best remedy, the saying goes, for one who does not sleep."

"My conscience would not trouble me," Elton joined warmly. "If you would stay away from here with your damnable letters. They may read harmless enough—in fact, they seem silly and absurd—but just the same I'm admitting that the whole affair is upsetting my nerves."

"You may write while you eat, but the letters they must be prepared at once," Za ordered, ignoring Elton's protest.

While he waited for his breakfast, and for the better part of an hour following breakfast, Elton penciled one brief letter after another, twenty of them in all, one to each address furnished him by Za. They went to addresses ranging from London to Madrid, New York, Mexico City, Manila, Bombay, Hongkong, Tokyo, but with the majority of them for destinations in France.

"Monsieur is to have the great honor," said Za, rather casually, as he gathered up the letters and prepared to leave. "Please that you make no engagement for the night of tomorrow. At the chateau of his excellency there is to be a great reception in honor of the Grand Duke who soon returns to Russia."

"I rather surmised," said Elton coolly, "that I would hardly be welcome again at Count von Kuhl's chateau."

Za gave a deprecatory shrug. "One might so think, monsieur," he agreed, with a slight lifting of his nose. "But his excellency is a very unusual man, and forgives many things."

"This is very generous," Elton replied in kind, "but I am not at all certain I should care to accept any further favors from the count until I have refunded the amount I appear to owe because of Abbas Hilmi's trick poker bet."

"As you please," said Za dryly. "But at four of this afternoon I shall return with the letters prepared for monsieur's signature. Please that you be prompt."

When he had made certain that Za was out of the hotel, Elton entered his clothes closet, where from memory he wrote down, over and over again, the names and addresses he had gleaned from Za. He associated each name and address with some familiar thought or object, the better to fortify his memory against the day when he would have urgent need for those addresses. Having done this he burned his notes and was preparing to leave the hotel when summoned by the telephone in his room.

(To be continued tomorrow)
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NOTICE OF MEETING

All persons interested in the South Umpqua Fair are requested to meet at the Riddle grange hall, Friday, April 10th, at 7:30 p. m. (Adv.) H. B. Green, Chairman.

Give us your order for that box of candy you are going to send mother on Mother's Day and we will see that it is delivered. We have a good number of nice boxes to choose from. The Chocolate Shop.—Adv.

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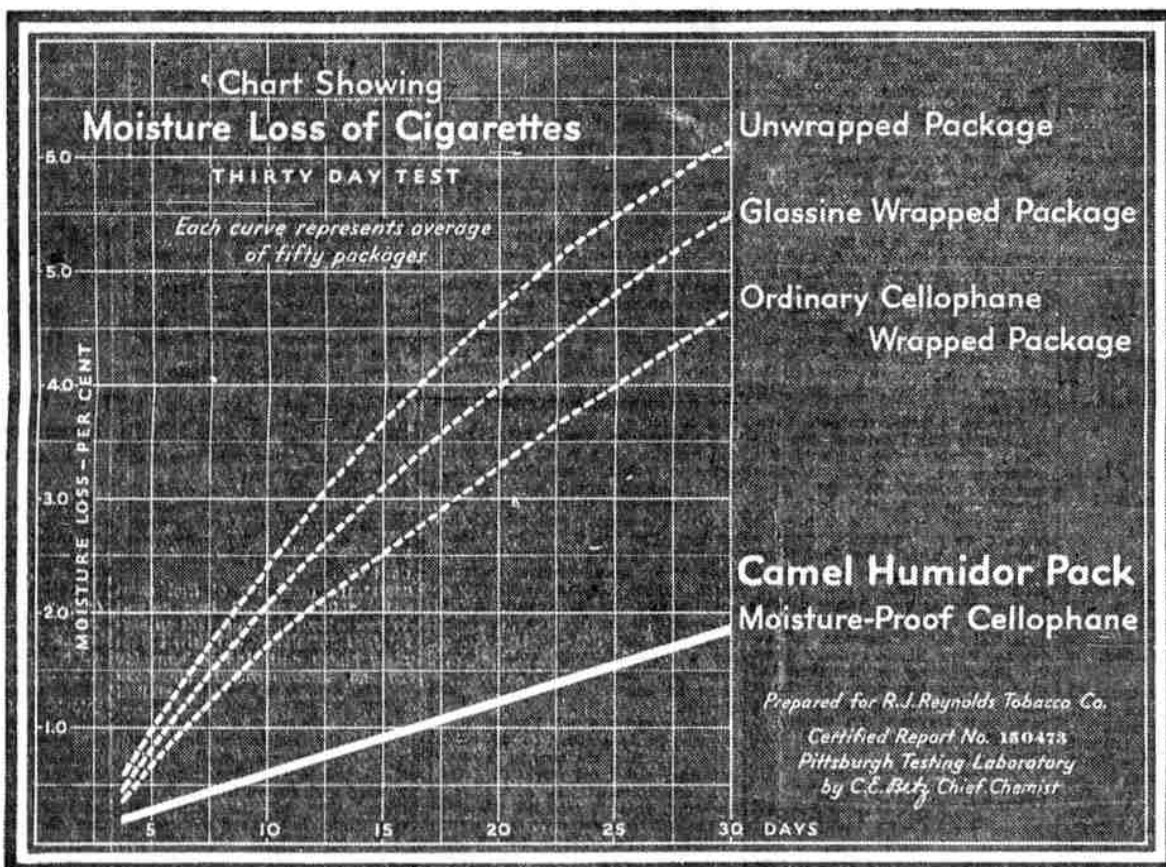
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Tackle that catches fish at Powell's Hardware and Furniture store.—Adv.

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It is so easy to tell the difference between parched dry cigarettes and fresh prime Camels that it is no wonder everybody is reaching for a fresh cigarette today.

Your fingers identify stale, dried-out tobaccos at once. While a Camel is flexible and pliant.

Your ears can tell the difference too. For a dust-dry cigarette crackles under pressure.

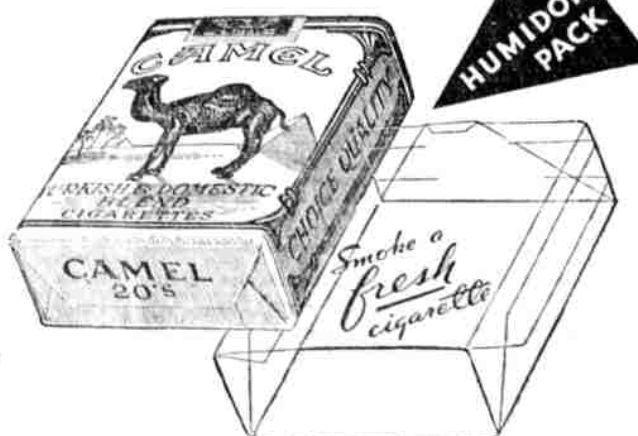
But the real test is taste and there is simply no comparison between the rich mildness of a Camel and the hot, brackish smoke from a stale, dry cigarette.

Switch to Camels just for today then leave them tomorrow if you can.

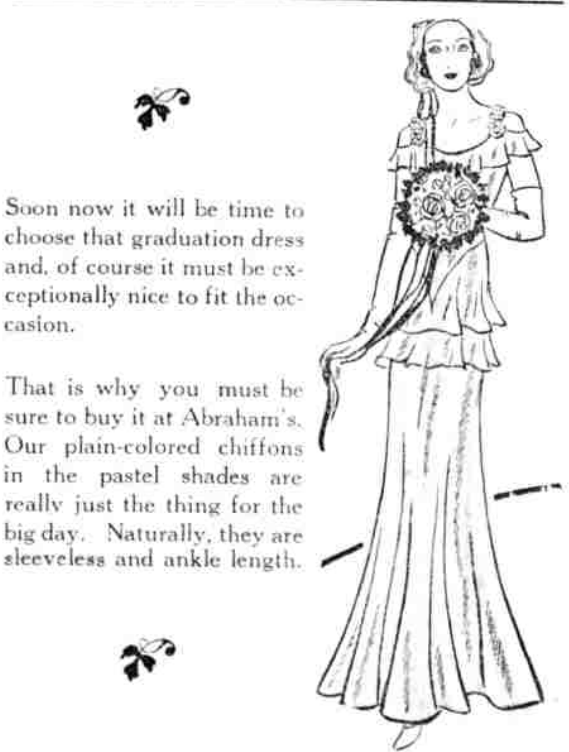
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