



THE DEATH TURN

by E.W. CHESS

Fourteen years before, when men fought each other and skies were red with their blood. Allied pilots over a hundred-mile sector of the Front had known von Kruger's Death Turn—and feared it. Now no one remembered that dread maneuver—until one day a stranger with a deep scar across his face walked up to a little Texas flying field—and gave it a new meaning.

JUST TWO MONTHS BEFORE the end of the war there was a story in a New York newspaper about an American pilot who was shot down over the Front. It was a story of a terrific fight over the lines between Harry Hammond and a German by the name of von Kruger. Both men had gone down, one of them in flames. Just once in the story there was a reference to von Kruger's "Death Turn." People who read the tale glanced hurriedly over that part. They did not know what the Death Turn meant. They did not know that the Allied pilots over a hundred-mile sector of the Front had learned to fear those two words.

It was fourteen years before the Death Turn was

ever heard of again, and then upon a little flying field just outside of El Paso, Texas.

A young fellow by the name of Frank Hammond had just taken off the field in a second-hand plane which he called "The Blue Bullet." For all he knew, there was only one man watching him—a shriveled-up old-timer who had made his home around flying fields for twenty years. They called him "Pop" because it seemed to fit him. Half of the work he did for people he did for nothing. He'd helped Hammond assemble his plane, and get her in shape for a race for five thousand dollars without any thought of pay. Just a way of his, that was all.

The Blue Bullet had just skimmed over the trees

at the end of the field. She was making her first test against time, and she flashed by the water tank like a shot. Pop pressed the stem of a borrowed stopwatch, and mumbled something that sounded like "Good Luck." His heart was beating a little faster than it should have.

As he stood gazing at the watch, a stranger walked up. He was a thin, ghost-eyed man who wore an ill-fitting gray suit. From the corner of his right eye, and terminating at the cleft in his chin, was a jagged, ugly scar. For fully a minute he gazed at Pop before he spoke, and then only to mumble a name, and ask softly if there was one by the name of Frank Hammond upon the field.

Pop glanced around, and then back at the horizon.

"He just took off. Making one round of the course. But if he don't come back in seven minutes, he's down, see? And down hard. Them planes don't come down easy. They come down hard."

Pop's fist was shaking. His eyes were glued to his watch. The second hand was moving around faster than he'd ever seen it move before. Slowly his hand gripped. His lower lip drooped and his eyes closed.

"He's down," he said, almost in a whisper.

The man with the scar said nothing. If he had any emotion about a plane going down, it wasn't written upon his face. As he lighted a cigarette, Pop stumbled into a shabby roadster in front of the hangar, and motioned him to follow.

THEY sped madly down the narrow clay road. Along either side were greasewood shrubs, and bald hills of white sand—impossible landing places. On and on. The man with the gash looked passively out upon strange country. Pop didn't notice the silence, then. He was driving toward a point where he expected to find a dead man. Suddenly he caught a glimpse of blue down the road.

"There she is," he said hoarsely. One leg stiffened upon the brake, and the momentum forced them against the windshield.

The Blue Bullet was upright, and Frank Hammond was standing at the side of the road. There was a grin on his face as if he'd done something he was proud of. He stood looking at them before he came up to the car.

"I wouldn't have bet a nickel on your being alive," said Pop.

"Broke a feed line. But I put her down." He was proud he'd put her down in a space that wasn't wider than a dime.

"You put her down, kid—but God was hanging on your tailskid when you did. I never saw a man get a break like that in twenty years. But I guess it's about time you was getting a break."

The strange man with a scar was digging into his inner coat pocket for something.

"This guy came up just as you took off. Asked me where you was," said Pop. He got out of the car, and walked down the road, glancing around at the shrubs upon either side. He kept shaking his head, and saying, "I'm damned if I know how you put her down whole."

"It vas war, den," said the man. His lean fingers clutched at a folded piece of paper. It had been carried a long, long time, and was almost black, now. There were cracks in the creases, and the light shone through as Hammond read the last document of a war-time pilot.

"I am going to die. The doctor just told me I shall not live until morning. Von Kruger, the man who came down with me, is here. He says he might go to America after the war sometime. He may see you if he does. We crashed in the air and came down together, and I pulled him out of his plane before he burned up. He's a good guy, and has been swell in getting a good doctor for me. Maybe you've heard of his famous Death Turn over there. I don't know. Anyway, good luck, kid. And my love to Mother."

That was all of the last message from Harry, written in a dimly lighted cubicle of the hospital on August the seventh, nineteen hundred and seventeen, at the Karlsruhe prison camp.

Frank Hammond didn't speak. He couldn't. The nervous scrawl of his dead brother's last message had leaped the barrier of time. Fourteen years! Fourteen years before, when men fought and skies were red with their blood!

"What was the Death Turn?" Hammond said finally.

IT HAD been just a month before that two men had driven out from El Paso and posted a sign upon the hangar door.

Air Race—Five Thousand Dollar
Prize—Anybody—Information
Drexel Oil Company

The course of the race included the circling of the water tank upon the field, and the new oil derrick five miles away that had been spewing out gold. It was an advertising scheme, but the five thousand dollars were real. Possibly the five thousand would never have been

offered if its donor hadn't thought his son Dale Curry would win. It looked like a walk-away from the first.

Dale Curry had been to the Front, but something had happened there. No one knew just what it was. He came back with a tale that he'd gotten five Germans, but the rumor went around that he'd never been up to the lines at all. Possibly the stories of his combats were too vivid even to convince the people back home. All of that might have been forgotten if he'd ever stopped talking about his war record.

Dale had been picked as the winner of the race because he'd been flying off and on since the war. He had always had his own plane, but the last was something more than a plane. He got the Wright Brothers to send him one of their "Specials," which cost just a little over six figures. Dozens of the people were at the field when it came in. He invited everyone he knew, and Frank Hammond was one of them. Dale had played along with Hammond because Frank's brother had been shot down over the Front, and Dale seemed to think Frank and he had something in common. He didn't know that Hammond was doing everything he could to borrow two thousand dollars and buy the Blue Bullet. He would have laughed had anyone told him about it. Everybody knew Frank Hammond didn't have a cent.

Dale Curry was a little bit too sure of himself the day his plane was set out in front of the hangar. It was a beautiful monoplane—squat, with a two-hundred-and-twenty horsepower Whirlwind motor.

"That's a great-looking plane, Dale," Hammond said.

"The best that money can buy."

Some few of Dale's friends came up and Hammond was introduced.

"This is Frank Hammond," he said. "His brother was shot down over the Front, during the war. We used to be in the same outfit, him and me. Ask Frank. His brother used to write him about things."

Hammond hardly remembered the time when his brother had been shot down, it had been so long before. He glanced at Dale and let the thing pass.

"Yes, his brother and me used to be in the 33rd together. I wasn't there when he had his last flight, or maybe I'd have gone down too." No use spreading it on too thick. "Good guy, Harry. One of the best. Damn shame that bad German outfit got on his trail. A bad outfit, those under von Kruger. Yeah, they used to call him 'the Wasp'."

When everybody had gone, Hammond turned to Dale.

"Say, Dale," he said, still a little confused about it all. "What's the reason for your telling everybody you were in my brother's outfit overseas?"

Dale glanced at him quickly. "Why, he wrote to your mother about it. She showed me the letters when I got back."

"Funny, she never said anything to me about it."

"Say, do you think I'm lying?"

"I didn't say you were," said Hammond, and he started to walk away. But Dale took a few steps after him and grabbed his shoulder.

"Listen, you! You're trying to make a fool out of me, and I won't stand for it, see?"

Dale was raging, his breath catching somewhere in his lungs. His fists clenched suddenly, and he struck. Hammond staggered back and felt the blood streaming from his half-open lips. He gathered his strength together and got up feebly. He stood swaying, muttering something he didn't remember afterward. He only remembered that Dale struck him again and he went down.

The next day Hammond got the Empire Department Store to help him raise the two thousand he needed for the Blue Bullet. In his enthusiasm he almost forgot about his trouble with Dale. Hammond didn't know he was on the field the day of the Blue Bullet's first trial. But as they towed the plane back along the road, he thought of Dale. He thought of him because by his side was a man with a gash across his face, whose name was von Kruger. And von Kruger had once been the famed "Wasp."

IT SEEMED hours before they got to the hangar. They were inspecting the plane when Dale Curry came out to the field and stood looking on for some time before he spoke.

"Well, that was one way to fly a plane."

"Broken feed line. That's all," said Hammond. He didn't look up.

"A broken neck if you're not careful. Who's that guy?"

Von Kruger looked up, fixed his piercing eyes upon Dale for a moment, and then made an effort to smile.

"German. He was in the war."

"Yeah, they all say that."

"He really was," said Hammond pointedly.

"Yeah, and I suppose he was a great flyer."

No one answered. There was something about the deft manner of von Kruger's working that defied comment.

"A great German flyer," continued Dale in his surly

way. "He looks like a Swede to me. Say, Fritz, know anything about the great German flyers?"

Von Kruger nodded.

"Well, listen. I fought 'em back in the war. There was a hot one by the name of von Kruger. A big ace."

A kind of softness came into von Kruger's eyes. Yes, yes. He did know something about von Kruger in the war. He was in von Kruger's Jagdstaffel.

"Well, you should know something about his Death Turn."

Von Kruger smiled grimly. The famous turn of von Kruger—the turn he used to get his man. There was nothing so complicated about that turn. Only a vertical bank, nothing more. The swiftest way to get around, to surprise. As von Kruger explained, his hand went through the motions of the turn, first level, then turning upright as his hand circled. That was all there was to the famous Death Turn.

"Oh, yeah? Well, if that was all there was to it, his Death Turn would never have got the best of me."

Dale went away with a smirk upon his face, and the German glanced at Frank Hammond perplexedly.

They slept that night in the hangar. Von Kruger had no other place to go. They'd just finished a hurried breakfast at a small restaurant near by when Hammond had a telephone call from the president of the Empire Department Store. He came back to them with a worried look on his face. The man who had helped him raise money wanted to see him.

"I'll be back before dinner," Hammond said. Von Kruger could wait for him. They shook hands and Hammond left.

Hammond was ushered in to the president, a small fat German with gray eyes, who wouldn't look at Hammond, but sat gazing at the floor.

"I was told you almost crashed yesterday."

"It wasn't serious."

"I have been told by good authority that it is very serious. You can't come down in the race, and still win. Answer me—can you?"

"But there wasn't any trouble. Just a forced landing."

Bloch shook his head gravely, and his fingers tapped exasperatingly on the edge of his desk.

"When I made arrangements to raise money for your plane, I was under the impression that you were a good pilot. I understand now that you are no more than a beginner. Is that true?"

"I've not had many hours in the air. But enough."

"Your plane is to advertise this store. Everything with the name of the Empire upon it is first class. I

want a man who can win, not someone who will drop out of the race. It would make a laughing stock out of us. You understand that, I presume."

"I've had a great German flyer to look at it, and he says it is all right."

Insistently, and at his wits' end for a reason, he told of von Kruger.

Bloch's eyes blinked, and he arose from his chair.

"Who?" he demanded. "A great German flyer."

"Send him to me. Send him to me!" shouted Bloch. His hand dropped with a thud upon the desk. "That's all!"

HAMMOND returned to the hangar that noon. Pop knew something was wrong, but he didn't say anything. He knew Hammond would speak if he wanted to.

"It's all over," said Hammond, dropping his hands in a gesture of futility.

"All over with what?"

"The race, Pop. That's the only thing I ever wanted much. Where's Dale?"

"Out by his plane."

Hammond turned and walked out of the hangar, followed by Pop.

There were two new planes upon the deadline that afternoon. Two more of the entries in the race had just arrived. Just beyond was the Special, and alongside stood Dale Curry, talking to a few of his hangers-on.

"Come here, Dale," said Hammond. Dale looked up and walked over to him.

"Well, spit it out!"

"Listen," said Hammond. "Did you say anything to Bloch about my forced landing yesterday?"

"Maybe," said Dale.

"What did you tell him?"

"Oh, just the truth."

"What do you mean, the truth?"

"That you're pretty young to fly. No flying hours, much. Just for your own good, that's all."

"I'll show you how good I am."

Dale paled a bit, but didn't move. His hangers-on crowded around, and Pop came up and pulled Hammond away to the hangar office.

Hammond and Pop were still there when von Kruger came in a little later. Hammond was sitting upon a box, his head between his hands, when the German closed the door. Hammond looked up, and studied him for a moment.

"There's a rich German in the town who wants to talk to you. He's the man who helped me get the plane. I don't know what he wants."

"Vhy should I go?" said von Kruger.

"Never mind. He's a German. He'd like to talk to some one from Germany, I guess."

Von Kruger went under protest. Pop found a car that was going into town. It had hardly gotten to the main road before Pop ran into the hangar. .

"What's the matter. Pop?"

"Dale is taking the Special around the course."

Hammond cast a hurried and perplexed glance at the old man. His mouth opened as if to speak, and then paused.

"What's on your mind?"

"A race, now."

"Serious?"

"Yeah, come on, Pop."

They ran out to where the Blue Bullet stood on the line. Hammond crawled into the pit and Pop went to the propeller.

"Switch off," called Pop.

"Switch off," answered Hammond. Pop turned the prop over a few times, and then stopped it at a point of compression.

"Contact," he called.

"Contact," repeated Hammond.

The motor caught. The Blue Bullet sat trembling with vibration. Minutes passed. Pop came alongside and held himself to the cockpit with his hands. "She's warm enough, I think."

"Pull the chocks," yelled Hammond.

Pop ran to the right wing tip, then to the left, stopping each time to pull the string to the block under each wheel. He waved his hands then.

"All clear!"

The Blue Bullet moved forward, bumping over the field, just as the Special swept over the trees and above the horizon. Then a long trail of white dust streaked over the field. The Blue Bullet moved forward sluggishly, gathering momentum until it seemed to spring into the sky.

Hammond didn't know that Dale had sensed a competitor, had throttled down, waiting until only yards separated them. For a few moments, each held his place. Then, slowly, foot after foot, the Special drew away. No effort on the part of Hammond could help him. Just a few yards after the first mile, but the Special was still drawing away farther and farther, and there was no human power that could hold her back—nothing. Hammond knew he was beaten. He was beaten after the first lap. It was hopeless.

When he landed, it was a landing of surrender. Dale came over just as Hammond got out of his plane.

"You poor fool," said Dale. "You've got a lot to learn about planes."

Hammond didn't say anything. He was too crushed.

LATER that afternoon von Kruger came back to the field after spending two hours with Bloch, the president of the Empire. Slowly he related their conversation. Von Kruger understood everything now. Bloch had made it possible for Hammond to raise money for the plane. But he had shrewdly retained the power to control every detail of the race. Bloch was a business man.

"It doesn't make any difference," said Hammond. "She can't win." Hammond told him about the race. Von Kruger watched him. Through his mind was passing the memory of other days, of other ambitions, when he, too, was a man the age of the one who sat before him.

"Hey, Fritz! Where are you?" Dale shouted into the hangar. He wanted von Kruger's help. He'd pay him. Von Kruger hesitated and left, mumbling something Hammond did not quite understand. It was nightfall before he came back.

"I do not like dot man, Dale," said von Kruger.

"You haven't got anything on me," agreed Hammond.

"Dale pays for some one to listen to his almost fights with a guy by the name of von Kruger. Say, who the hell is this guy von Kruger, anyway?" asked Pop.

"He was a big German ace during the war," said Hammond, "but the Germans forgot about him afterwards."

"It's a damned shame von Kruger ain't here. He'd make Dale eat his words."

"That's von Kruger," said Hammond.

Pop glanced up at the German with an unsatisfied smile. "Kidding?"

"No."

"Shake hands."

Pop was puzzled, but he shook hands.

Later a boy came in with a wire for Frank Hammond, which read:

"I still control Blue Bullet as per terms of contract until two thousand dollars is paid and forbid your flying plane tomorrow. Other pilot arranged for.

Bloch."

The wire fluttered to the floor. Hammond's head fell between his hands. "She won't win, anyway." That seemed his only consolation. Von Kruger got up,

and motioned them to follow. Then went to the Blue Bullet, which had been put into the hangar. Slowly the strange eyes of the German went over every inch of her. Halfway through the inspection Hammond turned to Pop.

"He's looking for parts that might cause wind resistance, I think."

"Vot you call it?" asked von Kruger.

"Wind resistance."

"Wind resistance." He nodded. He was looking for points that might cause resistance, turnbuckles that had been streamlined, and cables that would cause less resistance with triangular strips on their backs. And the tires. Were there smaller tires to be found? Maybe. Hammond didn't know.

"Yeah," said Pop.

He left the hangar, and when he came back, there were two smaller tires under his arm. They fitted perfectly.

At four in the morning the change had been made. But the work had a strange effect upon von Kruger. For the first time he started talking about the Front. He told about his famous Death Turn, and why his vertical bank was better than anyone else's. He had never used the rudder on the turn. Just put her over on the side and then jerked back the stick. Faster that way. Hammond watched von Kruger's hand as it went slowly through the motions. Hammond kept thinking about the hand of von Kruger even after he got into his bunk. Don't use the rudder—just the stick. Just turn her over, and jerk back

FOR an hour people had been streaming into the field. There were banners hanging from the hangar. Vendors of peanuts and cold drinks called out their wares. There were four planes upon the deadline. Two of them were idling over. Some one was turning the prop of one.

A good twenty minutes before the race a large car with three passengers caused the crowd to push away and give it room up to the hangar door. Some one made an effort to stop it from going farther.

"This is Mr. Bloch, of the Empire. He's got something to do with the Blue Bullet," shouted the driver.

The car moved up to the hangar door. Bloch got out, and the two men followed him into the office where Hammond was talking to von Kruger. Both of them looked tired.

"Why isn't the airplane outside?" Bloch demanded.

"I want everybody to see it."

"We'll get it out in a little while."

"A little while! I want it now. Say, you, Hammond. You got my wire? You understand it, don't you? I'll give you five hundred when we win. Is that all right? I'm square with you, see?"

The two men with Bloch looked on sullenly and said nothing. One of them finally cornered Hammond.

"Listen, kid, don't try to pull any fast stuff. You know what that contract calls for. This German guy is flying, and if things don't happen that way, we got a warrant for you."

Hammond walked away. They were just taking the Blue Bullet to the deadline. He ran after them—he didn't know why. Possibly just to get close to the plane he had hoped to fly. Just to touch it. Just to feel the smooth surface under his fingers. But he was rebelling with all the power he had.

He watched von Kruger crawl in. He watched Pop turn the prop, and then spin it around. Some one came up behind him then. Hammond didn't turn.

"So the little boy is staying on the ground. Listen, take my advice, and stay out of these airplanes. They're dangerous." As Dale walked away. Hammond had an impulse to go, too. Just some place—he didn't care where. Nothing had gone right. Nothing ever had. As he stood there, he became conscious of von Kruger's eyes watching him.

Some one down the line shouted time. A few more minutes, that was all, and they'd be off. Seconds slid by. A flag was waved. The planes were moving out to the center of the field for the take-off of the twenty-lap race. The Blue Bullet was moving out, and Hammond was not in the pit. He was only watching it, following every movement. Something happened then. The propeller of the Blue Bullet had stopped. Von Kruger was motioning for some one to come. Pop moved away from the crowd. Thirty or forty steps and he stopped, sun-eying the crowd. His eyes found Hammond, and Pop motioned that he needed help.

They ran to the plane.

"Come here," called von Kruger. "No, dis side."

Hammond ran around. He was breathless, looking up at the gashed face of the German. He was mumbling something which Hammond could not hear. His eyes had turned to the crowd, a hundred yards away, and then back.

Pop was at the prop.

"Contact!" he shouted.

"Contact!"

The propeller flashed around. As it did, von Kruger retarded the gas and quickly crawled from the pit.

"You get in—quick!" he said. He removed his goggles and gave them to Hammond, who pushed them over his head.

"Quick!"

Hammond crawled quickly over the side of the Blue Bullet. For a fleeting second he felt the pressure of von Kruger's hand on his arm. There was a tender look in his eyes, the tenderness that is found in eyes that have gone through a dozen hells and come out alive.

Pop was smiling. He knew, Pop did. It had all been planned, and it worked like a charm. He was motioning for Hammond to move on.

"Good luck," whispered von Kruger. "and good-bye." He ran away and was swallowed up in the crowd.

Out in front a flag was waving for the take-off. One after another the planes shot across the field. The Blue Bullet was the last. It leaped across the field like a shot, rounded the water tower, and speeded on.

The race had started. Twenty laps of speed. Twenty times the planes would circle pinnacles which stretched up into the sky. Hammond's hand was shaking, his heart pumping blood through his body, his eyes seeking a plane that could not be far ahead.

The Blue Bullet was moving up on a pale green craft. He would pass it soon, and pass it before the first turn. It seemed to move slowly back toward him, foot after foot.

They were abreast. The pilot saw, but it was useless. He dropped behind. Just a glance and it was gone. But there were three ahead. There were still three when Hammond banked closely around the oil derrick and righted the Blue Bullet for its return flight. She had more power in that turn. She seemed to whip vigor she had never had before.

THE crowd was waving down below. The first lap was over. The water tower was passed. And then another lap, and still another. Just before the fourth turn, Hammond was wing tip to wing tip with a brown biplane. The turn would mean everything.

As he flashed on, Hammond's eyes glanced below. A lone figure stood upon the road, far from the crowd. His hands were waving frantically. Hammond waved. It was von Kruger, wishing him luck. No, there was something else. One hand was making a motion. One hand. He was making the motion of the Death Turn. That was it! Von Kruger wanted him to use the famed killer turn of the Western Front. The stick. Nothing

else. Just throw her over on the side, and pull back the stick. That was all.

It was just a flash, that figure upon the ground, and the water tank was almost upon Hammond. He threw his stick to the left, waited, and jerked it back to the seat. A whirl! A sickening jerk that plastered Hammond to his seat. His head sank down; his breath caught—and then he was around. He was in third place.

The crowd set up a wild cry. They didn't know what it was that pleased them. All they saw was a plane that whipped around a curve like the crack of a whip. It sent their hearts to their throats, and the blood rushing through their veins.

The eleventh and twelfth lap passed—the thirteenth. At the fourteenth, Hammond moved up into second place by the quickness of a turn at the water tower. Again the crowd was frantic.

It was Dale Curry or Frank Hammond now. Curry was three hundred yards ahead, but he was circling his turns. No reason to take chances, he thought. No reason to go mad, to play with death.

Hammond had a reason. On and on. The fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth. He was whirling around corners with only a few bare feet to spare. A slight misjudgment would mean a crash, but he was gaining. Each turn Curry's lead was cut down twenty yards, but on the straightaway Hammond wasn't gaining. It was the Death Turn that was cutting down the space between them.

The crowd below knew it was a race between two now. They were shouting and betting upon the outcome. Each turn held them breathless. At the seventeenth the space between the Blue Bullet's wing was so close that the women below looked away. They didn't want to see a man die.

"The flying fool!" some one shouted.

"They're even!"

Even! Wing tip to wing tip. Yard after yard and going like mad. Each of them was whipping around the curves now. Another lap. Another. It seemed endless.

The nineteenth lap and still together. Pop was running up and down the field as if he were crazy. He couldn't say anything. He couldn't do anything but wait. Since the tenth lap he hadn't watched any of the turns. It had been too much for him since then. His heart was in his throat somewhere, and he wouldn't take his eyes off the ground.

As they turned the nineteenth time, Pop heard some one gasp.

"What's the matter? What's the matter?"

"Close . . . close. He'll kill himself next time!"

The few minutes before the end Pop sat down on the ground, his head between his hands, until he heard the wail of the motors. Just one more turn. The last. The finish line was after that.

"He'll kill himself. He'll kill himself!"

Pop didn't take a breath. He didn't look up. Some, one screamed. Something crashed. A woman fainted. The crowd was racing over the field, fighting its way frantically forward. An ambulance went racing toward the spot where a plane had fallen. Minutes passed before the people who swept over the field knew it was Dale Curry who had gone down. At the last turn his wing tip had clipped the water tower. He spun half a circle, and crashed. He wasn't killed, but his Special was a wreck. Lucky guy, that, getting up and walking out of the broken remnants of his plane.

Back at the judges' stand, Hammond fingered his goggles as a man wrote out a check.

"Here's the check, Hammond. Made out to Frank Hammond, winner of the two-hundred-mile race. Lucky man. You'll be a Lindbergh some day."

Somebody shouted, "Speech." Frank stood watching the crowd.

"Thanks for the check. Thanks." Bloch was pushing through the crowd to get to Hammond. His two men from the department store were there. They'd stayed.

"Great boy!" shouted Bloch. "Great! Quick change you did on the field."

"Yes," said Hammond. "But it wasn't your fault, and tell those two big bozos to watch me while I pay you two thousand dollars. I'll be coming around after the three thousand change tomorrow."

"What's the matter?"

But Hammond was lost in the Crowd. Pop was near him. Each moment they thought they would find von Kruger. Hammond wanted to thank him. But they never found him, then. Von Kruger had fulfilled a promise. He was gone.