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**PHINEAS
PINKHAM**
howl

DOIN'S IN THE DUNES

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Foreign Legionnaires, it was true, swallowed corrosive cognac without batting an eye. But they choked when the Kraut Intelligence agents added Abd-el-Fizz to their diet. It was then that the action in Morocco got fast. And it got even faster when Phineas met Beni Hazzit—and let him have it!

IT WAS SPRING in Bar-Le-Duc. And since the drome of the Ninth Pursuit Squadron was only three miles from that Frog civic center, it had to be spring there, too. In the apple trees near the old farmhouse in which Major Rufus Garrity kept his Operations Office, the birdlets trilled and warbled in anticipation of the vernal crop of worms.

One morning at daybreak Lieutenant “Bump” Gillis, on his way to the farmhouse from his cubicle,

was seen to pause and pluck a crocus. And Captain Howell’s thoughts had already turned to love. He was wondering if his heartbeat back in the States was still writing to that halfwit on the battleship *Texas*. But it was into the palpitating heart of Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham that the tracers of summer penetrated the deepest. On the particular morning when this tale begins, Phineas straggled into the Frog farmhouse reading from an open book in his hands. Pilots

plunked down steaming mugs of Java when he started to recite—

*Oh 'tis the season now to go
About the country, high and low,
Among the lilacs hand in hand,
And two by two in fairyland.*

Major Rufus Garrity appeared in the doorway of hip sanctum, a look of nausea over his face.

"It is the spirit of spring," gurgled Phineas. "Don't you feel it, Major?"

"Yeah—ha! ha! I'm all atwitter!" Then the Old Man exploded. "Gulp that coffee and get to hell out to those Spads! You have been out of them so long now I bet they're filled with three generations of spiders. There's a war out there about ten miles from here—or haven't you read the evening papers? 'Spring is here! Lilacs! Nuts! I've got a nice spring tonic for you, Mister Longfellow!" he spat at Phineas. "It's a piece of two-by-four with nails in it—"

"Aw right, aw right," Phineas sniffed, "I can see you have none of the fine feelin's. All you think of is gettin' us killed. I bet even the Krauts this morning will not want to fight while choked up with thoughts of spring. Huh—oh, well—"

Phineas Pinkham could be wrong at times. Maybe the Heinies had run out of calendars and had no idea of the proximity of the Lenten season. Whatever the reason, over Mont Sec Captain Howell and his four Spads were jumped by a flight of Albatros Scouts full of tricky plays. The boys of the Ninth were kicked back over the midfield stripe separating the two warring factions. Captain Howell returned to explain it all to Coach Garrity, but Phineas Pinkham had ideas of his own—as usual. Perhaps it was because of two lovebirds he had spotted in the top branches of a tree. A Kraut had chased him down so low during the brief brawl that the tip of one of his wings was grass-stained.

"It is Babette who calls me," Phineas grinned at the world. "I will hie to her—also an estaminet or two. Haw-w-w-w-w!"

THE errant flyer arrived back at the drome three hours later filled with the spirit of spring and also the kind that comes out of grapes when they are allowed to stand awhile in a dark cellar. A big olive-drab A.E.F. car was rolling out of the drome when Phineas nursed his Spad to the dirt.

"That's the trouble," he gulped. "Just as if I didn't

get enough in Barley Duck. Huh—'Voose ate trays oiled! Babette says when I go up an' tell her it is spring. Huh—'Allez veet,' she says. What ees thees vouse theenk I she ees—ze weenter—bah?' That is a dame for you. Well, she will never see Boonetown. I will leave her flat when the *guerre*—ugh—hello, Casey. Why don't I git out? Why—huh I had no idea I was *ici* so soon.

"Haw-w-w-w-w-w!" The prodigal pilot got out and stretched himself, breathing deeply. "Boys, do you smell the spring, Casey?"

"If it was a spring, it was full of van rooge," snorted Flight Sergeant Casey. "That's all I smell. Even before you landed I says to Brody, 'Have you been drinkin'?' He—"

"Wise guy, huh?" retorted Phineas with a large growl. "Well that is a good way to get busted—in-sultin' an officer. You wait until I see the C.O., Casey!"

"It won't be long," the non-com grinned and ambled away.

It took just two minutes for Major Garrity to have Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham herded into the Operations Office.

"Well, you big-eared beaver," the C.O. cracked. "You been pickin' spring flowers somewhere? Left Howell's flight again, didn't you? Ha! ha! Don't bother to think up excuses, Pinkham. I am not going to do a thing to you this time, ha! ha!"

"Boys," the culprit chuckled, "haw-w-w-w-w!" I knew the spring would get you yet, Major. It's a time when—"

"You have been drinking, too!" barked Garrity.

"Haw-w-w-w-w-w!" contributed the lieutenant on the mat.

Major Garrity's jaw suddenly hardened. It was a jaw that one could crack brazil nuts against.

"Lieutenant Pinkham," he thundered, "we will miss you."

"H-huh?"

"You are just the man the brass hats want, Pinkham," Garrity went on, his face growing sourer by the minute. "You are full of the spirit of—the—er—exuberance of youth. Just the morale for the new pilots coming up. You are going to Issoudon, you freckled baboon, and you are going to teach the boys how to dodge and sidestep Heinies. Now laugh—you crackpot!"

"I RESIGN," Phineas yelled. "Get me a piece of paper and a pencil. Oh, I thought there was somethin' nutty about all this. Haw-w-w-w, I will show you!"

"You'll resign, huh?" Garrity yowled. "Not until

after you've pushed a wheelbarrow for six months at Blois. I've got you this time, Pinkham, ha! ha! Well?"

"I will get a lawyer," Phineas threatened, albeit gulping. "I will demand a writ of hab—I'll—"

"You'll get out of here right now and start packin' your trunk," the C.O. trumpeted. "That's what you'll do—you great big Spad playboy!"

The word spread like the news of a sweepstakes winner in a fishing town. While the indignant Phineas was packing his things in his hut, the pilots of the Ninth Pursuit flocked to his door.

"That is Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham," Bump Gillis said, feigning awe. "He teaches people combat flying with the Germans in mid-air—honest!"

"No—really?" Captain Howell gasped. "Why—er—why to think he's right there in the flesh—I'm positively thrilled!"

"Go ahead—you bums!" Phineas howled, pausing in the midst of cramming his belongings into his trunk. "But I will git hunk, you see! It's a long turn that has no laning—er—lane long that—oh well, I know fair weather friends when I see 'em. I go with a light heart as if it was only last night I got here. I—" The banished pilot turned quickly and let something fly. *Plunk!* In less than a minute five pilots were stumbling across the field with tears streaming down their cheeks. Phineas followed at their heels.

"Lookit these bums!" he yelled at Major Garrity as they neared squadron headquarters. "Isn't it touchin'? That is showing affection—oh, boys! It tears my heartstrings to leave 'em in such a state, haw-w-w-w-w-w! It took a lot of onion juice to make that bomb. Well, I might as well start see swar. Do I get a pullman or a day coach? Haw-w-w-w!"

"You'll fly that Spad of yours," the Old Man growled. "The brass hats think it will pep the new boys up to see you come in with a crate filled with bullet holes. Hero psychology, an' all that mullarkey, y'know. If I were a cadet and saw that Spad of yours, I'd desert and get back to the States any way I could. It's like sending a punch-drunk pug with his bugle busted in three places and his ears looking like two marshmallows to show some guys how to fight. Ha! ha!"

"Oh, I will forget the insults for now," Phineas sniffed with disdain. "I'll get the bus warmed up—"

"Look at the sky, chump!" Major Garrity snorted. "It's thicker than a sulphur and molasses. You take off in the morning—and don't give me any more guff!"

"Haw-w-w-w-w-w-w! Excuse me! I forgot I was in a sissy squadron. Well—"

The Old Man was pulling his fist back when a staff car drove up. A big officer stepped out, glanced around critically for a few moments, then strode wordlessly into the farmhouse.

"That bird looks familiar," Garrity murmured, following the brass hat inside. "Uh—er—good evening," he said aloud. The brass hat whirled.

"Hello, Garrity," the officer greeted. "Remember me? Colonel Dumphey of the Intelligence Corps? Happened to be going through this way on my way to Chaumont. Thought I'd drop in. Things are in the air, Garrity. Chaumont called me from Paris in a hurry. Looks like I'm going to take a long trip."

"Uh—er—maybe it's about that African situation, Colonel?" Garrity prompted him. "Been hearing a lot about that mess down there. Heard the French are withdrawing the Foreign Legion troops from the Lorraine border. Sheiks all stirred up by the Heinie secret agents. That it?"

"No joke," Dumphey growled and settled himself into a chair. As he did so several pilots trickled into the room. They were red-eyed and sniffing.

"You're just in time for mess," the Major said to his visitor. "Join us?"

"They—er—" Dumphey said, gesturing toward the pilots. "Just—er—maybe just laid a comrade to rest? Look quite done in—Major. All broken up—eh what?"

"It is just because they can't bear to see me leave them," Phineas Pinkham answered in place of the Old Man. He had just strolled in. "I wish it was Africa I was going to instead of Issoudon. Maybe you could transfer me to the Intelligence, Colonel, huh? I always wanted to see them Allah-be-praised bums in their bedsheets, haw!"

"Garrity!" Dumphey cracked. "Do you allow your men to talk to a superior that way? Lieutenant, you're too damned fresh!"

"Yeah!" agreed Phineas. "Well—huh—excuse it, please. It is only that I would like to help out no matter what place it would take me, sir." Then he went rattling on, "Boys, if them Arabs gang up on the Frogs in Africa—listen to me—haw-w-ww! If I was in the rice business in China, I bet you would hear me squawk about the price of ostrich plumes in Australia. Haw-w-w, why should I worry about the Arabs, huh? I—"

"Excuse me, Colonel," interrupted Garrity, "would you mind lending me your cane?"

A few seconds later the Colonel got his cane back—in two pieces. It had hit the back of the Pinkham chair a split second after Phineas had vacated it. Colonel

Dumphey got mad at the Old Man and refused to stay for victuals. Major Garrity swore and assured the brass hat that nobody would break a heart over his decision. One word led to another until the Colonel took a punch at the Major—but his timing was bad. He left the drome a few minutes later with his nose the color of a persimmon. “Haw-w-w-w-w-w!” Phineas enthused from the shelter of the ammo shack. “If the Old Man don’t look out, I will start respectin’ him in spite of myself. Oh, boys, what a left hook he’s got!”

NOW the situation across the Maxfield Parrish blue waters of the Mediterranean was no joke any way you looked at it. The Moslem boys were grumbling in their beards. They were anxious to get hunk with the infidels who had long ago chased their grandpas out of Spain. The pot had been boiling for weeks kindled by some skullduggery experts from Potsdam. And something was keeping it boiling. The Allied Command wondered what it was—wondered what they could do to stop it. From every part of Islam, reports had it, the sun-tanned sons of Mohammed were making their way to a torrid rendezvous in the shadows of the Atlas Mountains. The three great Kaids of the Atlas, the bashas of Tarudant and Tiznit, and sheiks from every place were reported as being bent on cutting themselves a piece of throat. The Allies needed Lawrence of Arabia and thought of transferring him, but no one seemed to know where he picked up his mail. Unbelievers got out of the Moslem city of Fez by every means of locomotion lest they leave their heads behind to be salted and made into mantel ornaments in Mohammedan cottages. It was a grave situation, indeed, and to make it sound worse, one had only to mention the names of the two tough Moslem boys who were behind it all, namely Sidi Okra, the Scourge of the Oases, and Abd-el-Fizz, the Butcher of Biskra. Allied leaders sat on the edges of chairs waiting for word from Intelligence Corps men that never seemed to come. They had pulled thirty-seven battalions of Frog troops from the Western Front and had sent them on the’ double to the port of Marseilles. Meanwhile, across the Rhine, Heinies in the know chuckled and toasted the far-away sons of Allah with very fiery.

The morning after the Colonel’s visit to the drome of the Ninth Pursuit Squadron, Phineas Pinkham got ready to leave for Issoudon. The sky was still the color of pea soup when Sergeant Casey ordered ack-emmas to drag out the Pinkham’ air chariot and get it warmed up. Major Rufus Garrity poked his head out through

the window of his sanctum, shook it doubtfully. A Spad’s Hiss turned over, made an awful clatter. The Old Man ran downstairs and out onto the field. He yelled at Lieutenant Pinkham. Phineas turned and yelled something back, but the C.O. could not catch it. Major Garrity swore, then waved his arms when the “Spad shot away and lifted into the aerial soup.

“Casey!” he bellowed. “Ser-r-r-r-geant Casey! Come here you—”

The non-com came running to the farmhouse, stopped to look at his commanding officer.

“I—he said you give him orders to leave early,” Casey yelled. “He—”

“Wh-What did he call me when he climbed into that Spad?” Garrity cracked. “If it’s what I think, I will call up Issoudon and have him arrested.”

“It was, sir,” bleated Casey. “He says to go dunk your dome, you lantern-jawed wart hog.”

“Don’t you call me names, Casey! You’re busted—you—!”

“It was him what called you that, not me, sir,” gulped the Flight Sergeant. “The loot says it—not me. He also says to tell you he couldn’t join the Foreign Legion anyways as no dame ever threw him down an’ his name ain’t Smith. I can’t see no sense to it, can you, sir?”

Garrity reached for a rock and flung it at Casey. Then he tore inside to get at a telephone. “I’ll show that mugwump. They’ll put him in the klink the minute he lands at Issoudon. Oh, I’ve stood enough—”

However, Phineas Pinkham never arrived at Issoudon. He miscalculated quite as badly as a man who buys a train ticket to Canada to join the Texas Rangers. Phineas found the ceiling zero and was almost on the point of turning back. Second thought changed his versatile gray matter. He had no desire to go to Issoudon and train new pilots, so why go there? Here was an excuse to keep away from such a humdrum existence. He pointed his nose southeast and let the Spad have its head. Although he was unaware of the fact, Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham was headed for the most cock-eyed adventure of his hectic career.

“Haw-w-w-w-w! That is what I’ll tell the old tomater! My compass went haywire an’ I got lost in the fog, and I flew an’ flew until the gas give out an’ there I was—of all places—in Switzerland! Why you could’ve knocked me over with an empty egg shell—”

It was tough, going. The prop churned up big gobs

of spray and tossed it back into Phineas' grinning physiognomy.

"It's a good thing I didn't strap my trunk on the wings like I figured," the Boonetown, Iowa, Merlin mused. "I will not need it. It is my bag of tricks that is most important and they're right at my feet! I hope the Switzerlanders have a sense of humor, haw-w-w!"

TWO hours later Phineas pulled up the Spad's nose. The mists were still thick enough to be made into blankets and Phineas did not want to hit the top of an Alp. That flying time should have brought him over the land of St. Bernard dogs and yodelers. But halfway through the next hour, the pilot began to get worried. His gas would not hold out much longer. He took a chance and cut down altitude. Breaking down through the thick ceiling, he shivered and gulped.

"I must've missed the Alps or I would've tripped over 'em long ago. Oh-h-h-h-h-h!" The Hisso skipped a couple of beats. It coughed and bogged down. The jokester from the States had to set his Spad down somewhere. Five hundred feet up he spotted a mist-choked countryside. The outlines of a small cluster of buildings became visible. Nearby was a stretch of real estate dotted with sheep.

"Haw-w-w-w-w! They're as good as a flare. It will be flat where they are."

Again Lieutenant Phineas guessed wrong. When he crawled out of the wreck of his Spad, he found out that he had tried to make a three-point landing on terrain that slanted away at an angle of forty-five degrees.

"I would not have been much use at Issoudon," the Boonetown stray mumbled as he limped toward a small farmhouse. But an angry Frog peasant met him halfway.

"*Sacre bleu, ze sheeps voose keel, non? Chien! Peeg! Ze crazzee flyeeng machine she ees—oui? Voose donnez moi Vargent!*"



"All you think of is dough, you Frogs," Phineas yipped. "Shuttez voose trap an' tell me where *je suis*—compreenny?"

The Frog pointed toward a signpost that hung drunkenly from an old post across the fence. The pilot stared, read—"Marseilles—8 kil.," and sat down on the wet turf, his brain doing an Immelmann.

"*Vous est malade,*" the Frog peasant said. "*J'ai le vin blanc chez moi.*"

Twenty minutes later Phineas, stomach warmed by the potent fermented juice of the Frog grape, trudged toward Marseilles.

"Boys, I am far from home in any language. Well, I will git a boat—no, I will git shot if I do. Even a Philadelphia lawyer wouldn't take my case now. Well—huh—" He turned at the sound of cart wheels. A two-wheeled vehicle drawn by a bony nag loomed up in the fog. Phineas hailed the peasant and was granted a lift. An hour later the miracle man drove the nag into Marseilles, down the famous Rue Noailles. He was all alone.

"I hope the Frog won't catch pneumonia back in that ditch," he chuckled. "Haw-w-w-w-w! But I am desperate an'—" He yanked his peasant hat down over his eyes and glanced about. Marseilles seemed over-ridden with Frog doughs. Phineas drove the cart into a side street and stopped

the ancient equine. Just ahead an old sign creaked on unoiled hinges. A faded, tattered French flag fluttered beneath the words "Cafe Napoleon." Phineas reached the cobbled street just as a Frog soldier emerged from the dingy emporium. The man stopped, looked up at the flag, and spat at it.

"Why, you traitor you!" yipped the Yank and leaped. He poked his fist into the soldier's prop boss and grounded him. Lest the noise of the man's *descendu* penetrate to the cafe, Phineas reached down and dragged the *soldat* across the cobblestones and in through the open doorway of a Frog house. The place

appeared untenanted. Phineas shut the door behind him, looked down at his victim. The man's coat collar was open and something dangled from his neck. It was a small bottle with a label pasted on it. By the light of a match the pilot on the loose attempted to read the label. The flare caused the Frog to stir and Phineas poked him again to render him *hors de combat* once more. This time he ripped the bottle loose and studied the peculiar characters scrawled upon the label. For a minute they stumped him, looking like Chinese at first. Suddenly he thought of a trick ring he had once owned on which the same kind of characters had been engraved. Arabic!

"Wh-Why—what is a Frog doin' with—why I believe I—what the—I'm—haw-w-w-w-w!" Phineas' jaw muscles bulged then and he took a knapsack from around his shoulders. From it he drew forth a wicked looking knife and a small bottle of red fluid. The knife blade was a queer looking thing. It had a big semi-circular piece cut out of the blade into which a man's wrist would just fit. Phineas uncorked the bottle, poured some of the red contents over his victim's wrist. He waited then until his prisoner got his marbles back. The Frog opened his eyes, stared stupidly at his captor, then tried to raise his hands. He wondered why one wouldn't move and looked at it.

"*Mon Dieu!*" he choked out. "*Sacre—ze arm—ze arm you have cut heem almos' off. Ze blood she run—non—stop thees—Gott!*"

"Huh?" gulped Phineas. "Make up your mind. Are you a Heinie or a Frog? Haw-w-w-w-w! Boys, have I stepped into somethin'. Come clean, you bum, or off comes the flipper! What is in that bottle? What's the idea of insultin' the colors of *la belle France*, huh?" He bore down on the knife blade and the captive turned as pale as a quart of milk and tried to yell. The Pinkham palm clamped down over his mouth.

TEN minutes later the Boonetown flyer was in possession of knowledge for which the Allied powers would have given half the A.E.F. monthly payroll. The man on whom he was sitting was a German who had enlisted in the Foreign Legion before the outbreak of the war. He had been sent to France in 1916, had been taken prisoner by the troops of his mother country. Astute Kraut brass hats had worked on him, had found that the prisoner's one ambition had been to get back to the land of *wienerschnitzel* and *schnapps* from which he had strayed when a waxen-haired *fraulein* had given him the ozone in favor of a beer garden

impresario. Now Wilhelmstrasse had been looking for just such a man. He had been to Africa. He would go back bearing a message to Sidi Okra, the Scourge of the Oases. Knowing that Frog troops were to be sent back to try and hold the Moslem boys in check, the brains of Wilhelmstrasse had seen to it that the Heinie Legionnaire was put back into North African circulation. And in the lining of his coat had been sewn a blank piece of paper. Around his neck had been tied a small bottle of purple liquid.

"Haw-w-w-w-w!" chuckled Phineas. "*Merci beaucoop*. You see this knife is just a fake, *mon homme*. Look at the blade. That blood was red catsup. Well — huh, did I fool ya! Haw-w-w-w-w!"

"Peeg—*schwein—chien!*"

Phineas had to put his man to sleep again. Twenty minutes later he sidled out of the Frog house dressed in the uniform of the French Army. The blank sheet of paper was in his possession. The little vial hung around his neck. From his ever-resourceful knapsack he had produced a black wig and a false nose that was identical in shape to that of the pseudo Frog he had just left securely tied.

"Well, I giss I am in the Intelligence Corps now," Phineas chuckled as he walked out of the Rue Noailles, his collection of odd novelties and tricks reposing in the pockets of the Frog uniform. "Haw-w-w-w-w! It takes a Pinkham."

As he plodded along the street the nomadic Yank wondered how he was going to get that message translated. Oh, he knew it had been written so that the writing would be invisible. That purple fluid had given that away. That would be a liquor made of stewing up violets. It would reveal some Arabic written with onion juice. Phineas' ample proboscis had caught the faint odor of the weepy tuber when he brought the nose and blank paper together.

"They aren't very smart, them Krauts," the wizard extraordinary grinned and headed for the waterfront. "The ex-Legion guy said he didn't know what was in the message. All he was to do was hand it to a sheik in Sidi Bel Abbes by name of Beni Hazzit. Haw-w-w-w-w! Allah won't be praised when I git through. Well, I got to find where the Frogs are sailin' from."

THE succeeding forty-eight hours were a nightmare to Phineas Pinkham. Three hours after leaving the Cafe Napoleon he was one of thousands lined up on a parade ground getting insulted by a diminutive Frog sergeant. Two hours after that he was

on a troop ship bound for Oran. Sinbad, compared to Phineas, was never out of his backyard. And while the steamer was weaving its way through the maze of harbor craft, a Frog peasant's wife was opening the door of a cottage near Aix to see her spouse dressed up in the uniform of the Yankee Flying Corps. It fit him like an elephant skin would cloak a mule. And in a small Marseilles side street, an ex-Legionnaire, who had broken loose from his bonds, was staring at the peasant smock that draped his bony frame and wondering how he would ever get back across the Rhine. The world was a crazy place with Phineas Pinkham loose in it.

The Boonetown miracle man landed at Oran in due time, spent torrid hours there in hot stuffy barracks before entraining for Sidi Bel Abbes, African headquarters for the Legion. There the soldiers shed Western Front regalia for the cooler outfit of the Legionnaires. Phineas got a squint at himself in a mirror and wondered when he would wake up.

"If Babette only could see me now," he mumbled. "She would think it was her fault, haw-w-w-w! I wonder why they wear a curtain at the back of their domes? And these ice cream pants—!"

It occurred to the Boonetown flyer that Lady Luck was riding on his empenage. From the time he had left Marseilles other troops seemed willing to give him as wide a berth as they would have tendered a polecat.

"I giss John Smith was not much of a mixer like a dyspeptic landlord," Phineas had mused on the way across the Mediterranean. "I will be as nasty as I know how."

Twenty-four hours after the troops arrived at Sidi Bel Abbes the word went around that they were to leave for the Moslem front early in the morning. Legionnaires were given liberty in the Algerian town and Phineas headed for the Cafe of one Abdul Kazam where unbeknownst to Allied brass hats skullduggery was the chief stock in trade. Crossing the Place Sadi Carnot, Phineas paused to take inventory of things he should have with him. A pair of Arabs shuffled close, clad in voluminous burnouses.

"If it got *really* hot here," Phineas sweated, wiping big globules of perspiration from his brow, "I bet them Allahs would send for a load of raccoon coats. Boys, I could fry an egg right on my dome right now. I wonder where the hangar is where they keep their camels, haw-w-w-w-w!"

The plane-less pilot reach the Cafe and walked in. Scowling beetle-browed Arabs choked the place. Four

of them crouched near a water pipe, sucking at the tubes noisily.

"I giss they're Scotch Arabs," grinned Phineas. "I bet they all use the same toothbrush. I—uh—er—gulp!" A great Spahi blocked the Pinkham runway, grunted something unintelligible and reached for a scimitar big enough to behead a rhino with one swipe.

"Beni Hazzit," Phineas gulped. "*Bismillah*—Allah be praised an' all that! I come from big white papa in Potsdam—er—Allah eel Allah!"

The big Spahi motioned Phineas to a back room, screened from the cafe by heavy drapes. Three Arab beauties, faces veiled, eyed Phineas curiously.

"Hello, Fatima," the Yank tossed out. "Haw-w-w-w-w!"

The Spahi growled, shoved him up a stairway covered with carpet as thick as a deep-dish apple pie. Again draperies were tossed aside, a fancy carved door opened, and Beni Hazzit stared at Phineas, alias John Smith, Legionnaire Number 0999333.

The Spahi was waved away. Phineas wiped his face with a handkerchief and wondered why Beni Hazzit could look so cool. There were several beads of sweat on the sheik's dark brow, that was all. He was a skinny Arab with a long crinkly black beard. Beni Hazzit looked at Phineas closely without speaking for several seconds, then held out his hand. Lieutenant Pinkham, alias John Smith, looked at that hand, felt icicles sprout out from his spine although the temperature was more than one hundred and twenty-so-and-so at the bottom of an oasis well. His eyes wandered. He saw the edge of something protruding from under a couch. The sunshine coming in through a latticed window made it sparkle.

"You have thees?"

"*Oui*—yeah—*ja*—uh—er—could I have a drink of—" He pointed to his throat and coughed. Beni Hazzit nodded, clapped his hands. Shortly the big Spahi brought a bottle of wine. Beni Hazzit poured some into two glasses, handed one to Phineas. The amazing flyer from France sat down on a hassock close to the sheik and sipped at the brew. As he did so, he reached into his pocket for the paper he carried. Beni Hazzit snatched for it as if it were a reprieve from the guillotine. Phineas put his glass down, reached his fingers up his sleeve furtively. He made strange passes over one of the glasses while Beni Hazzit gloated over the blank paper.

"Ze—bottle—son of a pig! *Avec le* purple juice! Veet!"

"Don't ya call me names, ya—uh—haw-w-w-w-w!" Phineas stuttered. "Here it is."

Beni Hazzit picked up his wine glass and drained it in one gulp. An hour later Phineas came down the stairs on the heels of the Spahi, his burnoose drawn up around his face. But there was a crinkly black beard jutting out from the cloth and Phineas' face was the color of walnut furniture. He had left Beni Hazzit, or whoever he was, under a stack of pillows and drapery upstairs. The Heinie agent was sleeping the deep sleep provoked by a double dose of morphine. Two Arabs closed in on Phineas as he came down into the cafe.

"*Balek!*" Phineas yipped at the Moslems as he headed for the door. It meant get out of the way in Arabic. The Boonetown pilot had picked up several words on his way across from Marseilles. The two Arabs who crowded him seemed to lead the way for him. They led him to the outskirts of Sidi Bel Abbes where three camels were waiting.

"*Bismillah!*" Phineas grinned and tested his beard to see if it was stuck fast. He got onto the back of one of the desert ships and the ruminant immediately got to its feet. "Boys!" gulped the rider, "they grab up altitude fast. Well, it is the first camel I ever saw without no power plant! Haw-w-w-w-w! I would like to see a Limey ride one."

Phineas never knew that camels could rock like the one he rode. No one could have convinced him that a guy could become seasick on the Sahara. But after a while he got his gastronomic organism on even keel and took stock of the situation.

"That Beni Hazzit—who I am now s'posed to be—was a fake," the Boonetown pilot grinned into his beard. "By Allah, he should have stained his arm, too. When he reached out that flipper— Oh, I am wise to everything now—that spur on the boot under the couch—he's a Heinie officer! I bet they have spies in Borneo, them Krauts! Well, I still have the bottle an' the paper an' all I got to do is find out what the Heinions wrote. Haw-w-w-w, if the Old Man and the bums could see me now! Sheik Beni Hazzit Pinkham—Allah be praised!"

ACROSS the hot sands the Arabs led Phineas to a great oasis near Debdu and there were the ruins of an old Legion post. Crouching among them were three great Moslem brass hats and the one ranking over all was Sidi Okra, the Scourge of the Oases.

"*Bismillah!*" piped Sidi. Phineas felt a trifle chilly.

Without a doubt this sheik was the worst looking thing ever to walk on two legs. He had a scar that reached from ear to ear, spanning the bridge of his

hooked nose. His eyes were green and yellow, and when he opened his mouth he flashed a set of teeth that could outbite a shark.

"Allah is great," Phineas said as the camel hunched down on its undercarriage. "There is nobody like Allah."

Abd-el-Fizz was not much prettier than his playmate. He muttered something to the other sheiks and then motioned to Phineas. The Boonetown flyer, feeling like a succulent rabbit caught in a telephone booth with a beagle hound, walked into the ruins of the fort. He drew out the folded blank sheet of paper and handed it to Sheik Sidi Okra. Abd-el-Fizz yanked the bottle from his neck and nearly ruptured the Pinkham Adam's apple.

"Haw-w-w-w-w!" Phineas emitted weakly and settled down by an evil-smelling fire. He watched the Arabs open the paper and pour the purple liquid over it. In the firelight he saw Arabic writing appear on the paper.

"Allah—il—Allah!" yelped the sheiks and unleashed a mess of gibberish that was all Greek to Phineas Pinkham.

However, the Boonetown self-appointed member of Intelligence had something else up his sleeve. An ace in the hole, so to speak. He produced a big black cigar from his pocket, lighted it, and sat back to enjoy its fragrance. The smoke from it skirled close to the hawk-like schnozzles of the sons of Allah. Sidi Okra sniffed and grinned expansively. Abd-el-Fizz gestured wildly and Phineas caught on. The Moslem boys were succumbing to the aroma of fine tobacco.

"*Bismillah!*" observed Phineas and took three other cigars from inside his burnoose. He handed them around, then sat back to wait. While the disciples of Mohammed lighted the weeds, Phineas' head swiveled. The Arabs who had escorted him to the oasis were sleeping peacefully near the camels. Time passed. In the light of the dying fire the face of Sidi Okra seemed to have acquired a coat of whitewash. One sun-tanned hand was pressed close to his diaphragm. Abd-el-Fizz shot Phineas a murderous look which suddenly changed to one of defiance as he resumed his puffing on the weed. Sidi Okra and his brother in skullduggery did likewise. Would they let an infidel German dog show stouter stuff than sons of Allah? No! A thousand Arabic no's.

"That's the spirit!" chortled Phineas. "Don't be sissies. Them assafoetida leaves mixed in those ropes won't do your livers any good, though. Haw-w-w-w-w!"

Time passed. Sidi Okra had difficulty in holding the last inch and a half of his weed. Abd-el-Fizz did not try



to. His dark physiognomy now the hue of *blanc mange*, he got up and staggered out to get some desert ozone. The third sheik sat gaping at Phineas with eyes that looked like a couple of glazed nuts. And still Phineas puffed on in apparent enjoyment of his own stub of twisted tobacco. Suddenly Sidi Okra swallowed hard, held onto his stomach with both hands.

"Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of the Allies," recited Phineas in high glee. He picked up a chunk of masonry as big as a loaf of bread. He bopped Sidi Okra over the scalp, whirled and crowned the other sheik, then went out and walked toward Abd-el-Fizz, the Butcher of Biskra. At the moment that sheik was as harmless as a consumptive kitten. Phineas had only to tap him lightly above the left eyebrow and he settled into the Sahara sands with a peaceful sigh. From the sheik he secured the message from Potsdam and headed for the camels. A Moslem camel rider stirred, got up and stared toward the dark heap under a date tree.

"Wallah-h-h-h-h!" **KERPLUNK!**

"There goes his three teeth. He will talk gum Arabic for awhile now," Phineas chuckled and leaped at the other son of the desert. A stiff right to the chin and

there was no more opposition. Quickly the Yank shed his burnoose, reached into his pants pocket for his Legionnaire kepi cap and drew it down over his black wig. He pulled off his beard and tossed it into the sands.

"Once more I am John Smith of the Legion," he grinned and climbed aboard a camel. "It's a caution how these bed-sheets will cover a multitude of shins, haw-w-w-w! On, sturdy steed, for Sidi Bel Abbes. I must get a friendly Arab to do some translatin."

NOW Phineas had no way of knowing but Intelligence officers of the Frog army had long been suspicious of Beni Hazzit. Even as our hero had been hobnobbing with Sidi Okra, a Frog officer had found a bottle of walnut stain in the effects of one Colonel Toussant of the Legion. Putting two and two, as well as three and three, together, an indignant Frog officer led a band of Legionnaires to the Cafe of Abdul Kazam and turned it upside down. There they found the still comotose figure of Colonel Toussant with his face stripped of its beard and his skin stained from shoulders to scalp, from finger tips to wrists. Arabs, they found out, had let some other fake sheik get out of town. Orders flew like wildfire. Two battalions

of Legionnaires stamped out of Sidi Bel Abbes and headed for Debdu.

Stranger things were to happen to Phineas. Three miles from the oasis, he heard a familiar sound over his head. Looking up he spotted a Frog plane and it was heading for the sands. The motor was skipping like an old maid's heart while the owner watched a Clark Gable flicker. Phineas watched the sky wagon, a Nieuport, land not more than a hundred yards from his camel. He coaxed the long-legged ruminant to scootch down so he could dismount. Phineas ran over to the crate and grinned at the pilot. "What ees eet wrong, m'sewer?" The Frog pilot swore, shook his head. Phineas soon discovered the trouble. It was a loose wire. The Yank climbed into the ship and began to test the Clerget-Rhone. It purred like a kitten. He got out while the French airman gaped at him.

"You air ze flyair? *Mais non*, you air ze private in ze—"

"Look what's comin'!" exclaimed Phineas, brain clicking fast. "Look—Arabs!"

The Frog turned. Something hit him behind the ear. When he awoke the Nieuport was gone. He was sitting in the hot sand and his empennage felt shriveled. A sheet of paper was pinned to his tunic. The Arabic figures on it fooled him, but the English scrawl was plain enough.

"Dear M'soor—It pained me to do it but I will get shot if I don't get back to my squadron in la belle France. Give the Frog brass hats that Arab writin' as it should mean somethin' to them. I could not wait to find out, haw-w-w-w! You can see the Kaiser has put the Kraut eagle on it as Sidi Okra wanted proof it did come from Berlin. He is a business man, that sheik, non? Get to the Oasis and pick up the bum before he starts anything more. That cigar must still have him gaga. Adoo for now. Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham

—Bar-Le-Duc, France."

"*Sa-a-a-cre bleu*—Peenkham. *Mon Dieu!*" The Frog pilot wondered if he had gone *cafarde*.

The Legion troops found him a half hour later trying to coax the camel Phineas had left for him to kneel down but it was a mulish camel. At sight of the Legionnaires, the pilot yipped for water and drank two canteens dry, after which internal ablutions he handed the paper to the Colonel of the Legion. The man took one look, yelled an order, and his troops hied back to Sidi Bel Abbes. A friendly Moslem there translated the message from Potsdam. The Frog brass hats almost

had a stroke at the tremendous importance of it. On the way from Germany, due to appear off the shores of Rabat, cruised a big transport submarine, the first ever built by the Heinies. On board were two thousand machine guns and enough ammunition to reduce the population of northern Africa by half.

"Thees ees what ze Moslems wait for, *oui!*" screamed a Frog general between leaps. "*Sacre*—we blow ze German boat to bits. Ze Arabs weel reach not near Rabat—ah—*voila* thees Peenkham. Who ees he—eh?"

The Frog airman groaned and sat down. "Maybe ees you have not hear of Jeanne D'Arc *aussi, non?*"

WHAT of Phineas? We pick him up skimming over the Rock of Gibraltar, an expansive grin wreathing his homely countenance.

"That is not Gibraltar," he exclaimed. "I must be lost again. Where is the insurance sign?"

An hour later his Nieuport was burning nothing but castor oil and was throwing it back into his face. He landed in France not more than forty yards from the Spanish border. Three days later he dropped off a camion on the drome of the Ninth Pursuit Squadron. A self-respecting scarecrow would have shunned him by that time. Phineas had a queer look in his eyes and he did not have to fake it. Major Garrity grabbed at him, waved a fist.

"So you didn't go to Issoudon, huh? Where did you get that suit? That's a Foreign Legion outfit—or it was. You been in Afri—? Oh, you can't make me believe that. You—"

"Oh go 'way," Phineas sighed and sat down on the ground. "I got lost— I got amnesia—prove that I didn't! Git away, I'm goin' to sleep."

Major Garrity did not believe it even when the news came across the Strait of Gibraltar to Spain, across France and into Bar-Le-Duc. The Allied brass hats acclaimed Phineas of Morocco and forgot ell about Lawrence of Arabia. They came in bunches to shake his hand and promise him medals. And through it all the Old Man just sat counting his fingers. Finally he collared Phineas and told him to come clean.

"*Bismillah!*" was all the Boonetown pilot would say. "Allah is good! No matter what I say you will still be an unbeliever. Haw!"

The next day the Wing suggested that Major Rufus Garrity take a leave of absence. It seemed that he was nowhere near himself.