



*Yank flying courage clashes with the treacherous cunning of a swarm of godless yellow devils. A tale of thrills and daring adventure in heathen skies.*

# THE FLYING IDOL

by MAJOR  
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**W**ITH A GESTURE of impatience Jimmy Caldwell flung himself into a creaking wicker-work chair. His boyish eyes flashed an antagonistic glance at the British Resident at Srinagar. His clean-cut, sun-tanned face was flushed with resentment as he asked petulantly:

"I take it, then, that the permit to cross the Tibetan frontier is refused!"

The British Official eyed him kindly. "Not exactly refused," he said, "but withheld."

"It amounts to the same thing," Jimmy blurted out. "Say, what's the trouble with you Johnny. Bulls anyway? You've been hogging the sea since Hector was

a pup and now you're getting your hooks on the air!"

"It's for your own good, Mr. Caldwell," the Englishman replied coolly. "As resident here at Srinagar it's my duty to protect the lives and property of foreigners as well as British subjects. Should anything happen to you I should feel directly responsible. For that reason I must forbid your flying over Tibetan territory until such time as I can communicate with the American Consul at Bombay."

From the time Jimmy had uncased his two place biplane at Calcutta some four months ago he had run into permit difficulties. The Indian authorities did not take kindly to the thought of an itinerant American aviator winging his way over the vast jungles

and plains of their domain with no other objective in view than to satisfy an insatiable desire for adventure. Ostensibly this was Jimmy's only reason for pursuing the air trails of the mystic orient.

In his inimitable way Jimmy had succeeded in unwinding the miles of red tape of Anglo-Indian officialdom without the aid of American representatives and with the exception of Peshawar, where he spent a night in the Military jail for dwelling too forcibly upon the garrison commander's ancestry, had usually managed to obtain permits without incident.

At Srinagar it was different. Tibet was forbidden territory, which made it all the more desirable to Jimmy's adventurous spirit. A close-up view of those mysterious monasteries perched high in the ominous black mountains held out an attraction which a man of Jimmy's calibre could not resist.

Jimmy made no attempt to conceal his feelings in the matter. He glared at the British Official in a manner unmistakably hostile.

"See here, Mr. Resident," he said, "I am a United States citizen, free, white and twenty-one. If I choose to fly that crate of mine over Tibet it's no concern of yours either officially or personally. Your jurisdiction ends at the frontier and if I choose to put my neck in a noose it's my own affair. Do I get the permit to take off?"

"No," the Resident replied firmly.

Jimmy jumped to his feet and bestowed a vigorous kick on the chair he had vacated. "Alright," he said heatedly, "when I get good and ready I'll go without it!"

He left the Englishman abruptly and strode out into the rapidly falling darkness of the Indian night.

JIMMY CHAFED INWARDLY at the stubbornness of the British Official as he walked rapidly in the direction of the Bazaar. The gathering blackness of the onrushing night settling down like a huge pall upon the dingy unlighted streets of the native city added to his chagrin. He was mad. And when Jimmy Caldwell was mad he was a fitting playmate for wildcats.

The protective aspect held out by the British Official incensed his American mind. Who in hell wanted protection on a trip like this. He was perfectly healthy and able to care for himself in a jam without having to cry to British Officialdom for help. And his twoplace Waco was trustworthy to the nth degree. To Hell with the permit. He'd go anyway.

He was thus engrossed in thought when a sharp

cry pierced the sinister stillness of the native streets, accompanied by a scuffling of feet and unmistakable English curses. Instinctively Jimmy broke into a run and raced toward the disturbance. Through the gloom he distinguished the form of a white man struggling desperately in the midst of a swarming mob of natives. Even in the darkness he caught the glint of flashing Kukris.

Jimmy went into action unhesitatingly. Roaring like an enraged bull he charged headlong into the melee. A shadowy form turned to meet the onslaught of the newcomer and went down with a sickening thud as Jimmy's two hundred pounds of bone and steel-like muscle launched at him.

Instantly a pair of natives fastened onto him. A sinewy brown arm encircled his throat. Wiry legs twisted themselves about his own. With berserk fury Jimmy fought himself free and reached the stranger who grimly, silently, was fighting furiously to keep his assailants from reaching him with their knives.

Heaving, struggling, sweating, the two white men fought like devils possessed. Suddenly the stranger tripped and fell. A dark form leapt at him; a knife gleamed in the darkness. Then Jimmy's foot shot out and landed flush in the native's stomach. He went down writhing in agony and the knife fell from his nerveless fingers and clattered on the sunbaked mud pavement.

The stranger was up in an instant. He muttered his thanks and pounded away at the attacking natives.

"Never mind the thanks," Jimmy panted between set teeth. "Fight, Bud, and give 'em leather."

A native, more daring than the rest, poised himself and sprang like a panther at Jimmy. Again Jimmy's foot came up and caught the knifeman in the midsection.

Jimmy grunted triumphantly. "Leather, Bud, that'll stop the scum!" The stranger smiled wanly. His breath came in short painful gasps. He tried desperately to follow Jimmy's advice but a feeling of vertigo seemed to have taken possession of his limbs. His feet refused to budge and his arms felt heavy and leaden. He was exhausted. With a half-choked sob he pitched forward on his face and was immediately submerged beneath a mob of screeching natives.

Snarling with rage Jimmy flung himself at the seething, struggling mass on the ground. With tigerish fury he punched and kicked at the attackers. Blindly he crashed blow after blow into the devil faces of the natives but the odds were overwhelmingly against him. Something struck his head with terrific force.

A blinding flash seemed to stab its way through his brain; a crazy, erratic ringing filled his head and he sank into oblivion.

WHEN JIMMY regained consciousness he found himself on a cot in the British Residency. The Resident was regarding him thoughtfully. "Well, my impetuous young American, it seems that you found trouble without having to fly over Tibet. How do you feel?"

Jimmy sat up and rubbed his head gingerly. "Fine," he replied, "except for this confounded buzz saw that is working overtime in my head. What happened?"

"Don't you remember?" the Resident asked.

"I remember getting mixed up in a sweet little scrap with some of your native playmates but a crack on the noodle seems to have cut short my recollections. Who started the fireworks?"

"Maybe your companion in misfortune can answer that question." The Resident glanced amusedly at a tall figure standing at the opposite side of the cot.

Jimmy followed his gaze and was up in an instant. "Bob Powley," he exclaimed joyously. "My thickheaded old classmate, Bob Powley! Gee, it's good to see you, you old numbskull. So you're the baby who thought he could start another Indian mutiny and lick the troops single-handed, eh? Where'd you get the idea you were so good?"

"Yes, sir," Powley admitted, "I'm the guy you piled in to help and a sweet job you made of it. But get me right on this, Jimmy, I didn't start the racket. I was on my way to the Residency for a permit to cross into Tibet when that gang jumped me."

"You'd have saved yourself a load of trouble by staying at home," Jimmy advised, with a sly glance at the Resident. "These Johnny Bulls ain't passing out any permits. But how come?"

Powley's reply was smothered with anguish. "I was going after Marion," he said.

"What!" Jimmy's yell was almost hysterical. He grabbed Powley's shoulders and literally shook him. "What do you mean, Bob?" he demanded incredulously. "What in hell do you mean?"

"I mean, Jimmy," Powley replied grimly, "that Marion is a prisoner in one of those accursed monasteries in Tibet!"

Jimmy was stunned. Powley's sister Marion meant more to him than life itself. She was the one thing in the world that he loved more than his flying. And strangely enough his flying was the only thing that stood in the path of his marrying her. She was

unalterably opposed to aviation as a hobby and her stand had brought them into their only disagreement. Just prior to Jimmy's departure from the States they had quarrelled on the subject and Jimmy left, avowing openly that the woman he married would have to reconcile herself to a flying husband.

JIMMY FOUGHT desperately to control his emotion. "For God's sake, Bob," he breathed, "what prompted her to go to Tibet?"

"You," Bob replied tersely. "It seems that Marion experienced a change of heart where flying was concerned after you kids quarrelled. Somehow she got the idea that hers was a selfish attitude and she decided to make amends. Consequently she took herself to the Naval Flying Station at Norfolk and spent days hobnobbing with the pilots and enlisted men trying to find out all she could about the game.

"Some young idiot who should have known better got under her skin and kidded her into believing that flying was the safest game in the world if you had the right kind of mascot associated with the hangar. The kid had put in some time in China and filled Marion full of tripe about a legend concerning a small idol called the Flying Buddha, so named because the damned thing was dressed up with wings. He said it was the only one in existence and that flying men in the orient considered its charm infallible. Anyone possessing it, he said, would be absolutely immune from dangers in the air.

"Well, you know Marion. She took a notion that she was going to marry you despite all hell and highwater and furthermore that you were going to be a flying husband, just as you said. So she made up her mind to get this flying idol as a mascot and roped me in on the plan.

"To make a long story short we shipped to India and Marion immediately hiked off to Tibet in search of her idol. She left me in Calcutta to head you off and tell you not to make an ass of yourself.

"I didn't hear from her for weeks. Then I received a note—and the Lord only knows how it came—saying that she had located the flying idol and with the aid of some good American dollars had managed to get possession of the thing. Well it appears the Buddhists got wise and all hell popped loose. They collared Marion before she could make a getaway and carted her off to some monastery.

"Somehow she connived to hide the idol before the Buddhists got her. She sent a chart through to



me giving its location, together with the name of the monastery to which they had taken her. This proved to be the smartest thing that little dumb-bell ever did because as long as the idol remained hidden she was perfectly safe. The Buddhists evidently regard it very highly and will not attempt to put her out of the way until the idol is found, and she won't tell them where it is—she daren't.

"I jumped across country immediately after receiving word that she was a prisoner, intending to get into Tibet and bargain with the Buddhists to release her in exchange for their idol. But somehow or other they were wised up to the existence of the chart and were out for blood.

"Tonight's fracas was their little way of getting their hooks on the chart, and, boy, they got it! They would have got us, too, if the Residency guards hadn't cut in on their party. Anyway Marion's fate is sealed unless we can beat that chart to the monastery at Koh where they have her imprisoned."

Powley slumped down on the cot as he finished his narrative and buried his head in his hands. "And, Jimmy boy, we can't beat it," he sobbed despairingly.

JIMMY SPRANG into action immediately. "The Hell we can't," he turned to the bewildered Resident, and his usually pleasant face was set in hard straight lines. "Where is Koh?" he demanded.

"About ninety miles northeast of here," the official replied. "The monastery he speaks of is situated on Mount Koh about seven thousand feet high."

"Good," Jimmy snapped. "And now, Mr. Resident, do we get that permit I was after?"

"Why, Mr. Caldwell, it is madness"—the Resident began but Jimmy cut him short.

"See here, Mister, it's a permit I want, not advice!"

"Well, under the circumstances, yes."

"Good! Now dig into your supplies here and see if you can rustle a pair of automatics and some spare clips of ammunition."

"You are not going to resort to violence," the Resident asked plaintively.

"No," Jimmy retorted with withering sarcasm, "with a girl's life at stake I'm going up to those Buddhist devils with an all day sucker in my hand and tell 'em I called for the rent!" Then he turned to Powley and slapped him on the back. "Up and at 'em, old man," he said quietly. "We're going to get Marion out of that mess or—or go out with her!"

The Resident brought the automatics. Jimmy

slipped one in his pocket and gave the other to Powley. "Come on, Bob," he said. "We'd better get down to the government airdrome and give old Betsy the double O if we want to take her sky riding before dawn. What do you say, Bob, are you ready?"

Jimmy's confidence had restored Bob Powley's poise. He was up in an instant. "Ready an hour ago," he said as they reached the door. "Can the chatter, pieface, and let's get going."

The Resident stared after them and a kindly light crept into the fading blue of his old eyes. His head shook in admiration. "These Americans," he muttered softly.

THE FIRST GRAY light of dawn was breaking over the distant mountains when Jimmy and Bob Powley climbed into the Waco. The motor was just ticking over as Jimmy adjusted his flying cap. He turned to Powley in the rear seat and gave his last instructions.

"Mount Koh should be easy to pick out. It's about the highest in these parts according to the map. All I want you to do, Bob, is keep your lights open for a landing place and remember this old bus ain't no helicopter. She needs room to set down in. All set?"

"All set, Jimmy," Powley replied. "Take her away!"

Jimmy took her away. He pushed full throttle and the Waco's motor leaped into being. With a full-throated roar the ship shot forward and tore across the hard sun-baked surface of the government drome. Jimmy held her down until he reached the end of the drome and then pulled off in a screaming zoom, leveled out, and headed in the direction of the lofty peaks that loomed black against the soft gray of the breaking day.

The Waco climbed rapidly. At five thousand feet she crossed the range of lesser mountains that bordered India and Tibet. Jimmy scanned the terrain beneath him eagerly. Spread out in ragged panorama was Tibet. The forbidden country of mysticism and intrigue, of sinister legends, whose grim mountainous peaks soared skywards and stood out like giant gray sentinels of pagan gods. Few white men had penetrated this mountain fastness of Buddha and lived to tell of their experiences.

Suddenly his gaze became more intent. His keen eyes fixed themselves on the unmistakable outline of a plane flying about a thousand feet below him. Wings flashing in the morning sunlight the stranger was streaking under full power toward Koh.

Jimmy was dumbfounded. A plane was the last

thing he had expected to encounter this side of the Tibetan border. The British, he knew, never flew over Tibetan territory, and his experience with the Resident at Srinagar had taught him that private enterprise was prohibited.

He made some mental calculations and decided that the ship must have taken off in Tibetan territory. This being true, he thought, there was only one explanation. The plane must in some way be connected with the monastery at Koh. Perhaps the chart which had prompted the attack on Bob was being carried in that very plane. The thought caused him to gasp with dismay.

He decided to investigate and nosed down. Simultaneously a hissing hail of fiery steel raked his ship from nose to tail. Jimmy's blood turned to ice. An inexplicable shiver ran down his spine. Someone was on his tail.

With the instinct of a war-trained pilot he jerked hard on his stick. The Waco went into a tight loop. And not a moment too soon. As the ship leveled out a small combat plane darted by, its gun still vomiting a spiteful rain of death.

Jimmy glanced hurriedly at the rear cockpit of his machine. Powley's face was pale and drawn but his eyes had taken on the glitter of chilled steel. He flourished his automatic menacingly.

Jimmy's lips compressed in a grim tight smile. Bob was certainly an optimist. An automatic and a two-place touring plane against a snappy little combat armed with a synchronized gun wasn't his idea of an even dogfight.

The situation was obvious to Jimmy. As he had conjectured the plane below them was carrying the chart, and Marion's death warrant, to Koh. The little combat has been posted with oriental cunning to head off pursuit. The chances were that it would succeed.

With the odds against him Jimmy acted quickly. He knew that to avoid disaster he would have to fight the combat plane to a standstill. To do so he would have to outmaneuver his enemy at every turn. Whatever he did he had to keep the combat's pilot from getting another bead on him.

The combat pulled into a flashy Immelmann and returned to the attack. But this time his guns were silent. The pilot knew that Jimmy's crate mounted no gun and in consequence was not wasting his ammunition until he got the Waco within his line of fire.

THE COMBAT PILOT leaned forward as though to sight his gun. Jimmy slipped dizzily. Then he banked sharply into the slip and came up under the fuselage of the other plane. The combat flashed into a loop and dropped like a plummet onto the Waco's tail.

Jimmy anticipated the move and put his ship into another loop. He came out a few feet from the combat's tail and clung tenaciously to this position. The combat's pilot pulled into a split-tail bank and quick as a flash Jimmy duplicated the maneuver. Then the machines began flying in tight circles, each trying desperately to fasten on to the other's tail.

Jimmy caught a glimpse of the combat pilot's features, contorted in a mocking smile. "A chink, by golly," he muttered to himself. "Damn it, you slant-eyed bum, I'd take that smile off your face in a minute if I only had a gun!"

If he had a gun. But he hadn't. And there was no other way in which he could hope to dispose of his enemy unless—a desperate thought shot through his mind—he could get near enough to pot him with an automatic.

And why not? He had literally scraped the fuselage of Hun machines back in the war days, so why couldn't he do it now? He'd have to take a chance though and let the combat get on his tail.

Jimmy decided to give it a twirl. To Powley's consternation he straightened out the Waco. The Combat's pilot was quick to take the bait. Buzzing angrily his crate fastened onto Jimmy's tail and a stabbing stream of red hot death leaped from his gun. Then Jimmy looped and as the Waco turned nose down at the top of the loop Jimmy pushed his stick hard forward and went down behind the Combat in a screaming dive. Then he zoomed and came up under the belly of the other plane.

When the Waco's prop was scarcely more than a few feet from the Combat's fuselage Jimmy leveled his machine and brought his automatic into play. Powley followed suit and the two pistols pumped a vicious fusillade into the vitals of the other machine.

It all happened so quickly that the Combat's pilot never realized his danger. Before he could shake the Waco from his blind spot, bullets from the American's pistols were ripping their way through the floor of his fuselage. He slumped in his seat as one of the bullets found its mark. In a dying gesture his hand tugged at the controls and the little Combat shot up like a rocket, stood on its tail for the space of a split second, stalled, and then dropped into a shrieking nose dive to earth.

Jimmy slipped to evade the falling plane. He and Powley watched it hurtle to a terrifying destruction below.

JIMMY'S SATISFACTION was short lived. As he whirled his crate around and headed again for Koh he realized that the Combat had accomplished its purpose. The valuable minutes consumed in fighting it off had given the other plane a lead which he could not hope to overcome. With a sinking feeling in his heart he nosed the Waco down and sent her roaring under full power in pursuit of the ship which he knew was carrying the chart.

Nose down and full power! He knew he was crazy to do it, but, God, he had to get speed! Speed was the only thing that could save Marion now.

Wings moaning, wires shrieking, motor screaming its angry protest at the increased acceleration, the Waco tore through the air like a thunderbolt. The tachometer needle leaped around the dial with alarming rapidity. The old crate was more than exceeding her normal revolutions. Jimmy expected her to peter out instantly but still he kept her nose down and the throttle wide open.

His altimeter read at one thousand before he finally pulled out of that crazy power dive. Still the Buddhist plane was far ahead of him. With the ship flying level again he cast a backward glance at Bob Powley. The look of abject misery on his friend's face cut him to the quick. It was evident that Bob realized the futility of trying to overtake the other ship. He had given himself up to utter despair.

Jimmy ground his teeth in impotent rage. He knew the other plane's crew would be well on their way up the mountainside before he could land his ship and as likely as not they would leave a rear guard to cope with him and Bob. He tried to figure a way of beating that chart to the monastery.

If he could only land higher up. He groaned inwardly at the utter impossibility of such a plan. These Tibetan mountains were nothing but barren piles of rock. The monasteries occupied the only available space on their slopes. It was worth a try anyway. Perhaps he would find a landing spot near the monastery.

He tilted the nose of the Waco and grabbed off altitude. At seven thousand he leveled his ship and sped forward. Mount Koh loomed ahead. Jimmy could see the monastery, almost on a level with his ship. He turned to Bob and gestured wildly. Then he scanned

the mountainside for a landing spot. A hurried survey told him it was useless. His eyes could distinguish nothing but barren rocks and deep, yawning chasms.

He was flying so near the monastery that he could see the buildings plainly. Powley saw them too, and thumped frantically on the fuselage. But Jimmy's interest was centered in other things. He was gazing intently at a huge courtyard that stretched out from the monastery. Except for the high wall that surrounded it, Jimmy thought it would make an excellent landing spot.

Jimmy's mind was made up at once. He was desperate. Wall or no wall he was going to try a landing in that courtyard. It was the one last chance to get Marion away from these murderous Buddhists.

Without hesitation Jimmy swung his crate across the courtyard and banked sharply. As the Waco came around he cut his motor and slipped until his crate was only a few feet above the height of the wall and stalling in.

The plane floated in a flat glide toward the top of the wall and began to settle. Jimmy could feel the controls getting sloppy as she lost flying speed. Powley clutched the coaming of the rear cockpit with both hands as he realized the extent of Jimmy's daring. He saw the nose of the Waco start to go down. A desperate cry escaped his tightly clenched teeth—"God, Jimmy, you'll never make it!"

JIMMY NEVER HEARD that cry. He was fighting with uncanny skill to keep the ship's nose up until she cleared the obstacle. He knew his clearance would have to be a matter of inches if he was to escape crashing into the rocky wall of the monastery that brought the courtyard to an abrupt ending. And inches it was.

With landing gear grazing the wall he literally lifted her over and nosed down sharply. The Waco sat down and flashed across the courtyard. Jimmy fishtailed violently to reduce his speed. The Waco rolled to a stop barely more than fifty feet from the monastery wall.

Immediately a howling mob of mongolian monks streamed into the courtyard. Jimmy slipped a new clip into his automatic and jumped to the ground. Bob Powley was beside him in an instant.

The shrieking horde of fanatical monks started to close in on the daring Americans. A giant mongolian wielded a sinister-looking sword. Jimmy's automatic spat venomously. The mongolian contorted into grotesque shapes and pitched forward on his face. Another of the monks sprang to retrieve the sword but

he never reached it. Jimmy's gun barked again and the monk sank to the ground.

Screeching and howling their imprecations at the intruders the demoniacal monks surged toward them. The air was filled with screams and curses intermingled with the destructive roar of the Americans' pistols. Pandemonium reigned.

The flyers stood their ground and fought back fiercely. Vicious stabbing death leaped from their automatics and ripped into the mass of frenzied mongolians.

Jimmy snatched the sword from where it lay and tore into the Buddhists like a madman. With a fury born of desperation he hewed a semi-circle in their ranks. The ferocity of his attack was more than the mongolians could stand. Panic-stricken, they scattered and ran toward the monastery door. In their frenzied rush for safety they fought and clawed each other for the right to go through the door first. Anything to get away from this crazy demon of the skies.

Jimmy followed them. Bellowing like an enraged bull he drove the monks before him.

Bob Powley started after him but Jimmy waved him back.

"Stand by the plane," he yelled. "Turn her around and get ready for a getaway. I'll take care of these yellow bellies." Then he disappeared through the tall, gaunt doorway of the monastery.

WHEN JIMMY DIVED through that doorway he knew he had to act swiftly. Danger threatened him on every side. Hideous and unspeakable torture calculated to make a man suffer the fearful pangs of a thousand deaths was the inevitable reward if the Buddhist fanatics succeeded in making him a prisoner. But at the moment the consequences were of no importance to Jimmy. His blood was hot. He was fighting mad. He was out to rescue Marion from the horde of shrieking devils that ran before him. And all hell couldn't stop him.

Whooping like an Apache Indian he charged after the fleeing Buddhists, not knowing where they were going and not caring much so long as he reached Marion. With relentless fury he chased them through a dimly lighted corridor whose tall ominous walls towering into the darkness above caught the hysterical yells of the monks and hurled the echoes at him with a thunderous din.

The half crazed fanatics continued in their flight and led him to a huge hall whose bare walls were built

of solid blocks of stone. The floor also of stone was as even as a billiard table. In the center Jimmy saw a huge squat idol; an ugly black Buddha whose hideous, leering features must have been carved by the devil himself.

The monks clustered around this idol and worked themselves into a fanatical frenzy. Their screams resounded through the hall with hollow intensity. An ear-piercing scream rose above the hubbub. Then Jimmy went berserk.

He had caught a glimpse of a woman's figure lying bound on the steps that led up to the idol. He knew it was Marion.

With long sweeping strokes of the sword he drove a path through the milling, shrieking mongolians who in the presence of their idol had been changed from a panic stricken mob into fighting clawing devils. Screams and groans echoed through the great hall as the fanatics strove to reach this slashing, flying madman.

But Jimmy was not to be reached. With reckless courage he fought his way through to Marion and slashed frantically the bonds which held her tied. Marion was free in an instant and Jimmy yelled at her to make the corridor. Then with a bull-like rush he hurled himself at the seething mass of yellow devils that sought to block their path to safety.

Clawing hands tried to drag Marion back but Jimmy was after them like a wildman. Cursing, sweating, hacking, he fought like a demon to reach the corridor. And he did.

Literally sweeping Marion from her feet he grabbed her and charged headlong across the floor.

Before the mongolians could define the significance of this move Jimmy and Marion had darted into the corridor and were racing to the courtyard.

A clamorous racket started up behind them. The mongolians had started in pursuit of their victims. At the doorway they ran into Bob Powley. His face drawn and tense he was covering the corridor with the ugly black muzzle of his automatic. The Waco was drawn up close to the monastery, its motor idling slowly. Powley had left nothing to chance.

Jimmy pushed Marion toward her brother and panted out instructions. "Into the back seat. Bob, and take Marion with you pronto." The howls of their pursuers were getting nearer. Powley clambered into the rear cockpit and dragged Marion with him. Jimmy bounded into the pilot seat and threw full gun. He was not a moment too soon. Even as the motor roared



to life the mob of blood-hungry monks reached the courtyard and tore at them.

The Waco answered instantly and tore across the courtyard. Jimmy grasped the stick feverishly and stared at the high wall which loomed ahead. The Waco's tail came up but the ship did not lift. The rarefied air at seven thousand feet cut down the resistance. She needed more space for a takeoff. Jimmy realized this and his blood ran ice cold. If the old Waco failed now they were done.

STRAIGHT AS A bullet the ship darted toward the wall, every second bringing its crew nearer to destruction. Even Jimmy's iron nerve began to give under the strain. Two hundred feet to go and still no lift.

One hundred. God! He'd have to pick her off and trust to providence.

The wall was bearing down on them with increasing rapidness. Jimmy's hand trembled on the stick. A frightened scream from Marion decided him. With the wall no more than fifty feet away he pulled the stick and picked the crate off. She came off sluggishly and then zoomed.

Jimmy felt her quiver from nose to tail. With beating heart he saw the air speed indicator begin to drop off. Every instant he expected her nose to drop and send them all crashing to a horrible death. Then he saw the gray outline of the wall flash beneath them. They were over.

With lightning-like speed he shot the stick forward. For the briefest second it seemed that the Waco would not take the controls. Jimmy's heart stood still. Then the ship lurched violently and nosed down. Jimmy got the feel of her instantly and flattened out. The old Waco answered him at once and roared toward Srinagar.

It seemed to Jimmy that their troubles were over. He turned and waved joyously to Powley and Marion in the rear seat. But his joy soon changed to consternation,

In his excitement he had forgotten the other plane. He saw it now, though, wheeling ahead of him and preparing to attack.

Jimmy had heard stories of oriental cunning. The grim truth of these stories was facing him now with startling reality. The mongolian aviators, seeing his maneuvers, had evidently defined his purpose and with typical cunning had sent their second plane aloft

to guard against escape. Either that or the monks had by some inexplicable means conveyed word of his daring landing.

The mongolian ship, secure in the knowledge that the Waco mounted no gun, was charging headlong to the attack. Its nose was aflame with vicious spurting fire from a synchronized gun. Red hot bullets ripped into the Waco's cowl.

Down came the mongolian in a screaming nose dive. Jimmy slipped dizzily to avoid the death plunge and then banked tightly into the slip. The Waco whipped around on its wing tip and Jimmy sent her buzzing nose down on the tail of the other ship.

QUICK AS A flash the mongolian looped and screamed down in a vertical dive. A stinging hail of lead and steel poured into the Waco. Jimmy split-tailed out of the line of fire and then half rolled. The Buddhist plane shot by him like a plummet.

In desperation Jimmy's eyes glued themselves to the tail assembly of the diving Buddhist. A crazy plan entered his head—If he could only get near that tail assembly he might yet have a chance. Like lightning he sent his ship hurtling down.

The mongolian shot into a snappy Immelmann and flashed back over his head. Jimmy duplicated the stunt and came out high just behind the other's tail. Then he dived—a crazy full power dive.

Buzzing like a hornet the Waco swooped down. Grim-mouthed, Jimmy held her into the dive and when it seemed that his thrashing prop must tear into the other's tail he zoomed.

Instantly a dull thud shook the Waco from stem to stern. Jimmy's heart almost stopped beating. He had staked his all on the split second that separates dive from zoom. Deliberately he had arced his landing gear into the mongolian's tail assembly.

For an agonizing moment his ship seemed to stand still. Then she rocketed skyward and came under control.

Jimmy flattened out and looked overside. The Buddhist plane, its tail assembly crumpled from the impact with the Waco's landing gear, was weaving crazy patterns through the sky as its pilot fought for control. It fell off erratically on one wing and began to spin. A grim smile suffused Jimmy's face. He knew how that spin would end. Then he banked ship and headed toward the sun and Srinagar.

THE MORNING SUN was beating down in full brilliance. Wings flashing in its gleaming rays,



Jimmy brought the Waco over the drome at Srinagar and slipped for a landing. He made a full circuit at about fifty feet and then eyed the scurrying figures of the government greaseballs as they hustled about the tarmac. His face was tensed with anxiety as he watched, and he waited expectantly. It seemed impossible that his undercarriage could be intact after the way he had rammed the Buddhist plane. But absence of any sign from the ground allayed his fears. The ground crew surely would have chased a man on to the field if anything was wrong.

He cut his gun and floated in tail down. The Waco settled nicely and rolled to a stop. Jimmy jumped to the ground and ran to Marion in the rear cockpit. She greeted him with a wan smile.

"Welcome to Srinagar," Jimmy chirped. "And thank your lucky stars the old Waco's underpinning didn't buckle when I rammed that chink." Then he glanced slyly at Bob Powley and his eyelid dropped in the faintest suspicion of a wink as he added: "Sorry we couldn't bring along your flying idol too."

Marion looked him squarely in the face. Her eyes shone with admiration. "You did, Jimmy," she said. "You are my flying idol."