



# SLAP-HAPPY LANDINGS

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*Phineas and Elmer Pinkham never let caution get in the way of a corking good time—not even when Boom Boom Brink’s chuckle-headed chimpanzee, responding apefully to the manpower shortage, took over as pilot of their big DC3!*

**T**HERE ARE BIGGER air transport companies in the U.S.A. than The Flying Carpet Airline, Inc., Bagdad, Iowa, but there are none busier and not one half so colorful, a fact that is never disputed by members of the Civil Aeronautics Board. The Pinkhams, father and son, it was admitted by all in the flying fraternity, gave a personal touch to their service that was definitely out of this world. They flew anything anywhere and at any time, and the sky was the limit. So were the pilots and the maintenance crew.

It was two hours before supper time on the

Pinkham drome and a DC3 was purring and ready to take off toward the east with a load of perishable vegetables. Elmer Pinkham was getting last-minute instruction from his pa, and Casey and Greasy Gilbey, two mechs, hovered close by.

“I wisht Boom Boom would git here,” Elmer said, scratching the tip of his retroussé nose. “What’s keepin’ that tomater?”

“Some cops, most likely,” Phineas sniffed. “You sure you feel up t’ makin’ this flight alone, son?”

“Huh? I have only done three hops since five a.m., Pa,” Elmer said. “I git tired I’ll just let Iron George do

the work. I'll just put the of gyro on zero an' knock off for a couple minutes. How's them Pratt-Whitney power plants, Casey?"

"They are loaded with horses, Elmer," the World War One veteran said. "But they won't jump over mountains without nobody awake t'give 'em the whip."

"Awright, Elmer," Phineas snorted. "You want we should deliver defunct cabbages an' cauliflowers? Contact!"

"Shake, Pa," Phineas Pinkham's offspring said. "I am off."

"He ain't kiddin'," Gilbey mumbled to Casey.

Phineas accepted the hand. *Br-r-r-r-r-r-r-z-z-z!* He jumped a foot off the field.

"Works both on AC and DC current. Ha-a-a-a!" Elmer roared.

"He *would* be standin' in a puddle of water at the time, huh?" Casey grinned, thinking far back over the years.

"Ha-a-a-a-a-a-a-a, ya-a-a-a-a Elmer enthused, and trotted toward the cargo crate. "If Boom Boom arrives, don't let him get away, huh?" The DC3 greased the strip, became airborne, and kept gaining altitude. Phineas held up two fingers, V-fashion.

"We already won the second war," Casey sniffed.

"This is V for them vegetables," Phineas grinned, and loosened the belt around his rotund meridian.

"What's he bringin' hack, Phineas?"

"Some Chiffendale desks or somethin' for an outfit in Ottumwa," the head of the Flying Carpet Airline said. "We're really gettin' on the ball, Casey. I got a big contract comin' up any day now. I am even thinkin' of buyin' us a light crate for liaison work. We could drop groceries and such if one of our DC3s ever get forced down in a blizzard somewheres. We all got to expand with the times. Haw-w-w!" Phineas felt his waistline. "I bet I couldn't even git wedged into a Spad's pit now. Well, if Boom Boom comes in, send him over to operations, Casey."

BOOM BOOM ARRIVED at the Flying Carpet airstrip three quarters of an hour later, and he was not exactly alone. He alighted from a taxi and immediately began arguing with the pilot of the swindle chariot while Casey and Greasy gaped and counted their fingers.

"What y' mean, double fare?" screamed Boom Boom. "This ain't counted as a human bein' an' you know it! Roscoe is a chimp."

"Look, pal," the taxi driver yelped. "He walks on two legs most of the time, don't he? I want my dough, an' if I don't git it, that pal of yours better be good wit' his dukes."

"Of all the highway robbers," Boom Boom Brink, ex-army pilot, protested. "Look, I'll spin a coin. Double or nothin'!"

"Nuts. You hand over six bucks or by—!"

Phineas Pinkham emerged from operations. He skidded back on his heels. The simian tipped his visored cap and actually seemed to grin at the airline boss. "El-Elmer said he wa'n't nothin' fer looks but— who's that with him, huh? I—"

Boom Boom paid the tariff, swore roundly for a few moments and then looked around him. Casey and Greasy approached with caution and Phineas yelped: "Whicht of you is Brink?" Boom Boom was a chunky citizen about five feet, six inches in height and he had a physiognomy that never would be in demand by collar manufacturers. The pilot stared at Phineas and began to smoke like a sick Wright Cyclone engine.

"Awright, so you're Elmer's pa, huh? So you can't tell whicht is Boom Boom Brink, huh? Ver-r-ry funny. I ought to bust you on the nose, Pinkham!"

"Look, Boom Boom," Phineas yelped, "you take that ape out of here! If you wanted a pet why couldn't you of picked a white mouse or somethin'? I been through a lot in my time an' it is time I started livin' a more normal life. Now you come along with—"

"I bought him from a zoo," Boom Boom said. "Roscoe is almost human, I never saw an airdrome yet didn't need a mascot. Shake hands with the boss, Roscoe."

Roscoe held out his big right lunch-hook to Phineas and twisted up his mouth. Phineas shook both ways. Then he grinned. "It is no use," he said. "I might as well admit you are a guy after my own heart, Boom Boom. You should git along swell here."

"I will pick up my pay tomorrer," Casey snapped. "You git worst with age, Phineas."

"Who is this long-pan?" Boom Boom asked, gesturing toward Casey. "Whoever he is, let him go, Pinkham. He's expendable, as Roscoe can do his job better anyway. Well, let's sign an agreement or somethin', huh? An' I need an advance as the jalopy I started out from Keokuk in got smashed up an' all my dough was in it. I am also bein' sued if the owner of the milk truck I hit can find me."

"Huh?"

"Yeah, he took my license an' name and such,

Pinkham,” Boom Boom said. “I shouldn’t have let Roscoe take the wheel.”

Terence Patrick Casey, veteran of the First World War, pawed at his face and leaned heavily against Greasy Gilbey. “Help me over t’ Number Eleven, pal,” he said. “I know where there is a full quart. It belongs t’ Elmer but—”

Boom Boom Brink took Roscoe by the hand and followed Phineas into operations. Roscoe immediately espied what seemed to be a ripe banana reposing on Phineas’ desk, grabbed it and shoved it into his ample oral cavity. “No, Roscoe!” Phineas howled, but it was too late. The chimp went into a tantrum and spat out the soap. He lunged at the proprietor of the Flying Carpet Airline and just missed him with a sweep of his big right hand. Boom Boom got Roscoe around the neck and then man and beast put on a grunt and groan that would have packed them in in any arena from coast to coast. Phineas was in the DC3 with Casey and Gilbey by the time Boom Boom had Roscoe calmed down.

“Give me a drag on that bottle, Casey,” Phineas said. “It looks like chimps have no sense of humor. Haw-w-w!”

Roscoe looked a little penitent when Phineas walked into the converted two-car garage. He was wearing a windbreaker and a pilot’s cap and sulking in a corner. “It’s okay, Pinkham,” Boom Boom said. “He’ll get orientated pretty soon. Now, about my contract—”

Phineas sat down with Boom Boom and talked terms. Boom Boom took out a fountain pen and Phineas took a quick gander at it. “Huh, where did you git that pen, Boom Boom?”

“Elmer give it to me over across.”

“What kind of ink you got in it?” Phineas asked, eyeing Boom Boom askance.

“Elmer said it only took a certain kind. Evaporink, I think he said. You know-er-I lent it to that milk truck driver to take down my name an’ license number an’—yeah, I had that kind of ink in it Elmer told me ab—”

Phineas grinned. “You won’t never get sued, Boom Boom. That truck driver has got only blank paper,, haw-w-w-w-w!”

“I think I am goin’ to like it here, Pinkham,” Boom Boom grinned. He handed Roscoe a cigar and the chimp took it and hit off the end. Boom Boom snapped a lighter to flame and Roscoe accepted the light and nodded his thanks. “Shades of Barley Duck, France, World Guerre Number One,” Phineas Pinkham muttered, and blinked his eyes.

AN HOUR LATER, a DC3 grumbled in the sky overhead. Phineas and his new pilot and Roscoe trotted out to help shoo Elmer Pinkham in. Boom Boom muttered his admiration as Elmer brought the cargo crate in and set it down as if he was only putting his hat on a table. Elmer left the DC3, glimpsed Boom Boom, then came running. “So you finally made it, huh? Did you saw the bars or git over the wall, pal? W-What’s that with you? No! It can’t be. It smokes a cigar, but—”

“It is a chimp I picked up, Elmer,” Boom Boom said. “It is almost human.”

“My poor achin’ back,” Elmer gulped. “It is all we need to get along better around here. Can it fly?”

“If you dast let it try, Elmer Pinkham!” Phineas roared. “I’ll bust you from flyin’ for so long that when you git back, you’ll be workin’ on jets. Oh, why did I let you talk me into—”

“What’s botherin’ you, Elmer?” Boom Boom asked. “Somethin’ happen up there? Somethin’ go wrong?”

“I was just thinkin’,” Elmer grinned. “We’ll le’s go an’ talk over ol’ times, Boom Boom.”

Phineas tried to join in the hashing-over of conflict in war torn skies, but Elmer and Boom Boom discouraged him. “Yeah, Boom Boom,” Elmer said. “They thought they was in a war, pa and Casey. BB guns an’ box-kites. They used up more coneyac than gasoline. They tested planes for Smithson’s Institute an’—”

“Yeah, Elmer. I got an uncle who use t’ fly in that civil war, too. He could catch anti-aircraft iron with a butterfly net. Remember that night we bombed Cologne an’ made such a stink—”

Phineas sniffed with disgust and went over to sit down by Roscoe. The chimp handed him a cigar and the old Spad ace bit off the end and lighted it. Steeped in memories, he sucked in the sweet smoke.

*Bango!*

Phineas Pinkham’s freckled countenance blackened. All that he needed was a tambourine and a couple of jokes to qualify as an end man. Elmer’s mouth snapped open. “Boom Boom, you didn’t train that chimp to—?”

“I hope to drop dead this minute if I did!” Boom Boom choked out. .

Phineas staggered out into the night. “I g-got to f-figger th-this one out, boys,” he mumbled. “It isn’t so! It couldn’t—just a coincidents—is all—ha-a-a!”

Elmer Pinkham put his head close to Boom Boom Brink’s. What he had to say did not concern either the first or last war. In conclusion, Elmer took a catalogue from the drawer of his famous father’s desk and

flipped the pages. "This number here, Boom Boom, is a honey. Pa is a genius cookin' up these trick novelties. Now look—"

There was never a dull moment on the airfield of The Flying Carpet Airline. Elmer Pinkham arrived back from the family homestead in Boonetown early the next morning. He carried a package under his arm with the morning papers. "Where's Boom Boom?" he asked his pa.

"Earnin' his dough, of courst," Phineas sniffed. "I don't carry no dead weight around here. You don't see. Number Seven out there, huh? We got a hurry-up job late last night. The House of Ezekiel's ball club's manager called me an' wanted us to haul his team t'Pocatello, Idaho, and back. Their bus got broke down. He is bringin' back a load of them big bakin' potatoes for a hotel in St. Joe. What a business, huh? Today I expect t'sign a big contract with a citizen named G. Klippinger Smeck. You sure Boom Boom ain't too battle-fatigued, Elmer? That jerk just got that crate off by a whisker—"

"You forget who he was flyin'?" Elmer asked. "Ha-a-a-a!"

"Awright, smart pants," Phineas sniffed. "Now about that contract. He's makin' up his mind the next couple days between us an' The Mercury Lines. We got to keep our noses clean an' everythin'. We all got to be on our toes. This Smeck is a wholesale fish-and-game tycoon, an' furnishes delicatsies for the mid-west an' eastern markets. Trout an' other fish from Utah and vicinity. Grouse an' frozen venison an' other perishable stuff. We git the contract, maybe, if we act smart an' have no accidents, see?" Phineas took a cigar from a box marked X, tossed one to Roscoe, and leaned back in his chair. "This contract means a new fur coat for your ma, Elmer, an' if she don't get it, somebody will get a bust on the nose."

"It is right in the bag," Elmer grinned. "Who knows, if we make good on that job, we'll be flyin' caviar from behind the Iron Curtain some 'day. Or if Gromyko gets tired of takin' a walk, he'll want a plane an'—"

"Go out an' see if you can help the mechs, huh?" Phineas sighed.

BOOM BOOM landed late that night. The pilot trudged into operations and asked for a loan of ten bucks. "Them House of Ezekiel guys, Pinkham," he groaned. "I bet that advance you give me on them. I would of won if their first baseman hadn't tripped over his beard roundin' third with the winnin' run. How you been, Roscoe?"

"That missin' link has got t' go, Boom Boom!" Phineas yelled. "He was in the office of a DC3 this P.M. checkin' the instruments! An' he's breakin' me, smokin' them twenty centers."

"See if he'll stand for nickel smoke poles," the pilot grinned. "Where's Elmer?"

"Takin' a load of scratch feed to Punxatawney, Pa.," Phineas said. "By the way, Boom Boom, you will both take Number Eleven out day after tomorrer, as I want no slip-up deliverin' four race horses to Baltimore. One of the hay burners is a favorite to win the Chesapeake Derby an'—"

"Me an' Elmer never missed yet, Pinkham," Boom Boom grinned, and winked at Roscoe. "You have heard how horses, particularly thoroughbreds, like mascots around, huh? Anyway, me and Elmer figgered to take Roscoe up sooner or later to test out aerobolism and vasamotor stability on simians."

"Over my dead body!" Phineas yelled.

"Awright, but I remember a race horse goin' berserker because it missed havin' no other company but other nags around," Boom Boom said. "It nearly wrecked a Trojan Transport."

"Look, I got a big contract comin' up, you lemonhead!" Phineas howled. "If anythin' should go wrong that we should lose it, I know one pilot who will be lookin' at help-wanted ads an' I could reach right out an' touch him."

"I'll talk it over with Elmer," Boom Boom said. "Come on, Roscoe, we'll take a turn around the airport, huh?"

"And if you meet a truck, push that monk under, huh?" Phineas sniffed.

Bad weather delayed Elmer Pinkham on his way back from Punxatawney. He landed on the home field the next P.M. with one of his power plants acting up, and he had trouble with the flaps. The DC3 came in a-loopin' and needed a little more runway that did not happen to be there. The transport nosed into a clump of trees, and kindling wood flew. Elmer climbed down from the DC3 telling the world at large what he thought of World War One ackemmas. Casey said, "Oh, yeah?" and started for Elmer. Roscoe intercepted him. The simian squealed and nipped Casey's empennage with his choppers.

Boom Boom Brink pleaded with the monk to let go. Phineas Pinkham, hopping up and down like a kernel of corn in a hot popper, thought of hectic days back in Bar-Le-Duc, France, and knew this one could compare with them all. "Awright, le's all pull ourselves

together, boys. One world an' all. Boom Boom, I'll give you twenty four hours t' git rid of that jungle bum!"

Slowly, things became normal. Phineas sent Casey into town to get himself a shot for protection against possible monkophobia. He chased Elmer and Boom Boom Brink into the operations office, and let Roscoe find whatever shelter he could.

"Now, like I said, boys," Phineas Pinkham began. "We all got to keep on the straight an' narrow an' do nothin' whicht will sour this Smeck typhoon against us. If we do a good job with the race horses tomorrer, that guy should sit up an' take notice, huh? Le's go over it all ag'in. You pick up the bangtails outside Peoria an' deliver 'em intact at Baltimore where the vans will be waitin'. The bangtails are worth almost a hundred grand on the hoof, but will be worth nothin' much on the horse meat market. So none of this horseplay that's been goin' on around here, compree?"

"You would think you didn't trust me, Pa," Elmer sniffed.

"It ain't that, son," Phineas said. "I don't trust me-er-that is, I know what I use t' do which—blood is thicker than water an'—"

"I never miss with hunches," Elmer said. "If we don't take Roscoe along somethin'—"

"It is in my bones, too," Boom Boom said.

"Oh, awright," Phineas yelled. "Take the missin' link, but if he messes up anythin' I will personally chaste him all the way to where he was born, an' fracture his skull!"

HOURS LATER, a DC-3 carrying four race horses, Elmer Pinkham, Boom Boom Brink, and Roscoe, skimmed high over Indianapolis. "I can't wait," Elmer chuckled. "You got it all straight now? You put that thing over your head over Baltimore, Boom Boom. I got Roscoe all set to leave the crate first. I'll make out I was with the bangtails an' you was asleep on the hay, huh? This will make flyin' history."

"I don't think we'd ought to—"

"Don't be like that, Boom Boom. Don't tell me you're slippin'. Anyway it is a test of a Pinkham product," Elmer grinned. "Yeah, wait until I start workin' on Approach Control at Baltimore."

"Sometimes I wisht I'd never met you, Elmer."

"He sure looks like a pilot, Boom Boom," Elmer said, and slapped Roscoe on the back.

They were over Baltimore on schedule. Elmer called Approach Control. "Well, here I am. Number—wha-a-a-a? Climb to seven thousand? I'm Number Fourteen

to land? Look, Buster, I got race horses here, an' not salt mackerel. I got a co-pilot handlin' this crate as I took awful cramps over the Alleghanies. He's only had a half of a flyin' hour in his whole life. I—" Boom Boom doubled up. He was in the spirit of the thing. He put the Pinkham novelty number over his head and put his arms in the sleeves of the contraction.

"Stop the corn, pal." Approach Control did not seem to have a sense of humor. "Final clearance expected at four fifty-eight."

"Oh, yeah?" Elmer quipped. "If my gas gives out cruisin' around up here in the ionosphere, there'll be four horses on you, Buster. Where do I go for an hour, the movies? What is showing at the Bijou?"

"This is a scream, Elmer," Boom Boom yipped.

"Git Roscoe out of that seat, Boom Boom!" Elmer yipped. "Uh-oh, for a minute I thought—let me needle that chucklehead again. Maybe, pal, you want we should land at Philly an' ride the hayburners up there, huh?"

"Your final clearance at four-fifty eight," repeated Approach Control.

Boom Boom, at the controls, checked his reserve octane. "Look, Elmer, this ceilin' could git lower and lower. We're in rough cloud formations, an' them nags could git air sick. The static is awful., Maybe this won't turn out so funny, huh?"

"Callin' Approach Control," Elmer yipped. "Like I said, we got t' come down, pal. We have got a hayburner here named Open The Door, Richard. It is worth nearly sixty grand. My pilot is just a student an' he's ready t' crack. Everythin' up here is Snafu, pal. Emergency! One horse has busted lose an' is tryin' to bust into the pilot's office. How about clearance, huh? We are desperate. We can stay afloat another five min—I mean, you should see the pilot. We—"

"Get Roscoe back there out of sight," Boom Boom Brink said, and kept cruising at six thousand.

"Approach Control! Calling Four-Oh-Four. You are now Number Four to land. Stand by—"

"A break," Elmer yipped. "I'll get Roscoe in back there. Where's the bananas, Boom Boom? Ugh, you look like his twin brother. My old man is a genius when it comes to—come here, Roscoe, ol' pal. Le's go out an' see the hossies."

The Flying Carpet Airline DC3 came in for a landing at four-ten P.M. When the big cargo crate taxied up to the apron, an airport flunkey's hat hopped right off his head. His eyes bugged out like a bullfrog's and then he started screaming and pointing. In a big passenger job, five women fainted after looking out the

window. The DC3 shivered to a stop. Out stepped a chimpanzee, wearing a leather jacket and a pilot's cap. He blinked, took off the cap and wiped his low brow. Strong men tried to remain sane.

"I tell ye, I saw it at the controls when it come in," a man said as a big crowd gathered. "It was flyin' it. I tell ya—!"

"I saw it too," a special cop said; and tried to keep his upper plate from shaking loose.

Out of the big cargo crate stepped Elmer Pinkham. Men surrounded him. Elmer doubled up and asked for paregoric.

"Look, pal, who was flyin' this crate?" a man choked out. "Come clean. I saw—"

"Look, I took sick," Elmer said. "A half hour from Baltimore, my pal, Boom Boom Brink, had t' go back an' hold onto a horse that got loose. Somebody had to land it, huh? It is all I know. You've heard of talkin' dogs? An' horses that go into bars an' ast for olives in their Martinis? Well, I got nothin' more to say—"

"Incredible," a man gulped, just as Boom Boom stepped down from the transport.

"He did awright, hah, Elmer?"

"Wa'n't you flyin' it, Boom Boom? Listen, don't kid an old pal. Well, I'm a monkey's uncle—well, le's check in. That dispatcher won't believe us neither."

THE WORD SPREAD like wildfire. Newspaper city rooms got the office. Teletypes clattered. Radio stations were all agog. A call came in from Ripley in New York.

Elmer and Boom Boom were besieged by wild-eyed newspapermen before they could hide somewhere. Camera men broke up bulb after bulb snapping Roscoe's picture. "Look, boys," Elmer Pinkham said. "It is like I said. I don't care what you believe. Boom Boom says he wa'n't flyin' it. I was horse du combat with a touch of ptomaine or somethin'. We don't want t'be quoted. We got no more t'say. Now, leave us see if the bangtails are off the crate okay, huh?" Boom Boom went into a washroom and locked the door behind him. When he came out his eyes were red from laughing and his ribs were sore. Special cops reached the airport to keep traffic moving.

Extras hit the streets of the key cities not long after Elmer and Boom Boom and Roscoe had their chow in a beanery two miles from the airport. Reporters waited outside. "Pa never pulled a neater one, Boom Boom," Elmer chuckled. "I wonder how soon he'll hear about it, huh? Have another hot dog, Roscoe. If you could've seen yourself, Boom Boom—"

It was eight P.M. in the Pinkham home in Boonetown, Iowa. Phineas was ensconced in his old easy chair reading a journal of the trade. "I wisht Elmer would wire me or somethin', Bessie," he called to his better half. "I won't never digest them turkey coquettes if I don't hear. Them bangtails was worth—huh? Oh, you want I should turn on Abriel Geeter? I was goin' to git Bust the Till if you didn't mind—huh? Awright, I'll turn on that commutator. Huh, sometimes I wonder if I shouldn't of married Babette—who, me, Bessie? I didn't say nothin'. I—"

"Sh-h-h-h," Bessie Pinkham admonished. "There he is. You sure you used that Cruml this mornin', Phineas? Your hair don't look like you used nothing but brillo, but—"

The radio gave out with the soothing voice of Abriel Geeter. "Ah, but there's strange news tonight. Strange indeed, ladies and gentlemen. Yes, with all the alarming rumors of the race between builders of atomic energy, it is refreshing to give you such an item as this one. It is, indeed. A plane landed at Baltimore just a few hours ago; a big transport plane, carrying four race horses. Ah, but there is nothing strange about that. Not at all. But no human hand was at the controls—"

Phineas uttered a cry like a stricken canvasback duck, and his good wife came running.

"—And when the big plane came to a stop, out stepped a little chimpanzee wearing a pilot's cap and a pilot's leather jacket. Eye witnesses swear that they saw the simian at the controls when it came down to land. The other members of the crew, Elmer Pinkham and Botsford Brink, told an amazing story. They were not flying that DC3. Now, ladies and gentlemen, before we continue with this amazing story, can I have just a minute telling you about Cruml. Ah, if this story has lifted your hair, let me tell you how to smooth it down—"

"Cruml!" Phineas choked out. "Git me more spirits of ammonia. Oh, cripes, when I git my hands on those two jugheads! All of them horses could of got killed, Bessie. They let that monk land a DC3 with—no, it ain't so! Not even a son of mine could be that screwy! Look, I am on my knees, Bessie. Git me some spirits of—!"

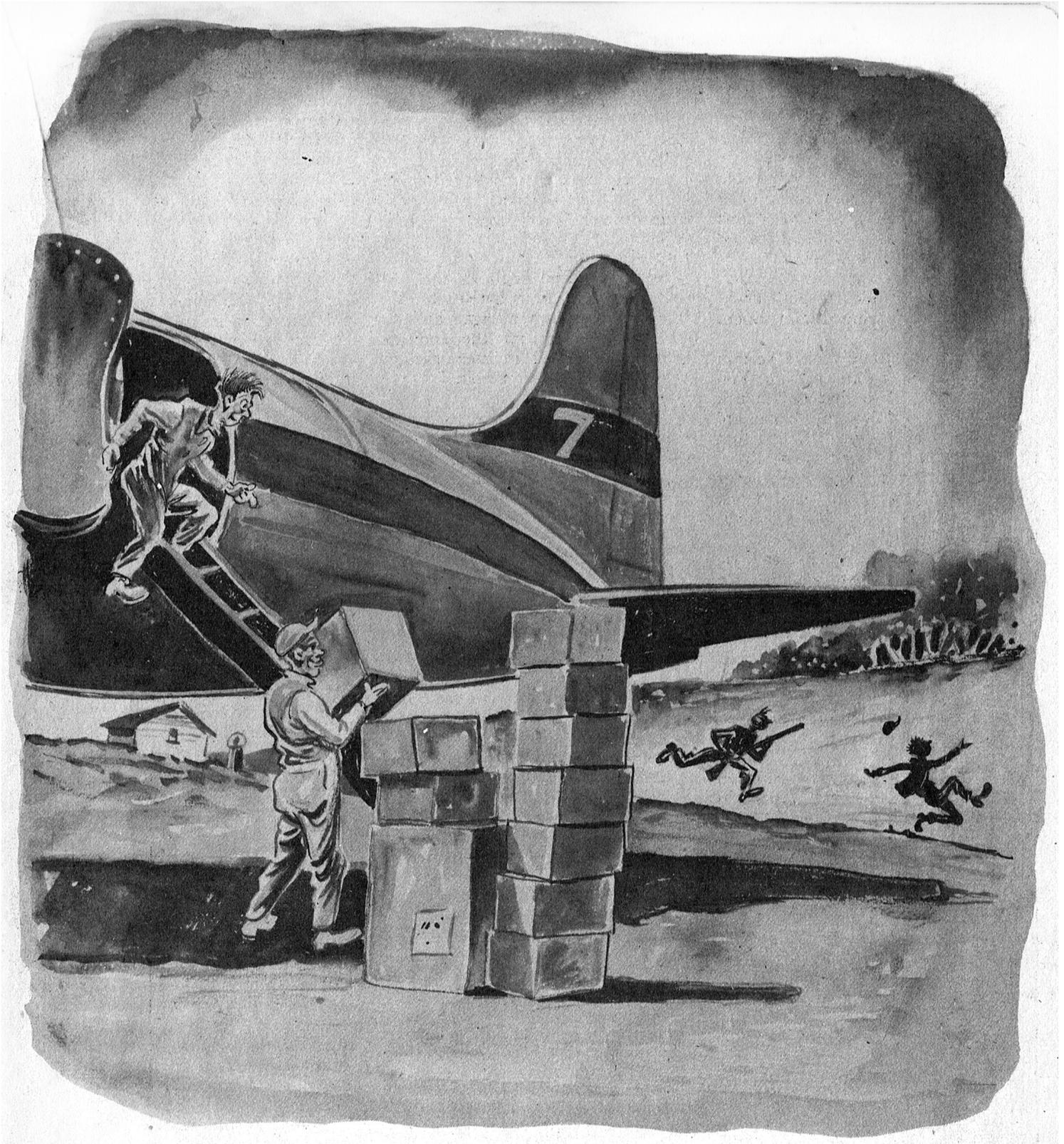
WHEN The Flying Carpet DC3 landed on the strip near Bagdad, Iowa, hours later, Casey made it very plain to the crew that Mr. Phineas Pinkham was in no mood for a game of jack straws. "An' you better hide that missin' link somewheres, too, Elmer. He has got a shotgun all loaded. He also got a telegram from a guy."

"I'll come clean with it all, Boom Boom," Elmer said.

Casey blew air violently through his nose. "Oh, you will, huh? When he was a flyer nobody ever believed what he said, Elmer, an' he never expected 'em to. What chanct you think you got?"

"Well, come on," Boom Boom said.

The pair entered the operations office. Phineas was still so burned up he was panting like a puma that had been chased across three states. His eyes were wild and there was a shotgun across his knees. Elmer turned to run. "Stay where you are, you addle-pated jackanapes!" Phineas yipped. "Here, read this, and then go find a



orphan asylum!” He tossed a crumpled ball of paper to Elmer. “When you finish, I will shoot you both!”

Elmer read the communication aloud. “‘Mr. P. Pinkham, Flyin’ Carpet Airline. Heard of disgraceful conduct of your pilots stop CAA should drive you out of business stop Imagine risking valuable race horses to animal pilot stop Unbelievable and outrageous stop Wouldn’t give you contract hauling ashes out of my cellar stop. G. Klippinger Smeck.’”

“You are grounded, Elmer. You are docked a month’s pay besides!” Phineas yipped. “The CAA has already called me an’ says we’ll be investigated.” The old Spad miracle man picked up the shotgun. Boom Boom was well on his way to the county line before Elmer scrambled up a big tree at the northern edge of the field. Terence Casey had his memories, hoped Phineas wouldn’t miss.

“Look, Pa,” Elmer yelled. “Would you snoot your own son?”

“So you remind me who you are, hah?” Phineas roared, and pulled both triggers. Nothing happened. He had forgotten to put in the shells. The mechs were madder than their boss and Casey offered to stand watch while Phineas went for ammo.

“What is the use, Casey?” Phineas finally gulped out. “An ol’ dog taught him the tricks. Le’s forget it all, huh? It was swell bein’ in the aviation business this long. Put For Sale signs on the crates first thing tomorrer mornin’”

Three hectic days followed. Irate citizens from Washington finally stopped visiting The Flying Carpet Airline. They decided to forgive and forget after hearing the war records of Phineas and Elmer Pinkham. “They can’t stay in business nohow,” one of the airways arbiters commented. “Nobody would ever give them even a job of distributin’ handbills.”

“It looks like we are defunct,”

Phineas told his employees four days later. “We ain’t had enough business to pay us to git up any mornin’. In just three days Smeck hands out the contract an’—you should be proud of yourselves, you two bums!”

“We just thought it would be fun,” Elmer said. “Like the time you and a guy named Gillis found a suit of armor and played Joan of Ark over in France. All the Frogs—Garrity said—”

“Huh? Yeah, haw-w-w-w-w-w!” Phineas grinned. “We—never mind that! If I ever see that lousy brigadier, I’ll—what’s that?”

“A car,” Boom Boom said. “Sounds like it needs new brakes, Mr. Pinkham.”

Then the telephone demanded attention. Phineas picked it up. “Flyin’ Carpet Airline, Inc. Wha-a-a-a-a-a ? It did? Pancaked eleven miles from here? Fourteen hurt an’ took to the hosp—who? He does? He’s on his way here? Yeah, he just come in, it looks like. Sure, I’ll take care of it. Yeah.” Phineas hung up. “A Tri-State Airliner folded up not far from here, boys!” he yipped. “One passenger escaped injury but was badly shook up an’ he wants transportation quick t’ Salt Lake City. Boom Boom, don’t just stand there. Git a DC3 warmed up. Veet! You stay here, Elmer Pinkham. You’re busted. I’ll have discip—”

Boom Boom Brink nearly knocked over the citizen coming into operations on his way out. Phineas stared at a portly character wearing expensive mufti; the citizen’s eyes looked as if their owner was peering into the next decade. A State trooper was guiding him.

“You run this airline?” the cop asked Phineas.

“Maybe you expected Howard Hughes or Rickerbacker? I don’t keep these crates here for chicken pens. Who—?”

“This is Mr. J. Klippinger Smeck,” the cop said. “Wants to be flown to—”

Elmer Pinkham uttered a little animal-like cry. Phineas nearly blew a gasket.

“Yes,” Smeck said, his marbles still scattered somewhat. “Got t’ reach destination—important conference tomorrow morning. Got to reave light away. Incorporant ponference—where’s the plane?” He put a fountain pen in his mouth and scratched a Corona-Corona against his pants leg.

“You bet,” Phineas choked out. “Crate is already turnin’ over. Hear the engines? You’ll be there okay, ol’ friend. I’ll take care of him, officer.”

“Right,” the cop said. “Ain’t I seen you before?” he asked Elmer Pinkham. “In the papers or—?”

“Couldn’t of,” Elmer said as Phineas shooed Mr. Smeck out. “I never went there. Look, Pa—”

“You stay here!” Phineas yipped. He took Smeck by the elbow and ushered him out and across the field. Boom Boom Brink had the power plants roaring. Phineas helped the tidbit tycoon into the cargo crate and even gave him a cushion to sit on. “There, you’ll be all comfy, Mr. Smeck. I’ll be right back as I got to see my pilot.”

“Yes, thank you. We were goin’ along nice when the truck came around the corner an’—no, trucks don’t fly, do they? There was a crash and I swallowed a piece of bridgework. Sirens went off. I’ll get my lawyer—” Phineas went into the pilot’s office and sat with Boom

Boom as the exwar ace took the DC3 off the runway and upstairs. "That is him, Boom Boom. Maybe when he sees the favor we done him, he'll—"

"When he gets the Cobwebs out, he'll ask for a chute an' bail out, Boss," Boom Boom said. "Well—!" He swung his head around and stared at Phineas. He snapped his fingers. He started laughing and then reached under the seat and came up with what appeared at first to be a leather windbreaker. "Look, Mr. Pinkham," the pilot said. "You don't fight fire with nothin' else but, do you? Leave everythin' to me. You go back an' start talkin' to our passenger an' I'll do the rest. Ha-a-a!"

Phineas was in the mood to go along with any kind of a gag. He went back into the long steel cocoon and sat beside Mr. Smeck. "How y' feelin' now, huh?"

"Better, thank you, much better," the opulent citizen said. "Where's everybody, huh?"

"Oh, we reserved this crate just for you," Phineas said. "Less load, more speed, huh? We're sure loopin' along, an' I figger, at about ten thousan' feet. Engines sound nice, don't they? We hire the best mechs, the best—huh, what's wrong?"

J. Klippinger Smeck was half off his empennage. His eyes became two dirty windows in a haunted house and both of his chins shook like agitated jello. "L-Look ! I—ft is that—it is a—!"

Phineas looked. The door of the pilot's compartment was open. A stooped figure peered at him, its hands nearly touching the floor. Under the visored cap was the face of something that should have been knocking coconuts off trees in a distant land. For a few moments Phineas felt the little gremlins run up and down his spine and they had terribly cold feet. Beads of fret juice popped off the Pinkham physiognomy. "That chimp! How did it—? Boom Boom, where are y'—? I-er-huh!"

"I see it all now," Smeck screeched. "You're that Pinkham who—that chimpanzee is flyin'—Pinkham, what d-dastardly plot is this? Look, go up and kill the beast. Take over the—"

"Me? Hah, I couldn't never fly one of these modern sky wagons," Phineas yelled, going along with Boom Boom. "I never tried anyways. Well, I don't know how that ape did away with my pilot an' took over. Looks like we got t' pray, my friend."

"Pinkham, I'm not a wealthy man," Smeck gulped, his face the color of a penguin's dickey. "But ten thousand is yours if you'll try to fly this plane. Fifteen—"

"It is not money I want so bad," the old Boonetown miracle man gulped. "But unless I git that contract of yours haulin' them brook trouts, etc., life ain't worth nothin' as I will be ruined if I don't. So what have I got t'lose? It is kismet, huh? When your time comes—"

"Anything, Pinkham," J. Klippinger Smeck said. "Where's my brief case. Oh, let's hurry as there are high mountains ahead an' if that ape—here, hold the pen for a minute, Pinkham. This'll be an agreement until we ca-can m-make it m-more legal an' — Godfrey, we're failin'!"

"We just hit a headwind, I hope," Phineas choked out. "Yeah, le's do hurry before we—that's it, Mr. Smeck. Steady with your hands, huh? So's lawyers can read it—I hope I can fly this crate after—"

Boom Boom Brink dropped altitude suddenly, then brought the nose of the cargo crate up with a stomach-flattening wrench. J. K. Smeck grabbed Phineas around the neck and held on. "Awright, we are still right side up," Phineas yipped. "Hurry an' sign what you wrote."

The passenger hurriedly obeyed. Phineas took the semi-official document, scanned it hurriedly, and put it in his pocket. "Well, keep your fingers crossed," he grinned, "I'll go up an put up a desperate battle to save us, Mr. Smeck."

The door of the pilot's compartment opened. Boom Boom Brink looked out. "Everybody awright?" he howled the length of the cocoon.

"Where's that chimp?" Phineas yelled. "We saw it! We—"

"Ye-Yes," Smeck said. "It was flyin' the ship an'—"

"What's wrong with you guys?" Boom Boom asked. "You have some snorts before you come up? You two mustn't have no vasomotor stability, huh? Or got air sick an' seen things. If there was an ape here I would of seen him. Boss, you first world war pilots don't belong in nothin' but a horse an' buggy—I never heard such a thing—"

J. Klippinger Smeck mopped his pate. He was both relieved and suspicious and was getting a slow burn. "Look, Pinkham, if this was a trick—!"

"Huh? I saw it myself, Mr. Smeck. I—"

"Don't be silly," Boom Boom said while he let the gyro do the work for the moment. "I had t' climb t'fourteen thousan' to hop a peak back there an' your blood left your domes an' you saw things. It happens sometimes, an' you also had associations of ideas after that cock-eyed story went through all the papers about a DC3 bein' landed by Rose—an ape at Baltimore. Sure, we had a chimp on that run but nobody ever

believed us when we said he never was at the controls. A story gits around—give a dog a bad name—a snowball foilin' downhill an' things like that—”

“Fancy that, Pinkham,” J. Klippinger Smeck finally whooshed out. “Guess we’d better forget what we thought we saw, what? Be laughing stocks. Let’s forget it all. Have a pure Havana, Pinkham, and as soon as we can arrange it, we’ll make that contract more binding.”

“Yeah,” Phineas said, keeping his face away from Smeck. “I remember once over Mont Sec I thought I saw a dame in the sky ridin’ a horse with two heads. Then I looked at my altimeter an’ saw I was five thousand feet higher than a Spad should be. My dome—Boom Boom, git back to that seat an’ take over or I’ll fire you as soon as we land! I demand absolute safety an’ efficiency from my help, understand?”

“Yes, Mr. Pinkham,” Boom Boom said.

The DC3 landed at Salt Lake in due time and disgorged J. Klippinger Smeck. Six hours later, The Flying Carpet Airline, Inc., had the much-sought-after contract, and Phineas shook hands with Smeck and went looking for Boom Boom. He found him in the eighth tavern he visited and sat down for a snort or two. “I guess I’m gettin’ old, Boom Boom,” Phineas said. “Hah, an’ t’thiuk I make that chimp costume piece in my own factory. That Elmer, haww-w-w-w-w ! Sharp as a tack. Remind me to raise your pay, Boom Boom. An’ on the way back I am goin’ to fly that DC3.”

“I quit,” Boom Boom said.

“Awright, but I bet, I could,” Phineas sniffed. “I better go out and send Elmer a wire.”

Phineas Pinkham’s disconsolate son received the message at Bagdad, Iowa, even as Boom Boom and his Pa Were getting ready to take off from Salt Lake. Elmer opened it and read it, listlessly at first. Then his big ears began twitching and a tremendous grin split his face wide open. The telegram said:

DON’T SELL CRATES STOP GOT SMECK  
CONTRACT STOP ROSCOE DID IT AGAIN  
STOP EVERYTHING FORGIVEN AS YOU ARE  
CHIP OFF THE OLD BLOCKHEAD. YOUR  
LOVING PA.

“Rut Roscoe is locked up over in town, Elmer,” Casey said when he got the good news. “I don’t get it.”

“I do,” Elmer Pinkham snickered. “I wondered if Boom Boom was as smart as I thought he was. I says to myself I bet if he don’t think of it, Pa will. We sure fooled everybody. Ha-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a!”

Casey sighed. He looked at Elmer and thought of Phineas Pinkham and then Roscoe. Darwin, he told himself as he groped his way out, really had had something on the ball. He had to grin as he crossed the field. He hoped there would always be a Pinkham.