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**PHINEAS  
PINKHAM**  
howl

# HUNBUGS

*written and illustrated by*  
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*Meet Lieutenant Ignatius Moots, newest member of the famous Ninth Pursuit.  
You may like him or you may not, but let us give you a tip—don't ever bet with him. Phineas did!*

FLYING ACES (V17N4) JULY 1934



**A** BAKER'S DOZEN OF BUZZARDS of the incomparable Ninth Pursuit Squadron were swinging lead in the big room of the Frog farmhouse.

One sat apart from the rest. The others looked at him askance, which, in any language, means sidewise and very dirtily.

No, this time the cynosure of narrowing optics was not Lieutenant Phineas "Carbuncle" Pinkham of Boonetown, Iowa. It was a chunky, moon-faced individual who answered to the name of Lieutenant Ignatius Moots. Ignatius would bet you on anything. At birth, it would seem, Lieutenant Moots had been saturated with that rare gift of the magi, gambler's luck. Ignatius would lay you even money on the time and place of the turning of a worm, on how many short hairs there were on the back of Major Rufus Garrity's neck, or on how many bullet holes a flight of Spads would gross after a brush with the Von war chariots.

Doubting Thomases had laid their money on the line, and Lieutenant Moots had scooped it up. Even the inimitable Pinkham had found to his sorrow that legerdemain, sleight of hand, conjury and other mystic powers into which he had delved were no antidotes for Lieutenant Moots' uncanny ability to prognosticate the whims of Fate. Two days after Moots had hit the drome, he had bet Phineas that the next dog to amble onto the field of the Ninth would be white and carry at least two black spots on its tunic.

"Haw," Phineas had guffawed, and had dug down into his jeans for ten francs. "It's a bet, an' are you nutty—oh, boys!"

Not fifteen minutes after the wager had become official, a white pooch had trotted nonchalantly across the drome, and its hide had sported not only two black patches, but four.

No, you could not beat Lieutenant Ignatius Moots. To make the situation in the squadron mess hall all the more intolerable, Ignatius was thumbing a roll of currency that even a horse would not try to swallow at one gulp. The group of pilots from whom this legal tender had been gleaned seemed to tighten together like a knot in a shoelace when one pulls hard at both free ends. Not even when they had expected a Boche air raid had the Spad pushers of the Ninth been on such tenterhooks. For twenty-four hours before, they had pooled their lean assets to make a raid on the Moots' treasury in a desperate attempt to inflate their flattened pockets.

"Termorrer night," Lieutenant Moots had said,

"there's a chance to git your dough back. The first brass hat that sticks his mug into headquarters after six o'clock will have a black mustache. Are you on?"

The pilots had been on with a vengeance. It had not seemed possible that the Moots' luck could hold. An hour after the bet had been made, Ignatius had gone in to Bar-le-Duc. Some time later Bump Gillis, Captain Howell and two others had decided to motor to the same Frog metropolis. That same night, very late, Bump had returned to the drome with bated breath and homicide hived up in his heart. An indignation meeting had been arranged hurriedly.

"I'm tellin' ya," Bump had hissed out of one corner of his mouth, "he's a phoney. I was sittin' in the cafe when I hears voices through the partition. It was Moots, an' he had another guy with him. He frames it up for the guy to come walkin' in with a colonel's hat on at quarter past six. He also says to the guy to carry a cane to make it look good. The dirty—"

"We'll clean him," Phineas Pinkham had cracked. "We'll demand all our dough back. An' then I'll slam him. I'll knock him stiff."

AND NOW the zero hour was drawing near. The clock on the wall ticked off a flock of minutes until it read ten minutes past six. Lieutenant Moots complacently returned his roll to his pocket and rubbed the palms of his hands together.

"I'll set myself up in some kind of payin' business," he soliloquized with a grin. "A guy never gits rich workin'. Now look at me. I come to the drome with just two bucks an'—"

"Let him rave!" purred Bump. "We got him on the hip. I read that in Shakespeare once."

"Either it was a misprint or Shakespeare was wrong," muttered Phineas. "He meant 'on the jaw.' Oh, when I whack him—"

Time plodded on. Twenty past six! From outside came the sound of auto brakes squealing. Lieutenant Moots yawned. Then the door opened. Phineas got to his feet. He walked toward the man who stood surveying the interior of the big room. The fellow wore a trench coat and carried a cane. A black mustache decorated his face.

"Pay me," grinned Lieutenant Moots. "I—"

"Hello, Fishface," Phineas flung at the visitor. "Right on time, ain't ya? Well, well—"

"Wha-a-a-a-at?" snorted the visitor.

"Swell actor, ain't ya?" said Phineas, and he swung a bunch of knuckles up from the floor.



*Kerwop!* The man with the black mustache made a queer sound. He seemed to rise clear of the floor and hang in space like a drifting goose feather for a dozen seconds. Then he came down, to spread out on the boards like a heap of empty salt sacks. Another big figure oozed in through the door, tripped over the shellacked one and emulated a ball player sliding for the plate.

Major Rufus Garrity barged out of his sanctum just as the big officer was crawling around on his hands and knees in search of his hat.

Phineas Pinkham, brushing his hands, opened his mouth to say something, then changed his mind. A sneaky feeling that all was not according to Hoyle swept over him. He looked at Moots, gulped, then scratched his head. "Where's your commanding officer?" boomed a voice. "Who slugged the colonel? Somebody say something!"

"I'm in command here," howled Garrity, stumbling across the floor. "Pinkham, what does this mean?"

"That is not a colonel," Phineas blared forth. "He was impersonatin' an officer an' I batted him one. I'll also accuse Lieutenant Moots of bein' a dirty crook."

"Wh-who's impersonating a c-crook?" came a bewildered voice.

"Wh-who's a dirty colonel? I—er—I—"

The man Phineas had walloped had gotten up and was trying to locate a means of support. He finally wound one arm around Garrity's neck and then pointed at his attacker.

"Those three men hit me!" he muttered from the fog that engulfed him. "Those three men with freckles an' buck teeth."

"That man," cracked the big officer, who was no less than a brigadier-general, "is Colonel Bingle from Chaumont. Garrity, this is the most dastardly outrage I

have ever witnessed in the army and I've been in it for thirty years. Garrity, what is the meaning of this?"

"I know as much as you do," groaned Sir Rufus. "Pinkham—"

"I—er—well, huh," sputtered Phineas, "it looks like a mistake has been made. Er—they will happen, even in the best armies, an'—"

The other pilots sidled toward the door. Lieutenant Moots, a strange smile on his face, mooched to a window and slid through.

"Lieutenant Pinkham, eh?" blazed the brigadier. "So! I've heard what an insubordinate, fresh, unprincipled upstart you are. Nobody can handle you, what? When I get through with you, you'll be as tame as a kitten. Back at Fort Bliss they called me the Iron Duke!"

"Huh, you wouldn't think I was the Oil of Castor, would you?"

"Who said that?" cracked the brigadier and whirled on his heels. For the voice had come from behind Garrity. Phineas straightened his lips and assumed a very innocent mien.

Major Garrity groaned and waited for the hurricane. It did not take the brigadier long to oblige. He shook his fists under every nose that was handy, and threatened to disrupt the squadron, to spread these fresh buzzards to the four winds and hand each a shovel.

"And how long have you been in the army, Garrity?" he finally blared at the Old Man. "Ever hear of discipline, major, or of respect for a superior?"

Major Garrity suddenly felt very nasty. "I am only a beginner," he snarled. "Only twenty years, sir. I have never even been known as a brass doorknob."

The brigadier swore and promised to bust Garrity. Then he turned on Phineas. The Boonetown flyer had the colonel up against the wall and was diligently brushing him off.

"It was all a mistake," he was assuring the officer. "Be a sport, as what is a *guerre* without a sense of humor?"

"Now I thought you was somebody else and—well, what's two teeth, huh? Your gums'll shrink up and your wisdom teeth will git more room and won't never ache. Now, it was like this—"

"Garrity," howled the brigadier, "put that man under arrest."

"With pleasure," responded the Old Man.

"Pinkham, get to your hut. Consider yourself—"

"Awright, awright." interrupted the culprit. "I will

show you at the trial. I've got witnesses."

"Now," the brigadier growled as Phineas shuffled out, "we'll get down to business. I came down from Chaumont to find out why those six night-flying Jerries can't be driven out of their holes. After a look at the way the Air Force is run. I can understand it. Now. Garrity, I'm going to see that the bombing squadrons get what they're yelling for. That Boche rail center near the Moselle has got to be wiped out. If it isn't—"

"Oh, I know the answer," groaned the Old Man. "That damned rail center! Let me tell you something, sir. Those six Jerries aren't just half a dozen night flyers. They're experts. Been trained to fly at night and at night only. Their hideout is between here and the Moselle. They don't come out in the daytime. How're you going to spot them, eh? Did you ever hunt raccoons at high noon? And why can't our pursuit ships ever cope with them? They don't go in for night flying at the flying schools. A lot of the buzzards they send up here didn't attend enough classes in the daytime. Maybe we can go out flying lanterns, sir. Maybe—"

"None of your lip, major!" cracked the man from Chaumont. "I want action. There's no such word as 'can't' in my dictionary. I want some combat ships to protect the bombers. Only two nights ago two Handley Pages went over. Those six Jerries came out of nowhere and knocked one down. The other landed behind the Jerry lines. A fine state of affairs—six Jerries throwing the monkey wrench into the entire Yankee offensive machinery. Garrity, it's preposterous."

"Yeth," snapped the colonel through a gap where two good teeth had been, "he'th right. It'th prepoththeroth. Juthth thixth Germanth—"

"Oh, shut up, Bingle," yapped the brigadier. "Wait until you get some teeth before—"

"Maybe you don't know this," Garrity went on. "Those Jerries are equipped with planes armed like the new Allied Salamanders. Guns all over them. Those six Huns are night raiders. They're like cats. I bet they can't even fly in daylight. German ingenuity, sir. Specialized fighters. Six planes screened from view from upstairs. At night they wait until they hear the sounds of props and see lights from exhausts. Then they sneak up. Tell Chaumont to start a night school for Yankee pilots. When they graduate, we'll help the bombers."

"Now, look here, Garrity, I won't brook such insolence. I'm ordering you to—"

And while this harangue was seething in Garrity's



official cubicle, Phineas Pinkham was sitting in his hut, having a powwow with several of his fellows who were now, like himself, reduced to abject poverty.

"I CAN SEE IT ALL as plain as day," the sore thumb of the Ninth was moaning, "that guy he hired didn't show up. He got cold feet at the last minute, an' what happens along but a real brass hat with a black mustache! It ain't possible. That bum's luck is crooked, somehow. An' I'm broke and under arrest."

"It's no use," said Howell. "Even you can't beat him, Carbuncle, so what is the use?"

"Ha," grinned Bump Gillis, "there's one thing I can't help but like about the mushhead. He has got Mister Pinkham all booked up for a nice room in the Hotel de Barbed-Wire. It is an ill wind—"

"Smart, ain't you?" cracked Phineas. "Got me beaten, huh? Well, I'll show the fathead. I'm goin' to clean that bum down so fine that if shoes for elephants were sellin' in France for a cent a pair, he wouldn't even be able to buy sandals for a housefly. Oh, I'll git him. Nobody ever got the best of a Pinkham for good."

"Talk, just talk," Bump grinned, and stifled a yawn. "Git out, as I have got to think," snapped Phineas. "I am riled to the quick. I won't be responsible."

When he was alone, Phineas called himself into conference. Lieutenant Moots! Only on the drome two weeks, and he threatened to relegate Phineas Pinkham to second fiddle. Such a thing could never be. The Pinkham brain ticked over and turned out more revs in five minutes than a Hisso prop could in a month. Ideas spurted out like shavings from a bucksaw. Phineas pounced upon one and sensed its great possibilities. He took a pair of scissors from a drawer and cut a small piece of oilcloth from the table cover. To this he hitched a piece of wire. This done to his satisfaction, he unearthed a can of shellac and a brush from his stores, and in very few moments he had the wisp of oilcloth colored to his taste.

"I guess that bum never read enough about me," Phineas observed to himself, "or he would know better than to—" His musings broke off, his thoughts turning to the Boche. The subject of the six Hun night raiders drove every other thought from his brain. He, Phineas Pinkham, was in the bad graces of Chaumont once more. He would have to do something to pull himself out of a possible sojourn in Blois. "They got some sound detectors out on their secret drome, too, I bet," he mused. "They only go out when they hear bombers. They wouldn't go out just to chase one Spad at night.

If a guy could git them out of their, holes without bombers around, huh, well, well!" Phineas' homely face split into an expansive grin. His eyes were affixed to two globes of goldfish that belonged to Bump Gillis. They were very light, those two glass globes. If one looked into the mouth of the bowls, the fish looked normal size. Through the glass, however, they seemed magnified at least six times. This fact intrigued Phineas.

"Lookin' at fish is good for nerves," he finally chuckled. "An' fish is brain food, too. Well, from the idea I got, you would think I'd swallowed a whale. Sometimes I feel I was a hog when they passed out brains. Well, well, is it my fault I am a Pinkham?"

Altogether there were three fish bowls. Bump kept trinkets in one. The three would suffice, Phineas felt sure. "Ha," he said mysteriously, "with them and a nice hand-saw I will make history."

A few minutes later, with a great load off his mind, Phineas barged into the Frog farmhouse. Major Rufus Garrity was in the midst of delivering an ultimatum to his-brood.

"Tomorrow night," he was saying, "you birds can start in going to night school. Practice flying tomorrow with your eyes shut, and by the time the day is over, you'll be experts. My conscience is clear, as I'm only a mouthpiece for that blubber-headed brigadier who just left a little while ago. I've got some telegrams all dictated with nice things about you. It'll save time. By the way, Wilson, I think you told me your family moved. Where to, now?"

"Haw-w-w-w!" guffawed the latest arrival on the scene. "Am I glad I've got on the dunce cap an' don't have to take part in the lessons! Well, I cannot tarry as I have chores to do. Bomb sewer, bums!" And before Major Garrity could summon appropriate words, Lieutenant Pinkham had disappeared into the night.

"Howell," the Old Man barked, "Pinkham goes up tomorrow, brigadier or no brigadier. I'll show that fresh cluck."

That night Lieutenant Pinkham spent out in the dew-saturated meadows. On hands and knees he crept stealthily through the grasses. Every so often he would leap forward like a cat that deems it the psychological moment to pounce on the unsuspecting bird. It was very late when Phineas walked toward his hut. He carried a baking powder can under his arm. It was well perforated with holes.

As he neared the hut, he spotted a figure walking across the drome and knew it to be that of Lieutenant

Moots. The demon gambler had a habit of walking in his sleep. Once Moots had covered half the distance to Bar-le-Duc in a pouring rain before he woke up. Phineas had advised him to take carfare to bed with him.

"Only a guy like him would walk around in his sleep," Phineas now sniffed. "I've got a good mind to shoot off a gun. They say a sudden noise is fatal. But then, how'd I git hunk with the bum?" He approached Moots and touched the somnambulist lightly on the shoulder.

"Uh—er—ugh," Lieutenant Moots said suddenly. "I bet you ten francs—er—well, h'lo, Pinkham. Looks like I done it again. Thanks. I'll go back to bed."

Phineas made sure about that. Then he walked around in back of the row of huts and singled out a tree. He climbed it, fussed around in the branches a bit, then swung from a limb and dropped to the ground.

"And now to bed!" he exclaimed with a grin.

MORNING found A Flight ready for the air. Phineas was dunking toast in his early morning coffee when the Old Man came out of Wings rubbing his eyes.

"Well, with me in the air again, the Boche better watch their P's and Q's and all the rest of the alphabet," declared Phineas cockily. "Am I in fine fettle this day, oh, boys! I would even bet the limit with Moots, the big bum. Today I couldn't lose doin' anythin'."

"Well, the lieutenant is on his way in right now," cracked Garrity. "Let's see how big you can talk then, you freckled ape. Let's see you take some francs away from him."

"Oh, so you scoff, do you?" said Phineas indignantly as Lieutenant Ignatius Moots strode in, dressed for flight. And the lieutenant happened to be in his best betting mood.

"Look, you big-time gambler," said Phineas with rich sarcasm, "I'll bet you somethin'. My I.O.U. against a hundred francs. You see that tree in back of Howell's

hut? Well, you can see that there's only one leaf on it. And there's a brisk breeze blowin'. I bet it's still there by sundown tonight. Is that a sportin' proposition, you big stiff, or—"

"It's a bet!" yipped Moots, as he licked his lips.

"Pinkham, I knew you were a game guy. Well, well, this starts the day off all right, all right."

Phineas turned his face to hide a grin in the depths of his muffler.

"Well, get goin'," ordered the major. "Make believe you know how to fight when you meets the Huns. Of all the frowsy outfits I—"

"Why, sir, how long have I been in the army?" Phineas mimicked the Old Man. "I will have you know that back in Fort Sumter they called me the Copper Wash Boiler."

Major Garrity choked on his coffee, spilled most of it down his neck and threw the cup at Phineas.

"I'll murder you yet!" he spluttered.

A Flight patrolled the lines. They ran into a pair of Boche Rumplers and rumped them up to a fare-thee-well. But there seemed to be a dearth of Jerry combat ships in the sky. Howell seemed reluctant to go home. He bored deep into Heinie territory near the Moselle, and Phineas looked overside his Spad to take an inventory of the terrain.

"Down there some place are six krauts," he mumbled. "Well, I smoked out a den of foxes once."

With no action forthcoming, Howell wheeled home. One by one the buzzards dropped down. Phineas suddenly yelled with ire and jammed in the throttle. Down below, Lieutenant Moots was making a pass at the tree on which the single leaf fluttered.

"Cheatin', huh?" he yipped and went down, Hisso' wide. The wheels of Lieutenant Moots' Spad whisked close to the tree. A wing tip kissed the edge of a roof. Major Garrity ran around the field in a tight circle and waved both fists.

"You fools!" he shouted. "Ah-h-h-h-h!" He shut both eyes. The Pinkham Spad whizzed down and



missed Lieutenant Moots' gyrating ship by inches. Phineas pulled up, zoomed, banked around and hedgehopped a hangar as he gunned for a landing. Sergeant Casey took a nose dive to dodge the Spad's wheels, and when the ship rolled over the turf, every groundman on the field was hugging the earth like a snake.

"He's a crook!" howled Phineas as he got out of his Spad. "You saw him, bums. He tried to knock off that leaf."

Lieutenant Moots got out of the wreck he had made of his ship and limped over. "It's a damn lie," he protested. "I busted somethin' and was out of control. I bet you—"

"Bets!" yowled Garrity. "Bets! Is this an airdrome or a gambling joint? That's enough, Pinkham. You stay on the ground now for keeps. I'll speed up that trial. I'll testify against you."

"I'll git myself the best Frog lawyer in Paris," cracked Phineas. "I'll fight this case to the limit. Am I scared? Look at me. Haw-w-w-w-w!"

The day wore on. Patrols went out and came back. Some bore scars of sanguinary conflict. Three pilots rested up all during the day, preparatory for night solos that were to come. One was Bump Gillis. Reports came into the drome. One was to the effect that another Handley Page had been driven back to the field the preceding night. Three Spads from a Frog squadron had tried to follow the attackers back to the hidden lair. One had returned with a ship that looked like the carcass of a cow after a family of buzzards had picnicked on it. Another report had it that the Baron Oswald Friedrich William von Schnoutz, the Dresden demolisher, was on his way from the Italian front to make an end of Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham.

"They never know when they have enough, the Vons," was Phineas' comment. Despite the fact that his shoes were glued to the ground, Lieutenant Pinkham was exuberant. The lone leaf still fluttered on the limb of the tree back of Howell's hut. In another hour the sun would be down. On his aimless way across the field as the dusk patrol came in, Phineas met Lieutenant Moots.

"Pinkham, I'll bet you that the next cat that comes by here will be soakin' wet," began Moots.

"Over-confident, huh!" mumbled Phineas to himself.

Then, "It's a bet!" to Moots. "My new whipcord pants against twenty francs, huh?"

The pilots ganged around. They waited. Finally, a

feline meandered into view. Even at a distance it was apparent that the cat was as dry as the proverbial bone.

"Well," said Phineas, "it looks like my luck has t—" He stopped. Just as the tabby sauntered by the groundman's barracks, a window opened and somebody tossed out a pitcher of water. Before his very eyes Phineas saw the cat baptized, and his new pants had gone to Lieutenant Moots.

"I still can't believe it," Captain Howell murmured. "Nobody is that lucky."

Phineas gulped, then looked toward the tree. The leaf was still there. His spirits rebounded and he smiled broadly.

"Well, Mister Moots," he expanded, "on yon limb still waves the leaf. Pay me."

"Why—er—darned if it ain't," responded Moots. "Aw-right, Pinkham, I don't ever hedge. Here's your dough."

"I should've bet, too," groaned Bump. "Why I didn't I don't know. Lend me some dough, Carbuncle, as—"

"I'm a little hard of hearin' tonight," cut in the inimitable flyer. "Out of my way, paupers!"

"Huh," muttered Moots and he scratched his head as he gazed at the little leaf.

NIGHT FELL. Toward twelve o'clock Bump Gillis flew into the ebon ozone. Thirty minutes later he was back minus the bombs he had had slung under his Spad.

"I dropped 'em," he explained as he pawed at a clammy brow. "I don't know where. Four of those suckers jumped me. I don't care. I'm a coward or whatever ya git shot for. To hell with bein' a dead bat. I'd rather be a live pink-eyed rabbit."

"Who's goin' to shoot you?" cracked Major Rufus. "That settles it. No more flyers leave this field tonight or any other night. It can't be done."

"Will ya bet me," interposed Phineas, "that I can't go out and—"

"Bet you?" howled the Old Man. "It's a sure thing you can't go out."

"I only mentioned it," growled the jokester, and he sauntered away disconsolately. But while the squadron slept, he left his hut and crept to the tree behind Howell's hut. From a point of vantage he had picked beforehand. Lieutenant Moots was watching. He chuckled at what he saw, and began to count money on his fingers.

Early in the morning, Major Garrity poked his head out of the window of his quarters. He looked toward the tree near Buzzards' Row and swore mightily. The

leaf was gone.

Phineas Pinkham entered Wings an hour later. The Old Man swung his feet from off a table and glared at his pet peeve.

"What're you lookin' so happy about, huh?"

"Well, sir," chuckled Phineas, "it just can't keep. I'll have to tell you. That leaf, haw-w-w-w-w! I made it out of oilcloth and wired it to the tree. I cut it off last night so's he wouldn't catch on. I'll teach that bum!"

"Oh, you did, did you?" Garrity fairly howled.

"Well, listen to me, you halfw't, I bet Moots a hundred francs last night that it would still be there this morning. You flap-eared son-of-a-gun!" The Old Man moved fast, but the object of his wrath was faster. Phineas beat the major's boot to the doorway with nothing to spare.

"Well, I'm a cockeyed sailor!" he exclaimed as he trod across the field. "That Moots! I'll clean him now."

That night a Spad was on the line. Three bombs were snuggling close to the floorboards. The Old Man had placed it there in case the brass hats came in. A whole sextet of them barged in after mess.

"That's the spirit, Garrity!" serenaded the brass hats. "That's the old fight. We've got to spot those six Huns."

"Y-Yes, yes, sir," gulped the Old Man. "Sure, we've got to." He extended a limp, clammy hand when they were leaving.

Over at the mess hall, Phineas was being put on the rack.

"Faked leaf, huh?" grinned Moots. "Well, well, I tumbled to that when I paid over the dough, so I bet the Old Man and did he bite! I got his next month's pay. Ha, ha, ha! Was he sore!"

"Well, you just met up with a guy who has you beat on brains, that's all," declared Bump Gillis. "Cheer up, Carbuncle. You had to meet your Waterloo, the same as Napoleon. You were good while you lasted, but—"

"So I'm washed out, huh?" Phineas snorted. "Well, Mr. Ignatz Moots, listen to me. I'm bettin' you every dime you own that I'll go out and clean up them six Heinies bats. Tonight I'll go out and shellack 'em. Every dime and that diamond ring you've got on your flipper. Well, is it a bet or have you got your feet in ice cakes, huh?"

"Is it a bet!" yipped Lieutenant Moots. "You heard him, guys, Oh, Joeys, are you playin' up my alley! I think you're nuttier than peanut brittle, Pinkham, but you asked for it."

"You're cracked," Bump Gillis assured his hutmate.

"In the first place, you can't get out to a ship. You've got orders. In the second place, how're you goin' to find them krauts? In the third—"

"Oh, shut up!" interrupted Phineas. "It's a bet. I go to make ready. I ask you, Lieutenant Gillis, in a very polite way, not to disturb me in the hut. Adoo."

Let us follow Phineas Pinkham. The Boonetown flyer, still bristling, went to his hut and dumped Bump Gillis' goldfish into a pail of water. He took the three very thin glass bowls and busied himself by cutting cloth to fit over the openings. The coverings he tied down with strong twine and then attached loose strings to the heavier cord. It was a strange ritual, even for Phineas. Out of his trunk he brought a lot of deflated toy balloons which it required almost an hour to inflate. There must have been at least three dozen of them.

At precisely one o'clock Phineas Pinkham left his hut, carrying his strange cargo. Lights appeared to be glowing brightly in the goldfish bowls. Phineas stood on the field to get the wind direction, then let one of the clusters of balloons loose. They sailed into the air, headed in the direction of the lines. It was a night clouded by a thin haze, the stars being barely visible. Two other balloon clusters followed the first.

"Well, it's just a question of how long it takes, that's all," the trickster observed.

Out on the field, a pair of sentries stared at the floating goldfish bowls.

"What you make of it, Bill?"

"Beats me," replied his companion. "Another cockeyed invention of that crackpot looey, I guess. Don't pay no attention."

Several minutes passed. Then a man walked across the field. Near the window of his cubicle Major Garrity was sitting. Sleep had eluded him. The thought of the francs he had lost to Moots through the manipulations of Phineas Pinkham probably had a lot to do with it.

"Huh," he exclaimed gruffly, "that looey walking in his sleep again. This time I hope he walks clear to a stone quarry and doesn't wake up until he hits bottom."

Garrity watched the man walk stiffly, straight ahead. Suddenly he let out a leonine roar. The sleep walker had made a leap for the bomb-loaded Spad. He was in the pit, fumbling at the switch, when the Old Man left his chair.

"Pinkham!" roared the major as he swung his door open. "Out onto the field. Get your guns! Shoot him."

But when men ran out onto the field, the Spad's Hisso was roaring.



"It's no use," moaned the Old Man.

"Well," said Bump Gillis to Howell, "the bum has won one third of that bet. I wouldn't give him a thousand to one even now."

PHINEAS PINKHAM flew over the nocturnal Front, passed high over the Yankee tin hats and headed for real estate spotted profusely with coal scuttle helmets. Over those he flew high, wide but not handsome. His homely face was devoid of its grin. An anti-aircraft gun battery opened up on him as he headed for that bottle-necked shaped stretch of topography between the Saar and the Moselle. Right there, Phineas felt sure, was a very suspicious stretch of land, and he was going to set the Spad down on it, bombs and all. Tonight he was shooting the works with the bony crapshooter, and he knew the dice were loaded.

Down toward a very bleak area dropped the Yank. At a hundred feet he skimmed along over the topmost branches of a straggling forest. And then down below, like a big bald patch on top of a man's pate, was a landing field. How smooth it was Phineas did not know, but he took the chance. He wing-slapped down, cut the Hiss, and the wheels hit. As the Spad bounced along on the turf, Phineas prayed. Somehow the ship managed to stop rolling. The Boonetown flyer got out of his pit and listened, wiping beads of sweat from his face. There did not seem to be a living thing within a hundred miles.

However, not two miles from that spot, under a camouflaged screen, squatted six Huns. As many ships crouched on the line, waiting.

"You hear sounds, *ja*?" whispered one of the Boche to a man at the detecting device.

"Now it goes," he replied. "Noddings do I hear. Joost ofer idt passes maybe, *Herr Leutnant*. Der close vatch I keep, *ja*!"

Meanwhile Phineas, a hand-saw dangling from his belt, was entering the woods. He singled out a very tall tree, up which he climbed until he reached the topmost branches. For almost fifteen minutes he scanned the high heavens, and his heart felt very heavy. Then he stifled a cry, for away up there a pair of lights flickered. After a time there was another.

"Haw-w-w-w-w!" he gloated. "I beat them balloons by half an hour, an' they had a swell start or me. Now I'll play me a solo." Once Phineas had heard a musical saw in vaudeville, so he strove to conjure up a good imitation. *Tw-w-a-a-a-ng! Hr-r-r-rum! Whe-e-e-e-u-um! Br-r-r-ru-u-um-m-m!*

"Sounds like they could hear it in Berlin," muttered the intrepid Yank as he twanged on.

Over at the secret drome, the six Huns were standing straight as ramrods. They were all aquiver. A man at a phone hissed something.

"*Ach, der obserfer he sees lights skim oop by der sky. Bombers, ja!*"

"*Achtung!*" barked the Boche leader.

"Props they sing!" roared a Heinie as he came down from the platform supporting the sound detectors. "High oop, *ja*!"

Boche props roared. One by one, planes slithered out from beneath the camouflaged netting. Up they roared to the Stygian ceiling. From his perch Phineas saw, and almost fell out of the tree. Just about a mile and a half away, the exhausts of the night-raiding planes cut the murky ozone. Phineas remained glued to his perch. It was not time. When they landed—that would be the zero hour.

Up toward the gliding lights thundered the Boche—up and up, with the Boche leader's eyes glittering, his lips twisted. *Ach*, this was sport! Then the Hun's eyes popped. He saw one swaying light, a cluster of little balloons above it.

"*Himmel!*" he roared. Frantically he signaled and winged over, heading earthward. "*Der trap iss idt!*" he raged, and blinked lights at his wing tips. The other five bat flyers caught the signal and high-tailed it toward their holes. And as they fluttered in one by one, Phineas watched them like a hawk, memorizing the exact spot. Then he scrambled down through the branches of his lookout.

Again Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham rattled the dice with the bony crap-shooter. "An' Moots thinks he's a gambler, the bum!" he grinned.

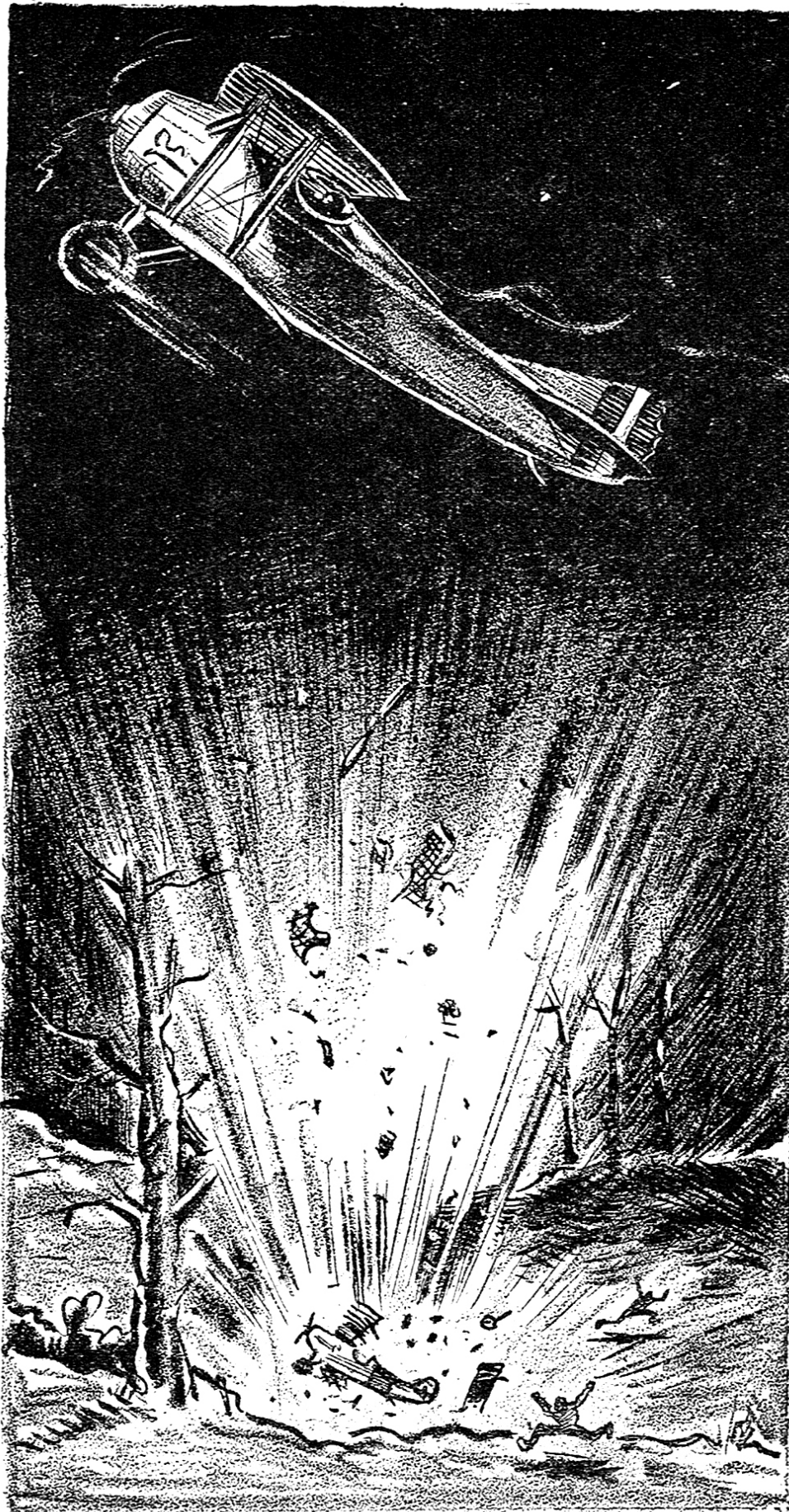
Phineas climbed aboard his ship and jazzed the motor. From idling speed it roared to the limit of its fury and hopped away. After giving its pilot two heart-rending lurches, the Spad decided to behave and cleared the ground.

"Oh, boys!" breathed the irrepressible Yank as the undercarriage cleared the tree tops. "Now for the fireworks."

He pointed the nose of the Spad toward the big dipper and let the ship climb. As he passed over the spot where the Heinies were hidden, Phineas looked down. A light flickered, shone through the screen for an instant. Figuring he had enough altitude, he banked and shot toward the ground.

Down below, the Jerries were in a panic. They had





just evacuated their ships when they heard the alien prop again.

"*Nein!*" shot out the Boche leader as a trio of his men made a leap for their pits. "It iss *der* scheme to findt us. If ve coom oudt, *der* Allied ship ve cannod catch. In our shelters, vunce. *Schnell! Dumkopfs*, you hear, *hein?* You—"

*Blam!*

"*Ach du lieber!*" yipped the Hun leader. "*Ach, Himmel!*" The force of the concussion sent him into a sprawling heap against the side of a dugout.

Upstairs Phineas wheeled about—up and then down again, to jerk another bomb loose. The target was duck soup now. Flames were licking out from the Boche den. *Cr-r-r-r-ash!* A sheet of flames shot up with belching wreckage, bits of camouflage, chunks of metal and fabric.

"Stick to your holes!" howled the delirious Yank as he got into positon for his last lethal egg to drop home. "This is the one that'll hurt the most. Just relax, Heinies!"

*Blooeey!* The last bomb seemed to be a direct hit. Clods of dirt pounded against the floorboards of the Spad as Phineas swept over. A prop gyrated skyward, a big hunk of wing with a Maltese Cross splashed upon it.

"Well, adoo!" called out the harrying Y'ank. "I must be off in an awful hurry. I've got another dry-cleanin' job to do when I git home, if ever. Fireflies in fish bowls, an' music by the master of the musical saw, Phineas Pinkham! Haw-w-w-w-w!"

Lieutenant Pinkham made a bee line for home. Three Heinies cut him off close to the lines. A palpitating Boche observation post had heralded his coming.

"After getting this far I'll be



stopped, huh?” cracked Phineas. “Not if you was all Richthofens, *nein!* My grandpop ran a gauntlet of, bloodthirsty Injuns once. I am a block from the old chip. Here I come!”

Straight through the cordon of Boche Phineas burned a trail. Slugs beat a tattoo against his Spad. German archie banged away. Searchlights poked at him. Over machine-gun nests . the Spad flew. Rifles cracked. Potato-masher grenades gyrated skyward. Yet the Spad was still up when it reached the Allied front porch.

At three o'clock in the morning, Phineas set his ship down close to the group of sleepy-eyed members of the Ninth. The Spad had no sooner stopped rolling when the prop fell off. One wing was almost nude. A big cloud of steam belched from the radiator and all but obscured the arrival.

“Who is it?” bellowed Garrity.

“Haw-w-w-w-w!” guffawed Phineas. “Pay me!” He walked into the clear. “The Heinie sextet ain’t even a duet now,” he grinned. “Those lightnin’ bugs looked big in the fish bowls of yours, Bump. Well, I’m pagin’ Lieutenant Ignatz Moots.”

The jubilant Garrity called up the Iron Duke. He did not even say “sir.” Before five o'clock three bombers had made a wreck out of a Heinie railhead. At dawn Phineas was in sole possession of the wealth of the Ninth Pursuit Squadron.

“I think I’ll invest in a payin’ business after the *guerre*,” the amazing pilot drawled before he crept into his bunk. “Mister Moots, let this be a lesson to ya, haw-w-w-w-w!”