



Missing Sticks

J. M. Taylor

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Faces streaked with soot or burnt cork, over six thousand paratroopers and glidermen of the 101st Airborne Division Screaming Eagles jumped or crashed into the swamps, canals, hedgerows and villages of the Cotentin Peninsular of France sometime after midnight on the sixth day of June 1944.

Over four hundred C-47 Dakotas carried the Screaming Eagles through the darkness and into a thick cloud bank that night. One load of pathfinders crashed into the English Channel. Planes were seen to explode in midair. Others crashed and burned past all recognition, probably due to ground fire. Just before dawn, the initial glider serials slammed between the hedgerows, into trees and each other. Many planes safely delivered their troopers to their designated drop zones. However, come dawn eighteen planes, each carrying a stick of fifteen to twenty paratroopers, were missing.

As so often happened that night, many paratroopers found themselves alone. Some quickly banded together, others wandered for hours, evading Germans and capture. Some were all too quickly made casualties, either by the hard landing or German fire. Other were taken prisoner. Some of the real stories are even harder to fathom than the stories in MISSING STICKS, a fictional account of a handful of those missing men, representative of those declared casualties in real life.

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