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**PHINEAS
PINKHAM**
howl

CRAZY LIKE A FOX!

written and illustrated by **JOE ARCHIBALD**

It was as tough as walking across No-Man's-Land with a flare in each hand—that mission G.H.Q. gave to Phineas "Carbuncle" Pinkham. Oh, well, Phineas had to learn some time that he could fool with the Frogs and the Limeys and Mannheim's staffel and get away with it —but Yankee Brass Hats were birds of another feather!

LIEUTENANT PHINEAS "CARBUNCLE" PINKHAM'S PRESENCE was very much desired in Wings. In fact, Major Rufus Garrity, the C.O. of the Ninth Pursuit, had been looking forward to seeing the inimitable flyer from Boonetown, Iowa for all of the past fifteen minutes. It was just fifteen minutes longer than was his wont to wait for any inferior officer. Sir Rufus was swearing, and each blistering outburst would have pierced a ten-inch plank. He pounded one big fist on the top of the table, then got up and began to stamp around in a dizzy circle.

Outside, in the big room, buzzards of the Ninth paused in the midst of whatever they were doing to

listen to the disturbances with profound interest. One, who answered to the name of Bump Gillis, sat apart from the rest and indulged in some wholehearted chuckles. We might even call them savage. It was apparent to all present that this particular buzzard was cognizant of the reason for Lieutenant Pinkham's tardiness. Pilot Gillis, however, was Scotch on his father's side and was giving nothing away.

And then the door of Wings burst open and slammed against the wall. The knob snapped off and rattled along the floor.

"Orderly!" bellowed the irate Rufus.

"H-here, s-sir," came a startled voice from the entrance door of the big stone farmhouse.

"I want Lieutenant Plnkham here in just two minutes, understand roared the Old Man. "If you have to hit him over the head and drag him here! Get!"

The orderly turned and fled. Bump Gillis yawned, rose from his seat and walked out to the tarmac, where he put on all speed and followed on the heels of the non-com. As the men neared the hut wherein abided Phineas, there came a potpourri of grunts, angry epithets, and the sounds of furniture being kicked all over the place.

The orderly glanced at Lieutenant Gillis wonderingly, approached the shack with caution, and peered inside. The summons that it was his duty to deliver thickened in his throat. Bump Gillis leaned against the door and laughed to his heart's content. On the floor, feet and hands securely lashed with rope, writhed Phineas Pinkham. The flyer extricated himself from something that closely resembled a cruller and glared up at the faces of the visitors.

"H-hey, ya bum," he shot between gasps at Gillis, "git me outa this. I—"

"Haw-w!" enthused Lieutenant Gillis, enjoying a long-deferred revenge for past indignities suffered at his hutmate's hands. "Why don't ya look in the book? Don't it say how to git out? Ya've been practicin' that trick fer a week now an'—"

"Y-yeah?" retorted the hapless Pinkham. "Well, that guy that wrote it is a fake. I-I'll send for my money that I paid f-fer it. E-even Hoodinny couldn't git outa this. W-why, y-you tied me, Bump, ya fathead. I bet ya never tied me like the book said. Y-ya dirty bum!"

"Lieutenant Pinkham," began the orderly dutifully, "the C.O. wants to see you quick. He's mad an'—"

"H-huh?" snapped Phineas, struggling to a sitting position. "H-how the hell can I git there? Cut these ropes, ya nitwit. Mad, is he? Well, if he wasn't, he'd be sick, the ol' walrus. Hurry up an' git me outa this, an' don't stand there like ya was goin' to jump into somethin'."

Lieutenant Gillis laughed and reached for a knife. Taking his time about it, he reached down and severed his hutmate's bonds Phineas climbed stiffly to the vertical and glowered at the grinning Bump.

"If I wasn't so stiff, ya mug," he shot at his hutmate. "I'd bop ya one in the snoot. Where's that book? I'll find out if ya tied me—"

"Beg your pardon, sir," interrupted the orderly, "but the C.O. said—"

"Awright' Awright!" howled Phineas. "Git to hell outa here!"

FIVE minutes later, Lieutenant Pinkham walked stiffly into the palpitating presence of Major Garrity. The Old Man's mustache and eyebrows stood out straight. A hat could have been hung on his out-thrust lower jaw Phineas discreetly measured the distance between his own chin and the great freckled fists of his lord and master, who seemed on the point of jumping at him at any minute.

"W-well, sir," managed Phineas, "here I—"

"I'm not blind!" barked Major Rufus. "Took your time about reporting to me, didn't you. Pinkham? And look at your uniform—a disgrace! Looks as if you just dug it out of a ditch. Button up that tunic! I'll teach you to respect a superior officer, Pinkham, if I have to bend a prop over your skull. Keep me waiting, will you? Just don't give a damn, do you, you fish-faced—"

"I was tied up, sir," Phineas defended himself. "It wasn't my fault. I—"

"Tied up?" roared the C.O. "Tied up? How many times have I told you to drop everything an' jump when I—"

"Ya don't understand," went on Carbuncle. "I was practicin' rope-escapin' tricks an' Bump Gillis tied me up like it didn't say in the book an'—"

"Tricks!" erupted the Old Man, jumping up and down and tearing at his scant crop of hair. "My God!" Abruptly he ceased his gymnastics to shove a fist close to Phineas' nose. "That's what I want to see you about, you—you—"

"H-huh?" jerked out the miscreant, scratching his head as his face lighted up with expectation. "Ya want me to show ya one, huh? Well, I thought it was about time I got some appre—"

"Shut up!" stormed the C.O. "You were in Bar-Le-Duc last night, weren't you, Pinkham?"

"Yeah, sure. I—"

"Then maybe you can tell me who dumped the can of garbage into the car that stood out in front of the Red Cow Cafe?" shouted the major. "Colonel Whitcomb's car. Came up from Chaumont. G.H.Q., understand?"

Phineas squinted at the ceiling and scratched his head. "Don't know nothin' about it, sir. I—"

"You're a liar by the clock, as usual, you crackpot," retorted the C.O. "And that wasn't all. Somebody poured rice in the radiator of that bus and it was boiling so the rice swelled out into a nice pudding. All they'd have needed would've been raisins. Well?"

Phineas hurriedly wiped a grin from his homely face. "Why, that's funny, sir," he said innocently, "I

didn't hear nothin' about it. Why, me an' Bump left—"

"Shut up! The mess sergeant has told me that somebody took some rice out of the kitchen," continued Major Rufus, his eyes gleaming piercingly.

"The dirty squealer!" exclaimed Phineas. "I'll—"

"So? Well, Pinkham, you're in a jam," pointed out his superior officer triumphantly. "They arrested two doughs for that job and they've got 'em in the guard house. Somebody saw 'em carrying the garbage can away and they were too drunk to remember who gave it to them. How many francs did you have to pay them, Pinkham?"

"Wh-why—*er*—w-well," stammered the Boonetown flyer, at a loss for words, "I—"

"Going to let those doughs take the medicine, eh?" purred the Old Man. "Oh, no, you won't," he added, "because I've already sent word through, and they're cavorting around on the loose right now. One Lieutenant Pinkham is awaiting such disposal as the brass hats see fit. Now, isn't that nice, lieutenant?"

"Cripes!" groaned Phineas. "A guy can't have no fun in this war. Well, awright, but when the Jerries start runnin' these guys ragged, an' ya git short of men, ya'll wish ya never busted me!"

"We'll try to hold the Germans back until ten new men come up to take your place," replied the major, with exquisite sarcasm. "Now, get out of here, Pinkham!"

BOONETOWN'S contribution to the worldwide fuss walked out of the Presence, mumbling indignantly. Hope sprang up like a weed in several human breasts as he shuffled to the door. For weeks and weeks these war birds had been as just so many guinea pigs with which to prove the worth of Phineas Pinkham's bag of tricks. And for an equally long time they had prayed for emancipation via a well-aimed burst from a Spandau or the pressure of the Old Man's iron fist.

Be that, as it may, they had hoped in vain. The irrepressible Phineas had soared to great heights instead of having been taken for a nose dive. Now things looked very, very bright indeed for the harassed buzzards of the Ninth Pursuit. One could play fast and loose with the Frogs and the Limeys, but snapping at the august heels of a Yankee brass hat was something to crawl out of.

"Hope you git nothin' worse than Leavenworth," offered Captain Howell with a grin as Phineas brushed by his chair.

"Oh, yeah?" burst out the Pinkham hopeful. "Well,

ya kin all go soak your necks, ya bums." Having delivered himself of this parting shot, the exponent of legerdemain and all its relations continued on his way, murmuring something about the deplorable lack of a sense of humor in the A.E.F.

Now one would have expected to see joy reigning unconfined on Bump Gillis' face as Phineas entered the Nissen. Instead, the flyer was sitting on his cot, cuddling an armful of woe. A pink-tinted missive, from which emanated a delicious aroma of heliotrope, was in his hand.

"That mess monkey squealed on us," growled Lieutenant Pinkham as he entered. "An' I got it all blamed on me. I oughta told old armadillo that you was as much to blame as me, ya bum. Ya—what ails ya? Ya look like the breakin' up of a bad cold. Git a letter from a dame an'—"

"Yeah?" snapped the miserable Bump. "Well, listen! She says here, she says, '*I suppose you think it very funny, Mister Gillis*—she calls me 'Mister,' Carbuncle. Can ya tie that, huh?—*that you should send me a letter with nothing but a blank sheet of paper to read, but I think it's a low-down trick and you have a lot of explaining to do before I waste my time writing to you. I have one or two more appreciative friends in the service, Mister Gillis, and a box of cake and candy intended for you has gone in another direction. Yours very truly, Sadie McIntosh.*'"

"Cripes!" remarked Phineas with a grin, forgetting his own tribulations for the moment. "That is a short note, eh? I should think you would've had more sense than to kid a dame like that. I—"

"Huh?" sniffed Bump. "Ya think I did that, ya fathead? Ya know I didn't. You saw the letter. Ya even lent me your fountain pen."

"Hmph! That's right. Well, I bet them censures did it. They made a mistake an'—"

"Yeah, the big clucks!" agreed Lieutenant Gillis. "I bet they did. Well, I gotta sit down an' write her right away or else I am out in the cold as far as she's concerned."

"An' I suppose that means ya want to borrow my pen again, huh?" snapped Phineas. "Why don't ya loosen up an' spend a dime?"

"I won't hurt it, will I?" retorted Bump indignantly. "An' ya wouldn't want to see me lose my dame, would ya?"

"Oh, awright," grumbled Carbuncle and produced the pen. "Say, did anythin' come for me in that mail? I been expectin'—"

"Yeah," grinned Bump. "A can of maple syrup. I know. I had it took over to the mess shack so's ya couldn't put no gasoline or arsenic in it."

Phineas assumed his most indignant posture. "Why, ya big bunch of pirates!" he howled. "Took my syrup, huh? Well, you guys can divvy up an' pay for your share. I ain't feedin' this air corps, see?"

"Aw, shut up," said Bump sociably and began to write to Sadie.

PHINEAS growled some more about the purloined syrup and then settled down on his bunk. A strange light smoldered in his eyes as he watched the pen scratch feverishly over the sheet of bond paper. He was very much pleased to note that the chimney on the old lamp was plentifully smudged and robbed the hut of much-needed illumination.

It did not take long for his hut-mate to finish the important letter to the States, for Lieutenant Gillis wanted it to arrive with all haste. He was sealing the envelope when Captain Howell pushed his head in the door of the hut.

"C'mon, buzzards!" he yipped. "We got a treat up at the house. Pancakes an' syrup!"

"Why, you bum!" shouted Phineas. "Ya mean my—" But Howell was well on his way.

Nothing having come in from the brass hats regarding the war on this particular night the mess table of the Ninth was completely surrounded by war birds whose lips smacked in anticipation of this extraordinary gastronomic treat. The Old Man was already seated at the table when Phineas and Bump walked in, the former surveying the gathering around the festive board with a jaundiced eye.

"Better enjoy yourselves while you may," the C.O. was saying. "Rather think that G.H.Q. has an eye toward this squadron for that little trip over into the Jerry back area. They've got to have that ammunition depot busted up before the krauts start a new drive. As yet, no squadron has had any luck but bad in trying to spot it. I heard they lost two D.H.9s over across the river on that go."

"It's suicide, that job," declared Howell. "Mannheim's Tripes are covering that sector from dawn until dusk. It'd take a whole squadron and then some to—"

"Which is what G.H.Q. doesn't want," interrupted the Old Man. "Now—"

A door opened and the mess attendant staggered in under the onus of a great platter of cakes. A cheer went up as he reached the table and deposited it without

mishap. Forks stabbed out and the pile of cakes dwindled rapidly as the avid buzzards transferred them to their own plates. The syrup went from hand to hand.

Just a few minutes later, a maddened crowd of pilots was chasing Phineas Pinkham across the night-shrouded tarmac, their palates fouled by the obnoxious taste of glue, and each striving to get his lower and upper bicuspid to part company. The thought that glue was made out of the hoofs of dead cows and horses spurred them on to the contemplated massacre. Major Garrity, sputtering and swearing, stood on the steps of the stone house and pawed at his outraged tongue with the palm of his hand.

Across the field they chased Phineas, over a brook to a big tree, and in the umbrage of this Carbuncle sought sanctuary. For an hour he hugged a limb like a squirrel, dodging a barrage of rocks, tin cans, broken limbs and balls of mud. At length, in twos and threes, the besiegers fell back and walked to their huts, there to rummage for any liquor whatsoever that would banish the taste of glue from their palates. Phineas alighted from his perch and waited until the time was opportune to seek his bunk. And so ended another hectic day on the field of the Ninth Pursuit.

WRAPPED up in their working clothes, A flight tumbled out of the huts at dawn and trudged toward the line of war chariots. If the Jerries could but have seen their faces as they climbed aboard, they probably would have taken the morning off. A more sour-visaged bunch of sky Jehus never fingered joysticks. Cognac, water and coffee had been allied to drown out the lingering taste of glue, but had proven impotent

Lieutenant Phineas Pinkham had made a slight detour on the way to his ship. He had come via the rear of the hangars and approached his Spad under the screen of several groundmen. Climbing into his pit, he favored the pilots on either side of him with a defiant grin. Bump Gillis' response was an uncomplimentary, decidedly harsh sound that is oft referred to back in the States as a Bronx cheer. Homicide, skullduggery, and mayhem were written on other faces that happened to glance in Phineas' direction, and right then and there it became apparent to everybody with half a brain that it was going to be just too bad if the Boonetown flyer got in a tight spot with Jerry.

Minus two and a half ships, A flight came back naif an hour later to crow about a brief triumph over Mannheim's flock. The half-ship was the Spad brought

down to the ground by Phineas Pinkham. One comprehensive glance by the ackemmas convinced them that the government could make a new ship more cheaply than resurrect this one. A strut and an aileron had been left somewhere behind, and great pieces of fabric flapped in the breeze. The tail fin flopped over on the bias as the Spad rolled to a stop in a great cloud of steam. Across the tarmac a landing wheel rolled with a grease monkey in pursuit.

“Well,” grinned the intrepid Phineas as he stepped out of the wreck, “I hate to disappoint you guys, but here I am back again. Where have you bums been all day?” With that he forced out a nonchalant whistle and strolled away.

“Cripes!” groaned Howell. “We never have any luck. That nut has more than nine lives. Well, we’ve still got a chance to fight this *guerre* in peace. The brass hats ought to be over here today.”

“I’m rootin’ for ’em,” growled Bump and followed in his hutmate’s footsteps.

COLONEL WHITCOMB and company rolled onto the drome just three hours later in a big khaki-colored bus. Phineas was leaning against C flight’s hangar, showing a pair of interested ackemmas how to make an ace out of a trey of hearts, when his attention was arrested by the retching of brakes over in front of the farmhouse. He saw a great broad-shouldered individual removing himself from the vehicle, and then he turned to the groundmen.

“Any of you guys got some field glasses?” he growled.

“Yeah,” answered one of the men. “They’re right inside. I’ll git ’em, but don’t let nobody see ’em in case they reckernize ’em.”

The brass hat stood and preened himself before entering the domicile of the Ninth, and this gave Phineas time to get the field glasses trained on the important personage. Carbuncle saw a pair of eyes as tender as a stepmother’s kiss, a nose of great length, and a chin which must have been made of old tank parts. He felt a trifle weak as he handed the field glasses back and edged away. This brass hat, he knew, was the type who saw to it that military jails were never untenanted. Well, it would not be long now.

Humming “I Hear You Calling Me,” Phineas went to his hut to have a last seance with himself while awaiting the summons. Lieutenant Gillis proved a great help. He convinced his hutmate with pleasure that so far as he could see, there was no hope, and

wanted to know if he could give aid in packing up Phineas’ belongings. The Boonetown flyer was measuring Bump for a haymaker when the orderly intruded.

“Awright,” grumbled Phineas and rose to go.

“I bet that corporal has wore out three pairs of shoes between this shack an’ the Old Man’s,” opined his grieving hutmate. “Well, bad luck, ya fathead!”

“Nuts!” was all that Phineas could think of by way of repartee.

Colonel Whitcomb scowled his best as Lieutenant Pinkham sauntered jauntily into Wings and saluted as sloppily as he knew how. “So this is the famous Lieutenant Pinkham,” he rasped before the Old Man could think of a nastier greeting. “Very clever young man, I am told. Can’t seem to take the war seriously, hmph! Sort of an eccentric.”

“I’m a what, sir?” inquired Phineas, hie eyes narrowing.

“Shut up, Pinkham!” barked the Old Man.

“Heard you don’t care a tinker’s dam for majors, colonels, or, yes, even generals,” continued Whitcomb, his words becoming more and more sarcastic. “Had a lot of sport in Bar-le-Duc, eh, lieutenant? At my expense, what? Well, I’ll—”

“Well, sir,” interrupted Phineas, his temperature at the zenith, “if ya come up here to bust me, hurry up an’ do it, an’ see if I care a damn. I never did like to hear a guy recite an’—”

“Pinkham, you jackass!” erupted Major Garrity. “You-you—”

Colonel Whitcomb had a desperate fight to preserve his dignity. After several deep breaths he forced out a weak grin. His eyes, however, were as cold as a halibut as he stared at the irate flyer.

“It all depends, Pinkham,” he snapped, “whether I break you or not. G.H.Q. has a little job that has to be done, and as the unfortunate patriot has as much chance of coming back alive as a man has of walking across No-Man’s-Land at night with a flare in each hand, we are reluctant to pass it out. However, Pinkham, the little incident in Bar-le-Duc will be forgotten if you should care to volunteer.”

The Old Man gasped. Phineas Pinkham laughed. “That sure is very nice of you, colonel,” he purred, his fist itching to massage the brass hat’s nose. “Well, I’ll take it. When tougher jobs are done, a Pinkham will do ’em. And if I git bumped tryin’ to find that ammo dump, my last words will be all about how I like brass hats with shiny seats to their pants. When do I go over?”

Again Colonel Whitcomb seethed and gnashed his teeth. However, he rallied his scattered wits again and turned to the C.O.

"This fresh upstart will take off at dusk." That was all. Flashing the complacent Phineas a scathing glance, he strode out of Wings. "Well, good-bye, Pinkham," ventured the Old Man in a strained voice.

"Yeah," said Carbuncle, "giss y've got rid of me. Well, I'm the guinea pig now, huh? Goin' to give me a feed before I go, like they give a guy who's goin' to the chair?"

"Better get some sleep," snapped the Old Man. "I—er—Pinkham, I—er—"

"Ya ain't goin' to bust out cryin', are ya?" laughed Carbuncle the bold.

"Wha-a-a-?" roared the C.O. "Why, you blankety-blank, fish-faced fathead! Get out of here! Get! Or I'll break a chair over your—" Phineas got.

ONCE in his hut, the apparently doomed flyer sat down and thought and thought and thought. He slept a little, then awoke to think some more. The mental agonies brought no fruit. When Bump Gillis came in from the last patrol of the day, he found Phineas filling his pockets with some of his most precious possessions. He scaled his helmet to the bed and tried with difficulty to say something befitting the grave occasion.

"Aw, go lay an egg," Carbuncle advised him. "You're like the other clucks. A guy is a nice guy after they sprinkle gravel in his face. Anyways, I'm cornin' back. Write that on yer cuff."

"Yeah?" replied Bump with a growl. "So's Napoleon."

As the zero hour came up fast, it occurred keenly to the buzzards of the Ninth Pursuit that Phineas was not such a bad egg, after all. But would they tell him so? They would not. No doubt their parting word with him would be in the form of an insult, and then one of them would probably go back to his hut to find a Gila monster in his bunk.

Let us take time by the throat and drag it along an hour. A Spad was ready and growling on the line. Phineas Pinkham was standing beside it while the personnel of the field watched in oppressive silence. He drew a cigarette carefully from a metal case and asked Bump Gillis for a light from his butt.

"Sure," said Bump with alacrity and held the glowing end of his smoke to the tip of the thin white tube protruding from Phineas' lips. Suddenly there was a sharp hissing sound, and startled pilots saw a little stab of flame. Bump howled, jumped into the air and

slammed his burnt fingers against his side. Phineas guffaw'ed, tossed aside the little tube which had been loaded with powder and climbed into the Spad.

"My God!" exclaimed the C.O. to Howell in an awed voice. "What a man! What a m—"

The Hiss screamed out. Phineas gunned away, made a very impolite gesture with a combination of nose and glove as he rolled over the tarmac.

"Damned brass hats!" was the Old Man's surprising outburst.

SEVERAL minutes later, a Jerry observation post near the Meuse spotted Phineas' Spad skimming high against the roof of the world, which was garishly lighted by the great multicolored shafts of a dying sun. A good night for a murder. Quickly Mannheim's squadron was buzzed and when our hero reached far into the back area, three Junker pilots licked their chops and gunned their Tripes off the ground.

Lieutenant Pinkham circled and looked overside at the hostile terrain for a sign of that dump wherein Jerry had stored thousands of gas shells and an assortment of concentrated hell that meant no good at all for his side. It was a wonder, Phineas mused, that the brass hat had not ordered him to blow it up single-handed with a bag of hand grenades.

He nosed down, then circled at a height of less than three thousand feet. A premonition of disaster rippled under his shirt, climbed up his spine to the back of his neck. Phineas turned his head and saw just what he had expected to see. Three Tripes were sweeping down on his tail, fanning out to hem him in!

To hell with the dump! He yanked the stick back to his stomach and the Spad went up and over, then fluttered down smack dab on the tail of the outrider of the Boche triangle. A little nursery rhyme could well describe the events of the next few moments.

*Three mean Germans flying in the blue,
One forgot to duck.
Then there were two.*

But two were more than plenty. We would like to relate that our hero in a desperate encounter proved that right will prevail—but, alas and alack, it could not be. Caught between two fires, Phineas' Spad shook violently and staggered crabwise through the ozone. Another burst, and Phineas' veins froze up. A tongue of fire licked out from the hood, crept back toward the pit. So this was what a guy got for throwing garbage into a brass hat's car!

Overhead, the Jerries hovered to watch a cremation. The Boonetown flyer forced a grin, thumbed his nose at the causes of his discomfort, then threw the Spad into a sideslip and dropped through space, the resultant rush of air extinguishing the flames.

The Tripes hammered down, but saved Spandau lead. The Spad began to spin, with Lieutenant Pinkham striving frantically to straighten it out. The ground below, coming up fast, was spinning around and around as if some giant hand were churning it with a spoon. Men have strange thoughts when they feel something pulling their hold on life away. Phineas were even stranger. He wondered how he would look wearing a long kimono and playing a harp.

Crash!

SOME time later Phineas opened his eyes and weakly brushed a hand over his head as if he expected to find a halo there. Slowly the film disappeared from in front of his eyes, and for a moment he had the illusion that he was twins. It wasn't possible for one man to ache so much. Voices hummed all around him, and then he lifted his head and stared into a lot of faces, over which were, cocked big tin buckets. No, these were not angels. They were Kaiser Bill's suckers.

"We gates," ventured Phineas with a grin. "Well, I ain't dead, so to hell with that brass hat! Some day I'll—"

"Get up, *Dumkopf!*" barked a guttural voice, and then a vice closed about Phineas' neck and jerked him erect. The errant flyer groaned as his wracked frame protested.

"*Hauptmann* Mannheim," the Boche officer went on, addressing another German, "he iss your prisoner. First yet we have use for him. *Herr Oberst* von Grube has ordered—"

"*Ja*, I know," came the reply, and Phineas looked into the face of the arch enemy of the Ninth. "So has my staffel commander, *ja! Ach!*" His eyes widened. A triumphant grin lighted up his stolid face. "Leutnant Pinkham, it iss! We meet before, *ja*, *Leutnant?* Now—"

"Go feather your nest!" snapped Phineas. "An' lay an egg."

"Impudent swine!" rasped Mannheim. "I'll—"

Bop! Phineas' uppercut had been too swift for interference. *Hauptmann* Mannheim described a little parabola through the air and came down on the back of his neck. Again the lights went out for Phineas as a Boche caressed him with a gun butt.

When he opened his eyes the second time, he was

reclining on something that looked like the floor of an evil-smelling stable. For several moments he rubbed his head and gazed blankly around him. From a long distance away, it seemed, came a voice.

"Ullo. Yank!" it said.

Phineas shifted his glance and saw three grinning faces, then two, then one.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"'Arold 'ammersely," the man replied. "Hi'm a blinkin' hobserver, or Hi should sye, 'was. Lookin' fer the hammo dump, was yer? Han' so was Hi, matey. A millyun 'Uns knocked us orf this mornin'. My poor blighter of a pilot was kilt."

"Huh!" grinned Phineas. "The *guerre* is over for us, huh? Nothin' to git but prison camp an'—"

The cockney looked out of a little window and held up a warning hand. "There's a Jerry houtside," he whispered, then sat down on an old keg. "Yer don't know the arf of it," he continued. "The blinkin' Jerries will tyke yer over to 'eadquarters an' make yer write a letter, that they will. Tellin' where that hammo dump will be an' it will be a bloomin' fake. A lot of Yankee ships will 'op orf and when they gits into 'Unland, a millyun Tripes will knock 'em orf, see?"

"What did you tell 'em?" asked Phineas.

"Hi tol' the Jerry as 'ow he could jump in 'ell first, I did," answered the observer. "An' he bashed me on the 'ead an' Hi don't know nothin' until Hi wakes up 'ere agyne. Strike me pink, yer'll git the same, Yank."

"Nope," grinned Phineas, "because I'll write 'em the letter."

The cockney leaped from the keg. "Wily, yer blarsted—"

"Shut up!" snapped Phineas and he yanked the Cockney close to him and whispered hurriedly in his ear.

"Gorblimey!" gasped Harold. "Luvly! The 'Uns will bring us a bit to eat an' they bring cow's milk, lieutenant, they do, yus! An' I know where the hammo dump is at."

"There is a Santy Claus," grinned Carbuncle and sat down to wait.

A FEW minutes later, two Jerries came in bearing two portions of coarse-looking potato bread, several wormy apples and a little crock of milk. Phineas played his part and seized the food ravenously. After the door was locked again, Corporal Hammersely munched at the bread and stood watch at the little window while Phineas Pinkham began to do strange things.

First he ripped a letterhead of bond paper out of his flying coat, spread it out before him on a box and then selected a fountain pen from a group of three in the pocket of his tunic. Dipping the point into the milk, he looked at the observer. In a low voice the cockney dictated. Phineas wrote hurriedly, making doubly sure of the information by drawing a crude map, then pushed the sheet of paper under the box to dry.

Torturous minutes passed, both men keeping up a constant mumbling to allay any suspicions that might crop up outside.

Suddenly the prisoners became rigid. Boots beat a measured tread toward the stable. Quickly Phineas snatched up the sheet of paper, folded it quickly and shoved it into his pocket. The door was flung open and a German officer appeared. Behind him stood two soldiers, guns held ready.

"*Leutnant* Pinkham," ordered the officer in English, "come out!"

"Jar vole!" agreed Carbuncle and grinned at the cockney. "Cheerio!"

"Cheer' o," mumbled the Limey. Phineas walked out slowly. The officer reached out, shoved him roughly.

"*Mach schnell!*"

"Stop yer pushin', squarehead!" growled Phineas.

The prisoner was led across a farmyard toward a big house that was but a black blotch in the darkness, relieved only by two little beams of light that seeped through drawn curtains. Opening a large door, the officer thrust Phineas in ahead of him. At a table in the center of the room sat *Herr Oberst* von Grube, the inquisitor. Near him were two other cold-eyed officers and none other than *Hauptmann* Mannheim, gloating with might and main. Phineas sneered at the flyer and stopped in front of the table.

"Well, Hair Obust," he said, "what—"

"*Schwein!*" barked the man. "Say 'sir!'"

"Like hell!" An open hand smacked Phineas across the face but it proved no antidote for the Pinkham grin.

"*Das ist genug!*" barked von Grube. "You, teach not manners to an *Amerikaner*. Look here, *Leutnant*," he purred, "you come to locate our ammunition dump, *ja?*" He laughed thickly. "Well, you have located it, *mein Freund*, and you are to write your squadron commander a little message telling him just where he can find it, or else—well, your treatment in a prison camp will not be kind. That is," and he hesitated, "if you arrive at prison camp, *Leutnant*."

"I'll write anything you want," came the surprising response. "They sent me out to git bumped off, damn their hides! Give me the choice of that or a court martial. Well, hurry up before I change my mind."

"*Ach!*" cut in Mannheim. "Yankee pig! A heart of jelly, as I have supposed."

"I'll break yer jaw, ya fathead," yelled Phineas lunging forward.

Hands reached out and yanked him back.

"*Genug. Hauptmann*," roared von Grube angrily. "This does not concern you. *Leutnant*," addressing Phineas. "perhaps you have some paper of your own that would identify you to your—"

Carbuncle grinned. "Jerry thoroughness, huh?" he commented with a touch of pseudo-admiration. "Sure." And he pulled out a folded piece of white bond paper, on the top of which in black type Jensen & Olson proclaimed to the world that they were expert plumbers and steamfitters of Boonetown, Iowa.

PHINEAS spread the paper out on the table, selected a pen from his pocket and looked at von Grube. An officer peered over his shoulder as he began to write the message dictated by *Herr Oberst*. He had just succeeded in penning, "Major Garrity. Ninth Pursuit Squadron" when he seemed to find something wrong with the pen. So he selected another and wrote on.

Phineas strove desperately to keep his heart where it belonged and his hand from shaking as he scribbled the words dictated in his bold hand. When it was finished, the paper was snatched away quickly and handed to von Grube. *Herr Oberst* chuckled with satisfaction and in turn handed it to Mannheim, who perused it for fully ten minutes before stamping it with his verbal approval. Mannheim had reason to doubt Phineas Pinkham. Once he had dined with him—and thereby hung a tale that has already been told.

"You will have that dropped over the American lines early in the morning," *Hauptmann* Mannheim, and now the prisoner is yours. We thank you, *Leutnant*," he shot contemptuously at Phineas, who had assumed a priceless hangdog posture and expression. "Traitorous dog!"

Carbuncle summoned every iota of will power to let this last thrust pass and to submit to the manhandling at the hands of Mannheim as he was pushed out of the house. A big car was waiting there, and into it our hero was unceremoniously shoved,

to land on the floorboards on his nose. But as he struggled erect, a light of triumph flickered in his eyes and passed unnoticed in the gloom.

“Well, I’m goin’ to eat again with you bums, huh?” he shot at Mannheim as the car purred away. “Sorry, I ain’t got no choklit.”

Mannheim cursed. Then a chilling laugh emanated from his throat. “The Yankee joke, *ja?*” he rasped. “Well, we have the joke for Phineas Pinkham. Ha! A great joke, *mein Freund*. We are not going to my staffel, pig! We are on our way to a Gotha drome. We have a wonderful surprise for the great *Leutnant* Pinkham. A surprise that only he would appreciate, *Ja!* Faster, *Dumkopf!*” he snapped at the driver.

Phineas felt weak, and sank back on the cushions. A joke, huh? Well, it wouldn’t be long before the square-heads were treated to one. And right this minute Corporal Hammersely of the R.F.C. would be getting in a few chuckles.

THE following day the plot began to thicken. Near the little village of Coilon several miles from St. Mihiel, a company of Yanks were resting at the side of a road when a Fokker swept high above them. Watching it closely, the doughs saw a tiny object fall from the ship. Suddenly there was a flash of white and a parachute opened up. A sergeant watched the parachute float down lazily for several moments, then started on the run.

About a quarter of a mile away he picked up the sandbag and brought it in, ripped it open with a bayonet and unfolded the sheet of paper that fell out. The non-com evinced surprise as he picked it up and read the contents, scratched his head, looked up at the disappearing Fokker, then shoved the message into his pocket. Soon a motorcycle chugged by, a mud-bespattered individual at the controls. The sergeant hailed him.

“Hey,” he said, “goin’ anywheres near Barley Duck?”

“Not unless Persian’ wants me to,” came the response.

“Well, imagine I’m Pershin’, see?” drawled the sergeant. “This little note I got here was dropped out of a Jerry ship an’ it’s got to go up to the Ninth Pursuit Squadron. Savvy?”

“Awright!” grunted the rider and snatched the message. “But if I git hell for not gittin’ back to where I come from in time. I’m lookin’ ya up. What’s yer name an’ company?”

The information was duly received and the rider

bore down on his mechanical bug and lurched away. Another hour, and Major Rufus Garrity was standing in the middle of an excited group of pilots, staring at the much-thumbed, wrinkled sheet of bond paper which bore the royal seal of Jensen & Olsen and the address of the Ninth Pursuit Squadron. Nothing else was visible on the paper. The Old Man swore and glared at the motorcycle rider.

“You say this was dropped from a Fokker?” he asked for the tenth time.

“Yessir,” came the reply. “That’s what the sarge said. Well, if ya don’t need me here, sir, I better be goin’”

“All right,” mumbled the C.O. absently, and stared at the message again. “That’s Pinkham’s writing all right, Gillis?” he tossed the letter at Lieutenant Pinkham’s hutmate.

“Yeah, I’ll swear to it. An’ that letterhead! The Jerries couldn’t get hold of it no way. Cripes, I wonder what it’s all about. Carbuncle, I bet, ain’t dead, an’ he had the message dropped an’—”

“Clear as mud,” snapped Howell. “I suppose the Jerries kindly did him this favor and are now feedin’ him strawberry shortcake an’—an’ why didn’t he write somethin’?”

The Old Man’s jaws suddenly snapped together and sounded like the springing of a bear trap. “By cripes!” he jerked out, his eyes gleaming strangely. “That’s it. Howell, why didn’t he? Nobody drops a message unless there’s somethin’ on it. And the Jerries are not in the habit of dropping notes for Yanks unless—unless—by God! I’ve got a hunch, buzzards. I may be as crazy as Pinkham, but just the same I’m following it up. Pinkham, you know,” he paused to sweep the faces around him with sharp eyes, “is crazy like a fox. I’m going to get in touch with Intelligence.” Without another word he dashed into Wings.

“What’s he mean?” asked Bump Gillis, scratching his head.

“You ask us, huh?” growled one of the pilots.

“When we git cuckoo, too, we’ll let ya know.”

Intelligence, Brigade P.C., listened to the Old Man and immediately got busy. A major hot-footed it up to the Ninth Pursuit, arriving there at dusk. After mess he locked himself up with Major Rufus Garrity, and far into the night wondering pilots waited in the big room outside in anticipation of another miracle wrought by Carbuncle.

Sometime in the night the majors slipped out of Wings and were gone for nearly half an hour, returning for more powwow. These faces grew more

and more skeptical as the minutes fled, but at last Rufus Garrity and the visiting major emerged with triumph written on their gaunt, weary visages. In the C.O.'s hand was the message from Phineas, and all eyes were drawn to it like bits of steel to a magnet.

"Men," he said, "there was a message written on this paper. Lieutenant Pinkham has sent us the location of the German ammo dump—how, God knows. We don't. Already word has been sent to the Handley-Page-outfit over at St. Dizier. In a very few moments they will go over and drop a lot of hell. I—I am afraid Pinkham has given his life. I think we might have been a little more tolerant of the man. I guess he was right when he said we had no sense of humor. I—" The major's voice failed him. Bump Gillis swore and turned his face away.

SLOWLY the door of the house swung inward. A cool breeze was wafted into the room. Behind it came a torn, bruised and tattered individual who looked as if he had been the plaything of a cage of lions for a month. The face of the arrival was swollen and scratched, and but for the grin would never have been recognized.

"S—say," panted Phineas, as he came toward the frozen group, limping all over, "don't you bums ever go to bed?"

"Pinkham!" roared the C.O. "H—how in hell?"

"Say," burst out the Boonetown prodigal, "did ya git my message?"

"We did, Pinkham," replied the major of Intelligence. "We also searched your hut and found a book you have been reading. There was something on a page you had marked about how a certain Bolo Pasha had left plans written in milk behind when he was executed. Well, we followed instructions and placed the paper over a lighted lamp, and there—"

"Huh!" exclaimed Phineas. "I thought there was a braes hat some place that had brains."

"B—but," said the C.O., "there is one th—"

"Y'know what them squareheads done to me?" suddenly interjected Phineas. "After I wrote 'em their message, they turned me over to Mannheim. One of his gang brought me down. Well, they said they had a joke for me, the bums!" He paused for breath and wiped a streak of mud from his face. "Took me over

to a Gotha squadron where a lot of Heinie brass hats were goin' for a joyride, an' what do you think for? Huh? Well, they was testin' out a new parachute some kraut invented an' ya could roll it up an' put it in your pocket. They needed somebody to jump out in it to see if it would work!"

"Well, they tied my hands behind me an' put me in the Gotha an' took off. When they got over their lines, they made me jump out. I kissed myself good-bye, but the thing opened an' there was a wind blowin' that drove me right acrost to the Yankee territory, an' when I got almost to the ground, the thing busts an' I land in a bunch of brambles and roll into a stone quarry. An' I don't feel so good."

"B—but," insisted the Old Man. "I still want to know what became of the message you wrote for von Grube."

"Sure," grinned Phineas as somebody handed him a glass of rum, "I shifted pens after I wrote where the message was goin'. Used another one, an' did I fool them krauts? Disappearin' ink, yeah."

"Wha-a-a?" snapped Bump Gillis all of a sudden, the portent of Phineas' revelation jolting his brain. "Disappearin' ink? Wh—why, then them letters I wrote to Sadie were—ya big ape! I'll knock what's left of ya loose from your ears."

"Sit down, Gillis," ordered Major Garrity, "or I'll knock you down. Lieutenant Pinkham, right now that ammo dump is getting hell, I imagine, and, of coarse, a lot of Mannheim's Tripes will be looking for the bombers in another direction. You'll get a medal for this."

"Haw, I bet them krauts'll be sore," enthused Phineas, trying to rub four bumps on his head at the same time. "An' maybe that brass hat, Whitcomb, will pull in his neck." His one good eye blazed. "Mannheim, the bum! Some day I'm goin' to git that kraut where I want 'im, an' when I do, he'll wish he'd been born a Swede. Well, I'm back, mugs," he grinned with difficulty at the awed pilots, "an' ya have to like it."

"We do," grinned Howell. A medico entered with an armful of gauze, plaster and bottles.

"Got to fix him so's he'll look human enough to get a medal hung on him," the C.O. explained.

"When he gits so's he is able to be around. I'm goin' to pin somethin' on his mug an' he'll wear it the rest of his life," promised Bump Gillis.