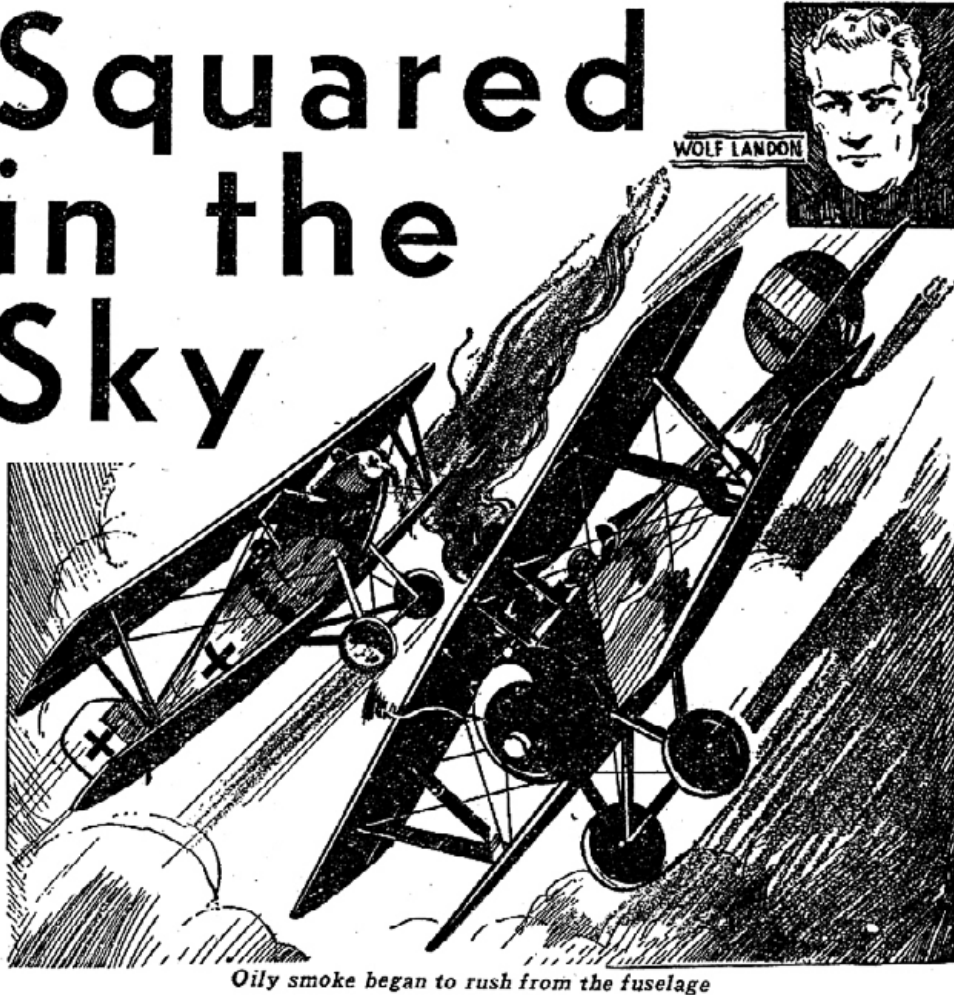


# Squared in the Sky



*Oily smoke began to rush from the fuselage*

*Wolf Landon Swore to Get the Hun Who Fought with  
Weapons Allied Flyers Could Not Match!*

By KENNETH L. SINCLAIR

*Author of "Pariah Patrol," "Flight Leader," etc.*

**W**OLF LANDON'S safety belt creaked horribly as the inertia of the sudden nose-over threw his weight against it. The stub-nosed, ferocious-looking Sop Dolphin streaked vertically downward, its motor winding up to an ear-shattering howl. The howl of a sky-wolf pouncing upon its prey.

Jaws set, neck arched, deep-set eyes blazing, Landon rode the ship down, standing on the rudder bar. The Yanks called him a lobo because he always flew

alone. They watched him with awed, wondering eyes during the few minutes he spent on the ground between his relentless patrols. He was a man apart.

But that didn't bother Landon. He had been called Wolf long before he came to France. He was here for one purpose, to fight. If he chose to hit a pace that no one else could follow, that was his business. And right now the crimson Pfalz, for which he had scoured the skies during long, weary patrols, was below him.

That red Pfalz haunted the dreams of kiwis, was mentioned in hushed tones at mess, was discussed in profane tones at Wing. It flew always alone, as did Landon's Dolphin. But while Landon fought with the ferocity of a timber wolf to clear all black-crossed crates from the sky, his guns hammering and blazing, the guns of the Pfalz remained silent, cold. Its red-helmeted pilot flew with incredible skill, but he never fought for position on an opponent's tail. Instead, he tried to put himself into that opponent's ringsight, to provide a target that even an over eager kiwi couldn't resist, felt he couldn't miss—

And to turn Vickers guns upon that sinister crimson Pfalz meant death.

**P**LUMMETING down through scattered blobs of Archie smoke, Landon fired a burst to warm his guns, then fixed his eyes upon that logy, awkward-flying German ship. It looked like an easy mark, that Pfalz, but there was only one slim chance of nailing it.

Suddenly tracers made delicate lines around the Boche crate. Landon stiffened in his pit. He wasn't the only man attacking the Kraut! A Nieuport had come darting out of a cloud, pounced upon the Pfalz' tail, was closing in for the kill!

"You blithering fool!" Landon yelled, uselessly. "Get away! Don't you know it's a trap? Don't you know—"

It seemed that the man piloting that Nieuport did not know. But that wasn't possible; word had been passed to every outfit in the sector. Fifteen men, most of them fledglings, had fallen for the lure of an easy mark provided by that Pfalz during the past week. And fifteen men had gone plunging down in flaming crates—

Suddenly Landon jerked, as if struck in the face. This thing was doubly impossible! Every ship of the 57th was on

the home tarmac, lined up for inspection by a worried Brass Hat. Landon, as was his custom, had ignored the inspection. He had jumped into the Dolphin which, somehow, he had wangled from the British, and had started his lobo patrol. He was dead sure, however, that every Nieuport in the outfit was right now in the flight line in front of the Op shack.

Yet the ship making the rash, suicidal attack on the crimson Pfalz bore the insignia of the 57th!

The pilot of the crimson Pfalz was giving a performance up to his usual standard. Mushing his ship through the air, wobbling uncertainly, he goggled back at the Nieuport, as if unable to make up his mind what should be done about this situation.

The man in the Nieuport, probably excited over getting his first victory fairly in his grip, closed in. A hundred yards, fifty, twenty—

Kurt Regan slumped far down into the pit of the Pfalz.

The Nieuport pilot responded, gunning his motor until the nose of his ship was only a few feet behind the empennage of the Pfalz. The deluded fool thought Regan had wind-up, was paralyzed with terror, Landon knew. Couldn't he see the sinister steel tube that projected below and behind the Pfalz' flipper?

Didn't he know, by now, that this Pfalz was impervious to bullets? It was characteristic of Kurt Regan that he should load his ship down with armor plate, sacrificing its performance in order to make sure his own hide would remain intact. The weight of the armor ruined the ship for combat flying; but ordinary fighting had never been in Kurt's line. Craft, trickery, guile—those were Kurt's weapons.

And the prey had flown right into the trap. Regan's head turned making sure that

the Nieuport was in position. Then a sudden jet of crimson flame spurted from that steel tube, with almost explosive violence. The slipstream hurled the flame toward the Nieuport, unerringly.

This thing had happened fifteen times in the past seven days. Crimson flame had licked around highly inflammable, doped fabric. Wings had turned swiftly to black, useless skeletons. Burning fuselages had plummeted to the earth—

And Wolf Landon, still a thousand feet above, was helpless. He saw the Nieuport lurch and roll like a stricken thing as its pilot suddenly realized what he faced. It seemed to Landon that the Yank had actually been quick enough to get clear—that he had started his roll a split second before Regan cut loose with the flame-thrower, in fact.

**B**UT that idea was soon smashed. Smoke gushed from the fuselage of the Nieuport as the little ship dropped into an erratic, tell-tale spin.

Landon pounced upon his enemy. Crouched behind his hammering guns, lips drawn back into a snarl, he aimed down into Regan's cockpit. Only from this direction was the German unprotected.

But Kurt Regan was well aware of his danger. Glancing upward, he slammed on full control, gunning his motor to the limit. Logily, the Pfalz twisted away, dropped into a vertical slip, and headed desperately for the protection of the clouds.

Cursing, Landon went hammering after his old enemy. But he had lost his position, now; and he might as well throw paper-wads at that armored crate as waste ammunition on it.

The Pfalz reached the clouds, plunged into them, and was gone. Useless to follow; Landon made a flipper turn, looking down, trying to spot the wreck of the Nieuport. The light was bad, but—

The Nieuport came skidding in alongside him, close, its fuselage blackened by smoke, its diminutive pilot waving his arm!

It wasn't possible, yet there it was. The kiwi had somehow put out the fire and now he was flying blithely on, waving at Landon as if to thank him. And the insignia of the 57th, on the side of that smoke-blackened fuselage, was as plain as ever—

Wolf Landon sat like a statue in his pit, letting the Sop fly itself, staring at the man in the Nieuport. His throat was suddenly dry, and his eyes smarted. Was this an apparition he was seeing?

Landon's mind flashed back to a world of thundering automobile motors, stands packed with screaming faces, flags flying, cars bunching at the turns, stringing out on the straightway. That south turn at Indianapolis, and Kurt Regan's car cutting in, forcing Landon against a third car—a crash—the world toppling over and over. Another crash as they went through the fence, the two wrecked cars locked together, burning furiously.

Landon, who had been thrown clear, fighting his way into the flaming wreckage, searching for Fred Case, his one pal, who had been riding with him. The smell of burning rubber, the awful feel of it as his hands touched a tire, the way it stuck to his skin.

But Fred Case was gone. And, without a witness to uphold his story, Wolf Landon had been kicked out of racing by the A.A.A., his career smashed.

And the man in that Nieuport there was Fred Case! He knew it as he knew his name!

Landon passed a quivering hand over his goggles, looked again. The Nieuport was gone. Probably it had plunged into the clouds. But, like an apparition—even as Fred Case had disappeared—it had

vanished.

Staring rigidly at the instruments, Landon brought his ship in over the hangars of the 57th in a howling nose-high slip. With wires sighing, controls mushy, he straightened out and clumped down on the tarmac. Full gun and full rudder swung the crate around and he taxied to the line. Like a man in a dream he climbed out and stood there, slapping his rolled helmet against his thigh, eyes probing along the ragged row of the 57th's Nieuports.

Five-seven-four-eight—6031—5976.

They were all here. To make dead sure, Landon walked from ship to ship, feeling the rotary motors. Every motor was cold. Not one of these ships had been in the air during the past hour. Had it been a phantom ship, carrying the insignia of the 57th? Abruptly, Landon wheeled, gravel crunching under his boot, and headed for the Op shack.

Major Ernst, a bothered-looking little fat man, swamped by detail and always making fretful complaints about it, looked up, wiped sweat from his two chins, and shoved a blank combat report across the desk.

L ANDON ignored it. "Any replacements coming up? Bringing ships?" he snapped.

"Why, no, Lieutenant," the major said.

The big pilot put his palms on the scarred and liquor-stained desk. "Now think carefully, Ernst. Has any ship left this field in the past hour? I saw a Nieuport, carrying our insignia, jump the Pfalz—and get away. I want to know who was in that Nieuport, and I want to know damned quick!"

Ernst squirmed. His expression of innocence was so overdone that it might have been spread on with a trowel.

"Why—why the ship wasn't from this field, Lieutenant. The boys've been

playing craps ever since the inspection ended. You—should have stayed, Landon. The colonel—"

Landon dismissed the idea with an incisive gesture. He couldn't bother with formality; always he had been a law unto himself. His job was to fight, not jabber with Brass Hats.

Ernst, rubbing desperately at one small, pink ear, spoke again, quickly, as if anxious to switch the line of talk.

"Landon, I've got bad news. Chaumont's been calling all afternoon. That damned devil in the Pfalz is working a racket. Sends cablegrams through Holland to parents of American boys he shoots down. Tells their folks that if they kick in with money, their boys'll be given proper burial. It's—pretty awful, Landon. Don't know how in the dickens the man gets the addresses of our boys, but—"

Typically a Kurt Regan game—

"Of course," Ernst went on, "he's doin' it on the sly. If the German High Command ever heard of it, they'd prob'ly shoot him. If on'y there was some way we could prove it to them. We can't just fly over an' drop a message, they'd never believe our accusations against one of their own officers, without cast-iron proof and evidence."

"It's the most beastly, rotten—" Landon ground out. He stopped, almost with a jerk, however, when a sudden, awful thought stabbed through his brain. Fred Case—the half-pint car designer was a naturalized American citizen, a genius with motors; and his parents lived in Germany! If that were Fred Case here, in the sector, flying a ship that bore the insignia of the 57th—

It didn't make sense. Nothing made sense any more. Not since Regan, who had found racing more profitable than heeding the German consul's pleas that he go back and fight for the Fatherland, had ruined

Wolf Landon's career by trickery. Landon had been four months in the hospital, after that smash. When he got out, America was in the war. Regan had returned to Germany. And Fred Case had not turned up.

"MAJOR," Landon snapped. "I'm going over to that Pfalz' drome. I'm going to strafe hell out of—"

Ernst sighed. "You always do. Regular as clockwork, every time he downs a man, you go over and strafe his drome. Know how you feel. I'd go myself if I could squeeze into a ship. But you act almost like you knew this Regan, had something personal against you. You raised plain hell, at Wing, to get yourself posted to this outfit—was it so you'd be opposite von Regan?"

"Maybe," Landon ground out.

The door creaked. Several of the pilots trooped in: Jim Eaton, Biff Tyson, Dan Savidge, Cork Bradford.

"Evenin' boys," the major commented.

"We've been talking things over, sir," Bradford said. "About the Pfalz, and that rotten scheme for getting money out of our folks, if we go down in Germany. We've all decided to fly over and strafe that guy's drome off the map, sir. That is, if you'll give your permission, sir."

Bradford was a lean, erect pilot with curly blond hair that looked as if it might have been marcelled. His features were delicate, and he had the scrubbed, immaculate look of a tailor's dummy. But he had a buoyant air and a broad smile that nothing could displace. The pilots behind him nodded agreement to his words; Tyson scowling and looking pugnacious, Savidge looking sad, Eaton fidgeting nervously.

Ernst looked up at Landon.

"Landon's got the same idea," the C.O. remarked. "You can all go over together—

and give that human rat a couple slugs for me."

Dusk was thickening when the pilots trooped across the tarmac. The Nieuports were gassed and ready. Greasemonkeys had pulled Landon's Dolphin into a hangar, tail-first, and were pumping gas into its tanks. Landon stalked into the hangar, looking for the armorer sarge. As he did so; he caught a glimpse of a furtive figure that darted away from his ship, dived through a door at the rear of the hangar, and was gone.

Landon sucked in an icy breath. Fred Case! Fred's quick-moving walk, Fred's sawed-off stature, Fred's way of holding his head a little to one side, as if studying something—

Wolf Landon darted to the door, flung it open.

Nobody in sight.

Motors barked into life on the tarmac. No time to go prowling around in the darkness of the orchard behind the hangars now. Wheeling, Landon strode to his ship, inspected it from prop to flippers. Nothing seemed wrong.

Ten minutes later he was in the air flying at point of a shadowy five-ship formation, scowling at the instrument dials. Was his imagination running away with him? Or had the past risen up to smash him in the face? Was the apparition really Fred Case, the friend who had deserted Landon when he was needed most?

Whatever the answer, it would have to wait. There was something even more important at hand, a score to settle with a flying ghoul.

The home drome of von Regan was beyond the bend of the Meuse. Landon reached it just as dusk gave way to darkness.

Lights flickered on the field below. The Pfalz was being wheeled into a

hangar.

Wolf Landon dropped in a thundering power dive, warmed his guns, and went streaking across the smooth field at an altitude of ten feet, kicking rudder this way and that, spraying the Boche hangars with lead. Like frantic gnomes, casting terrifying shadows in the light of the flares, men ran for shelter. Some darted to the gun-pits and swung Maxims mounted on old carriage wheels with the axles set into stumps, trying to bring them to bear on the Dolphin.

The hangars expanded and grew before Landon's eyes. At the last possible moment he backsticked into a chandelle, leveled out at a hundred meters and circled the field.

THE Nieuports were doing their stuff. One by one they dropped on the field, guns hammering. Landon's turn came again and down he went once more.

Closely, he had been watching those Nieuports. There was only one way in which von Regan could be getting the home addresses of the boys. Someone was sending the information over to him. Dropping it from a ship, perhaps—

But he concentrated savagely on the job in hand as he dived, leveled with hammering guns, backsticked over the hangars, and looked back to see what damage he had managed to do.

As he looked back, he jerked in the pit, stiffening. His eyes spotted something—a tiny metal cylinder, falling lazily, turning end-over-end.

Landon jerked his head back, looking up. That cylinder had been dropped from a ship and the ship must be overhead.

But there was no ship overhead. The Nieuports were all at the other end of the field, diving in unison—

Wolf Landon spun back to face his instruments. Was he going crazy? *That*

*cylinder had been dropped from his own ship!* There was no other answer!

At that instant the blare of his motor broke off. There was no coughing, no scattering miss to give warning. Only abrupt silence, and the high-pitched wailing of the wires, going slowly down the scale as the Dolphin lost speed.

Savagely, Landon put the nose down, snapped the switch off and on again, juggled the throttle, peered at the tank pressure gauge, at the oil pressure dial, at the tack. Motors didn't cut out like this—Landon had pushed the thunder-buggies around enough dirt tracks to know when a mill was tuning up smoothly. There was nothing wrong with this motor. Yet—

The ground rose toward him steadily. Gliding the Sop as best he could, he dropped it into a tiny cleared space, fishtailed, and patted wheels and skid on the rough surface.

As the Dolphin lurched drunkenly to a stop he leaped from the pit, dived under the wing, and came up at the nose. Angrily he tore away part of the motor cowl. The breaker cams had been pulled from both mags. Two wires ran back through the fuselage, toward the tail—

Cursing softly, stumbling in the darkness but not daring to strike a match, Landon followed up the wires.

They led to a metal box about the size of a shoebox, that had been cleverly hidden in the rear of the fuselage. There was a sort of a key on the side of the box, and a hole in the bottom. Directly under the hole was a small tear in the covering fabric, a tear that looked as if it had been made by accident.

Landon banged one fist into his other palm. This, then, was how von Regan had been getting the addresses of the parents of the boys he burned! Landon himself had been bringing them over, unwittingly!

A soft sigh of wires and struts snapped

Landon alert. Peering up into the darkness, he saw a Nieuport dropping onto the tiny field, deadsticked. The ship leveled, touched with a rumbling sound, stopped. Landon raced to its side.

"Why in hell'd you risk setting down to help—" he began. But he broke off abruptly.

The man in the pit of the Nieuport, wriggling out of his monkeysuit, was Fred Case.

Case jumped to the ground, stuck out his hand.

"Long time no see, Wolf," he said.

Landon tried to speak, and couldn't. Case was in uniform—Boche uniform, with plenty of gold braid and tinkling medals.

When Landon got his breath, he said, "Why, you dirty— Fred, you took a run-out powder on me once; but I—"

"Not a run-out, Wolf. Ever hear of amnesia? When we went through that fence on the south turn I was thrown clear, knocked out. Somebody picked me up, rushed me to a doctor. I didn't know what I was doing, but I sneaked out of his house, wandered around the Circle for hours, trying to figure out who I was and what I was. I went to Chicago, to Omaha—everywhere. But I didn't find out who I was.

"Four months ago my memory returned. I found out you were over here, so I came. Wanted to tell you what the play was right away; but I'd heard of Regan's racket, and I was afraid you'd spoil my little game if I let you in on it."

"But that Nieuport you use," Landon objected, "it hasn't been on the field! You—"

"No. Got special permission from Wing and from Ernst to hang out with the 98th."

"But you attacked Regan, and caught fire—"

Fred Case grinned. "No. I didn't catch fire. I had smoke-boxes fixed in my ship, so I could fake it, make Regan think he had downed me. When you saw me in the hangar tonight, I was busy fixing those wires on Regan's message dropper in your ship."

They faced each other; Wolf Landon, hulking, determined, a man of brute strength, unswerving honesty, smashing power; Case, diminutive, quick-moving, perhaps the greatest race-car designer in the world. Landon opened and closed his fists, swallowed, and scowled.

"But Fred—that Kraut uniform you're wearing—"

"Listen, Wolf. My folks live in Germany, I know. But I'm an American. This war isn't easy for me; but I'm not double-crossing you. I'm working for G-2. My job is to smash that dirty game von Regan is playing. You'd be amazed, Wolf, how much money that rat has already taken in, through Holland, from the folks of Americans his outfit shoots down behind the lines. It's rotten—"

Wolf's eyes were gleaming now.

"Fred! We can get our motors started, get out of here before the Krauts find us. We both landed deadstick; they didn't hear us, couldn't see us in the dark—"

"No. Here's my identity disk and my papers, Wolf. From now on, remember, you are Fred Case. We're going to call on von Regan, if you're game."

Landon whistled silently. Fred had brains, all right; often his moves were so swift, so baffling, that Wolf couldn't quite keep up with them. Always it had been that way. Landon, the popular hero, guided by the brain of Fred Case, who kept in the background, head cocked a little to one side, a quizzical, thoughtful expression on his face.

"What in hell, Fred—"

"This way, Wolf. Let's go."

Fred Case strutted into the Operations office of Jagdstaffel 14 like some undersized, bedecorated peacock, seeking to make up for his lack of stature by impressing everyone with his tremendous dignity.

There was only one man in the room; a young corporal who sat at a telephone switchboard, sending word of the strafe to the Boche headquarters. This man half turned, gaped, and stared as Case prodded Landon into the room at point of a Luger.

"At once," Case barked, in German, "you will get in touch with Wing Headquarters. I am von Gorlitz, aide to Ludendorff. I have here a prisoner, an American whose plane fell in a field near the road as I passed. You will drop all other calls, and put mine through at once."

Scrambling to his feet, eyes on the dangling medals that adorned Case's chest—the *Pour le Merite* was there, and a dozen more—the corporal saluted. "It shall be as his excellency commands," he agreed.

Case, slapping his gleaming boot with a riding-crop that he had taken from the cockpit of his Nieuport, glared at the unoccupied desk of the Kraut C.O.

"Von Regan!" he barked. "Where is he? Why isn't he at his post? Explain, corporal!"

THE man could not suppress a smirk. "Our worthy *Herr Kommandant*," he said, "always disappears when we are strafed by the Yankee devils. He does not leave word where he is going."

"Very well. About your business. It is not fitting for you to make such comments about your superior Officers."

The call went through. Fred Case picked up the instrument.

"Von Gorlitz, of *Der Grosser General Stab*," he announced, pompously. "Yes, yes, I know you thought I was in Bavaria,

but I am here, fool! I have a prisoner—an American aviator. I wish you to come here at once. You will arrive in an hour? *Ja!*"

Case banged the receiver into place. Wolf Landon, his brow furrowed by astonishment, said, "Say, what in the—"

Case made a swift gesture toward the corporal. The man did not understand English, but to carry on a conversation would be to arouse his suspicions. And the two Americans were taking long enough chances.

The hour dragged by slowly. The other Nieuports, finished with their raid, had headed for the home tarmac, across the lines. Men passed the operations shack, bent upon their jobs of repairing the damage. But no one entered. The communications corporal stuck to his post, handling calls that went through the switchboard, furtively eyeing the bedecorated general who had seated himself at the Kapitan's desk and was covering his prisoner with the Luger.

Finally, a heel thudded on the step outside. Kurt von Regan stepped into the office.

At the threshold he stopped. His thin, predatory face sagged, his monocle dropped from his eye and swung back and forth on its string, in a short, excited pendulum.

"Fred Case!" Regan whispered hoarsely. "It iss—not possible! I—you—"

Case smiled affably. Wolf Landon turned in his chair, and watched the jagged scar that bisected the right half of Regan's face twitch and turn livid.

At that moment a gray staff car stopped outside. Grim-faced Boche Brass Hats stalked stiffly into the office, thrusting Regan aside.

"Kapitan!" one of them snapped. "Is this the proper manner to receive your superiors?"

Regan saluted desperately, clicking his



heels.

"Herr Oberst, I have the pleasure to report one prisoner of war, one spy! This man in the general's uniform—"

The colonel, in spite of his decorations and spiked helmet, was just a gray-haired, tired old man. But he smiled with open amusement.

"Your prisoners, *Kapitan*? When this one covers you with a Luger? What will you try to make us swallow next, von Regan? We are becoming very tired of your tactics, your—"

Fred Case got to his feet, glanced languidly at his strap-watch. "I am von Gorlitz. This prisoner is Lieutenant Fred Case, A.E.F."

"A lie!" Regan barked. "The spy is Fred Case! This other is Wolf Landon. I know them both—"

THE colonel scowled. "Regan, I warn you—"

A telephone bell shrilled. The corporal put receivers to his ears, listened a moment, then got to his feet, saluting. "For the *Oberst*," he said. "From Berlin."

The colonel took the call. As he listened, an expression of incredulous horror came to his face. Still listening, he turned, and fixed upon Kurt von Regan a merciless stare. Finally he hung up.

"*Kapitan* von Regan," he snapped. "I have word from Berlin: the parents of Fred Case, Lieutenant, A. E. F., happen to live in Leipzig. A few minutes ago they received a cablegram. The message had been sent from Holland to an address in New York, from there it had been forwarded through Holland, to Case's family in Leipzig. Immediately they turned the message over to proper authorities. The message stated that Lieutenant Fred Case had been brought down in flames on German soil. The message further stated that, if five

thousand dollars were sent to you, through Holland, you would see that Case's remains would be given proper Christian burial. *Herr Kapitan* von Regan, what monstrous thing is this?"

Regan's whole face was twitching now. He rolled his eyes from side to side, as if seeking a way of escape. He was the same old Kurt Regan, all right; the man who looked so evil, so venomous, that it was hard to believe his nature matched up with his looks. But it did.

"*Herr Oberst!*" he pleaded desperately. "I can explain! But I yet do not understand—" Savagely, he swung back to glare at Fred Case. Switching to English, he barked: "This cannot be! You are dead! I saw you go down, in flames!"

Fred Case nodded understandingly. "And radioed your man in Holland, telling him to get on the job. You work fast, Kurt; and cablegrams travel swiftly. That flamer was faked, and I put the address in that cylinder myself, Kurt. I had to make it a New York address, otherwise you'd never have sent the message. But I'd sent instructions to New York to have the message forwarded in a hurry. And I'd sent word ahead to my folks, telling them to turn the message over to the military. Kurt, you are trapped."

The colonel broke into the line of talk. "What is this? You speak English—I do not understand that language. *Kapitan* von Regan, for a long time we have been hearing sordid rumors. We refused to believe them, charged them up to enemy agents trying to spawn trouble. But now we have proof which we cannot ignore!"

"This prisoner," the bogus von Gorlitz reminded, "is Lieutenant Fred Case, A.E.F. Prisoner, show the *Oberst* your identification disk, your paper."

The colonel swung around. He had been so busy with Regan that he had not yet paid proper attention to the general.

But Case's uniform, his rigidly-maintained dignity, the fact, that he had a prisoner and had remained here for an hour, waiting, all added up in the colonel's mind and convinced him that this was the real von Gorlitz. Swiftly, the colonel inspected the papers which Wolf Landon showed him. Then, returning them to the prisoner the colonel faced Regan again.

"So!" he barked. "Not only do you communicate with the enemy, not only do you work this ghoulish scheme to get money, to make yourself rich on the anguish of bereaved parents, but also you lie, in order to increase your vile revenue! *Kapitan*, it is a dreadful thing to find a beast such as you among the gentlemen of the Imperial Air Service. Have you nothing to say for yourself?"

Regan opened his mouth, but no words came. He was trapped, neatly, inextricably, and he knew it. He whirled, and bounded like a deer through the open doorway. His boots thudded on the tarmac.

The colonel, struggling with his Luger, said:

"General von Gorlitz, with your permission I shall order von Regan shot at once, without trial. He—"

The other staff officers had gone racing after von Regan. Case nodded to Wolf Landon. Landon lunged across the room, jerked the Luger from the colonel's hand, and pressed it against his belly.

"It gives me pain," Case remarked, in German, "to break up an illusion, Herr Oberst. Back up to the wall, please. We find it necessary to tie you—"

A door slammed. Landon and Case whirled. They had forgotten the communications man. Taking advantage of his opportunity, the man had bolted through a rear door. His voice came back to them now, screaming warnings about *Amerikaner* devils in the Operations office.

Landon swore. Fred Case said, "Damn! We'll have to run for it, Wolf, those babies'll close in on this shack in a second or two—"

Side by side, they darted through the night. Shouts rang across the tarmac. Shadowy figures pounded by, running in all directions. A searchlight atop one of the hangars went into action, sending a merciless, probing finger of light swinging across the field, illuminating everything.

There was just one way to evade that beam—by getting into a hangar. The only hangar open was the one into which Regan's Pfalz had been wheeled. Landon and Case plunged into its shelter.

In one corner was a pile of wornout tires. Germany was short on rubber and the tires had been cut in small sections, ready to be shipped back to a factory to be salvaged. The two Yanks worked around behind the pile, dropped to the floor.

The whole Boche drome seethed with excitement, yet no one came into the hangar.

"Wonder where Regan vanished to?" Landon asked.

Case shrugged. "But they're on to him now. Sooner or later they'll find him, or starve him out."

"The same goes for us, Half-Pint. We've got to get out of this. Let's make a run for it."

"Right, Wolf. But—"

Faint sound quivered through the silence. A trapdoor not ten feet from the Americans lifted and in the dim light cast through the windows by reflection of the probing searchlight beams, they saw Kurt Regan's face, and the blued-steel of a Luger.

"Don't move, either of you!" Kurt hissed. "Case, kick your Luger away from you. Landon, you are an ox for strength—you will start the motor of my Pfalz, then open the hangar doors. The ship is headed

right.

"Case, you will hold down the tail as I rev up, then you will let go when I signal. One wrong move, and your friend gets a bullet through his head."

"Understand?"

"Sure," Case said. "You're making a getaway, to save your hide. Got a secret passage under here, leading to your hideout—"

"Silence! Get moving, both of you!"

"Fred!" Wolf Landon growled. "We're helping this rat dodge the firing squad he deserves! Let's—"

"Do as you're told, Wolf," Case said softly. "The lad has the drop on us."

Under Landon's powerful hands, the motor of the Pfalz roared into life. Regan gestured wildly with the Luger.

Obediently, Landon threw his weight against the hangar doors, rolling them open.

Thundering, the Pfalz darted onto the tarmac, streaked away. The searchlights found it, followed. Wild shouts and the clatter of machine guns rang across the field. But the Pfalz lifted clear.

THE excitement occasioned by Regan's escape gave the Americans a chance to make their own getaway. Within five minutes they had reached their own ships, and had made hurried repairs to the Dolphin's mags. They started the Dolphin first, let its motor idle while they started the Nieuport. Then they took off.

The Boche drome was ablaze with activity. Gasoline flares made wicked, flickering red eyes, arranged in neat rows along the field boundaries. The searchlights probed frantically into the empty sky.

Wolf Landon, nursing the cold Hiss, leveled at a hundred meters, and searched the horizon. There it was: a faint exhaust flare, well down and fading fast. Regan

was making a run for it.

Landon banked over and, with Case's slower Nieuport following, drove hard after the Kraut.

Regan's ship, loaded down with armor and *Flammenwerfer* equipment, was slow. Landon overtook it, banked around, and dropped upon it with hammering guns.

Kurt banked frantically. He was in a spot and he knew it. Landon was too wise to get into that fatal position on the Pfalz' tail and the Pfalz was too slow to escape. For Regan, there was only one answer—stay and fight. And that didn't appeal to him.

Landon's tracers flicked into the armored Pfalz. Regan banked frantically away as the Yank got into position above his pit. Cursing grimly, Landon thundered up into the night, banked, and dropped again, trying to get above that narrow pit opening to pour copper-jacketed slugs down into the renegade.

But again von Regan rolled away. With Vickers guns hammering, Wolf Landon followed him. No good. That damned armor made the Pfalz impregnable. The savagery of Wolf's attack was checkmated.

He broke off, made a thundering chandelle and rolled the Dolphin on its back. Watching the Pfalz through the open center-section of the top wing, he let go with the Lewis guns. But Regan, fighting for his life, skidded drunkenly out of the sights.

Lips pulled taut over his teeth, eyes blazing, Landon went down in a power dive that nearly tore the wings from the Dolphin. Before his eyes danced a vision of a brick track streaming toward him over the long snout of a race car. And in that vision he saw Regan's car making that treacherous cut-in as Landon sought to pass, thus throwing Landon against that third car. Locked wheels—and a smash for

which the judges had held Landon responsible. Wasn't he called Wolf? Weren't those the tactics one would expect from a wolf of the tracks?

That was only a part of the fury that gripped him now. Kurt Regan, the trickster, the ghoul who had tricked kiwis to flaming deaths, then profited from those deaths, was getting away.

Landon's gas was running low. It had been a long hop to the Boche drome, and it was a long hop back to the lines. He could blaze away all night at that damned armored Pfalz without downing it. Right now, Regan was probably grinning with triumph—

Another exhaust flare cut into Landon's range of vision. It was the Nieuport—Fred Case was joining the scrap.

But Case was dropping on the Pfalz' tail, inviting flaming death! Landon cursed bitterly, nosed down until he stood on the rudder bar, wagged his wings savagely. But Fred, crouched in the pit of the Nieuport, seemed to have lost his mind. Surely he knew better!

**W**OLF LANDON'S throat jerked taut as he saw von Regan crouch in the pit of the Pfalz. He'd be reaching for the lever that set those flames going—

To Landon, leaning hard against the coaming of the Sop, peering ahead through the dim light, it seemed that the Pfalz stopped in mid-air. For a moment everything was wiped out—the thunder of the Hisso, the battering of the slipstream, the howl of wires. The Pfalz bucked, expanded, became a ball of flame that grew and grew and then suddenly blossomed into a giant, blinding flare that hung motionless in the sky.

Something had gone wrong with the *Flammenwerfer*. Regan had mounted it with asbestos, and had run the steel tube

well back of the Pfalz' empennage to make sure that his own ship would not be set afire. Yet the flame-tube had backfired.

Landon had one glimpse of a dark figure, twisting and flailing with useless arms in the midst of the flames. Then, lazily at first, but gaining speed, the blazing wreckage dropped, spinning.

Fred Case's Nieuport zoomed, sidled alongside the Sop. Fred waved a hand, gestured toward home.

As the two ships taxied to the flight line, eager pilots crowded around Landon and Case. Even Major Ernst was there.

"By damn!" the C.O. piped. "We'd near given you up, Landon! What in hell happened?"

"Yes," Cork Bradford put in. "I was afraid other Boche outfits had cut you off on the way home. Regan could have wirelessly them—"

Languidly, the diminutive Fred Case got out of his Nieuport.

"That," he commented, "saves us a lot of trouble. We'll only have to search one billet now, instead of all of them. Bradford, just how did you know Regan had a wireless set in his plane?"

Bradford tensed. Too late he realized that he had made a fatal slip. He crouched as if to run, but Wolf Landon was upon him in one bound and against Landon's strength the struggles of the pilot were useless.

"Major Ernst," Fred Case remarked, "if you'll search Bradford's billet you'll find some aluminum cylinders with an inscription, in German, stating that when picked up they are to be taken at once to *Kapitan* von Regan, unopened."

"Y'mean Bradford's a—a spy?"

"Not exactly a spy. Bradford's a man who needs a lot of money. Some Kraut spy probably approached him, offered him plenty if he'd put the names and addresses of the pilots that von Regan burned down

each day in Landon's message chute. Wolf went over to strafe the Krauts after each of those flamer kills, remember; knowing that, they'd hidden a message-dropper in his ship."

"Fred," Landon demanded, "why in hell'd you fix it so I'd go down? You—"

"I needed help, Wolf—needed some guy to play the part of Fred Case while I played the general. I'd have come to you, told you about it only I didn't know who the guy was who was sending those messages. And at the first suspicion that we were closing in on him, he'd have dropped the game like a hot iron, and I couldn't have trapped Regan."

"But Regan's Pfalz—what made it burn?"

"Remember how burning rubber expands, and sticks to everything like the dickens? Well, I stuffed his flame-tube with chunks of those old tires in the Boche

hangar while you were starting the ship and Regan was busy with throttle and choke. Those chemicals that they use in the *Flammenwerfers* make a terrific amount of heat, so the rubber expanded almost instantly, plugged the tube. And you know what happens when a rifle has been jammed muzzle-first into the dirt, and then is fired.

"Something like that happened when Regan let go at me with the *Flammenwerfer*. The flame melted the rubber instantly, and with the outlet plugged, the flame backed up into the chemical tanks, and—well, I guess there was some justice in what Regan got after all. He'd owed a debt to Death for a long time. Say, Wolf, you owe me a drink. I bought the last one in Indianapolis, just before the race, remember?"

"Sure," Wolf Landon said. "Come on, we'll take care of that now!"