

# Weird Tales

REGISTERED IN U.S. PATENT OFFICE

Volume 26

CONTENTS FOR AUGUST, 1935

Number 2

Cover Design . . . . .	M. Brundage	
<i>Illustrating a scene in "Doctor Satan"</i>		
Doctor Satan . . . . .	Paul Ernst	146
<i>A thrilling, fascinating tale about the world's weirdest criminal</i>		
The Drome of the Living Dead . . . . .	John Scott Douglas	165
<i>What horrible compulsion made the aviators of the Whirlwind Flight fire on their comrades?</i>		
Ghost . . . . .	Leona Ames Hill	179
<i>Verse</i>		
The Black Orchid . . . . .	Seabury Quinn	180
<i>An eerie mystery story about a botanical monstrosity—a tale of Jules de Grandin</i>		
The House Party at Smoky Island . . . . .	L. M. Montgomery	197
<i>A quaint and appealing weird story by the author of "Anne of Green Gables"</i>		
Once in a Thousand Years . . . . .	Frances Bragg Middleton	204
<i>A fascinating tale of a weird adventure in the Sargasso Sea</i>		
Satan in Exile (part 3) . . . . .	Arthur William Bernal	223
<i>An astounding weird-scientific story about a daring brigand of the airways</i>		
The Treader of the Dust . . . . .	Clark Ashton Smith	241
<i>John Sebastian returned to his house, only to experience a ghastly horror</i>		
Old Salt . . . . .	Edgar Daniel Kramer	246
<i>Verse</i>		
The Idol and the Rajah . . . . .	Claude Farrere	247
<i>A strange tale of sudden death and the six-armed goddess Kali</i>		
Weird Story Reprint:		
In Amundsen's Tent . . . . .	John Martin Leahy	251
<i>A popular story from WEIRD TALES of seven years ago, reprinted by request</i>		
The Eyrie . . . . .		266
<i>The readers express their opinions</i>		

Published monthly by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company, 2457 E. Washington Street, Indianapolis, Ind. Entered as second-class matter March 20, 1923, at the post office at Indianapolis, Ind., under the act of March 3, 1879. Single copies, 25 cents. Subscription, \$3.00 a year in the United States. English office: Charles Lavell, 13, Serjeants' Inn, Fleet Street, E. C. 4, London. The publishers are not responsible for the loss of unsolicited manuscripts, although every care will be taken of such material while in their possession. The contents of this magazine are fully protected by copyright and must not be reproduced either wholly or in part without permission from the publishers.

NOTE—All manuscripts and communications should be addressed to the publishers' Chicago office at 840 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Ill. FARNSWORTH WRIGHT, Editor.

Copyright 1935, by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company.

COPYRIGHTED IN GREAT BRITAIN



WEIRD TALES ISSUED 1st OF EACH MONTH



"One by one the corpses were released from their bondage."

# The Drome of the Living Dead

By JOHN SCOTT DOUGLAS

*What horrible compulsion led the aviators of the Whirlwind Flight to fire on their comrades? An exciting tale of the World War*

**M**AJOR HUGH MILLER, wiry little Commanding Officer of the 1st Air Squadron, glanced up as his big, blond orderly entered his office.

Hope struggled with despair in Miller's haggard gray eyes.

"Is that one of Cameron's flight?" he asked hoarsely.

Lieutenant Clinton Creel's thin lips twitched with a faint smile.

"No, sir," he answered crisply. "Just a plane being ferried here from the rear."

Miller glanced at his wrist-watch for the eighth time in an hour.

"Ten or fifteen minutes more petrol in their planes if they're still alive, Creel." The C. O. ran a shaking hand through his iron-gray hair. "It's driving me crazy! Ten men gone in two weeks—vanished completely. Where, Creel—*where?*"

Creel shrugged. "The breaks of war, sir!"

Miller sprang to his feet, his face twitching. "Breaks of war, nothing!" he cried. "It's——" His bony hand made a trembling, helpless gesture as he groped for words; words which would express the fear that had been crawling in his brain like maggots for the past two weeks.

The little officer began to pace back and forth, speaking in a voice husky with emotion:

"There's a spy in our midst, that's evident, Creel. Someone's tampered with our beacon light each time a patrol returned after dark. But—how? I've placed guards around the switch; still it goes off. No one can find anything wrong afterward.

"The flights which should land here continue westward, unable to find this drome. Where do they go? If they cracked up, we'd get reports. If they landed at other dromes, they'd return. But ten planes we know of have flown westward in the last two weeks—never to return.

"No wonder the men are going screwy from the strain. They try to hide their fear. But it's there, all the time, preying on their minds. . . . And what of that 'Whirlwind Flight'? It swoops down, killing our men right and left. It's not a flight composed of flesh-and-blood men—

it's composed of devils, of machines, of robots. The Frogs claim it flies westward, too—not eastward toward the German lines. They claim there are repainted D. H's. in that flight; that it is flown by the phantom pilots of Yanks who died."

The C. O. broke off short, beads of perspiration standing out on his gray forehead. "They're crazy, of course—quite crazy——"

Shuddering as though in the grip of malaria, the little major began pacing behind his desk. Once more he glanced with glassy eyes at his watch, shook it, looked again. Then he pulled the blind back an inch from the window. Nothing but darkness, broken momentarily by a star shell dripping its tentacles of light down the sky. No sign of flashing exhaust stacks; no sound of droning props through the crashing, shrieking noises filling the night.

A blue-flame seemed to burn in the orderly's light blue eyes.

"You're taking this too hard, sir."

"Too hard!" The C. O. wheeled, eyes twitching with anger. "What would you have me do, Creel?" Miller's voice wasn't quite steady. "Laugh and shrug when I don't know what kind of hell I'm sending those kids out to when I order them to fly? Every time I send 'em out, I wonder if I'll ever see them again. By night they vanish to the westward; by day, that damned Whirlwind Flight attacks like hell on wings!

"I'm not like you, Creel. I'm with those fledglings every minute they're flying. You don't feel anything. You have no nerves, no heart—you're like those demons in that Whirlwind Flight, you're a machine!"

Creel's thin lips tightened. "I don't let my imagination——"

"Imagination!" Miller snorted. "You have none!" Suddenly the wiry little major's body stiffened. "Motors, Creel!

Cameron's flight——" He turned, eyes unnaturally bright. "The beacons are ready?"

"We examined them before dusk, sir."

"Yes, yes; I remember. And that ferried plane came in——"

**T**HE C. O. brushed past Creel, hurrying down the narrow corridor of the barracks toward the door. There he froze. Not a flight; just a single motor! The others had died? Something tightened in the major's throat. If that single pilot, Russ Cameron, had discovered that hidden airdrome from which the Whirlwind Flight came, the loss of two men was worth while. Tomorrow the bombers could flatten it. So ran his thoughts.

He sensed rather than saw men at "archie" posts, ready to fire the anti-aircraft guns. Other men stood at the beacons, ready to place fingers of light on the plane to identify its insignia.

The droning was deafening, now, clapping sharply against barracks and hangars. The C. O. could see the sputtering, bluish-white flashes of its exhaust stacks.

"Lights!" he barked hoarsely.

From the darkness came grunts and curses.

Swearing like a madman, the C. O. ran toward one crew.

"Lights, you fools!" he bellowed. "They must work! Not five minutes ago——"

"That was five minutes ago, sir," a mechanic interrupted.

A cold sensation gripped the little major's heart. Strength seemed to flow out of his body. Above was a plane, flying westward to what? Death, destruction? Here on the ground they were powerless to direct its course, yet the C. O. felt certain it was one of his planes. Once more some mysterious hand had blotted out their beacons.

Suddenly Miller saw red. "For God's

sake, get lights! Anything! Matches, searchlights! We have to let that fellow know where his drome is; he hasn't over seven minutes' fuel in his crate——"

Men were only too eager to assist their comrade. Pilots came running out of the hangars with searchlights. Others struck matches.

There was a long, drawn-out *voooooo* of a speeding projectile—then a blinding blaze of light. Blackness was blasted away. For a number of seconds, the major could see nothing. When he could distinguish objects again, the sputtering exhaust stacks showed him that the plane was far to the westward, flying a straight course. The shell had exploded at the moment when the pilot might have seen their myriad small lights; that moment had passed.

The major walked back to his office with bowed shoulders and numb brain. He felt as if the 71st were in the skeins of some intangible mystery. Russ Cameron meant more to Miller than any other member of the squadron. In sending him out to solve the mystery which had been cracking morale, he had played his last ace—and it had been trumped. The little major felt dead inside, utterly beaten.

**L**IEUTENANT Russ Cameron had been blinded by that exploding shell. Flying five thousand feet above earth, he had peered downward while the blue light quivered in a macabre world. A weird, unrecognizable world it was. Before his eyes could adjust focus, earth and sky were again drenched in blackness.

His daredevil blue eyes shadowed as he glanced at his petrol gage. Almost empty! A few minutes more, and he'd be groping blindly in the darkness for a landing—groping as Nevin, Crabbe, Rockwell, Towne, Brawley and others of the 71st had groped before him.

A weird foreboding chilled Russ Cam-

eron's heart. In a few minutes, perhaps, he would learn how they had completely vanished from the face of the earth. Ten companions had vanished—where?

Death was understandable. The two friends who had left the 71st with Russ had died as brave men die. They had met a bombing squadron. Russ had accounted for two Fokkers; his two friends, for one Fokker each before they had died from machine-gun lead. But you understood that!

Disappearing like the ten men who had flown westward over the 71st's drome, however, leaving no wreckage, no charred remains, nothing—that was what gnawed at a man's reason, undermined his belief in his own sanity. Russ shifted his big, rough-hewn body uneasily in his pit. And would he, too, vanish like that when his petrol gave out?

Suddenly a beam of light fingered the sky. Relief surged over Russ. He had not passed the 71st—he was not lost!

The light struck his plane, blindingly. Russ could see nothing below, but he kicked left rudder, pushed his stick forward, and went into a spin. Another light shattered the blackness.

Russ's confidence returned. Right where the beacons were located at the 71st! His drome, all right.

The lights followed him down. Doubt suddenly crept into Russ's mind. What if this wasn't his drome? What if the lights had refused to work again? The C. O. had promised that Creel would place them under guard, of course . . . but there were those vanished men!

Russ snapped his stick backward, sharply. Mingled suspicion and fear made his backbone creep. He glanced at his gage. A couple of more minutes, if he wanted to chance a blind landing. No—too hazardous! Death was almost certain, that way.

His hard, rugged jaw stiffening, Russ nosed down again, every sense alert, quivering. One of the lights dropped, outlining the field. Russ breathed easier. The outline was reassuring. The same shape as the 71st. Khaki-clad men were visible here and there near a building which must be the hangar.

Okay! He was safe!

Russ rolled in on the tarmac. Three khaki figures approached his plane. Russ felt the hair rising on his head. A cold fear pinched his heart. He had the illusion that he had died and that he was meeting his dead friends. He stilled the rising feeling of panic, and laughed—a short, nervous laugh.

"Nevin! Towne! Brawley! How in hell did you get here?"

Nevin and Towne did not appear to hear. Their bulging eyes were blank and glassy. But in his friend Brawley the transformation was most pronounced. A big fellow, he had been—but this living skeleton, with skin like sagging parchment and blackened tongue showing behind colorless lips—what had been done to him?

Sweat sprang out on Russ's forehead.

"Brawley," he screamed, "for heaven's sake, don't stand there staring like that. Speak, Brawley!" Russ Cameron's voice withered as panic swept over him. "Dead," he muttered thickly. "Dead, but alive! How——"

It came to him then with a horrible shock. *Zombies!*

Part of his service had been in Haiti. He had seen things which he and the other men never discussed, accidentally witnessed voodoo rites which negatived reason. Once he had seen a negro whom the curse of some witch-doctor had prevented from sleeping in his grave. Dead, the man had seemed, and yet he walked. A zombie! And the eyes of these men

were like those of the negro—glittering, staring straight ahead!

Ice formed in Russ's veins as he snapped off his ignition and the prop of his plane stopped turning. His knees shook as he climbed down and walked between these living dead men toward the hangar. In a moment, he saw his mistake. It was not a hangar; it was an old French château. Familiar, too. Something groped in his mind, and after several seconds he got the connection.

It was a château he had seen from the air, in the Bois du Noir, said to belong to some French duke or other. Then he was far west of his destination, the drome of the 71st!

And then Russ saw why this drome within Allied lines had not been found. Already other zombies were rolling down a heavy, light-green matting over the drome. A lawn, seen from the air! But the beacons? And then Russ understood that, too. They were portable beacons, not fixed beacons such as were found at the 71st. When they were wheeled out of sight, the château would have just the proper air of unkept desolation. Buried here in the woods, a mile from the main road, it had nothing to attract either interest or suspicion. Even in the day, when sentries in the towers reported that there were no other planes near by, the green matting which appeared to be grass from the air could be rolled back, and planes could take off. Three minutes later, there would be no sign that this château was anything of importance; that it housed these loathsome creatures.

Beside Russ walked his three former friends—stiffly, like huge, mechanical dolls. Goose-flesh traveled down his spine. He turned to flee. Bony hands gripped his arms, and he felt as if he were in the grip of a vise. And he was half dragged toward that château of horror.

A week before, a conked engine had saved his life by compelling him to desert a dog-fight when the Whirlwind Flight attacked. He was the only man who had seen the members of that flight of demons and lived to tell of it. Their faces, he now recalled, were like Nevin's, Towne's and Brawley's. Dead faces, devoid of expression. But those flyers had worn German uniforms.

RUSS CAMERON'S brain seethed as he ascended the stone steps of the château. Other stiffly moving men were wheeling another Spad into the hangar. Had another flyer just preceded him into the trap?

They passed through an open door, turning right into a big room. Behind a desk at the other side of the room sat a small man with the face of a pig and up-standing yellow hair like porcine bristles. His uniform was gray, not khaki. Russ knew he was trapped.

His hand flashed for his automatic. Too late! Two huge Germans leapt at him from either side, pinioning his arms. Russ screamed:

"Brawley, for God's sake, help me!"

The three Americans stood like stone statues, their faces blank, while Russ struggled with the two burly Germans.

In a moment he was relieved of his automatic, and his arms trussed at his sides. Meanwhile, another man in gray approached, and led the three zombies away. Poor, doomed souls—they had led their friend in life into this trap. Would he, Russ, do likewise?

His two captors marched him forward. The officer looked up at him with small, bright eyes. "Welcome, Lieutenant."

Russ swallowed a lump in his throat. "What have you done to Nevin and Towne and Brawley?" he demanded fiercely.

"I," said the little man, "am Baron von Kauptmann. Those are my men, members of what you American swine call the Whirlwind Flight."

The color drained from Russ's rugged face.

"Brawley fight for you?" he demanded turbulently. "I don't believe it!"

The pompous officer laughed sardonically. "Your friends have died, *Herr Leutnant*. But in dying, they have left part of themselves to serve the Fatherland. Their brain cells! In Haiti, I learn this secret, *ja?* But from voodoo I learned only part of this secret. 'Suspended death' is what I call my serum; my slaves die, but their brains live, *Herr Leutnant*." He waved a pudgy hand at the Germans holding Russ. "I weary of baiting this stupid fool. To his cell!"

Rage burned in Russ's heart. The man's overwhelming conceit caused a red haze to swim before his stinging eyes. He broke from his captors, and started toward von Kauptmann with closed clenched fists. But heavy hands gripped his throat, and the two Germans dragged him backward, and half carried him out of the room.

Down two flights of steps he was taken, below the surface of the earth. The air was damp and sour, with a charnel scent of death which made Russ Cameron's flesh crawl. Only two electric lights illuminated perhaps twenty cages, only ten of which were filled. In the first one was a man whose old-young eyes lighted when he saw Russ. He must be the aviator who had landed just before he had.

"What is that fiend going to do with us?" he demanded hoarsely.

"Kill us," Russ formed with white lips.

The aviator's face drained of color and his face began twitching.

The reek of this morgue was so strong that Russ felt sick. On either side, as he was marched along, Russ recognized the

living corpses of former friends. Their bulging eyes glittered as they sat motionless on stools staring straight ahead. None showed the slightest sign of recognition. Their parchment-like skin seemed to be drawn tightly over their skulls; they were incredibly wasted. And yet in each Russ recognized something familiar of the man he had known, and the gathering horror which washed over him caused his blood to turn to ice.

Zombies—his friends! And he was about to become another. What hellish serum was this of von Kauptmann's which could make of these dead men a fighting machine as deadly as the Whirlwind Flight which had so shattered the organization of the 71st? Did it feed the brain cells with some galvanic force such as the plates of a battery give forth by the action of acid? Some electrical action, perhaps?

He shuddered as the horror of the idea reached his dazed mind. Then he whirled on one of his captors, his fist flying toward the man's jaw. *Crack!* The powerful German went down as though pole-axed. Lightning streaked before Russ Cameron's pain-filled eyes, and his knees crumpled.

He gained consciousness from the blow he had received, to find himself in one of the cages. Outside the bars, he saw the pudgy German scientist, von Kauptmann. In his hand was a hypodermic needle. Russ felt as if his tongue had swollen so large that it filled his mouth. The end, this! He stared around his square cage. The guards had removed his stool. The only object in the cage was a pan of water.

As his eyes cleared, he saw two of the living dead men standing motionless beside von Kauptmann. Towne and Brawley! His own former friends used as the tool of his destruction! The German officer unlocked the cell-cage. Russ threw himself against the door.

"Hold him," von Kauptmann shouted.

The two zombies made stiff, awkward movements, but their hands closed on Russ's arms, and his struggles were futile. The German rattled off another order and Russ was dragged back into his cage. While they held him, von Kauptmann rolled up the American's sleeve and prepared to inject the hypodermic needle. Russ struggled afresh, his eyes wide with horror.

**S**UDDENLY all hell seemed to break loose in the last cell. The aviator who had been brought there before Russ began screaming and ranting. The glimpse he had had of Russ's treatment had proved too much for his reason. He flung himself against the door of his cage. He clung to it like an ape, screaming.

Von Kauptmann stiffened, scowling, with the hypodermic needle poised above Russ's bare arm. Then he laid down the needle, jumping erect.

"*Verdamme!*" he roared. "Of what use to me will a madman be? Leave this swine! We will attend him later!"

The zombies left the cell, walking mechanically, and von Kauptmann hastily locked the door. Relief surged over Russ so quickly that his knees buckled. The cracking of the other newcomer's reason gave him a few moments' respite. But of what use would it be to him?

He noticed the hypodermic needle containing the fiendish serum. If he could drive that into von Kauptmann's arm! No hope of that! He would send the two living dead men in first, and no needle could hurt them!

Von Kauptmann had unlocked the door of the last cell, and had ordered the mechanical men to seize the hapless aviator. He struggled with a madman's strength, but the two zombies held him, pinioned him to the floor.

"Better," von Kauptmann snarled. "that he have his serum now. If he continues like this, I can never depend on him."

He drew from his sagging pocket a kit, and removed from it a hypodermic needle. He held it up, and pushed the plunger slightly. When he saw a drop, he shook it off, and raised the man's sleeve. He plunged in the point of the needle. Then he ordered the zombies to leave the cell.

The aviator began to shake violently; then a death rattle commenced. His eyes began to glitter feverishly, and he made shaking, palsied movements. He was dying!

Russ tried to shake off the numbing feeling of horror that gripped him. He had seen his own fate! Von Kauptmann was still watching the dying man, a sardonic smile on his thick lips.

Russ seized the needle, and had an impulse to dash it to the floor. How futile! Von Kauptmann would merely substitute another needle. Then he saw the water—a chance! He swiftly squeezed the serum from the needle, and plunged the point into the pan of water. He sucked the needle full, and emptied it in a dark corner of the cage. Now, surely, the needle would be free of that deadly poison! Once more he filled it with water, and then placed it on the floor of the cage where von Kauptmann had left it.

Presently von Kauptmann returned, unlocked his cell, and ordered the zombies to hold him. Russ struggled with them to allay suspicion, but in a moment the German had rolled up his sleeve, and injected the needle into his arm. He felt the pressure of the water in his blood, and then began to shake as he had seen the other man do.

Von Kauptmann chuckled. "Another servant for the Fatherland, *ja?*"



Then he tossed a stool into the cage, and went away, leaving Towne and Brawley once more in their cages.

Russ felt weak and sick. Whether it was because of the presence of a fractional drop of the poison in his system or because of the hideous stench of dead bodies, he did not know.

How was he any better off than these corpses in this ghastly chamber of horrors? He was caged, and sooner or later von Kauptmann would discover that he was not dead. His second injection would not be water!

But the pattern of von Kauptmann's fiendish scheme was slowly clarifying in his mind. The German must have some means of turning out the beacons when night landings were to be made at the 71st. Pilots would pass their drome, only to be drawn to this château by von Kauptmann's beacons. The drome here had been deliberately laid out in similar design.

He could guess at the means by which the German had come into possession of the château. It was not hard to believe the duke who had owned it had been murdered! Von Kauptmann and the few Germans he had serving him must have been transported across the line by plane at night.

Once the American pilots had been taken prisoner, von Kauptmann had put them under his power with his fiendish serum. Thus he possessed the most deadly fighting machine in the world. Zombies could not fear death because they were already dead. They could be prey to none of the fears or misgivings of living men. The most fearful odds meant nothing to them.

Small wonder, then, that this Whirlwind Flight had stricken terror and superstition into the hearts of men of the 71st and other squadrons along the front.

They understood, subconsciously, that they fought a machine composed of creatures who were, somehow, less than human.

Russ saw that his only chance was to imitate the zombies as far as possible. Prolonging his imprisonment, he might find a means of escape! With this in view, he began rubbing the dust from his cell on his face, giving it a cadaverous appearance, creating an impression of hollows beneath his cheek-bones which did not actually exist. Then, by sitting motionless on his stool in the shadows, he might escape detection for a few days. Daylight, however, would reveal the truth.

**E**ARLY the next morning, von Kauptmann came down the corridor between the cells, chuckling to himself. Loathing for the man swept over Russ in seething waves as he sat motionless on his stool, his face in shadow, and his begrimed hands looking like claws due to the outlining of dust. If von Kauptmann had been mad, Russ might have forgiven him. But he was not mad, unless a desire to serve the Fatherland by any means, however foul, was madness. To him, this was an experiment in science, no less useful in its way than poison gas and shrapnel.

Presently a big, blond man in American lieutenant's uniform descended the stairs. Lieutenant Clinton Creel! He clicked his heels sharply together before von Kauptmann, and saluted.

Von Kauptmann frowned. "Fool!" he roared in German. "Do you wish this *Jagdstaffel* to be found by Americans, that you come here in broad daylight?"

"I beg your pardon, Your Excellency," Creel said. "But Major Miller is like a man out of his head on account of losing Lieutenant Cameron. I sought to ease his

anxiety by taking his car and a driver and searching for the lieutenant's plane to the north of the tarmac. I ordered the driver to stay with the car, and came by a round-about route through the woods searching for his plane. And I found this drome, *ja?*" His smile was cruel.

"Speak, then," von Kauptmann grunted. "But be more careful in the future."

"Your Excellency, at nine the swine of the 71st are once more going to seek the *Jagdstaffel* of the Whirlwind Flight. Disappearance of Lieutenant Cameron has aroused indignation to fever pitch."

Von Kauptmann rubbed his pudgy hands together.

"Ah, you bring us good news, Dizinger. Today we shall wipe out that squadron to the last man, no?"

"For the glory of the Fatherland," said Creel, his eyes alight.

Russ Cameron's body shook with fury. What he wouldn't have given for a blow at Creel's bland face, to have his fingers in Creel's throat!

Creel shortly took his leave, and von Kauptmann remained only a few minutes longer. He returned presently, however, with a flat-chested man in German aviator's uniform. Russ recognized the thin, tight lips and the cruel, deep-set eyes of the big, broken-nosed aviator. Taube, the German ace! Russ had met him once in battle, and both had withdrawn with conked engines. Now Taube led Americans against Americans. Irony, that!

Taube carried a tray of small bottles, covered with rubber stoppers through which von Kauptmann plunged his needle to suck up the serum. He went into one cell after another, injecting the serum.

Russ understood that it was somehow necessary to charge the brain cells of the living dead men with this serum as it was necessary to charge the cells of a bat-

tery. His body tensed. They would have to kill him before he would submit to an injection!

Von Kauptmann paused before his cell, key in hand.

"Bah!" he snorted. "I should waste my precious serum on you! You had plenty not many hours ago!"

Von Kauptmann spoke to his zombie slaves:

"You will follow the great Taube into battle and do honor to yourselves and the Fatherland! You will fight whatever he leads you against."

They departed, but guards appeared presently to release them from their cells. Russ's brain raced. Should he strike now? But the armed guards would shoot him down if he attempted it. These robots would not help him.

The chance did not come. Before Russ could form a plan, they had reached the planes, and the zombies were mechanically climbing into the cockpits.

Shaking with anger, Russ climbed into his Spad. Now it bore Boche insignia. His prop was swung by a guard, and he revved up his bus savagely. Others did likewise; and finally the chocks were kicked from under the wheels.

Taube eased forward on his stick, roaring down the field into the teeth of the wind. Two by two, the living dead men followed their enemy — followed like so many mechanical sheep a man they would gladly have killed when they were alive. Lastly, alone, Russ trundled down the field, the end man on the right wing of the flight.

Up, up, up they climbed, roaring through a sea of clouds, submerged in mist, only to emerge into a clear sky at fifteen thousand feet. Russ's mind was on escape. But Taube would not be long discovering his absence, for he looked back frequently. If he vanished, the

whole Whirlwind Flight would be after him, and he would lead this hornets' nest to the 71st.

Eastward they went, still climbing, with a glimpse of shell-gutted earth visible only infrequently through the rifts in the sea of white.

At eighteen thousand feet, they reached their ceiling, and Taube leveled out. Buzzing eastward, Russ saw a flight of German Fokkers winging westward, far in the distance, and at the tip of the cloud bank. If Taube noticed his countrymen, he gave no signal.

**S**UDDENLY another group of planes emerged from the clouds. The red, white and blue cockade! Members of the 71st. Russ Cameron's rough-hewn body tensed, and his heart beat a little faster.

A Very-pistol flashed its signal. *Attack!* The Spads leveled out, roared forward, straight for the Fokker flight.

Vickers and Spandaus began interlacing the intervening distance with bright red-yellow ribbons as the opposing pilots opened fire. The clattering of machine-guns could be heard even above the roaring of the Hisso motors. Russ watched, his eyes bright and hard.

Taube half turned, a cruel smile playing on his thin lips. He gave a signal which seemed to register on the eyes of the living corpses, reaching their brain cells as electrical impulses travel to a machine. The nose of his plane dipped. Down he went, his motor wailing. And behind him followed the Americans, only one of whom was aware of the horrible thing they were about to do.

Russ, his eyes twitching with anger, knew Taube's plan. Taube struck the American flight from behind, while they were occupied with the German Fokkers. The German's claw-like hand reached for the stick-trigger of his machine-gun.

At that instant, Russ saw red. He knew these men followed Taube blindly, that they might take as enemies anyone acting against him. Something of this machine, however, must break. Russ could wait no longer.

He side-slipped, feeding his Spad full gun. Then he roared forward, straight for the tail of the diving German. Russ had never shot a man in the back before; now, however, there was no other course.

Taube's plane was outlined against the hair-line of his ring-sight. Russ squeezed the trigger of his Vickers. Twin streams of steel-jacketed lead lashed out, striking the German's back. He crumpled over his stick, never knowing what had happened. His plane went into a plunge, nose to earth, tail to the sky.

Russ's wild attack had carried him into Taube's position in the flight. Instinctively he flinched. Bullets would soon be tearing his body to ribbons! Moments crawled, and finally Russ turned. He shuddered as he saw the eyes of the corpses upon him—glassy, expressionless eyes.

They told him nothing. But their failure to attack could mean but one thing. *He* was now their leader! Incapable of more than the automatic action their training in flying had given them, they could not do anything save obey some thinking leader. Russ was that leader! A wave of exultation flowed over him. His was the command of the most deadly fighting machine on the western front! The Germans would taste their own medicine!

Russ pulled back on his stick slightly, his eyes hardening. The men of the 71st had not yet seen the Whirlwind Flight.

Russ nosed down toward the Fokkers, passed them. Then, bringing his nose up sharply, he accomplished a reversal by means of an Immelmann turn. Like au-

tomatons, the corpses executed the maneuver with him. When they came about, they were roaring down on the tails of the black-cross planes.

The Yanks saw them, then. Consternation must have filled their souls. The momentary paralysis which gripped them alone saved Russ.

Guns bickering, he roared down on the tails of the Fokkers. One plane was dead-centered in his ring-sight. Russ kicked left—then right-rudder—raking the plane with a cross-fire. Smoke curled up from the Fokker in black tendrils which were instantly pierced with darting tongues of flame.

The other members of the Whirlwind Flight slashed into the battle with the same deadly fury. Fokkers were being raked fore and aft. Pilots crumpled over sticks or tried to climb out of the devastating streams of incendiary-sprinkled lead.

But as they started to climb, the bewildered Yank pilots acted. The noses of their planes lifted. They zoomed after the fleeing Fokkers, driving in burst after burst of screaming lead.

From odds against them, the odds now favored them. They must have felt there was a mistake which would be quickly rectified when the Whirlwind Flight realized what they were doing. But they took advantage of what they believed to be an error.

Thrust between two such deadly fires, the Fokkers were doomed. Below them were the Yanks; above, the Whirlwind machine. One plane after another broke into flames. Bullets wrecked and slashed and tore the German ships to ribbons.

Russ saw a second pilot fall dead under his withering fire. Then a third. . . .

The red haze which had swum before his eyes began clearing. Only one German pilot left, and he streaked for home.

Russ gave his signal, and zoomed. The Yank leader started to pursue, then dropped back. It was impossible for him to attack a flight which had saved his life, even though that flight bore black crosses. He waved, and presently his flight vanished in the sea of clouds. "Now what?" Russ asked himself. "If I return to the 71st, this legion of corpses will follow, and destroy everything in their path. Not even the 71st could escape! But if I return to von Kaupmann, I'll chance being discovered. At the very least, I'll be thrown into a cell."

Even those alternatives seemed preferable to risking the lives of his comrades at the 71st. Reluctantly, Russ returned with the machine.

WHEN he landed, von Kaupmann strode angrily toward them. Russ carefully fell in behind several of the taller men; daylight was too revealing.

Von Kaupmann snorted: "Taube gone! *Verdammte!* It is evil luck!" But suddenly his face brightened. "Perhaps I have a greater machine than I realized if it is capable of going into battle and returning without a leader! *Ach!* no longer will I need that dope-fiend, Taube!"

Chuckling to himself and rubbing his soft hands together with satisfaction, von Kaupmann had the guards return them to their cages. Russ Cameron saw no chance to escape.

But when he was once more the sole living man in that chamber of the dead, Russ began pacing his cell impatiently. Creel would soon find some means of reporting what had really happened. Von Kaupmann would return to the cages with a better light. It would not require long for him to discover the one living man—and Russ would not be living long!

A guard came to the corridor, and released Brawley. Then he unlocked Towne's cage. Russ's heart beat fast as the guard paused before his own cell. Von Hauptmann was using these zombies for some work or other. If Russ could but secure his release! One man against one man!

And then Russ's pulses began pounding as the guard began unlocking his cage. It was an effort to keep his facial muscles under control, to sit motionless while his chance was coming.

Outside, he heard the drone of an airplane motor, the whine as it dived. He knew as well as if he could see that Creel was making the pretense of looking for the Whirlwinds so that he could communicate with von Kauptmann. In a moment, his chance would be gone. The guard hesitated, listening. Russ's heart was in his throat.

And then the key turned!

"Come out," the guard grunted.

Russ rose stiffly, and walked stiff-legged until he was a foot from the guard. Then the big German's mouth opened as he detected a false note in Russ's disguise—he was breathing.

Before the guard could utter a sound, Russ sprang. His fingers closed on the German's fleshy throat, shutting off all sound. But he was a big fellow, and Russ was weak from lack of food. The German rolled him over, clawing for his gun. Desperate as the Luger came out of the German's holster, Russ rolled him over on that side. There was no time for the niceties of fighting.

With sinking heart, he heard Creel's excited voice somewhere above and von Kauptmann's bellow of rage. A shot from this guard would be his end. But if he could gain a few moments, he had a chance.

That was why, as he came over on top

of the German and saw the gun flashing toward him, he thrust the big head swiftly toward the stone flooring. The crunch of the German's skull made him shiver—but the gun did not explode.

Meanwhile Towne and Brawley had stood like statues, taking no part in the affair.

Russ seized the guard's keys, hastily unlocking one cell after another until he was surrounded by living corpses. Then he picked up the Luger, and turned to the men.

"Follow me," he commanded them. "Seize the guns of men who try to oppose you. Obey no one but me! Now—*forward!*"

Von Kauptmann was bellowing orders. There was a clamor above, then the sound of many footsteps, as men descended the stairs.

Russ sprang toward the entrance of the dungeon, Luger in hand.

A guard came into view. His rifle spat flame, and a bullet pinged from one of the cages. Before he could fire again, Russ's Luger cracked.

The guard stumbled and fell. Russ paused only long enough to toss the rifle to Brawley.

Three more guards were just behind the fallen German. They blazed away. Bullets whistled and whined above Russ's head.

He dropped another man. Brawley rushed forward, his rifle spitting lead. The two remaining guards died before they could fire second shots.

"Seize their weapons!" Russ shouted hoarsely at the zombies, as he leapt over the bodies.

Another German descending the stairs aimed point-blank. Lead ricocheted from the stone walls. Russ brought his gun crashing down on the man's head. He could hear the German's skull crack.

Up the stairs Russ ran, the Americans close on his heels. The Whirlwind Flight was still the most deadly fighting machine in the world. But it was not von Kauptmann's to command. The baron might change that, given the chance, but Russ was determined he would meet the German first.

He could hear men running ahead, realizing they faced death on the stairs from a group of zombies who could not be killed. Their destruction could be wrought only by the difficult head-shot which would destroy the brain cells directing them.

Russ came upon a straggler who had stumbled. Wild-eyed, the man sprang to his feet, his gun exploding. Powder seared Russ Cameron's cheek, and he squeezed the trigger of his gun. The German's body sagged. Russ picked up his weapon as he bounded up the stairs.

Above, von Kauptmann's roaring voice:

"Go down those stairs, you swine! Fire at their heads! I'll kill the man who hesitates."

A shot echoed from the walls as if to emphasize his words. The guards could be heard clumping down again.

**R**USS met them at the second landing. Bullets swirling about him, he rushed toward them. Lead seared his shoulder, but he ran on. Clubbing with his automatic, he beat down a guard about to fire. The living-dead men, with the gray, waxen countenances of corpses, surged forward, firing with deadly accuracy. The guards melted under their fire.

Picking up an automatic which had fallen, Russ took the stairs two steps at a time. Half-way up the last flight, he met Creel and von Kauptmann.

The German spy raised his automatic,

W. T.—3

squeezing the trigger. But fear of the grisly legion of the dead racing toward him made his hand shake. Lead whined in Russ Cameron's ear as he bounded up the stairs.

Von Kauptmann was shouting at the zombies to stop. They could not hear him yet above the cracking of Creel's spitting gun. Russ's fingers itched for the traitor's throat—but it was von Kauptmann he must reach first, von Kauptmann he must silence before he lost control of the machine.

"Creel!" Russ screamed hoarsely. "Kill Creel, men!"

He raised his automatic, squeezed the trigger. A sharp click. Empty! Creel turned his gun away from Russ, aiming at the oncoming horde, his eyes wide with horror. Von Kauptmann pointed his weapon at the American leader. Russ hurled his empty weapon, striking von Kauptmann's right arm. The Luger flew from the German's hand. He stooped for it. . . .

Russ threw himself at the legs of the leaning man, and they went down together. Von Kauptmann struck at his face with a pudgy fist. The American's hand clutched at the German's throat. And then a rushing tide struck him, and he felt a damp, icy hand slide past his face. The hand of the dead!

Von Kauptmann was free for a moment, groping for the gun. Russ got to his knees, and then was hurled violently against von Kauptmann. He heard a piercing scream—Creel's voice. He could not turn—with von Kauptmann's fingers groping for the gun.

Russ's hands closed on yielding flesh. A blindness of rage made the world spin around him. Von Kauptmann, who had created these ghastly creatures from men Russ had known! The German fought, but Russ was scarcely aware of the hands

clutching and clawing madly at him. His fingers grew damp with blood, ached from the strain. And a boiling surge of exultation swept over him as he felt von Kauptmann's body relax. The screams echoing through the stone halls only made him press the harder.

Then, slowly, the madness passed, leaving him sick with loathing at what he had done. Russ reeled to his feet, gazing with a horrible fascination at the grisly creature who lay dead at his feet. Von Kauptmann! Shuddering, he turned his eyes away, only to encounter a sight which made his backbone crawl. Creel—he had forgotten!

But the zombies had remembered. Expressionless, with glistening eyes, they were tearing and rending a bloody, misshapen thing. Creel! Life remained in that gory bundle of rags? It must! For the thing at which the zombies were tearing and mauling like vultures over a kill was still screaming in a way that froze Russ's heart. He had heard the frightful screams of pilots being burned alive in flaming planes—but nothing like this!

Sick and nauseated, Russ picked up the gun von Kauptmann had tried to reach, and fired three shots at the quivering thing these incredible creatures mauled. Convulsive movements shook the tormented body, and then Russ hoarsely ordered the zombies to stand at attention. Then he made an inspection of the château and hangars. No one! Guards and mechanics must have served in double capacity.

Now what would he do with these zombies? Von Kauptmann could have told him—but he was dead. Placing a gun at their heads and destroying their brains would have permitted them to return to their graves. But that he could not do—these men who had once been his friends. Another idea!

Returned to their graves, a deadly fighting machine would be lost! Why not turn the hellish machine once more against the people who had devised it? Why not let these zombies leave earth fighting?

"Fuel busses, men," Russ ordered them. "We're taking off directly."

The corpses obeyed. Mechanically, they fueled planes and placed them on the dead-line under Russ's direction. When all were ready, Russ took his position at the point of the V-flight, and taxied down the field.

Not until they had crossed the German lines did they meet a German patrol—three wings flying in formation. Terrific odds! But what did odds mean to dead men? Only to Russ could it matter.

**T**HE details of that fight were never quite clear in Russ's mind. It came back in nightmares, and he would awake with his body wringing wet, and his eyes wide with horror, staring at blackness. But before he awoke, he would experience again some of those moments which had branded his subconscious mind with sights and smells and sounds unforgettable.

Bickering guns, cracking planes, belching motors. Screams from dying Germans which rose above the shrieking of diving, darting planes.

A machine which followed his every move. Glittering eyes registered his movements on the serum-drugged brains, and the robot flight responded. They smashed up one wing, scattered it. And then the Germans broke formation, each singly bearing down on members of the Whirlwind Flight. But what could humans do against that grisly legion?

Zombies' planes caught fire, and still the dead men followed Russ, staring fixedly through walls of flame, and fight-

ing until the planes disintegrated and dropped horribly-charred bodies through the clouds.

Brawley's ship burst into flames. Yet he still sat at the controls, his hand on his machine-gun trigger, frozen-faced as a statue. A Fokker staggered under his fire, and went plunging to destruction.

Even flames could not break his machine! It was invincible while fabric and machinery would hold together—an invincible armada of the skies! But one by one the corpses were released from their bondage, their heads riddled with bullets, or their bodies blackened with flames.

Russ remembered in those nightmares that they fought what seemed endless years, while one after another dropped out of his squadron; fought until only he and two Germans remained, and, as if both were sickened by the carnage, turned away and limped home.

Only when he awoke, his body shaking, did he remember the end: how he had landed the plane bearing the German insignia on his home drome by diving through a hail of anti-aircraft fire; and how, with glazed eyes, he had told Major Miller of those things which he could scarcely bring himself to believe.

"Leave it to me," the C. O. had said gently. "I'll recommend you for a Distinguished Service Medal—and there's no chance in the world you won't get it, after destroying that Whirlwind Flight. But how you destroyed it and who composed that flight—well, I believe you because there's nothing else this side of hell which could account for that Flight. But we'll have to have another story for the brass hats!"

The horror had slowly left Russ Cameron's eyes.

"That's best," he had agreed.