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**PHINEAS
PINKHAM**
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PHINEAS PINKHAM FLIES AGAIN

written and illustrated by **JOE ARCHIBALD**

Yielding to the demand of many thousands of flying model builders, Joe Archibald, personal historian of the famous Phineas Pinkham who singlehandedly almost lost the first World War for Uncle Sam, brings back Phineas in a new and hilarious series of adventures. Hail Phineas, Demon of the Blazing Skies, now chief of the Flying Carpet Airline, Inc., the biggest little trouble monopoly on wings in the USA!

ONCE IT HAD BEEN A COW PASTURE, but a year after Tojo admitted he should have stood in honorable bed, it was bulldozed into the semblance of an airport. It had an administration building the size of a two-car garage, one runway, some gas tanks and floodlights. There was a big sign over the gate and it said:

THE FLYING CARPET AIRLINE, INC.
BAGDAD, IOWA
Phineas Pinkham & Son, Props.

We Fly Anything, Anybody, Anywhere!
The Sky Is The Limit!

A DC3 was in its parking area and two men were seated on the port wing and poking into the entrails of a power-plant. One of them had a face that would have fitted well into the map of Ireland. He also had a bay window under his coveralls and a bald spot under his visored mech's cap. He also had memories.

"T'think I'd see this day, Greasy. Gettin' bossed around by Phineas Pinkham ag'in," moaned Terence Patrick Casey, once a flight sergeant near Bar-Le-Duc, France, in the first world war.

"You ain't kiddin', Casey? You mean t'tell me he was a officer onct an flew airplanes?"

"Yeah, it always was a mystery how he got to be a looney," Casey sighed. "What he could do with a Spad! I remember one day—"

"I only started workin' for him this A.M., Casey," Greasy Gilbey said. "He seems like a swell guy. Whicht remin's me, I'll try out this cigar he give me."

"No! No!" Casey yelped. "We're sittin' on a gas tank an'—later, Greasy. You might as well learn now as later. They sure was the days. Look, start workin', as here he comes."

"Well, you never changed much, huh, Sarge?" yelped Mr. Phineas Pinkham as he neared the cargo crate. "Gol' brickin' like always. Don't forgit I'm payin' you now—not the U.S."

"An' you also ain't got no bars on your shoulders no more," yelped Casey. "I been savin' a poke in the nose for you sinct 1918, an' there's plenty other airlines could use mechs, so just needle me a little too far is all—"

"Haw-w-w-w," Phineas laughed. "Like ol' times, huh? Elmer ought t'be due back any time now. I hope he delivered them four prize hogs in time for the fair out in Wyomin'. Operation Bacon, Casey."

FATHER TIME had not strafed Phineas badly. He had a little too much suet around his meridian and a sprinkling of borax at his temples. His thinning hair, for the most part, was still the color of brick dust, and his unpretty physiognomy still had as many spots on it as the late Al Capone's record. Time had not cooled his ardor for fooling the gullible, mute evidence of this fact being a small but lucrative trick novelty business that bore his name in Cedar Rapids. The lion's share of the proceeds gleaned from said enterprise over a period of twenty-five years had gone into The Flying Carpet Airlines, Inc., for Phineas, when his son Elmer had come back from the second world war, had hurried to the nearest sale of surplus government

transports and had gone back into the aviation business.

"What's Elmer bringin' back this trip, huh?" Casey asked.

"Six night club dames for a joint in Des Moines," Phineas grinned. "I hope he aired out Number Seven 'fore he let 'em aboard. I bet he forgot that bottle of cologne I give him. What'll we haul next, huh? I would've flown that heap if I wasn't sure Bessie would of crowned me if I did."

Greasy Gilbey dropped to the ground and wiped his hands with a gob of waste. "That'll purr like a kitten now, Mr. Pinkham. I figure I'll jus' smoke that cigar you give me."

"Don't mention it," Phineas grinned, and walked away. Casey sighed deeply and thought far back as he too moved away. Gilbey lighted the cigar, inhaled deeply for a few moments, then put the stogie up to his nose to enjoy the Havana wrapping.

Who-o-o-osh! Bang! Gilbey jumped two feet off the ground and grabbed at his nose. On his way down again he saw the miniature rocket settle to the earth almost three hundred yards away. Phineas laughed fiendishly and told himself he had a new number ready for mass production. The trial test had been a great success. "I'll tell 'em t' make two thousan' t'start. On the band I'll put *Hiroshima Habana Special*, haw-w-w-w-w!"

Casey went over and got Gilbey by the arm. "Come with me, pal. There is things you got t'know if you wish t'stay happy on this job. Onct I saw him stab himself with a knife up to the hilt, only it was really—you could also use a drink, Gilbey."

"Don't tell me, Casey. Don't tell me his son, Elmer—"

"The sins of the fathers," Casey said dolefully. "Him I don't blame so much—"

Phineas walked into his office and sat down and let his fifty-year-old mental assembly wander back into the long ago. Back to the day when he had unwittingly introduced tail guns to aerial warfare. Two Frog muzzle-loaders affixed to the Spad, with strings running from the cockpit to the triggers. Spandau slugs whistled past his noggin once more as he coaxed an unsuspecting Kraut within range. Then—*whango!*

The drone of airplane engines inside Phineas Pinkham's head took on an ominous note. He kicked his chair back, ran outside and yelped, "Boche! Git that siren goin', somebody as—" He put on the brakes quickly when he realized that his imagination had

made a sucker out of him again. "I guess nobody ever gits over a *guerre*," he gulped and looked upstairs. A DC3 was coming in. He could almost see the rabbit-jumping-out-of-a-hat-insignia on the nose. Suddenly the big crate bucketed at less than two thousand feet and Phineas got latex in his knees. The DC3 nearly turned over on its back and the commander of American Legion Post 77, Boonetown, Iowa, shook beads of sweat as big as eight-balls off his brow.

Casey came running. "Call the meat wagon, Phineas, quick! He won't never make it!"

"Elmer," Phineas howled. "It is your pa callin' to you! Oh, if we only had a control tower, Casey. El-me-e-er!"

The DC3 straightened out, roared in for a landing, kissed the runway as softly as a mother kisses her first born, and stopped dead.

"What was I worryin' for?" Casey sniffed. "Or you for that matter?" He glared at Phineas. "I guess we forgot what his name was."

Elmer Pinkham stepped out of the DC3 and then gave a hand to six comely pigeons.

"What happened up there, Elmer, huh?" Phineas yelped.

"One of the babes wanted t'take the controls is all. She won't never make a flyer. You got spirits of ammonia around, pa?"

"Oh, you big lummo! You lemon-head!" Phineas roared. "You could of washed up fifty grand worth of airplane. Lettin' a dame—" He threw up his hands and leaned against the cargo crate and knew now how a certain C.O. had suffered years ago. "Gimmie stren'th, Oh Lord!"

"It was a swell trip, Junior," a nightclub yodeler said to Elmer. "It was like gettin' flown by Jimmy Stewart if it wa'n't we had to look at your face. An' what have you been flyin' in that crate lately whicht I'm sure was nothin' you put on strawberries like sugar an' cream."

ELMER PINKHAM certainly was no collar ad. His hair was the color of dried corn husks and it grew on his noggin as stiff and straight as bristles on a toothbrush. He had wide, washed-out blue eyes that seemed forever surprised and his nose was *retrouse*



like his ma's. All the freckles he had were on his ears and he'd inherited a set of teeth that were nearly too big for his oral cavity.

"You maybe think them crates grow on trees, you lamebrain?" Phineas kept yelling at his offspring. "I hope we don't never have to ferry the quizzer kids nowheres as you'll let the youngest one try an' make a landin', huh? Dames! They just blink at you an'—"

Elmer began to stew. "Yeah, I guess it runs in the family, pa. Over in England I was talkin' to a brigadier general one night. His name was Garrity. He said to ast you some time how you nearly got jugged in a U.S. bastile for tryin' to stow a Frog dame away on the transport comin' home. You had her hair cut off an' in a dough's uniform. Her name—Babette—I think he—"

"That no-account, crumby brass hat!" Phineas Pinkham howled. "In the first *guerre* he tried to ruin me. He tries t'make a bum outa me in the eyes of my one an' only son in the second one! If I ever get hold of the dirty—!"

"Forgit it, pa," Elmer said. "Don't forgit you got blood pressure too high. If it goes over its ceilin'—"

Two shiny sedans came in through the gate. The nightclub chicks climbed aboard and were immediately whisked away. "Say, pa," Elmer said as he followed his parent into the operations office, "whatever happened to that Babette?"

"You shut up!" Phineas yelled, and dropped into his swivel chair. He reached for some papers and took a swift gander at them. "We ain't doin' so bad, son," he enthused. "Ought t'have them crates paid for inside of ten years. Huh, here's a letter I almos' forgot. It's from my old hutmate when I flew the Spads. Name's Gillis, an' he's a big shot in Cleveland an' is president of the Rotary Club. Wants me to entertain at a dinner on the seventeenth. Haw-w-w-w-w, I got a new number that will knock them for a row of Nissens—or Quonsets—but I don't see how I can make it. Well, I'll tell him some other time—"

"You heard any more from J.G. Huddlespoon, pa?"

"No. I bet he's give the job to the Shangri-La Airways, the stuck-up, two-chinned typhoon," Phineas griped. "It is incrimination against war vets."

"How long has a man got a right to be called a war veteran?" Elmer sniffed. "Are they still givin' vets of Gettysburg priority on housin'?"

"You are altogether too fresh, Elmer!" Phineas trumpeted. "An' lay off my blood pressure tablets!"

"They look like chiclets," Elmer said, and put one

in his mouth and bit down hard. He chewed for a moment and found the flavor not bad at all. Then there was a fizzing noise in his mouth. Froth bubbled through his teeth and he ran for the washstand in the corner and drew a glass of water. He tipped it to his face just as the bottom of the glass gave way. The water soaked through his shirt and trickled downward. The lather in his mouth kept building up until he looked like a shaving soap ad. It had a horrible taste.

"Awright, when you think you are smarter'n the old man, write me a letter, Elmer," Phineas yipped. "Now git out there an' help the mechs check up on Number Eleven!"

"I'll git hunk. I'll fix your wagon, pa!" Elmer sputtered.

Twenty minutes later, Phineas thought he would go out and see how the cargo crates shaped up. He got out of his chair without difficulty, but he couldn't get the synthetic rubber seat cushion off his empennage. One or two futile tries convinced him that it was as good a vulcanizing job as he'd ever come across. "Haw-w-w!" he laughed, as he changed his trousers. "I never was prouder of him than I am now. There is nothin' slow about his catchin' on."

Phineas was on his way out of the office when the phone jangled. He hopped back and answered the public utility gadget. "Yeah! Flyin' Carpet Airw—oh, hello Mr. Spuddlehoo, I wondered—Huddlespoon? Sorry, haw-w-w-w! What's that?"

J. G. Huddlespoon told Phineas what: "That job I called you up about some time ago. Well, we've talked it over and we've agreed to let you fly that stuff of ours to Cleveland. Want a responsible pilot now, understand? Our trucks will bring the cargo out there ten o'clock, morning of the seventeenth. Don't believe you'll need more than one cargo plane, Pinkham."

"Right," Phineas said. "What is the stuff?"

"Why-er—tractor parts," Huddlespoon said. "You know our factory in Cedar Rapids. New idea in farm machinery and of course we—"

"Just leave it to me," Phineas yipped. "I'll give it my personal attention, Puddlesmoon. Just bring it here an'—yeah, sorry, Mr. Huddlespoon. Now the charge for this haul—"

"Anything you say will be agreeable, Pinkham. Just send the bill—"

"What a sucker—I mean a guy just walked in," Phineas hurriedly added. "We'll be expectin' the trucks." He hung up and ran out to the air strip. "Elme-e-e-e-e-e-r!" he howled. "*Comst du hier!*"

ELMER finally got out of a DC3 and jogged toward the operations shack. "What you want, huh? That Casey just took me for thirty-seven bucks with them dice of his. I'm beginnin' to think—"

"Has that bum still got them pair of loaded dice he used over in Barley Duck?" Phineas roared. "I'll fire that mick! Onct he held the mortgage on the equipment officer's house in Shinbone Gap, Idaho. Oh, Elmer, we got the job."

"Huh?"

"Huddlespooner called me. The trucks will bring the stuff here the seventeenth. The sevent—why, that is the day when Gillis has the Rotary binge—we can kill two birds with one stone, son. We should be in Cleveland about—let's see, them crates will go two hundred miles an hour if I'm at the wheel. Yeah, I'll wire Bump Gillis I accept. I got to brush up with Horace a little before—"

"Who's that jerk, pa? If you've gone an' hired another first world war pilot I am finished," Elmer fretted. "An' you ain't goin' to fly no crate I'm ridin' in. Why don't you tumble how old you are?"

"I should bat you one, Elmer Pinkham," Phineas yelled. "I can still fly anythin' lighter than a bridge abutment. Anyway, I am goin' along with you in Number Seven. Horace is a secret I got. It—he will be a sensation in Cleveland."

"Look, we are in the air transport business, not try in' out for the Looey vaudeville circuit," Elmer said. "We got to put in more floodlights an' get a co-pilot. We got to have radio contact with each other an'—"

"Awright, as soon as I get the check from the Hubblesboon & Rickett Manufacturin' Co., I will get us a copilot," Phineas agreed. "You got somebody in mind just as if I didn't know."

"Sure. He is Ottie 'Boom Boom' Brink who used to bomb kraut cities with me," Elmer said. "He has been makin' a buck sky writin' but got sky writer's cramps last week. It is somethin' like the bends and why not when a guy has to write 'McQuinnrhan's Beer' seven times in one day?"

"Awright, but you got to have him looked over by a medico," Phineas sniffed. "It's enough I got one psychro—"

"I resent that," Elmer said, then grinned. "I heard that you was sent to Chaumont, France, onct an'—"

"Now about this new haulin' contract," said Phineas. "We got to arrange for a cargo back as—"

"Maybe Bob Hope'll sell the Cleveland Indians to Cedar Rapids on the seventeenth," Elmer said. "We will fly them down here."

"Haw-w-w-w-w-w!" Phineas exploded. "What a pair we make, huh? Look, let's not wait. Send for Boom Boom, Elmer."

"Le's see, I think it is the Flower Hospital he is in at the moment," Elmer mumbled. "In—"

"Huh?"

"Well, he tried to land a Stinson on the roof of the new post office in—but don't you worry, pa, as he is some pilot."

"Well," Phineas mused resignedly as his pride and joy trotted out. "A kangaroo couldn't expect to have an eagle for an offspring."

The Flying Carpet Airline, Inc. had to be satisfied with a short haul or two during the next three days. Phineas and his son came back from delivering three chimpanzees to a circus in Indiana an hour before dusk one day, when they were met by a pair of citizens sporting visages as long as Washington filibusters. The tallest of the duo handed Phineas his card. It said: *C. R. Graves, Mortician, Day & Night Service. Chapel Free.*

"This is my assistant, Mr. Digby," Graves intoned.

Phineas eyed his son quizzically. "Haw-w-w-w-w, I see what you mean, pal, but flyin' isn't that risky no more. I don't blame you for interviewin' perspective clients, but, well, we're busy men an'—"

"You misunderstand, my friend," Mr. Graves said. "We have two corpses to take care of that must go to Cleveland on the seventeenth as then the relatives can be there for the funeral. They will be tied up all other days. We must have a day or two to fix them up properly. I'm sure two wooden boxes would not take up too much space even if you should have other cargo."

"I dunno," Phineas said. "It's a stiff assignment."

"Quite an undertaking yeah," Elmer quipped.

"I am willing to pay one hundred and fifty dollars," Mr. Graves said anxiously.

"It is a deal," Phineas grinned. "With corpses there shouldn't be too much overhead, Elmer. Haw-w-w-w-w!"

"Tell 'em to bring only twenty-five pounds of baggage each," Elmer Pinkham said. "We take off at noon on the seventeenth."

"Thank you so much," Mr. Graves said. "Let us be on our way, Mr. Digby."

Phineas and son tripped into operations just as the phone rang. Phineas picked it up. "Oh, h'lo, Bessie, darlin'! Huh? Don't darlin' you? Why not—?"

"You mental washout," Mrs. Pinkham replied vehemently, "the girls are coinin' for bridge in half an

hour. I broke an egg to make some salad dressin'. *Boof!* Now I look like. Aunt Jemima. How does it come off?"

"That black powder?" Phineas gulped. "It don't without the magic formula an' I'll have to send t'the factory for it. Bessie, I swear I never planted that trick egg in—*Elmer!* You come here, you—!"

Elmer Pinkham was already out on the field and accelerating speed. Phineas hung up, counted to eighty, then shook his head hopelessly. "Monkey see, monkey do, yeah. What's bred in the bone, etcetera."

THE BIG day arrived. After the Huddlespoon & Rickett cargo had been stowed aboard Number Seven, a cadaver Cadillac came in through the gate. Phineas called for Casey and Greasy Gilbey. "Get the wooden kimoners out of that jalopy an' load 'em in, you guys," he yelled.

"So we're pall bearers now, huh?" Casey sniffed. "Where's the frock-coats an' striped pants, Phineas? An' licenses to tote stiff's."

"Don't give me no lip," Phineas barked. "I'm payin' you bums all you're worth an' you know it."

"An' you expect us to live on that?" Gilbey cut in. "Uh, what am I sayin'? Come on, Casey."

Mr. Graves handed Phineas some papers. "Permits and burial certificates and such," he said. "A mortician will meet you at Cleveland. Good day, gentlemen."

"I am glad the corpses was put in last so we can git them out first, pa," Elmer said as he climbed aboard the transport. "Everythin' okay, Casey?"

"The tanks are full an' the engines turn over," the first world war mech snapped. "What elst do you want, a tow car?"

Phineas went aboard with a small valise and a wicker basket with a cover over it. He put the basket down next to one of the long wooden boxes, and then went up to the control pit. Elmer was checking his instruments.

"All them gadgets," Phineas scoffed. "No wonder bums had to have a PH and a D to get in the air force in the last *guerre*. Our Spads had only about three instruments an' they generally got shot off 'fore we got any use out of them."

"No kiddin'?" Elmer sniffed and jammed the throttles up the gate. "We're on our way, pa."

The DC3 made its run and became airborne and Phineas sighed with utter contentment and thought of other days. "It remin's me of the time I stowed away in a Limey Handley-Page bomber, son. Now, there was a crate. We were on our way to wash up a kraut ammo dump back of Metz. Well, sir—"

"Oh, forgit them horse and buggy days an outside plumbin'," Elmer tossed at his pa.

"You are too fresh for your rompers," Phineas admonished. "You think you young squirts were hot pilots. Why, let me tell you—"

"One night we took off in the B-17's to bomb Cologne," Elmer yelled loudly. "Gettin' away from the target, a hundred Messups jumped us an' they had fifty calibre slugs an' 23 mm. cannon, not BB's like you old vets used. We put up an awful fight. Our crate, 'Bertha's Bustle,' had only one engine workin' when we hit the channel. Then two bandits dropped down on us—"

Elmer Pinkham felt a draft. He twisted his head around. He saw that the door of the pilot's compartment was wide open. He let his chin drop as far as it could possibly go as he swapped dirty looks with a pair of flinty-eyed citizens. They stood there, grinning maliciously, and one held a wicked-looking Betsy.

"Don't look now, pa, but—but—!"

"Awright, you punks, we wa'n't as dead as we made out. Git out of them seats an' scram back in the bus!"

"What is this?" Phineas Pinkham choked out.

"It is not a game of charades, pal. Awright, I'll count to three, Igzy, an' if they haven't moved, we'll rub 'em out now instead of later. One—two—th—"

"Do as they say, Elmer," Phineas yipped. "Think of your ma!"

Elmer got out of the seat. He thought he saw his chance and made a pass at one of the rough boys. The Betsy came down on his noggin, crossed his eyes and buckled him at the knees. His marbles rolled every which way. A bandit jumped for the controls and yelled, "Git 'em back in there, Igzv. I'm headin' for Canada with this heap. We'll dump 'em later an' even Admiral Byrd won't never find 'em."

Elmer, out on his feet, staggered out into the steel cocoon and fell flat on his face. Phineas, griping into his rain barrel, sat himself down on the edge of an empty coffin kimono and looked into the business end of the bandit's howitzer. "Pretty slick the way we got aboard this sky wagon, huh? Our faces are tacked up in too many post offices for us to have took chances gettin' recognized as live passengers. Tractor parts, huh?"

"Elmer!" Phineas called out anxiously.

Elmer was still out as cold as an Eskimo evicted from his igloo. Number Seven's 2400 horses made the only sound anywhere for a few moments. "Sure,"

Phineas gulped. "Tractor parts. Why did you go t'so much trouble for stuff like that for? It is silly."

"I didn't think you two punks looked very bright," the crook called Igzy said. "They're makin' things t'day an' shippin' them as somethin' else. Ever hear of how many parts there are in atom bombs?"

"Wha-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a ?" Phineas yelled.

"Sure. When we git up near Winnepeg, Canada, another plane meets us. Too had we got t' have to knock you guys off as that is the only messy part of the job. Got t' burn up this heap, too, so's you will be hard to identify even by close relations."

"T' think I onct made monkeys out of the best Junkers in the Kaiser's air corpse," Phineas groaned, and surreptitiously slid a big boot toward the wicker basket. "It looks like I ain't got it no more, huh?"

"Our cut on this deal is twenty grand," Igzy the bandit boasted. "Yeah, we've been tappin' wires leadin' in and out of that factory for weeks, Pinkham. Uncle Sam ought to get an I.Q. Ha!"

PHINEAS suddenly remembered the pair of photos he had seen in the combination grocery store and post office in the little town of Bagdad. Yeah, these were the wanted characters all right. Illegal entry into the U. S. Members of a spy ring. Approach them with caution—they are dangerous. He got his boot against the wicker basket and lifted it up slowly to shake the cover loose with his toe, talking like a back fence gossip to keep Igzy's attention off the sly maneuver. "Foreign agents, huh? I remember back in 1918 how I put the skids under Jerry spies in Barley Duck. You wouldn't think t' look at me I even stole Von Papen's watch, huh? I got took prisoner onct behind the lines, an' three days later I landed near Commercy, France, in a Fokker D7 an' wearin' Goerin's best uniform."

The cover of the basket toppled and hit the floor, making no sound. There came a faint whirring sound that only Phineas could isolate. Igzy glanced toward Elmer who suddenly emitted a groan, seemed satisfied that the DC3 pilot wouldn't pick up his marbles again for at least ten minutes, and scoffed, "You was an aviator once? I think you're nuttier than a fruit cake, Pinkham. Let me see you git out of this one, Buster!"

Phineas suddenly screamed. He pointed with a long finger toward the wicker basket. Igzy looked that way and then his eyes bugged out like a startled hop-toad's. His mouth snapped open. The head of a hooded cobra came up out of the basket and began weaving back and forth. Its eyes were little jets of greenish orange

fire and its tongue slid in and out. "A s-s-snake!" the bandit screeched. "How in h—did it get in here?"

"A cobra," Phineas howled, simulating abject terror. "Don't dast move a muscle as it is the most deadly of all serpents an' can strike from ten feet out. It is a cobra an' its bite is goodbye forever an' ever. Oh-h-h-h-h, if your pal even makes this crate bucket even an inch one way or the other we are goners!"

"A cobra?" Igzy choked out, beads of sweat popping off his ugly pan. "We gotta knock it off, P-Pinkham. Don't move now—"

"If it slides out of that basket an' hides where we know not where," Phineas said in a raspy voice, "it'll strike from ambush like a sniper. Nobody'll be safe. It could crawl under the door an' git the bandit flyin' this DC3. Can you also fly, pal?"

"Nah!" Igzy shook globules of worry dew off his brow and away from his eyes. "Well, I'll fix that dirty snake!" His hand shook like a plucked harp string and he missed by a good two feet when he fired the first shot at the cobra. The snake reared higher and even began to hiss. Igzy blasted at it once more and got only a piece of the basket's rim. The DC3 ran into headwinds and began to go into a sickening series of drops. The cobra did not seem to like it and Phineas yowled, "Hit it, will ya? It is ready t' cut loose!"

Bang! Bang! Bang!

"Are you shootin' blanks?" Phineas Pinkham roared at the petrified Igzy. "Missed it every time. Quick, gimme the gun or we are lost!"

"Y-Yeah, Pinkham," Igzy gulped, and tossed the Betsy to Phineas. "Hurry up an' kill that—"

"Haw-w-w-w-w-w-w-w!" Phineas, the Roscoe clutched tightly in his right hand and pointed at the addled Igzy, got up and walked to the basket, stooped over and patted the cobra on the noggin. "There, Horace, ol' pal, ol' pal, git back there an' relax!" Igzy stared open-mouthed, torn between paralysis and the feeling that he had been taken for a patsy. "What g-goes? He-e-e-y, Al!"

The cobra subsided, folded up and sank down out of sight. Igzy reached for a fire extinguisher, but it was taken out of his hand by Elmer Pinkham who was now out of his coma. Elmer whanged Igzy over the scalp and Igzy folded, canary birds holding a community sing inside his noggin. "Nice goin', pa!" Elmer yipped. "A tame cobra, hah? Now I've seen everyth—look ou-u-u-t!" The other bandit appeared in the doorway leading into the DC3's business office at the same time the fire extinguisher reached it. *Bong!* Like jet

propulsion, Elmer Pinkham went into the control room and hit Al before the dishonest gee could shake the effects of the pyrene treatment out of his mental assembly. Phineas was certain Elmer split every one of Al's atoms with the punch. Elmer pushed the bandit out into the steel cocoon for his pa to take care of.

"Grab them controls, you lemon-head!" Phineas Pinkham trumpeted. "Haw-w-w-w-w-w! It sure is like ol' times!" He picked up a spanner wrench that Casey had left lying around and hit Igzy one for good measure. He managed to dump both crooks back into the containers they had come aboard in and saw to it this time that the covers were tightly screwed down. He went up to the DC3's office and sat down beside Elmer. "Radio workin', son?"

"Switch it on an' see," Elmer said "Don't forget the mike. How did you ever hypnertize a cobra, pa?"

"It was not real," Phineas grinned. "It is a marked improvement on an old number that has been foolin' audiences for years, son. Nobody can tell it from a real cobra now. That item sells for two hun'ed dollars each when I git 'em in production."

"That's my ol' man," Elmer mumbled.

PHINEAS went to work. After awhile he contacted the Cleveland airport. "Flyin' Carpet Airline DC3—Number Seven callin' control tower. Roger! Wilco! Geronimo! Come in, somebody, will ya?"

"Pa," Elmer choked out. "Give 'em the right call, you flathead—excuse me, pa."

"Cleveland callin' Flying Carp—what was that again?"

"The Pinkhams are comin' in," Phineas yelled. "Get the F.B.I. to meet ol' Number Seven. We got Igzy Yazgazca an' Al Yiffniff. If there is a hearse there waitin' it is not Mrs. Astor's. Grab the crew of that meat wagon an' approach them with caution. Wilco? Send word to the cops in Cedar Rapids t'pick up two undertakers named Digby an' Graves. They are all members of a spy ring. They—they tried to steal tractor parts that ain't really. Pinkham signin' off."

"A spy ring," Elmer forced out. "Garrity was right, pa. He said you could always fall into a pig pen an' come out wearin' a diadem of gardenias—"

"You fly this plane, you little squirt," Phineas yelled. "Shut up, as here comes Cleveland onct more. Yeah?"

"You are nuts, pilot!" came a voice from downstairs, "Start in ag'in and make sense, will ya?"

"Roger! Look, I ain't been brushin' up on raddio as

I flew in the first *guerre*. Clear the way for a DC3 is all I ask, Bub. It has got a silk hat painted on it with a rabbit jumpin' out of it. Haw-w-w-w-w-w!"

"You won't have no license, you smart joker, when you put that crate down here, and you won't never get another," the voice from downstairs said.

"What's a license?" Phineas yipped. A choking cry fanned the Pinkham ears. Phineas grinned and looked at Elmer. "That is how I drove brass hats crazy in the last fuss, son. Armchair pilots ought t' git needled. Why didn't you tell me you had to reserve runways?"

Elmer sighed, checked his altitude, his fuel and his oil and blood pressure. "Yeah, that brigadier over in England wa'n't just whistlin' Dixie when he told me about my pa," he said. "Have a stick of gum."

"Don't mind if I do," Phineas said. He crammed the stuff into his mouth and started chewing. His jaws became glued together and he tried to pry the lower one loose with the heels of his hands. He suddenly realized that he manufactured the product himself and had given a package to Elmer only yesterday. He had nearly a half hour to wait, he knew, before he could become articulate.

"It is writ that he who lives by the sword," Elmer quipped, "won't never die under the wheels of a garbage truck, pa. Look, there is Cleveland down there."

The control tower kept the DC3 circling around upstairs for nearly twenty minutes before it gave the Pinkhams the office to come on in. "I bet it is because you burned them up, pa," Elmer said. "In about five more minutes we would have had enough gas left t'clean a pair of dame's gloves. That Casey! He never filled up these tanks, pa! He's got to be fired."

"Casey?" Phineas roared as the DC3 went in to land. "If he goes, I go, Elmer Pinkham! If he goes, Boom Boom Brink stays unemployed. Why, me an' the sarge are insep—you got them flaps down, son? You're goin' too fast. Look out for that oil truck—uh—you'll pile up with that crate takin' off. Watch it—"

"The next time I'll bring ma," Elmer snapped. "She ain't half as bad a back-seat driver as you. Shut up, as I'm putting this heap down. Don't blow a gasket!"

"No discipline nowadays," Phineas griped. "No respect for nobody's elders. *Lo-o-ok out, Elmer!*"

The DC3 greased the runway and finally shuddered to a stop. Airport officials, newspapermen and cops swarmed around it as the Pinkhams alit. A big citizen with a badge got hold of Phineas' sleeve. "All right, what's the gag, brother?"

"Git them coffin topcoats out of there an' take a gander at what's in 'em," Phineas sniffed. "You are cops?"

"We ain't sisters named Andrews. We're holdin' two characters that drove a mortician's jalopy in here awhile ago. Awright, give!"

The long wooden boxes were taken out of the DC3 and opened. When the lid was unscrewed from one, a swarthy glassy-eyed occupant sat up and blinked at the reception party. The cops gasped. "The guy was right. This is Al Yiffniff!"

Igzy was sprung next. Igzy was irrational, to say the least. "Oh, b-bury me n-not on the lone pararie-e-e-e—let us me-e-e-t in the sweet bye an' b-b-bye—"

"An' the next time we are ast to haul grapefruit," Elmer Pinkham said quite irritably, "make sure they ain't alligator pears. Tractor parts, they said—"

"You can't trust nobody," Phineas said. "We should get medals for this, Elmer. What is this stuff they talk about in atom bombs like nucleus fissures? Where's a phone as I got to call Bump Gillis."

THE ROTARIANS had eaten. It was time for entertainment. Rotary president Gillis arose to introduce the guest speaker and his son. Bump Gillis was now a trifle corpulent and he displayed quite a head of scalp. "Fellow Rotarians," he began. "Since I called my old hutmate of the first world war to come here to entertain us, he has become famous. Along

with his son, Elmer, he exposed a dangerous spy ring that bored from within. None of you can guess a single thing that they might not do if they live long enough. But you didn't come here to hear me speak—"

"You can say that ag'in," Phineas cut in.

Applause.

"So without further ado, Phineas Pinkham will now demonstrate his marvellous talents," Bump Gillis concluded. "Especially how he turned the tables on two dangerous members of a subversive gang who sought to undermine the safety of our homes. It is an honor to give you Phineas Pinkham—and you can have him, ha!"

Phineas got up and opened a valise. "Gentlemen, you have always heard the hand is quicker'n the eye, huh? What looks like what it really ain't can fool everybody. Here I have a plain ordinary egg. Here—" He handed it to a very austere citizen wearing a posy in his lapel. "Break it. my good man, to show 'em it is an egg."

The Rotarian obliged. He broke it against the rim of a drinking glass. *Poof!* The Rotarian was now black-face.

Bump Gillis closed his eyes, dropped his head in his hands. "Oh, cripes, the banker I was promised that loan from." He leaned against the man sitting beside him. "This—this is where I came in, Frank," he sighed. "Almost thirty years ago."