

THIRTY HOURS TO LIVE

by FRANKLIN M. RITCHIE

*With a weird shrieking whir, the airplane streaked for earth like a flaming comet.
The pilot's chum turned yellow and fled, but—read it and see for yourself!*

RED WINGS FLASHED SUDDENLY out of the sun, diving straight down upon the two S.E.'s, Spandau guns rattling as they came. Jack Gorham half rolled and skidded sharply as a Fokker pulled up quickly on his tail, beating a tattoo on his elevators. The American looped, his own gun joining the chorus as he got his sights on the Jerry. And he grinned as the latter crumpled over.

But his heart stopped for a moment as he banked the bus to swing back to Scooter Boggs. The nose of the latter's crate was pointed upward, propeller shot away, and black smoke was pouring from the tank. Gorham dived swiftly, but too late. The other S.E. dropped in a whip stall and went over in a spin, while flames licked back along the fuselage.

"Scooter!" he called pleadingly. "Scooter!" A hard, dry sob racked him as the ship sped earthward.

Wild rage seized him as he spotted the Jerry who had got his chum. The Fokker pilot was cool and he rolled out of the way of the plunging S.E., pulled an Immelmann to change direction, and looped suddenly. Bullets began to rip through Gorham's fuselage.

But the American had forgotten all rules of battle, all thoughts of caution. He knew only that Scooter Boggs—good old Scooter who had been with him from ground school—had been shot down. He wanted revenge, so he went blindly after the German.

Crazily he pulled the stick into his stomach till the bus stood on its tail. For just a moment it was held there by the whirling prop. But that was long enough to pour a burst into the belly of the enemy crate and it went down in flames.

Archie filled the air with black shrapnel bursts. Levelling off, Gorham waggled his wings as a signal for Scooter to follow—unwilling to believe that Scooter Boggs was lying under the black smoke column which rose from the charred wreck near the lines.

But slowly, as Gorham sped back toward his own 'drome, came realization that Scooter was gone. "Another one for the Invisible Squadron!" Gorham muttered savagely, naming them over one by one, those who had been washed out. Ten in two weeks! He shivered.

Mechanically he set the bus down on the tarmac, cut his switch, and then slumped forward on the cowl, his shoulders heaving. Slowly he dragged off his goggles and ran the back of a leather glove across his eyes, leaving a smear of brown oil on his windburned face. Paying no attention to the "grease balls" who ran to grab his wingtips, he sobbed openly.

Big Bill Gaunt, out of "A" Flight, and freckled little Cy Armstrong from "C," leaned into the cockpit and laid kindly arms across young Gorham's shoulders.

"Scooter Boggs—gone West!" muttered the latter, unashamed of his emotion, for he and Scooter had been closer than brothers, closer even than Gorham and Gaunt and Armstrong.

"No, Jack," Gaunt answered, almost in a whisper, "he's only gone over to the Invisible Squadron. And the Squadron always sticks together."

Slowly the youngster's wiry frame straightened and he climbed from the ship, staring into Gaunt's blue eyes. "I wish I could be sure of that, Bill," he muttered.

Pudgy Morgan, the flight commander, bustled over, his black brows drawn together in an angry frown. "Cut that out!" he snapped. "You're yellow and I'll see it's taken out of you." He stared at Gorham with cold disapproval. "If you'd given Boggs proper teamwork you'd have brought him back."

Jack's thin face flushed angrily and Armstrong snarled. But Gaunt's big hands kept them both back. Gorham shrugged. Scooter hadn't come back, and after all that was all that mattered.

"You're under arrest for leaving your ship before taking it to the deadline," snapped Morgan. But

Gorham, his shoulders sagging, paid no attention to the pompous little man.

"What's wrong with him?" Armstrong demanded testily while Gaunt stared after the flight commander. Gorham shrugged.

"He's sore," he answered, as though it mattered little. "He was walking with a Frog mam'selle at Dunkirk when the Gothas pulled a strafe on the Handley-Page 'drome there. He lit out for a bombproof and left her, so I took her along with me. And now he's sore." But Gorham was not interested in Morgan and his eyes were wistful.

"You sure about this Invisible Squadron, Bill?" he asked.

Gaunt shifted uneasily and pulled out a big plug of tobacco from which he bit a "chaw". "We started out together," he said slowly, "and—," he paused in embarrassment, brown jaws working up and down. "Somehow I can't Agger that they're really leavin' us when they go West."

FRECKLE-FACED Armstrong, usually irrepressible, turned sober. "The Squadron sticks together!" he said.

A siren shrieked madly, signalling a bombing raid, and the unmistakable roar of Gotha motors was suddenly audible. Swiftly the pilots leaped toward the dugout and flung themselves inside. In the excitement they had no time for further confidences.

After the Gothas had laid their eggs, the three fliers separated. "Watch out for Morgan," Gaunt warned. "He's poison if he's got a grudge, and he'll pull anything at all."

But nothing happened. And next morning, before dawn, still thinking of Scooter Boggs who wasn't there, Jack Gorham was on the tarmac again, ready to take off. He shivered as he stood there in the mud, watching the exhausts flash madly in the darkness as the Ack Emmas warmed the motors. "Who's next?" he mused.

Bill Gaunt strolled past with Armstrong, goggles shoved back on his helmet, and he stopped to pat Gorham on the back. The latter nodded briefly, without speaking. "Remember, the Squadron sticks together," Gaunt told him.

Morgan, cupping his hands to light a cigarette, stared angrily at Gorham. "He's yellow!" he told the Skipper who had come out to watch them off. "Look, he's shaking already." But the Major shook his head as he watched Gorham. "Boggs was his best friend," he said kindly.

"But he's all right." And he strolled away. Morgan

snarled angrily, for the Skipper had countermanded Gorham's arrest.

"All right, sir," the "grease ball" sergeant was telling Gorham, who shook himself and climbed into the cockpit. Mechanically he gunned the motor and watched the rev counter, then nodded for the "mechs" to pull away the blocks. And a moment later the field was dropping away beneath him, camouflaged hangars merging into the gray darkness of the earth.

But he was still thinking of Scooter Boggs, and a black mood was on him. "Thirty hours to live!" he muttered, talking to himself under the roar of the motor and the fierce screaming of the wind in his wires. "That's all a pilot has on the front!" And mechanically he fell into the formation. Jackson, the ace, who would have been flight commander but for Morgan's scheming, was at point. And Morgan was in the rear of the V.

Swiftly they winged toward the front. The trenches zigzagged under them, and suddenly Gorham realized that he was over German territory, "Thirty hours to live!" he repeated to himself.

JACKSON'S wings waggled violently and he pointed upward. A moment later a fierce, staccato hammering pounded on Gorham's ears, over the noise of the motor, and dark shapes dived out of the clouds, firing as they came. His mouth went suddenly dry.

Flames appeared on Hannon's ship, which was just in front of Gorham. The nose of the bus whipped up in a stall and then fell into a tail spin. Jack Gorham stared in horror at the fiery meteor which hurtled toward the earth. "Thirty hours!" he muttered.

A black Fokker with a nose of bloody red dropped from nowhere onto Gorham's tail. The youngster heard the sound of ripping linen as a burst of lead tore through his fuselage. He grew cold, and the hair prickled on his scalp under his helmet. Undecided what to do, he flew straight ahead.

Jackson was busy with two Jerries, but he saw the new assailant on Gorham's tail and he swung about in a swift Immelmann, roared back, and then zoomed upward. His guns vomited death into the belly of the black ship which staggered under his fire and then pulled hurriedly away.

Gaunt went after the Jerry, his guns pounding, while Jackson whirled back to strike at the others. But Gorham was in a daze and he flew stupidly ahead. "Thirty hours to live!" he repeated over and over again to himself, shivering at the words.

At last the stabbing of the machine guns ceased and the Jerries disappeared, driven off by the rest of the formation, and Jackson signaled that the patrol was over. With a great sigh of relief, Jack Gorham swung his ship about and headed for home. But he was still in a daze and he fell behind the others. Until they reached the lines Gaunt herded him forward. But once on their own side, the veteran roared away, leaving him to his own devices.

The S.E.'s vanished over the horizon, but Gorham was too shaken by his experience over the lines to keep pace with them. Bill Hannon's face rose before him—Bill Hannon who had shot crap with him the night before and whose ship had just crashed in flames. Gorham's lips tightened. "The Invisible Squadron!" he mused. "Who's next?"

There came a sudden scream of wires behind and above him, and he glanced around in sudden fright. A white Albatross was diving for his tail. Another Jerry had dropped down below to cut him off, and a third was circling over him to prevent his escape by climbing.

Gorham banked sharply in an effort to throw them off, but they followed his clumsy maneuvers with mocking ease, coming nearer and nearer. Perspiration stood out on the American's forehead and his eyes were glassy underneath the goggles. There was desperation in his face as he strove vainly to shake off the Jerries. But they clung grimly, as though laughing at his awkwardness.

He muttered desperately, "It looks like my turn now!"

But there was a sudden flurry among his assailants, and glancing backward Gorham saw a gray ship speeding toward him. He strained toward it and sighed with relief as he recognized Hank Jackson, coming back to help him. The boy breathed more freely as the little crate hurtled toward him, seeming to leap through the air in its desperate haste.

Somehow or other Gorham managed to get his sights on an Albatross and he pressed the trigger on his stick. The Jerry crumpled under his fire and a moment later Jackson roared up. Looping swiftly, he came out on another enemy's tail, and he poured in a burst before the astonished pilot knew he was there. The third Jerry sped away in terror and Jackson waggled his wings for Gorham to go on home, following behind the youngster to make sure that no further harm should come to him on the way.

Gorham was still trembling when he set his bus

down on the tarmac and his face was pallid as he climbed from the cockpit and shoved the goggles back on his oil-spattered forehead. Slowly he pulled off his helmet and rubbed a nervous hand through his stiff, brown hair. "Thirty hours!" he was thinking. Mechanically he pulled back the sleeve of his flying suit and stared at the wrist watch. Two hours of his thirty were gone!

JACKSON, slow-moving and deliberate, a good-humored smile on his broad, sunburned face, came over and slapped him on the back. "Not so bad, youngster," he boomed. "You bagged a Jerry."

But Jack Gorham was thinking of Bill Hannon and of his own close shave. He didn't like to admit what would have happened to him had Hank Jackson not turned back in the nick of time to drive off the Jerries who had surrounded him.

Shuffling uneasily, he stuck out a big fist. "It was white of you to come back after me—after you were out of trouble yourself," he said slowly, his eyes on the ground. But huge Jackson merely laughed and shook the proffered hand.

"The Squadron sticks together!" he answered. And throwing an arm, over the youngster's shoulder the other man led him toward the huts. "Good work, boy!" he commended. "Keep it up and you'll get your share of Jerries."

Gorham wanted to tell him that it had been blind luck, that the Albatros had seemed to hang on his sights. And he was still thinking of Bill Hannon and his thirty hours. But he was silent.

Pudgy Morgan was less congratulatory than Jackson. "What's wrong with you?" he demanded testily. "Haven't you any sense?" And Gorham stiffened in anger at the little man's insolent contempt. But again he was silent; he was thinking of Hannon and Boggs.

That night the squadron threw a binge in honor of Gorham's exploit in bagging three Jerries in two days. They crowded about him, pounding him on the back, drinking with him, congratulating him—all except Morgan who stood aloof, grinning sardonically. And Gorham flushed redly, knowing in his Heart that Morgan was right. "It was Jackson that pulled me out!" he mused.

Depression seized him. In the big mess hall natty uniforms replaced the unwieldy flying suits and equipment of the day and the walls were hung with trophies from defeated German enemies. With all the

air of comradeship and fun which filled the place, Gorham could not shake off the black mood which had settled on him after he saw Bill Hannon crash.

"Thirty hours!" he muttered. "Twenty eight!" he amended. And Morgan, grinning at him, advised him caustically to snap out of it before the Jerries got him.

The binge broke up in a wild burst of merriment, and the pilots locked arms, holding high their glasses. "The Squadron sticks together!" they chanted. But Jack Gorham put it down as drunken folly or as a convenient shibboleth to lure more victims on to the fate which had overtaken Bill Hannon.

"Apple sauce!" he grunted to himself.

BUT red-headed, irrepressible Cy Armstrong, who shared a hut with him, grabbed him by the arm and dragged him off, gaily singing of the more or less unprintable adventures of Mademoiselle from Armentieres and various other French ladies. Despite his somber mood, Gorham warmed to the boy.

And in the days that followed they became inseparable. Cy had joined the squadron only a couple of days ahead of Jack, and both were novices among veterans. But it was the boy's, utter recklessness and irresponsibility, which drew Gorham to him, since Jack was ticking off his hours with grim relentlessness.

"Can that stuff, Jack," Armstrong urged him, grinning, when Gorham confided to him that he didn't expect to last longer than his allotted thirty hours. "Look at all these birds who've had double that time over the lines. You give me the willies."

"Yes," Jack admitted, "they've lasted because they've used some other fellow's time. Thirty hours is the average."

"Well," grinned Cy. "I'm gonna use half a dozen men's time if I can. And if I can't, the Jerries'll know they had a scrap." And he went off into a musical eulogy of the delectable Mademoiselle from Bar le Due.

And when they tumbled out next morning, dragging their "teddy-bears" over their pajamas, Cy Armstrong was still the life of the bunch. Red-headed, gay, irrepressible, he had them all laughing as they gathered about the kitchen for their hot coffee—for they went up before breakfast.

"Don't forget I owe you a dinner, Jack," he laughed cheerily at Gorham. "We'll run down to Boulogne tonight an' get it, if we can wangle a car out o' the Skipper." He grinned light-heartedly. "Don't get yourself fed up on strafin' Huns so you can't eat"

But Morgan bustled up, puffing importantly.

"We'll split the flight this morning," he announced. "There's a drive coming off and the infantry's yelling for pictures. They're sending over a flock of R.E.-8 two-seaters and I want two of you to hang around over the observation crates to see the Jerries don't butt in on 'em. They'll be working between Dickebusch and Armentieres for a couple of hours."

He stared at the men. "Armstrong," he said, "you stick around over Armentieres." Then he glanced at Jack Gorham with a queer look in his eyes. "And you stay on this end," he told the latter.

They were none too well pleased with the assignment. "That gang of R.E.'s is gonna drag out every Jerry scout this side of Amiens," Jack grumbled. But the other boy grinned back at him,

"Keep your shirt on," he advised. "The Skipper knows what he's doin' an' he'll probably have the rest of the gang where they can jump in." He slapped his thigh in sudden glee. "I'll bet he's passed the tip to 87 Squadron and maybe the Bull Pups, too. The whole wing'll be waitin' for the Jerries to jump us."

They walked down to the tarmac through the mud, stumbling in the darkness, to the place where the red flashing of the exhausts marked the waiting ships. Armstrong climbed into his bus and waved gaily at Gorham.

"Don't forget," he called. "Meet me tonight, Jack."

The other man waved back at him and a moment later the two ships were rising from the darkened ground into the lighter strata of the air where the rays of the rising sun tinted the tops of the fleecy cumulus clouds a delicate pink.

As dawn broke grayly over the earth Jack Gorham made out below the dry canal, the ancient fortifications and the modern ruins of Ypres and he banked left toward the lake at Dickebusch. Armstrong, waving at him again, soared over distant Kemmel in the direction of Armentieres just before the French border.

CIRCLING his ship. Jack Gorham kept a sharp lookout beneath him for the R.E.-8's which were to take the pictures. But he frowned a bit, wiping his goggles with the back of a fur-lined glove, as he recalled the look in Morgan's eyes.

"I don't trust that bird," he muttered savagely, swinging around in a tight vertical bank just to be sure his hand was steady in case of a surprise attack. "He's got it in for me on account o' that French doll an' I

wouldn't put it past him to cook up somethin' dirty just for spite."

He saw the R.E.'s coming out from their 'drome back of Poperinghe. He swooped down, just to let them know he was there and on the alert, then zoomed and climbed as steeply as he dared. Hunting all the altitude he could get before the Fokkers should appear, eager to pounce on the clumsy observation crates down below him in the light mist of dawn.

The ships strung out, going methodically about their work. They were making a mosaic, each bus flying in a straight line over a pre-arranged course, snapping overlapping pictures as they went. After these had been developed they would be put together like a jig-saw puzzle to make a huge photographic map of the sector. It was ticklish work, and they had no time to be on the lookout for Jerry scouts, leaving all that to Gorham.

But at last the job was done and the R.E.'s wagged their wings to let him know they were through, then headed back home. But there was no sign of Armstrong and Jack Gorham headed southward with a worried frown between his eyes, looking for his chum. Black puffs of Archie shrapnel bursting far ahead of him suddenly drew his attention and, staring intently into the gray horizon, he saw a dodging speck which must be Cy.

"Archie must've been on a binge last night," he grinned as he watched the erratic jumping of the shrapnel bursts.

But his brows contracted suddenly and deep ridges showed in his forehead between helmet and goggles as half a dozen black specks dropped suddenly out of the ceiling onto the dodging mote which was Armstrong's bus.

"Fokkers!" muttered Gorham, his scalp prickling and his mouth going hot and dry as he gave the crate every bit of "gun" and drove toward the darting shapes. "An' I hear they've got new model motors even better than the old Mercedes."

But he was thinking of Cy Armstrong and not of the odds against himself as he drove toward the flight of Jerries which was closing in on the lone S.E. crate that Armstrong was flying.

"I gotta make it!" he muttered grimly, eager only to get in there to help his chum, regardless of the odds.

But he was too late. The S.E. stalled suddenly, staggering in the air as though it had been hit, the nose going up. And then, without warning, it shot straight downward, plummet-like, flames streaming out

behind it Jack knew at once that there was no chance for Armstrong but he watched until the crate hit the ground and dissolved in a burst of smoke.

"Meet me tonight, Jack!" a voice seemed to roar even above the sound of the motors, and Gorham closed his eyes for a moment to shut out the sight of that black smoke. He couldn't believe that it was Cy Armstrong down there. He gulped hard.

"There must be an Invisible Squadron!" he told himself hotly. "A man can't go out like that!"

But the Fokkers had spotted him and they were heading toward him now, all six of them. A moment earlier he had been willing to face them all, if there was a chance of helping Cy. Now it seemed foolish, and Gorham banked swiftly around and headed back home in full flight before the Jerries.

And then, out of a cirrus cloud above him, came his own flight, diving swiftly on the Fokkers. Jack whirled joyfully and drove in among the black ships, reckless of consequences. He was eager only to get back at these men who had killed Cy Armstrong, his guns barking without stopping.

FOUR of the Jerries crashed and the others headed back into Hunland. The S.E.'s followed until a big Albatross flight showed on the horizon and Morgan wagged his wings as a signal to start home. Jack Gorham followed the flight but, once the excitement of the flight was over, he was thinking of Cy Armstrong.

"Meet me tonight, Jack."

Again the voice seemed to ring in his ears and he glanced about him, as though he expected to see Cy himself. But Cy Armstrong was not visible and Jack Gorham knew that he was gone.

Slowly he climbed from his cockpit, his head bent. Bill Gaunt, who knew what had happened, laid a hand on his shoulder. "He's with the Invisible Squadron, Jack," he muttered, and passed on.

But pudgy Morgan came running over, an angry snarl on his face. "You yellow cur!" he snapped, brandishing a fat fist in front of the boy. "I told you to stay with Armstrong, and you didn't. I saw you sneaking away from the dogfight." His voice rose in intensity and he grinned evilly. "You let them kill him and I'm going to turn you in for a courtmartial."

Jack's face went purple at the lie, then white. Suddenly he realized the other man's plan to frame him up. But it was the charge that he hadn't played square with Cy Armstrong which hurt most.

The memory of the black smoke rising from Cy Armstrong's bus was still with him, and wild rage took possession of him. He struck out blindly, a glancing blow which caught Morgan on the side of the face. He backed away, grinning triumphantly.

"Striking a superior officer," he quoted gleefully, "in time of war is—," and here he paused to leer at the other man, "punishable by death!" he finished in a rush, with a hard snap of his jaws. And Jack Gorham went suddenly cold as he realized what Morgan was saying.

But the Skipper himself came running toward them, in his flying suit, dragging on his helmet as he came. "They need the whole squadron toot sweet!" he shouted. "Take your flight down to Armentieres and wait for me," he ordered Morgan, hurrying on.

"I'll take care of you when we get back," the flight commander snapped at Gorham, turning toward his own bus again.

Swiftly the crates were refuelled and they took the air again. The drive had started, there was work for them to do, and private grudges had to wait. Morgan was leading the flight this time, at point, and the other ships followed in a V, heading back in the direction whence they had just come.

"He's not using much sense," grumbled Jack Gorham to himself as they drove southward beneath the clouds. Morgan seemed to be keeping no watch for Jerries in the ceiling. "We'll be cold meat for an Albatros flight above the clouds."

Farther and farther they drove on an angle which carried them always farther into Hunland and farther from their own lines. But still Morgan pushed forward with no effort to guard against surprise. Jack Gorham glanced about him with a worried eye, seeking signs of lurking jerry ships about them. His motor began to miss, and he trailed farther and farther behind the flight.

Suddenly they came—one flight diving through the clouds from above, another rising underneath the Americans to cut them off. Jack Gorham, far behind, saw the Jerries closing in and he groaned suddenly at his own inability to help. There were fully thirty of the Germans and they had the advantage of altitude.

"The damned fool!" he grated, swearing bitterly at Morgan.

JACKSON'S bus was the first to go—an Albatros sitting on his tail and raking him with lead. Jack Gorham cursed impotently as he recalled the time that

Jackson had come back to pull him out of a hole that he had gone into like a fool.

"And I can't do a thing to help him!" he groaned.

The ships were all mixed up now. In a fighting, dizzying swirl, moving so fast that he could barely make out which was which. But numbers were telling, and another S.E. headed downward in a wild dive which never stopped till he hit the ground.

The Americans were fighting, putting up a desperate battle, and two of the Jerries heeled over suddenly and dropped. Then an S.E. bus, trying to turn too quickly, locked wings with an Albatros and they both went down together, looking almost like one ship, flames streaming back impartially over both.

There were only two Americans left—Morgan in his blood red crate and Bill Gaunt with his white fuselage and green tail!

Jack Gorham still drove forward, despite the pounding in his motor which was growing louder all the time. There was an Albatros on Gaunt's tail and another was underneath him, pouring a hot fire upward. Jack could see the tracers going into the fuselage from beneath and he gritted his teeth almost as if they were piercing his own body. He leaned forward as though to urge the ship to greater speed.

Bill Gaunt's ship slid over on a wing and the wing came off! Flames burst out. And a dark body hurtled suddenly free. Bill Gaunt had leaped out, preferring swift death to the torture of the flames. Jack Gorham shuddered.

Hank Jackson! Bill Gaunt! Men who had saved his life, men who had been his friends. The Invisible Squadron was growing.

And Morgan—who was responsible for it all—was up there alone. Suddenly Gorham's anger was all centered on the pudgy little flight commander, and he forgot the Germans.

"Frame me up, will he?" he asked himself wildly. "Kill Gaunt and Jackson, will he?" he laughed bitterly, recalling Morgan's threat to turn him in when they returned.

"He'd better get back himself—if he can!" Jack grinned. And he banked around, turning tail for a run before the Jerries spotted him and it was too late.

Gorham's motor was missing—that would be excuse enough for quitting. And Morgan, up there alone in that hornet's nest of Jerries, would never have a chance. Jack knew he could pull out, saving, himself from the Albatros pilots and from Morgan's jealous hatred at the same time.

“And no questions asked!” he told himself.

But the picture of Bill Gaunt rose suddenly before him and of Hank Jackson who had come back to help him on that dawn patrol. He thought of Bill Gaunt and his quiet, sober assurance. “He’s only gone on to the Invisible Squadron.”

“The Invisible Squadron!” Jack muttered. “The Squadron sticks together!”

HE GLANCED around. He must have gone a little mad. He was alone no longer. There were ships all around him, S.E.’s like his own, and he could recognize the pilots. Why, there was old Scooter Boggs! He’d had an idea that the Jerries had conked Scooter up near Courtrai, but there was Scooter doing a half roll in his own inimitable style.

Jack Gorham looked at the others. There was Hooks Gardner—Clem Dugan—Larry Morrow—half a dozen others whom he hadn’t seen for weeks. Cy Armstrong waved at him as his bus flew wing to wing with Jack’s. And Hank Jackson and Bill Gaunt!

Jack laughed in sudden glee. “I knew it!” he exclaimed. “I knew they couldn’t be washed out altogether. The Invisible Squadron’s come back!”

Again he kernald to hear Bill Gaunt. “The Squadron sticks together.” And Jack Gorham’s lips drew suddenly together in a firm hard line.

“They do!” he snapped.

Morgan was back there somewhere, in a dogfight with the Jerries. And Morgan was one of the Squadron.

Somehow, with these others looking on, it didn’t seem to matter that Morgan had tried to double cross him, that he’d turn Jack in for a framed up court martial if he got back again.

“The Squadron sticks together!” And the Squadron, the Squadron Invisible, was watching him.

Jack Gorham set his teeth and banked around. Forward he drove, missing motor and all. The Albatros scouts saw him as he came and they dove to meet him. But Jack Gorham didn’t care. The Squadron Invisible was watching him and he had to make good. There was a wild crackling all around him.

When he regained consciousness he was in a hospital. After a while the Skipper came in.

“What happened?” Jack asked him.

“We pulled up just in time,” grinned the Major. “And 87 Squadron was with us. We chased the Jerries, or what was left of ’em. And you and Morgan both cracked up after you got across our lines.” Jack’s face was sober.

“Morgan?” he asked.

“Gone West,” said the Skipper. “But first he told how you came back to help—with a missing motor.” The Major’s lips smiled, though his eyes were distraught, thinking of those who hadn’t come back. “You’ll be the new flight commander,” he said. “You’re the only one of the old gang left.”

But Jack Gorham smiled out of his superior knowledge. “I’ll have the whole Squadron Invisible with me!” he told himself.