



JINX PEELOT

by HAROLD F. CRUICKSHANK

Every Time Sam Tenby Went Up in the Air to Chase the Boche, Something Went Wrong— Until . . .

LIEUTENANT SAM TENBY, of American Eighty-sixth Pursuit Squadron, drummed a smart tattoo on his rudder bar, as his Spad cut the sky like a meteorite rampant. A Flight was roaring hell-bent for action. Their leader, “Ugly” Duckworth, was on a spot. The big

skipper had gone out through a cloud bank, scouting ahead of his hellion flight, when a covey of Pfalz jumped him.

Captain Tom Ugly Duckworth was a dyed-in-the-wool buzzard who, of late, had bumped more tough luck than most flight leaders do in a full war. Twice in

three months his flight had changed completely. Just as the skipper got a group of fighting men coached under his efficient, iron hand, Fate stepped in and cracked it right open.

Sam Tenby had flown but three contact patrols with Ugly, and each time a jinx had sat upon his tail. Jammed guns the first time, a bullet-clipped feed line the second time. On the third trip out, something had gone wrong with his Hisso—one of those damnable little things it is hard to place one's finger on at the time had conked out the motor, forcing Tenby to land in a battered field of cabbages.

Ugly Duckworth had first groaned, then exploded. He was about at the end of his patience. Hell's bells!—the brand of replacements he was getting seemed likely enough rooks, but in the pinches they folded up.

THE sobriquet "Ugly" had been handed out by a mess wag as a fitting nickname to balance Duckworth, and not because of any ugliness of nature. But now, the nickname could easily apply with the latter meaning, for Duckworth was souring, becoming ugly.

Today his flight had been assigned to cover American operations in the Flanders area, where German aircraft were playing the devil. Duckworth had pulled his gang up into the sky an hour before take-off time. He had put the pilots through a series of mock engagements, maneuvering like a mad hawk—testing out their efficiency at stick, rudder and gun trips.

Sam Tenby had been glad of this hour. He came away smiling. Every move he had made was nearly perfect. His Hisso and Vickers responded like charms. He was ready, and now—with every confidence backing him, he throttled in to the last notch, nose up, searing the sky for suitable altitude. He was ripping sky wide to eastward, hoping to Immelmann over and strike at that milling circle of Bodies which hemmed in Duckworth. Here was his chance. He had several hundred meters distance on the next Spad of A Flight.

Something, some small voice in his alert mind seemed to prompt his every move. His nerve fibres were tensed. Carefully, yet firmly, the lieutenant pulled back on the stick. His Hisso was roaring wide, with perfect timing.

Up—up—Tenby was zooming to the Immelmann, his thin lips drawn to a mere line, his eyes slitted and full of flame. He was over. His thumb was on the trips. A red Pfalz showed clearly in his ring-sights. Tenby hunched himself over the stick. The Boche was head-on.

Cr-r-rp! The Vickers belched flame. Tenby licked his lips. His whole frame seemed taut enough to explode at any second. He was firing, firing on a live Hun.

Then suddenly a black void seemed to swallow the lieutenant entirely. No, he wasn't hit, but his Vickers had suddenly coughed out. There was no further response to his touch on the stick trigger.

Shaking himself free from a mad panic lasting only for a couple of seconds, Tenby tore frantically at his cocking apparatus. There was a jam.

And, although Tenby didn't know it at the time, a Boche bullet, a lucky slug from the machine he had on the spot, had jammed his gun tight. There was no way out.

GROANING one minute, cursing the next, the gutty young pilot yanked, wrenched and tore at his guns, hoping to cut clear the stoppage. But his efforts were in vain. A lachrymose mist coming out of his anger filmed his eyes as he skidded out of range of a pair of flaming Spandaus.

Tenby had again cut out. He was being forced to seek a landing, hoping that he could find the trouble which had again jinxed him, hoping that he could at least clear and come up again to show that his guts were still with him.

The ground below was a blur until Tenby dashed the film clear of his eyes. Unconsciously he was saying things to his ship, to his guns. In mad, heated soliloquy he was telling God, the devil and those Vickers just exactly what was in his mind.

Still snarling, he bounced in on a patch of open ground in a jarring pancake, and tore open his belt fastenings. Outside, he was darting to his engine area, when a weird sound arrested his attention. He looked back, and up. Something clogged in his throat. Coming down in a whorl of enveloping flame was a Spad—one of his buddies.

SAM TENBY found a seat on a near-by rotten log. For a long moment he stared into the turf at his feet, his mind a blank. He had received a special rating for his gunnery. Gunnery!

"Tcha!" he spat disgustedly, then picked up a wrench and moved in towards his gun mounts as if he intended to smash the double-damned mechanism to atoms.

"Blast you to hell," he bellowed. "I wish to God you were human, something tangibly human, so I could hurt you. In practice maneuvers you worked like a

cockeyed charm, then when I an' the skipper needed you, you went cold."

The wrench was raised high. Tenby's eyes were a blur. But they suddenly cleared. He was staring at a small indentation on one of the guns. Drawn like a magnet, he moved in. He jerked a screwdriver from his pocket and dug out a distorted Boche bullet. At once a wave of hope surged through his being. By God! He had at least something to show, something to hand to Ugly Duckworth.

But his hopes of getting back up into the sky today were blasted when, after an hour's tinkering with the guns, he could not restore them to operation order again.

The sky was empty when at last Tenby took off and headed towards the tarmac of 86 Squadron. His mind was milling, torn between a certain amount of dread and righteous satisfaction. He reached over to a small rack with his left hand. Here was the evidence—evidence that he had been genuinely forced out by a Boche bullet. By a——

Tenby's brows arched. He was sure he had placed that battered slug there alongside the screwdriver. The screwdriver was there, but the bullet was missing. Dusk was closing in. It would have been foolish to entertain the thought of landing again and searching for that slug. Hell aflame! What had he to hand to Ugly now?

HEART heavy, mind in a ferment of torture, Sam dropped his Spad to a landing and slowly let himself out of the belt webbing. Mechanics were darting up to his ship. A couple of pilots moved quickly towards him, and then—lumbering out of a door opening came Ugly Duckworth.

"Well!—"

"Well, sir, I'm sorry," jerked Tenby. "I was unfortunate as hell, skipper. I—"

"Yeah—for the fourth time some little dicky bird came an' pecked at somethin' or other just when you had a bold, bad Boche giant on the end of your lance. I know—I know —Tcha! I'll see you after you've eaten." Duckworth spat disgustedly and turned on his heel.

Tenby trembled, with mingled emotions playing hell within him.

He had plenty of guts, guts enough to take a poke at that big-shouldered leader. But it took more than just ordinary guts to fight a damnable Jinx. Turning over his ship to the greaseballs, and sending word along to the armorer sergeant, Tenby turned and moved along to his hut.

Misgiving, premonition hit him hard. Desire, hope and anticipation seemed to leave from his mind. He knew he possessed the goods, the guts, efficiency with which to make good. But—four times out of four he had failed. The batting average of his jinx was exactly .1000—against him.

"So—what more is there to say? I take Tenby out four times, and four times out of four he cuts out. Today, I gave the whole flight an hour's workout, an' they all come through like aces. When I was tight on a spot, later, I hoped for support. Holy gravy, Major! I lost young Meldrum, when Tenby's help could have saved him. I'm recommending that Tenby be sent back to Issoudun."

UGLY DUCKWORTH slumped back in his chair. His eyes seemed almost obscured by his heavy brows as he waited for the Squadron Commander's reactions to his explosive tirade.

Major Frank Dillon liked this hard-bitten leader of A Flight. Tough luck had soured Duckworth right enough, but it hadn't shorn from him his great fighting spirit and efficiency.

"I see, I see, skipper," rejoined the major. "Enough to get under anyone's skin. Lord!—but you've surely bucked a gale of rotten breaks in the past few months. But, this boy Tenby. He's a real guy. Are we going to break his heart? Can't you see, Duck, that if you shoot him back to Isso, now, you'll finish him? He's got guts, and is one of the best trained flyers that ever came to 86. Couldn't you give him another chance?"

Ugly Duckworth's big chest heaved. He bit hard at his lip to suppress a sigh. Slowly he got to his feet and took a turn round the office floor. Now he faced his chief, bending low, his eyes a-glitter.

"No. I couldn't do it, Major. Hell! The boys wouldn't feel secure with him in the flight again. It can't be done. Four times straight! I'll do this for him, though—I'll recommend that he be considered for an instructor's job back at the school. I've never seen a better man at the controls. It's a pity, Major—a damned pity. But I can't afford to take another chance."

"Okay, Duck," the major acquiesced. "I feel kind of lousy about it, though, and I know you do. I spoke to the kid a short time ago. Promised I'd do all I could for him. Duck—he looked at me like some trapped deer—eyes staring wide with hope. Hell! And I've got to mark him out. I——"

"Say!" Duckworth's eyes dilated, his brows jerking

high into his forehead. "What about that ferry job? Haven't you a Spad to return to the Vickers factory for reassembling of new guns? Why not give the kid that job? Give him the job and allow him a London leave until the Vicks are done—or longer.

IN THE meantime, you can get in touch with Issoudun and see what can be done about an instructor's job. Don't tell Tenby I made this recommendation. But—it might come a little easier. If he knew that he was chosen to train rooks especially for this squadron, it would—well, I reckon it might be easier. What d'you think?"

"Right. I'd lost track of that ferry job, Duck. Good idea. When you go out, send him in to me. He'll leave just before dusk tomorrow."

Two big men had sat in judgment on Tenby, two hard-bitten campaigners. In their rough way they had tried to be fair. He was to be marked out, but along a road that was the easiest way they knew.

Sam Tenby scowled at Ugly Duckworth as he climbed aboard a Spad late in the afternoon the following day. In spite of what Major Dillon had said, Tenby felt that Ugly was handing him dirt, for he knew that the leader of A must have recommended his pass out. Ugly was moving his big bulk toward the plane. Tenby snarled an oath and pressed in his throttle, waving to the mechanics at the chock chains.

A blast from his prop slapped Duckworth in the face, as Sam raced from the deadline. Ugly drew a hand across his cheek as if to wipe off something that stung. For a long moment he stood and stared at the silver shape climbing over the drome. With a shrug, he turned and moved back to the mess hut. In his pocketed hand he toyed a battered Hun bullet, a bullet he had picked up from the floor of Tenby's Spad's cockpit.

"I MEANT to hand it to him," he breathed, "just to show him I believed his story. But—Tchal" The big flight leader snorted and strode on indoors.

Tenby, meanwhile, found altitude and headed for Nieuport. A freshening sou'westerly breeze had sprung up, to add its dirges to those already playing in the rigging. Sam examined the discarded Vickers, which were being returned direct to the factory because of a bad fault. A bare fifty rounds of ammo plugged a single belt. Not enough for action.

But there was no hope of action for Tenby. His heart hung heavy with the thought of his future. He

had aspired to wash out Hun skymen. He was full of guts. There was little he couldn't do with a Spad, Bristol, or Nieuport. But, even as he realized this, there hammered in the back of his mind that persistent mockery of his attempts to make good in action.

As he neared the shoreline, Tenby's breathing became faster. His pulse-beat quickened. Out over those rolling gray waters there was adventure for the seeking. In the off-shore mists which clung to the Channel waters lurked enemy craft—subs, destroyers, minelayers and sweepers.

"If only I could be sure of those cock-eyed Vickers, I'd take a breeze out towards the North Sea," Sam mused. "To go back, never having engaged in a piece of real active service, effectually, is going to be plenty tough. Hell!"

His feet struck the rudder bar hard, as the thought tore through his mind like some torturing hot rod. To have to explain to people who believed in him that he had been a bomb-proofing trainer of rookie flyers played hell with his pent-up nervous system now.

The Spad gave a sudden lurch off to starboard. Sam kicked her back level. He swore savagely. A sudden blast of an increasing wind had caught him off guard. The wind increased as he left the shore-line, and now bugled like an army of devils through his wiring.

BACK near London there was a girl who thought a lot of Sam Tenby. She had told him so, when on his last leave from Issoudun. She had wished him luck, knowing that he would fast become an ace. For over a year she had driven a forward ambulance on the Ypres front, and had been wounded in action, saving a load of casualties in a raid.

"Wounded in action! Good God!" Sam bit off the words and spat them out as though they were poison. Through the mists he could glimpse the blur of the English coast. It was from that coast that his ancestors had sprung—swashbuckling Tenbys of Devon, who had covered themselves with glory with Drake and other early British seafarers. Buccaneers, soldiers of fortune, men of guts—

Tenby's immediate American forebears were of that stock. There had been Civil War Tenbys, and Spanish War Tenbys—roistering sea devils and land soldiers—

ONE of the last of the Tenby's was going back to the home of his ancestors ferrying a ship, out of action—Hell!

Again a gust of screeching wind clouded the Spad

amidships. Tenby was well out to sea. He slammed his right rudder hard, but this time there was no response. A long low groan, tipped with bitterness, escaped him. His rudder control wiring had somehow jammed. Perhaps a kink in the cable had stuck. He was drifting—being carried towards the northern neck of the Channel, with dusk coming on, and a troubled, cold, heartless sea rolling below.

Tenby held his head. From below, a thick bank of fog was caught and hurled upward by the increasing gale—a fog which swirled like an army of wraiths. But the young Yank pilot hung on to his wits. He had guts enough to keep his Hisso roaring and his hand firm on the stick. He hoped for a chance to be caught in some local eddy of swirling wind, which would twist him round head-on to the steady, prevailing half-hurricane. Then he would throttle in full and with his rudder set as it was, he would drift inshore and not out to the gray North Sea.

But that chance didn't come immediately. He was being driven hard toward the head of the Channel. Soon he would be off Ramsgate, and then—the hopeless, mountainous surges of the North Sea proper—

Two destroyers slid by beneath him. A winking eye of light snapped at him and Tenby was inclined to signal back that he would attempt a landing nearby. He was on the point of flashing this message when his Spad was suddenly caught in a mad whorl, swapping ends like a frenzied mustang.

Tenby was glad of this sudden change. Glad that he hadn't weakened. By God!—There was a fighting chance left to him, the chance to combat the jinx which sat atop his rudder right now. He jammed in his throttle to the last notch, his prop now striking hard at the howling gale.

But he made no headway; nor did he drift as he had hoped to. He found another element to battle now—fear, something which hadn't bothered him before. Fear—the fear of the ultimate in failure, and not the fear and dread of death. Sam Tenby wanted to make good. He wanted more than anything to get back to 86 Squadron where, he figured, he had a score to settle with Ugly Duckworth.

SUDDENLY, below, he spotted an arm of sand, riding high above the waves. Was this the Goodwin Sands area? Was it possible that a kindly fate had drifted him over this one haven in the long expanse of rolling water. He shot a glance to his maps, but could make

little out of them. Goodwin Sands or not, here was a place, the only place to make a landing. Even at that, he would be laughing right into the teeth of death to attempt to put his ship down there.

His hand moved the stick forward. There was little he could do but to nose down and exercise aileron control. If that sand bar were soggy, his undercarriage would buckle and, already, mountainous waves were crashing on and over that meager patch of strand.

Down—down—Tenby's breathing was cut off. His frame and mind were like a single piece of well-synchronized mechanism. His Spad struck hard, bounced high. He cut his motor as a gust of spume showered him. Then his tires struck again and stuck. The Spad shimmied hard, threatening to crack a longeron. Tenby was jerked hard against his belting. Drenched to the skin, stung by the salt slap of the spume, he hung for a brief second, unable to move.

THE fog of helplessness quickly left him, however. The greatest challenge he had ever known had been hurled full into his face. With a snarl, he unbelted and commenced a search of the trouble with his rudder cable. Out to sea, on every hand, deserted waves rolled on—on—the wind shrieking an accompanying dirge to their undulations.

For upwards of two hours Sam Tenby worked in the marrow-chilling hurricane—wet, soggy, half-frozen. He had found the kink in the starboard after cable, and with spanner and a flat rock was patiently beating it straight. At the height of the storm, ponderous waves had smothered him from time to time. But he kept at his task.

Now his cable was fixed. He tested it with bar strokes left and right. His heart began to pound the blood back through his veins. By chocking his wheels with small rocks, he felt that he could rev up and make a get-away. As the tires throbbed on the rocks they would be gradually pressed into the sand until they offered no resistance when he throttled in full for the takeoff. But the tide was flowing high. Signs of a cessation of the hurricane's might did not hold back the rolling tide which was already narrowing the sand bar.

The wind was sobbing out now, as Sam got his prop over and the motor started. He was ready to hop aboard. Darkness was descending in a drab mantle which would soon blot out all vestige of day.

Tenby sat back and surveyed the narrow strip of sand and the brief space between his Spad and the

water beyond. The chance was mighty slender, but he must take it; either that or drown like a rat, as the mountainous sea crept up—up—

He stuffed his throttle in a couple of notches. His Hisso coughed almost out. Before she broke again into full tune, a sinister roar from seaward brought Tenby's head up with a jerk. Coming out of the deepening sky, in a dive on the bar, was a fast Hun Fokker.

THE Fokker zoomed, swung out to sea a point, then Tenby glimpsed a signal lamp at work from her cockpit. "Raiders, I'll bet a buck," he jerked. "That bird's signaling back to some destroyers. Holy gravy! I'll bet it's another raid on Ramsgate. But—that egg was coming in to land. Something gone wrong with his crate—"

There was no time for further conjecture. As Tenby leaped out overside, a pair of Spandaus chattered above. The Spad was riddled in the first burst. Then, as the Hun circled and dived again, a brace wire twanged out, catching Tenby across the forehead. He spun, tottered forward over the sand, and slumped to his face, as the Spad's gas tanks exploded. A horrible maze of flame enveloped the Yank's ship, but Tenby never saw. He had taken the count.

The Fokker landed. Leaving his prop ticking over, the Hun moved cautiously over to where the American pilot lay stretched half on his side, on the sand. Blood covered his face.

"Gone—*Verdammt*, Karl," the man muttered, stowing away his Luger. Now he dashed back to his ship. There was some carburetor trouble—some annoying thing which had gotten on his nerves; and—he needed those nerves functioning at their best now. A valve needle was quickly withdrawn, cleaned and readjusted. A grim smile toyed on the Finn's face. This evening he would add more glory to the navy and air service of the Fatherland.

AT HIS back, out to sea, ready to operate at his signals, were two sleek destroyers. Their forward decks were loaded with floating mines, to be sown in Ramsgate harbor. When these were sown, they would back off to sea, and bombard. It had been done before, and effectively—

Sam Tenby jerked up a throbbing head at the roar of a Mercedes. For a brief moment everything swam in a black void. But, he was coming out, steeling himself to ward off further unconsciousness. That Fokker was still on the strand— Cautiously the Yank's fingers

closed over his automatic. He dragged himself slowly to his knees. He was staring through the half-gloom at the Hun pilot busy buckling his safety belt.

Tenby saw red; he dashed the film from before his eyes. He was on his feet. At a yell, the Hun jerked up his head and socked a hand down for his Luger.

Crack! Crack! Two shots crashed from Tenby's gun, and then a third, which caught the Boche in the neck. His own pistol exploded harmlessly and, as he sagged overside, Tenby clutched him and helped him soggily to the sand.

"It was either you or me, Jerry," hissed the Yank. "By God! I'm on the way to kill off that jinx. I'll take the Fokker an' try an' get inshore. I—" He broke off. Why not try to play the Hun's game out, and trap the destroyers!

The audacious thought pulsed in his throbbing brain, almost nauseating him. But, it persisted. Tenby made a swift search of the dead pilot's clothing and the interior of the Fokker's pit for operation orders. By the light of a signal lamp he quickly read these orders over. They were in German, but his knowledge of that language was fair enough for present needs.

IN THE pit, belted in, he sat for a few seconds or so, gulping in deep pulls of the salty air blasted back by the prop. Then, eyes slitted, teeth set hard, he jammed home his throttle and firmed a grip on the stick. A mist covered Tenby's eyes as he felt empty air under him. He was skyside and ready to strike a blow for England. "Send me back to Issoudun, would you!" he snarled at the deepening gloom. "Send me to hell, but not to Issoudun!"

He climbed to two thousand, then kicked around for the open sea. At first, his intention was to signal at once to the two Hun destroyers standing by. But another flash thought ousted all others. He must fly inshore, towards Ramsgate, and flash a warning. There would be submarines lying in the harbor, or cruising near-by. By God! That was an idea. Sam kicked about and gunned his Mercedes wide open. As he drew close to the port a covey of searchlights shot up at him. A sudden thunder of anti-aircraft shattered the night. A sliver of shell casing cut deep into his left upper arm. But Tenby dived on in, his lamp flashing madly. When his hopes had nearly vanished, he caught a sudden welcome eye of light winking at him from a signal station near the shoreline. They had seen. They were going to give him a break!

"Stand by to give sub's location— Stand by to give

sub's location on destroyers," came the message. But Sam flashed back at them:

"Stand by—submarines stand by for action. I'm going to pull those Hun ships in close. Watch for signals—stand by—"

HE HAD kicked around. The mad splatter of flame in the sky had ceased. Sam Tenby was accepted as a British agent. He was cutting sky back to the destroyers. And now he caught their signal flashes.

"God," he breathed, "I don't know whether this is lousy or not. Your damn skyman tried to kill me. Here goes! Come and get it—"

His lamp was signaling an all clear, and like sleek water rats the two fast destroyers cut water and headed for the open harbor.

On shore, a squadron of British planes was standing to, ships ready at the chocks, in case the lone signaling Fokker might prove to be a bona fide enemy craft after all.

Those pilots, with the aid of sound amplifiers, had Tenby's location as he scudded in ahead of the destroyers.

Now, kicking round, Tenby was flashing his light beam out through his prop. He was giving location on the destroyers to the submarine signalers. Two long shapes crash-dived. Aboard the destroyers commands set the crew hard at work forward. They were getting ready to drop overboard that deadly string of floating mines. Tenby dived in low. He maneuvered hard, hoping to ward off the threat of nausea which stole over him in waves. He was losing blood fast, and already weakened by the previous blow on the forehead, he hadn't much strength left.

SUDDENLY the black-gray waters erupted with volcanic violence. Two torpedoes had blasted the most northerly destroyer almost clear of the water. Stimulated by this demonstration of success, Tenby put his ship into a dive. Down like a plummet he shot, and his Spandaus commenced to chatter. He was raking decks. Half-maddened by his previous bad luck, it was now as if Tenby had spotted his jinx riding the after rail of the remaining destroyer.

Prprpr-r-rpp—Men pitched to the steel decks, or overside. Then a couple of two pounders, mounted for'ard on the Hun ship, began to splash the sky with shrapnel. Tenby took another chip in his left shoulder. God! He was spun almost clear around in his seat. Blinding lights blotted out his vision.

And then, greater than the previous explosion came the monstrous upheaval of flame, steel, and steam, as the second British submarine's torpedoes contacted. It was this horrible phantasmagoria which pulled Tenby out of a fog which would have surely cost him his life.

Half-blinded by pain and the black waves of unconsciousness, he shoved his captured Fokker's nose at the shoreline. He was going down—down—— His Mercedes was shut off. Waves were leaping up—up, to clutch at him; and then he struck. A thousand thoughts leaped to his over-strained mind, and then a cold plunge—— Blackness——

Tenby awakened to find himself blinking owlishly at what seemed to be a sea of faces and lights. It took a moment or more to find himself and get his bearings. He lay on a clean white cot in a hospital ward. His left arm was strapped tightly to his side. "Drink this, old chap," a very pleasant voice called.

TENBY found himself gulping at a liquid which, although slightly bitter, he downed eagerly. "Better?" intoned that pleasant voice again. "You've been forty-eight hours coming out. Feel improved?"

"Y-eh, yes—much. But what happened, finally? I—didn't I drown?"

A chuckle greeted his observation. Officers and nurses drew in closer to Tenby's cot to offer their congratulations. One of the officers was gray-haired.

"Drowned—'pon my soul! You nearly were at that, sir. I'm General Marshman, of the Naval Air Service. Want to offer my thanks and congratulations. Marvellous, my boy. You'll hear more about this.

"Now—before you slip back to rest, is there anything we can do for you? Anyone in particular you'd like to see. The Colonel in charge here says that you'll pick up quickly. Might as well have a decent time while you're here. Any folks, or friends? We'll get 'em."

In spite of his pallor, Tenby blushed. There was a friend—surely there was, and a right good friend.

"I'll give you her address, General," he breathed. "Maybe she'd like to visit me. Glad I'm not going to be conked out for long. Thanks for all your kindness. I Was right glad to do a little bit—to help." Tenby lay back on his pillows, his breathing regular, though fast. God! What a break. He was going to—to see—Her!

TWO weeks later Sam Tenby awakened from a doze at the sound of a pleasant voice.

"Brought you a letter, Sam," called the pleasant

feminine voice. “English postmark. Woe betide you if its from another girl.”

Sam’s girl opened the envelope and spread the contents out.

“No,” he snapped, “it’s—it’s not from a girl. It’s from a—a damned mandriver—a—a—wait! Mebbe I’m wrong. I’ll read it. Holy smoke, listen! Old Ugly wants me—”

“My dear Tenby: Heard of your fame.

Congratulations, buddy. I knew that sooner or later you’d put the clamps on that jinx. You’ve beaten it yourself, and that’s worth a lot. I’m out, down at Taplow on the Thames—Boche slug in the thigh. I’ll be going back soon, and would like you along as Deputy-Leader of the old A Flight. 86 needs men like you, if you care to come.

“Under separate cover, I’m sending you a Spandau slug, a bullet you’ll recognize. Yes, I found it. I believed your story at the time, Tenby, but you didn’t give me a chance to hand you the bullet. I’ve been saving it until the time when you killed your own jinx. If you come out of the ether before I do, drop around to Taplow.

“Every good wish, bud. Yours— Ugly Duckworth.”

“Ugly, Sam,” breathed the girl. “Why—that’s a decent enough letter. Why is he—Ugly?”

“He isn’t. That’s a gyp, honey. He’s —a blown-in-the-glass he-man; and say—I’m going to be his deputy. Jiminy—” Sam’s words were smothered by a maze of auburn hair and—he liked it, liked it even better than Ugly’s letter.