

Nippon Nemesis

A Buzz Benson Adventure By Arch Whitehouse

“THERE’S something devilish going on. They intend to bomb an important point somewhere on the western coast of the United States. Don’t ask me how they intend to do it. I’ve seen enough of these Japs to know that they can do anything once they set their minds to it. I don’t believe in ghosts, spirits or the black art, but I’ve seen some queer things happen out here in the Orient. If we got a wire this minute, saying that San Francisco had been raided or bombed by Japanese planes, I wouldn’t be a bit surprised. -

These words were racing through the mind of Billy “Buzz” Benson as he climbed his Boeing scout up from the race-course airdrome outside Shanghai to make an aerial inspection of the Whangpoo River. They had been uttered by Rear-Admiral Hooker T. Wilton of the United States Yangtse Patrol, at a confidential meeting of the American naval and military commanders assigned to the Shanghai area. The American sea dog was one of a long line of nautical warriors, and hardly the type of man to be worried by rumors. His words had brought a new note of seriousness to the men in the small gathering. When Rear-Admiral Wilton took this attitude, there was usually something to worry about.

“And what’ more,” he had continued, “this ridiculous velvet-glove stuff holds us in irons. Diplomacy— bah! We know they’re waiting for the chance to knife us, but the first move we make will be interpreted as hostile. Every man in uniform who walks down Canton Street is a potential spy!”

Buzz hoiked his ship up to 3,000 feet and curled around in lazy circles to reflect further on Rear-Admiral Wilton’s conversation.

“I tell you,” he had gone on, “there’s something brewing out there in the river somewhere. We’ve got to watch every ship that goes in and out. I’ve had two tips.” The group had closed in tighter around the little table

“The first is a report that the Japs actually have succeeded in controlling an aerial torpedo. That is, a radio-controlled plane, loaded with high explosive. That means that if their control-base ship can get somewhere within 1,000 miles of the U. S. coastline, it is possible that a series of these planes can be sent off from her decks and guided to a spot and exploded. It would be impossible for us to pin it on them.”

“Then it is possible that they are aiming at the Boeing works in Seattle. They are preparing a large order of planes for both China and the United States,” Buzz Benson had broken in.

“Right the first time, young man,” replied Rear-Admiral Wilton.

“The second is, and I have this on good authority, that a ship disguised as a noted liner will proceed from Shanghai within the next few days, make its way across the Pacific and head through the Panama Canal. Once within the Gatun locks it will mysteriously blow up, blocking the whole canal! You know what that means?”

“Yes! The Atlantic Fleet will be cut off from the west coast for at least several weeks. Shipping to support any army or navy in the Pacific would take two months to get around Cape Horn. America’s chances to wage offensive or defensive warfare in the Pacific would be cut in half,” Buzz had broken in again. Rear-Admiral Wilton gave the flying reporter an admiring glance.

“All right. You are the only man in this room who can look for this ship, and get away with it. You are supposed to be a newspaper man. Your plane is marked with the broad green band of an official newspaper correspondent. You, and you alone, can do it. Look for this ship that’s headed for the Canal and we’ll try to nail their fancy, radio-controlled, aerial torpedoes. Gad, but I envy you, Mr. Benson! I’ll trade seats with you right now. I would, if I could fly that damned hornet you have out there!”

AND so that's how Billy Buzz Benson came to be flying a green-striped Boeing over the Whangpoo River. The conversation had left him somewhat breathless.

He had come out to Shanghai as a newspaper man, but somehow had been drawn into delicate Secret Service work ever since he had left California. This was the latest, and he was not quite sure that it would be as easy as it sounded.

"Look for a liner that acts queer," he mused over and over again. "What does a liner do when it acts queer? Wriggle its funnels, or do a tango with its screws? This is a swell job!"

The Boeing, another of the long line of ships to which Buzz had been assigned, was exactly the same as the service machines except for the markings. It had been registered in the United States and China. It was not the only ship assigned to newspaper men and marked for such identification; there were several news services in the Shanghai war area using planes for quick dispatch of war pictures, movie reels and other material that could not be sent over the censored cables. They all carried the green band of the war correspondent around the fuselage.

It was all this that made Benson's task paradoxically easy and yet complicated. For one thing, there were other newspaper ships in the skies, so that he would not be watched any too closely, but, on the other hand, there would be other newspaper planes making strange contacts with outgoing liners, and they might give him plenty of trouble.

All this was contemplated by the flying reporter as he headed down the Whangpoo and inspected the wild tangle of shipping that lay in the bend of the river between Pootung and the mouth of the Soochow Creek. There were a number of Japanese warships. He recognized the Fuse, the Yamashiro, the Ise and the Hiuga, out-and-out battleships. Two or three submarines lay close by, and the aircraft carrier Hosho was steaming down the river and apparently heading out to sea. Behind her rumbled a ship of the Red Funnel Line, a litter of Chinese sampans and junks.

Here and there a coastal steamer and one or two gaudily bedecked sailing ships from the China Sea fobbed through the yellowish waters of the Whangpoo. Through it all trailed the unseen lure of the Orient, with its tight-lipped treachery,

bland-faced mysticism and the new rumble of warfare.

Off to the north the guns of Nippon were hammering at the Woo-sung forts and the trenches around Saioangmiao. The 24th Mixed Brigade had met the Japanese Ninth Division at the Hsaingyang Road, and together they were pounding on to crush the somewhat mystified Chinese at Taziang.

Rut contemplation was not to last long for Benson. There was something going on down there. The Jap seaplane carrier, Hosho, was steaming away, and in her wake the Red Funnel Line ship followed.

"Hello! Maybe this is the lad we're looking for," he mused to himself. "By golly! They are exchanging signals!"

From a spar projecting from her fighting top, a Jap signaler was flipping off a message in semaphore. Buzz picked up a few of the letters but he could not make it out. His knowledge of Japanese was too limited and the message was no doubt being sent in code. A seaman aboard the Red Funnel Line ship was taking the message and sending his "Message Received" reply.

It was getting dark now, for Benson had not left the race-course field any too early. Lights began to flick out from the city and the shipping below was beginning to break out its riding lights.

But the Red Funnel liner had Benson worried. He decided to go down closer and have a squint on his own.

"If my eyes are not getting goofy, I think I can see a plane on that deck, just aft of the rear mast base. What the devil is that doing there?"

He swooped lower and skimmed the blunt tops of the great masts. There was something queer about the whole ship, viewed from this point. Some of the superstructure had been newly painted and it didn't seem just O.K.

"I'll get her name and check up on her," said Buzz to himself. "That ship has too much rear-deck space going to waste."

Swinging wide, he heeled over, let the Boeing fall into a screeching sideslip and pulled out a few feet from the surface of the water. Seamen aboard the Red Funnel there rushed to the rails, but heaved a sigh of relief as Buzz drew her out and roared on, skipping the flicking rollers of the river, to pass not twenty feet from the bows- of the strange ship. He read:

“Trongate Castle”

“Trongate Castle,” mused Buzz, wrinkling his brow, and squinting through his goggles. “What the devil sort of a ship is that? I never heard of that one, and I thought I knew all the ships of the Red Funnel Line.”

WITH that he brought the Boeing up into a steep climb and curled over to get another look. This time he noticed that his presence was getting undue notice. Seamen streamed across the decks and tugged at great tarpaulins. The protruding wing of the airplane was quickly covered and other equipment lashed down to the deck was screened under great sheets of canvas. In the dim light it was impossible to figure just what it was all about.

Buzz roared on ahead and passed over the Hasho, which was heading out for the mouth of the YangtseKiang and the sea.

“I don’t like this, and I’m going back and check up on that Trongate Castle vessel. I’ll find out what that airplane was doing on board and whose it is. I’ll bet a dime there’s no such ship listed. But I’ll—hello! Just as I expected!”

He had turned back toward Shanghai and was cruising along, the Trongate Castle just sliding under his leading edge. A spluttering streak of tracer-bullet fire went over his top plane and splashed down into the muddy waters below. Buzz slipped out of the cone of fire, swung his ship around on one wing tip and caught a dim picture of a trim-winged Mitsubishi monoplane.

At a glance he had identified the craft as one of the latest Japanese monoplane fighters—and not a ship to be monkeyed with. Like a shot it altered its course and sent a stream of sparkling tracer full into the banking Boeing.

Buzz flew for all he was worth. The Boeing screwed in and out like a being possessed. Still the Mitsubishi came on, spitting lead and fire. The taut fabric twanged as the bullets ripped into it. Strange vibrations twinkled along the spars and longerons. An eerie chill ran up and down Benson’s spine as he treadled the rudder pedals and squirmed out of the fire. He had guns, but they were not loaded—the locks had been taken out by order of the Chinese officials in Shanghai. There was nothing to do but run for it and get an explanation later.

Still the Mitsubishi came on. Buzz wriggled out again and then suddenly caught the unknown pilot

flatfooted. In a twinkling of an eye he was on the Mitsubishi’s tail, and had his guns been loaded he could have blasted the Jap ship out of the sky.

“You’re not so hot with the stick, are you?” taunted Buzz. “You’d last about ten seconds if I had half a dozen rounds in my Brownings.”

The Mitsubishi was squirming now. The pilot acted panic-stricken and nosed down for the water. Buzz followed, playing a dangerous game in the deepening light.

Finally the Mitsubishi shot around and raced for the inky silhouette of the aircraft carrier Hoshu, Something told Buzz to stay away and he swung back, allowing the Mitsubishi to disappear into the darkness.

“Now who the devil was that, and what was his game?.” demanded Buzz as he shot back toward the Settlement race-course outside Shanghai.

It was night still, and for more than two hours Buzz had been in secret consultation with Rear-Admiral Wilton, Colonel Glasser of the 31st U. S. Infantry and Flag-Lieutenant Yancy S. Wilberforce of Wilton’s staff. Their telephone had been working overtime and they had learned at least one thing. The Red Funnel Line officials knew of no craft flying their pennant by the name of Trongate Castle. No ship had left their pier for several days, and the Customs House knew of no such ship.

“You can say what you like, but that ship’s the key to all our troubles,” growled Buzz. “I didn’t like the look of her from above. Perhaps from a side view she’d look O.K., but to me she looked pretty fishy. We ought to go out and stop her.”

“But what have we against her?” demanded Rear-Admiral Wilton.

“We can’t touch her in these waters. There’s no official state of war and we can’t do anything to her on the high seas. It’s still up to you, Benson. We’re all bound up in red tape.”

The spluttering emergency lights in their little H.Q. hut threw weird shadows on the wall, bunching their figures all together. There was some thin ominous about it all.

“O.K., but what can I do? Where can I start from?” replied Buzz.

The high-ranking officers exchange glances and then turned back to their maps and papers.

“You and Wilberforce go out along the waterfront tonight and see if you can’t pick up

something on that ship. Some one must have loaded her somewhere, and coolies will talk, if you pay them enough.”

“You mean, make a tour of the dives?” asked Buzz.

“Yes. Wilberforce can put on some gob’s clothing and act soused. You take care of him and see if there’s any news anywhere. If we can get something on that Trongate Castle, perhaps we can get some one on the Pacific Fleet to pick her up under some pretext.”

“It’s a good idea,” agreed Colonel Glasser, -

AN HOUR later Buzz and Wilberforce slipped out of the 31st Regimental Headquarters and went jostling along Foochow Road, slipping quiet passwords to M.P.s of the 31st Regiment who patrolled the area. They reached a narrow side street and went along silently until they turned into Avenue Edouard VII bordering the French concession, continuing on, they crept through another dimly lit sidestreet, past a few musty bazaars and tingling-glass shops until they had crossed the Rue du Consulat. A few more yards and they had disappeared in the shuffling throngs that weaved in and out along the water-front area of the old Chinese city.

The air was tense with expectation. The booming guns of Chapel could still be heard pounding away behind the North Station. Huddling coolies glided in and out of dim doorways. Overhead, Japanese shipboard fighters that had streamed up from the decks of aircraft carriers out in the Whangpoo roared away to vomit their bombs on the Chenju section where huddled General Tsai Ting Kai’s 19th Route Army.

For nearly an hour they stalked-on, unaware that they were being followed by a bland-faced coolie.

At last, on a nudge from Wilberforce, Benson suddenly wheeled and turned into a waterfront dive that went under the name of a hotel. The door opened with a squeak, and they dropped down a step to the dirty, sawdust-strewn floor. The remnants of what had once been a real bar stood along one side. Dusty bottles were ranged along on a stained shelf behind, and numberless glasses streaked with the drying stains of beer, whiskey, sake, brandy and other powerful beverages dotted the top of the filthy counter.

“Cripes! What a joint!” gasped Buzz to himself.

“Lesh hava nuzzer drink, ol’ pal,” bellowed the apparently tipsy gob at his side, yanking Buzz around and steering him for the bent and battered rail.

A sleek-faced Chinaman flopped two glasses - into some dirty water, slid a brandy bottle down the bar and took their money without a word. Buzz swallowed his and realized that while the glasses were none too clean, the brandy was all right. Then he leaned his elbows on the bar and stared about. There were several tables along a wall, and a few oil lamps in gimbals.

The air at the rear of the room was foul with tobacco smoke. Fully twenty people sat around, conversing in low tones or playing cards. No one took the slightest notice of Buzz and Wilberforce. There were other white men—and white women—patronizing the place.

“See anyone interesting?” asked Buzz

“Not yet. Let’s move farther down the bar. Make out we’re looking at the clock.”

As they started to move closer to the crowd in the murky barroom, the door opened silently and a slim-legged coolie glided in. He sidled up to Buzz and tapped him on the shoulder.

“You Meestair Benson?” inquired the coolie, in the clackety sing-song tone of the yellow man.

“What do you want?” snapped Buzz.

“Keep your shirt on, Buzz. He’s O.K. A ‘rickshaw man. You have a message—for—Mr. Benson?” Wilberforce went on.

“For Mist’ Benson,” snapped the coolie, handing a sheet of paper to Buzz.

With that the coolie turned and glided out of the smoky barroom. Buzz wanted to follow him, hut Wilberforce held his coat-tail and hissed a warning.

“Read it—quick I”

Buzz fumbled with the sheet of paper which had been carefully folded, but on which were marks of dirty hands. He still felt a strong urge to go out and follow the little coolie who had brought it to him.

“Go on, read it,” urged Wilberforce. Buzz opened the notepaper. It bore the crest of the Shanghai Club, and read:

“BENSON:

I have discovered something important concerning that ship you were inquiring about.

Drop in here tonight. I'll be around until about midnight. MARSHALL.

"Marshall! Who the devil is Marshall?" snapped Buzz.

"That's the guy down at the Red Funnel Line office—the one we were talking to this evening. He must have found out something."

"But how did he know where I was?" growled Buzz.

"Don't be so suspicious of everyone. Go on down and see him. It's our big chance."

"All right, I'll go, but it looks fishy. You stay here for a time and I'll meet you back at the 31st Headquarters. No use both of us risking a conk on the bean, and I feel it in my bones already."

They had another drink and Buzz noticed that the time was crawling along toward midnight and that if he expected to see the man called Marshall at the Shanghai Club he'd have to step lively. Wilberforce continued his act for a time and then made out he was inducing Buzz to stick with him. Finally Buzz jerked himself away and the disguised flag-lieutenant staggered across the floor and slipped into an empty seat near a table where a number of Chinese coolies sat over a layout of dirty playing cards. Buzz went out into the cool Shanghai night.

HE CUT around to his left and started along the waterfront toward the Bund, but there was an air of uncertainty about his movements. He was far from satisfied. There was a tinge of treachery about that note, but he kept his hand on his automatic in his leather coat pocket, and felt a little more secure.

Reaching the French Concession area, he had just passed the French Consulate building when out of nowhere came the shadows of running men. Buzz halted, and started to draw his gun when something struck his side and froze his hand so that the gun dropped from his fingers. He whirled to engage the man, but turned just in time to stop a smash across the forehead that sent out a blinding flash of light. Then the dim silhouette of the Bund went around and around like a mad film. His knees caved in and he felt himself floating away on some indescribable magic carpet.

Voices were audible but faint. Strange fingers were about his wrists, then a weird, floating feeling. There was a clatter of wheels—and Billy Buzz Benson had disappeared into the night.

It was many hours later when Benson awoke. He found himself lying on a greasy something covered with slippery matting. His arms were tied behind his back. His ankles were bound and a cord drawing his hands and feet as close together as possible was being strained to its limit. A gag between his teeth was giving him a severe cramp about the lower jaw.

For a time he could not make out anything definite about the place, and he realized that a bulbous something was pounding out jolts of throbbing pain in the vicinity of his forehead. He twisted and squirmed, still trying to focus his eyes. He felt himself slide dangerously forward, but there was nothing he could do about it. The windows danced and winked at him.

Then he began to sense a strange and yet familiar smell. He cocked his head around with an effort and tried to get a better view. He slithered back against the wall again, for the room was swaying and rocking. The windows were round, not square. Everything swung with the room, and Benson finally figured that he was a prisoner aboard an Oriental junk of some description.

Gradually he began to solve the mystery. His eyes no longer played tricks on him. He could make out definite objects about the dingy, odorous cabin. He saw a few lengths of rope, some strips of rusty-looking canvas, a paint pot or two, a broken stove of the Primus variety, a couple of small packing cases probably used as chairs or benches and a garish collection of old iron spikes, bolts, and other marine hardware.

"Gosh! What a joint to wind up in! I thought that Chink pub was bad enough. Wonder how long I've been here."

Buzz reflected on all this. His mouth was trussed up so tight he couldn't even whisper to himself. Back and forth, back and forth he slid on the wide greasy chest they had hurled him on—when, he couldn't tell. Outside, the sky was dreary. It might be noon or it might be the breaking of a dark dawn. Actually it was about eleven o'clock in the morning, and almost twelve hours had passed since Buzz had sidled out of the Chinese booze joint in Shanghai.

He tried to lie back and think, but the movement of the ship distracted his thoughts. He kept watching the

For a time he could not make out dingy ports, wondering where they were and where they were

heading. His head throbbed and the wound tingled. Above, he could hear the pad-pad-pad of sandalled or bare feet. For fully an hour he lay back and tried to figure it all out.

Who had decoyed him into the Bund to be slugged and shanghaied? What was all this to do with the queer ship, Trongate Castle? What connection was there to all this and the strange, unmarked ship that had attacked him over the Whangpoo River? And who had sent the strange note signed Marshall?

There was no answer to any of the questions.

SUDDENLY the pitching and rocking movement of the junk began to slow down. Above there was a pitter-patter of feet across the caulked deck. A whine of dried-out rigging blocks went up like the cries of tortured animals.

“Hello,” mused Buzz. “We’re heaving to. Wonder what’s up now.”

The movement of the vessel eased down to an even, sleepy bobbing. There was a rattle of chain and a splash somewhere forward. The anchor had been dropped.

“Some one’s going to board us. Hope they’re after me.”

Then out of the distance came the even purr of a fast motorboat. Benson’s hopes ran high. Hundred to one it was a tender from one of the United States Navy ships. Old Wilberforce had spotted their game and had come to the rescue.

But as the craft came alongside, his hopes dropped like a millstone. The commands were not in English, either from the motorboat or the deck of the junk.

New footsteps sounded above, footsteps from feet shod in solid leather footwear. They gathered somewhere above—sounded as if they stood at the top of the companionway that led down into this cabin. There was a rattling jabber of voices—but amid it all one voice

— the voice of a woman — was strangely distinct.

A door was slammed open and they started down the companionway. Buzz squirmed around, his bonds still biting tightly into his flesh. A gigantic Mongol entered first, a tubby fellow with a sparse growth of white chin-whisker. He had tight-fitting trunks on, no stockings and fiat straw sandals fastened on with the usual thong passing between the great and second toe. A long jacket

like tunic covered his arms and shoulders and buttoned tightly across his protruding stomach

Buzz actually wanted to laugh at the grotesque figure as he stalked in, but a long, black teakwood staff in the man’s hand looked too formidable. In his girdle, wound high above his stomach, was stuck a gigantic pistol. His head was bound in a black-and-gold strip of silk that allowed stringy tufts of hair to stick out at startling angles.

This monster was followed by a sleek little Jap dressed in a naval uniform. He was swarthy, sallow and none too pleasing to the eye. He darted around the big Mongol like a cat and leaped to Benson’s side. He started to say something, but a new figure slipped into the picture. If Buzz was amazed by the first two visitors, he didn’t show it, but when the third person came into view he allowed his eyebrows to rise to an astonishing degree.

“Well, Mr. Benson,” observed the girl, “we have caught you at last. I missed you from that transport when you were flying to San Diego.”

Buzz wanted to say something but it only resulted in a sputter across his gag. The girl motioned to the big Mongol to remove the gag. While the dirty bandage was being untied Buzz had a chance to take in his surroundings from a new angle.

The girl was Japanese, but nothing like those on picture post cards of the Orient. In the first place, this girl was not dressed in the robes of her country. She wore a pair of heavy whipcord breeches. Tan, laced hoots reached almost to her knees. A delicate turtle-neck sweater of the finest cashmere could be seen beneath her soft chamois-leather coat. A scarf of brilliant hues was knotted about her neck and her sleek, jet-black bobbed hair was held in place by a smart, fur-trimmed flying helmet. Nothing was missing from her costume. It was all the more startling, examined amid this square of marine squalor. But Buzz caught at once the fanatical gleam in the girl’s eye.

“Quick!” she snapped. Buzz realized that he was up against a tough situation. The girl dominated the whole scene and the big Mongol and the little Jap naval officer were mere pawns in this amazing tableau.

AT LAST the gag was slipped away and Buzz spat out a furry dab of dirty cotton. They loosened

the cord that bound his feet to his hands and he was able to sit up on the edge of the big sea-chest.

"Now! Let me speak with him!" snapped the Jap girl, coming forward.

"Well, Mr. Benson," she repeated again. "We have caught you at last, eh? You took one chance too many."

"O.K. with me," grinned Buzz, trying to get the stiffness out of his jaws. "But what's it all about?"

"What's it all about?" she repeated. "You do not know, of course. You were not flying over the Whangpoo yesterday afternoon, eh? You did not see that ship—the Trongate Castle—that ship near the Hosho?"

"Sure I did. What of it?" growled Buzz, sounding his own death knell.

The girl turned and spluttered a lengthy, blistering charge of conversation at the Jap officer. Then, turning back to Buzz, she went on again in English.

"You—you did see! I knew it. It is too late, he has seen," she went on, as though talking to herself. "But why did you not shoot at me last night?"

"Shoot at you?" answered Buzz. "Why should I shoot at you? I've never seen you before!" Then it began to dawn upon him. He started to splutter again. "You—you were not in that Mitsubishi monoplane, were you?"

"Yes—yes, that was I. I was trying to shoot you down. I knew that you saw and—you knew!"

"Knew? Knew what? What's the game, anyhow?"

"Why did you not shoot at me last night? You had a fine chance. You no shoot!" persisted the girl.

"Why should I shoot you? I knew that whoever was piloting that ship was a dud. No match for my Boeing. I don't shoot cold meat," parried Buzz, stalling for time and information.

The girl suddenly whirled, drew her coat back and took a small automatic from a leather holster beneath her cashmere sweater. Then with a short jabbering command to the Mongol and the Jap officer, she sent them out of the cabin. She drew a box over near Buzz, sat down, crossed her legs and toyed with the automatic,

"I want to speak with you," she opened quietly, watching the door closely. "You fly well.

I can use you, if you are not too particular—or patriotic."

"Go ahead, spill your line. I'm listening," agreed Buzz.

"You like to live, eh? But you know too much, yes. You have seen the Trongate Castle. You know all about it, eh?"

"No—but I'd like to," grinned Buzz. The girl wrung her fingers around the handle of the tiny automatic. Her eyes flashed that un-natural fire again.

"You lie! You do know!" she snarled, leaning forward and flashing a fiery glance at the bound flying reporter. "You are no real newspaperman out here. We know your game. It has sounded your finish bell. You know that the Trongate Castle is loaded with seaplanes and that it will go out like any other liner and skirt the coast of California. She has papers for San Francisco, but she'll never go there. You know what she'll do? She'll anchor about one hundred miles off the coast near Seattle. Then the sea-planes will be put overboard and fly by night and bomb the great aircraft factories there. America will be amazed. They will ask how ships can fly from Japan and bomb their shores. Hundreds will be killed, and China and America will lose many airplanes!"

"What a knife-in-the-back trick!" bellowed Buzz. "But they'll find out somehow. They'll nail that Trongate Castle and all the ships." He saw the idea of the aerial torpedoes at once.

"That's what you think. But it is not so. The seaplanes will not return to the Trongate Castle. Another disguised liner will be waiting off Vancouver to pick up the planes and bring them back to Tokyo. There can be no mistake."

"I tell you, we'll get that ship somehow. Leave it to the Navy."

"Bah! The Navy! It will be asleep. But we shall not need the Trongate Castle after she gets to Panama," the girl went on in her taunting voice. "You see, she will have another set of papers carrying her through to Glasgow. But—here's the big trick. When the Trongate Castle gets into the canal she will mysteriously blow up, destroying the main Gatun locks and thus bottling up the greater part of the American fleet."

"Just as I figured," growled Buzz, staring at the floor. "And then—"

"And then—Nippon will strike!" hissed the girl. "She'll strike at Guam, the Philippines and

Honolulu. Your country will be amazed at our swiftness. Once in Honolulu where we can establish a central Pacific base, the coast of California will not be safe a week. America will see all this and will hurry to make peace—a peace at our terms.”

Buzz sat figuring the gigantic plan, and realized at once that it all lay in the security of the Panama Canal. It was more than a personal matter now. Before, he had considered only his own safety and means of escape. Now the whole gigantic plot staggered him. He had to escape—or do something that would stop the Japs from carrying out their plan of dominating the whole Pacific Ocean.

Finally he challenged the girl with his eyes. “Well,” he snorted. “Where do I come in?”

“There can only be one way— now that you know the complete story. It is either what I say—or death!”

“Well, go on with the music, if I must dance to your tune,” said Benson. He realized now that he had learned too much. The telling of the strange tale had sealed his doom— whatever it was to be.

“Have you ever heard of the Kokumin Shakaito—the new Japanese State Socialist party?” said the girl quietly.

“No. What’s that? Another trick Communist outfit?”

“Not exactly. Our principles are many and strange, but we shall be leading Nippon within a few weeks.”

“You mean after you have conquered the United States?”

“Exactly. But we demand that the Emperor is the supreme head of the state. The House of Peers is to be abolished. Private property is to be limited by the state and all excess will be confiscated. Japan must withdraw from the League of Nations. Japan will revert to a complete Oriental policy and a new Far East League will be established.”

“Talk sense, and let’s get this over,” snapped Buzz.

“I talk more sense than you have ever heard before!” charged the girl, rising to her feet. “Here’s your chance! Renounce your country, become my personal pilot, throw in your lot as an airman and writer of propaganda for the Kokumin Shakaito, and you will be spared. Refuse, and you go over the side within an hour, loaded down with lead weights!”

“But how can I, an American, pass for a Japanese? No one will allow me to take any real part in such an uprising,” fenced Benson.

“That is easy. Swear to my agreement and I can have you turned into Captain Arai Sasebo. That is the name I have selected for you. Your American face? That can be changed within an hour or two by a skilful and painless operation to the eyes. We can give you the necessary slant and Mongol fold of the eyelid with little trouble.”

“You mean,” stalled Buzz, “that you want me to become your personal pilot, take part in your attack on America and later on become a member of this—this dizzy Kokumin Shakaito outfit that will eventually rule the new and greatly enlarged Japanese Empire? Is that it?”

“Exactly! And—well, I am waiting.”

“It’s too much to expect me to decide at once. Give me a few hours. What time is it now?”

“About noon.”

“I’ll give you my answer at six o’clock tonight. Can you have them ease my bonds a little? I can’t think, trussed up like this.”

“I’ll give you until then. Your bonds will be loosened. But at six o’clock, you must decide. I will have my personal surgeon here then to perform the little operation. You will be wise to decide in my favor.”

They loosened the cords that had held Benson, so that his hands were fastened in front of him and his legs free enough to walk around the small cabin with short shuffles. The girl left and the motorboat was heard purring away.

FOR hours Benson sat on the old sea chest and considered his position. He might accept the girl’s offer and go through the harrowing experience of waking up from an operating table and seeing the change made in his features. He probably could stop the Trongate Castle. But something told him that he would be given little freedom until that part of the plan had been carried out.

“No, I’ve got to get off this barge, get ashore and warn ‘em somehow. But where am I? Where’s this ship anchored? How can I get ashore?”

There was nothing to do but wait. For another hour he sat, contemplating his position. Suddenly he noticed, among the litter of junk on the floor, a glittering American razor blade. His eyes lit up with glee. Dropping quietly to his knees, he worked his way across the floor and drew it out of

the tangle of old wire, nails, bolts and lengths of rope. Bending over and holding the blade between his fingers, he managed to saw the heavy sash cord that shackled his legs.

He left the ends free, so that if anyone came in he could put his feet together and it would look as though he were still bound. Then placing the two-edged blade between teeth he went to work on his hands. This was not so easy, for the cords were hard and tightly woven, the blade kept slipping in his mouth so that at the end of ten minutes he had made little impression on his bonds but had slit and slashed his lips about until they looked chopped beef.

Another quarter of an hour and one of the cords was slashed. Outside and above could be heard shuffling of feet and the rattle of deck cordage. Evidently they were preparing for the return of the motorboat. Some planking was scuffled about, and a queer fish-horn sound trembled across the water. It was dark outside by now. Buzz worked his way across the floor and took a quick glance out of a port-hole.

The motorboat was coming on at great speed. Buzz made a mental notation of the direction from which it was approaching, and at the same time conceived a wild plan of escape.

"If I can only get aboard that kicker!" he growled, his bloody mouth streaking his wrists, hands and arms with gore as he worked at the remaining cords that held his arms.

The purring of the powerful motor of the motorboat crept closer and then stuttered as the pilot blipped it on and off for coming alongside. Buzz was frantic with haste now. Every second counted. He hacked and sawed away, snorting blood. Finally the last bond parted, and he spat the scarlet blade away, and swung his arms to regain some of the lost flexibility.

The motorboat was alongside now, and Buzz could hear the activity over the side. There was a dull rumble as a narrow gangplank went down, steadied and supported by a small party of coolies.

"Now for it!" snapped Buzz, picking up a long one-inch bolt for a bludgeon.

Like a ghost he crept up the companionway. He reached the opening on the deck without being noticed and crept around the side of the companionway combing. The crew of the junk was busy assisting the party in the motorboat to

come aboard and no one saw Buzz creep along on the opposite side of the creaky old craft, sheltered by piles of straw baskets, heaps of fishing seines and marine cordage.

The incoming party numbered at least four, and there was much chatter in Japanese as they finally clambered on to the deck. A coolie started to light a lantern, and for the first time Buzz realized that they were carrying no riding light on the junk.

He crouched, waiting for his chance, and saw the group huddle behind the big Mongol, who had taken the lighted lantern from one of the Jap seamen. They swung around to the entrance of the companionway, leaving two coolies to care for the tying up of the motorboat. The Japanese girl in the breeches and flying helmet was again commanding the bulk of the conversation and the rest were bowing and scraping to her every whim. Finally they started down the companionway.

"The balloon will go up in about ten seconds," grinned Buzz in spite of his lacerated mouth. "Now for it!"

LIKE a cat he leaped across the deck and with one blow felled a broad-backed coolie who never knew what had happened to him. The second twirled like a dervish and started to let out a yell, but Benson's bolt caught him full across the throat and he went over the side.

Almost at the same minute there arose from below a chorus of startling squeals. His absence had been discovered. Buzz turned, glanced around to see if there were any more on the deck to block his way, and noticed a stub-winged seaplane lashed down to the forward part of the junk. A swinging boom hovered above it, indicating that it could be put over the side with little difficulty.

"Cripes! Wouldn't I like that?" roared Buzz aloud. "But it's too late now. This baby will have to do. Here we go."

So, with a final bellow of triumph he drew back his arm, and let the long bolt go straight at the first head that popped out of the companionway. His aim was good and a shaven-topped coolie let out a scream, toppled back and carried the rest down the steep companionway stairs with him. It was Benson's big chance.

Slipping the lines that held the bobbing motorboat, he tossed them into the open pit. With a leap he was over the side himself, kicking the boat clear and fumbling beneath the steering

wheel for the starter. It was an American boat and he had no trouble opening up the 50-horsepower engine and easing in the clutch. Like a shark the boat whirled around in answer to the rudder and left a white curling plume behind it.

From the deck of the boat came shrill screams, cries and commands. Then a few shots were fired, and a minute later a machine gun opened up and spat chugging blasts all around him. He cut the engine a minute to kill the exhaust and let the boat slide into the gloom under her own inertia. Then as soon as he felt reasonably sure that it was safe to open it up again he stepped on the starter and continued on into the night.

For ten or fifteen minutes Buzz gave the motorboat all she had and continued in the direction he had decided upon before leaving the cabin of the junk.

The boat hit the rising swells and charged through the water like a young marine greyhound. He crouched behind the wheel and scoured the water around him for lights. There were none to be seen in any direction. Finally he fumbled about on the dashboard and accidentally turned on an instrument-board light.

"Well! This is great! Now I can look around a little," he grinned, lashing the steering wheel and cutting the speed of the engine down a trifle.

He left his seat and went prowling about the cockpit. There were four wicker chairs, cushioned with kapok-filled pads. These could be used in an emergency as life preservers.

He checked his gasoline and discovered that the tanks were nearly full.

"Well, if they came far, they must have refueled from some extra cans. But it suits me O.K."

Then down behind the driver's seat of the boat he found a celluloid map-case. In it were maps of the coastline of that section. One, showing the area from the mouth of the Yangtse-Kiang down to the southern shore of Hangchau Bay, was marked with a broad ink line that ended in a cross a few miles outside of Cape Yangtse. Another, in red ink, trailed out of the Yangtse-Kiang estuary to a circled cross about thirty miles east of Tsung-ming Island.

Buzz sat and puzzled over these markings for several minutes and moved up closer to the instrument board to inspect the marked charts with the better light.

"I'll bet," he frowned, staring at the small compass in front of him, "I'll bet this black course is the line out to that junk. That's right. I'm heading north now. That would take me back to Woosung, which is probably where these birds are operating from. But this red course—I wonder—"

HARDLY had Benson raised his head from the illuminated map-case than a low moaning wail caught his ear. His own engine was chugging away, and the new note had crawled up to him before he could make up his mind what it was.

For a minute he tried to peer around for another motorboat, but a cringing chill, creeping across the back of his shoulders, gave him more information than his eyes or ears. Instinctively he knew that a hostile plane was somewhere above and behind him. He wheeled around as he unleashed the wheel and stared upward—straight into the gleaming muzzles of two machine guns mounted on the nose of a fast shipboard fighter.

"I knew I should have conked that crate before I left," growled Benson. "Now she's after me again. Well, I'll douse the lights, anyway, and give her a run for her money!"

The dashboard switch was flipped and Benson gave the little boat the gun and headed her north again. Down the chute the seaplane came, both guns chattering. Buzz swung the boat back and forth like a madman, but a few of the missiles caught the nose of his craft and sent out trickling vibrations along the keel and thwarts. Buzz swore roundly and jerked the ship back again as the glistening pontoons slashed past over his head, the Jap shipboard fighter climbing up for another wild dive to stop him.

"She can't miss me all the time," snorted Buzz, lashing the wheel again and setting the throttle at about half-speed. "I'm slipping overboard for a minute or two."

Then as the Jap fighter ahead screwed around for another dive, Buzz grabbed one of the kapok cushions, slipped his arms through the two loops, grabbed a strong tow line and fastened it to a metal stern shackle. Then with a glance upward again he slipped over the side and let the boat slide away from him. There was a drenching wait until the boat took up the slack, then—an arm-wrenching yank, and Buzz was being towed

through the water with the fiat kapok cushion acting as an emergency surf-board.

"I only hope she gets tired quickly," gurgled Buzz, spitting and spluttering. "I don't know whether I'll be able to get back to that crazy kicker or not."

Brat-tat-tat-tat-tat A gain those splintery flames spat out of the gun muzzles. Once more the Jap shipboard fighter came down the chute, screeching and bellowing. Again the little speedboat caught the full blast of its venom. Like a harpooned shark it fought under the flailing torrent of lead that beat down upon it.

"Just put that gas tank on fire, my lady, and little Buzz Benson will be left holding the string," growled Buzz, lying fiat on his bouncing cushion.

Over the shipboard fighter went again, still far from satisfied with its work. The motorboat plunged on through the rollers, dragging its spluttering burden behind. It was getting colder by the minute. The cold waters of the East China Sea were chilling him to the marrow. Suddenly the boat began to plunge Then it seemed to stop. There was a popping chug. and she slewed off on a new course.

"That's done it," growled Buzz. "She's clipped the wheel lashing and she's running wild, except that the tank's gone, too, and she's running out of gas. Well, here's hoping!"

The next few minutes for Buzz were hair-raising. The boat went wild completely and yanked him all over the ocean. His arms were almost yanked from their sockets and he might just as well have been hitched to a runaway comet.

The shipboard fighter came down again, screaming and wailing. Her guns opened and sprayed the surface of the sea with spinning lead. The motorboat leaped and threw up its heels. The girl in the cockpit leaned over as she yanked the ship out of its dive—and saw that there was no one in the boat.

With a final zoom and a whirl she came back again to make certain. Buzz glanced up and saw that anything could happen now, with the boat flinging him about like this.

"If she starts this dive I'm letting go," reflected Buzz. "This damn fool ship will yank me full into her cone of fire."

Then there was a ghostly cough from the motorboat. Her engine conked with a mushrooming billow of white smoke from her exhaust.

The yanking and tossing was relieved and Buzz lay flat on his kapok cushion and struggled to get his breath. He glanced up through the salty spray that licked up around him and saw the Jap ship set itself for the dive.

But it never started...

OUT from the north, like a winged tank, came a formidable black ship bearing the insignia of the British Royal Air Force. Like an enraged hornet it cut across for the Jap Mitsubishi, and twin streams of Lewis venom spat out, battering the little fighter to ribbons.

"I don't know who you are, but give it to her. She's been handing it to me for a long time," yelled Buzz, starting to go hand over hand toward his motorboat. Again the British ship cut in and barked at the wavering Mitsubishi. Another burst and the Japanese ship went into a screeching dive, heading for the water not twenty yards ahead of Benson's motorboat.

"Good Lord, they've smacked her down!" gasped Buzz, preparing himself for an unholy smash. -

Then before he realized what had happened, the Mitsubishi pulled out, its pontoons hardly clearing the licking rollers. It shot across the tiny fore-staff of the motorboat, screwed over on one wing tip and raced away to the northeast. The British ship above made no effort to follow, but circled above, fired. a white Very light and then lowered a landing flare that struck the water about seventy yards from where Buzz was still struggling with his tow-line.

Immediately a blinding white glare lit up the water's surface. Buzz stared across at it and wondered what was going on.

"Are those guys going to land and pick me up?" he asked himself, still puzzled at it all. "Pretty decent of them. Wonder who they are and where they came from."

The great phosphorescent blaze on the water threw up its sizzling gleam and the attending cone of smoke. The ship above cut its gun and started to glide down. Buzz watched them, keeping an eye cocked for the possible return of the Mitsubishi. The British ship slid out of sight into the cone of white smoke, but beyond the glare of

silver light Buzz could hear the engine being blipped on and off for the landing. He sensed the swish as the two pontoons hit the water. Then the motor roar died away. There was something ghostly about the whole thing. Still the ship was not in sight.

“Why the devil don’t they taxi across and get me? They evidently know I’m here, or why did they come?”

He stood up in the motorboat and yelled. He put his finger between his teeth and whistled. There was no reply.

For five minutes he stood there, screeching his lungs out. The glow from the landing flare was dying out, in sparky spitting splutters. He bellowed again.

Suddenly a cold chill crept over him. Suppose they had both been wounded, and had only just managed to get the ship down?

“But that couldn’t be. The Mitsubisi didn’t fire a shot at them. Why the devil don’t they answer me— fire a light—or blip the motor; or something?”

The glow of the phosphorus flare was dying out fast now. It spluttered and spat curling displays of fireworks. The smoke became thicker and rolled across the water in silky white clouds. Then, just as the last struggling tongues of flame licked up, the nose of a British Westland Wapiti seaplane came creeping through the curtain of white smoke. The prop was still; the ship was floating free on the rollers and a northeast wind was bringing it toward him.

Buzz stood up again, shivering with cold. He cupped his hands around his chopped-beef lips and bellowed again. No answer!

“What the devil has happened to them — engine conked?” snorted Buzz in disgust. The bobbing Wapiti was only about forty yards from him now, and he made a momentous decision. Slipping off his shoes, coat and s* eater, he stuck the map-case in the top of his breeches and slipped overboard for the second time.

“I’ll find out what the heck is going on over there, or go to the sharks,” he spluttered, striking out for the silent seaplane.

INABOUT five minutes he reached the Wapiti, which was still floundering about amidst the curling plumes of smoke from the dying flare. He slipped between the two pontoons, grabbed the cross-bracing bar and pulled himself up on the

starboard float. Sitting there a minute to get his breath, he suddenly noticed that the ship carried a long black torpedo. His eyebrows went up in anticipation.

“Well,” he yelled, “what the devil are you birds sitting out here for? Engine conk?”

But no one answered. Puzzled, he sat and squinted up at the belly of the British seaplane.

“Must have gone for a swim, too,” he grinned, but he was not so nonchalant as the reflection might indicate. He crept along toward the rear of the pontoon and finally stood up beyond the trailing edge of the lower wing. This brought him beneath the observer’s cockpit.

“Hey!” he yelled again. “You guys out weekendng, or something?” He actually expected to hear good wholesome snoring.

Then the truth began to dawn upon him. There was no one aboard the ship at all. With a low oath, Buzz climbed up to the lower wing and peered into the pilot’s cockpit. There was no one there. A quick glance into the rear turret revealed that that, too, was empty.

The Westland Wapiti was deserted He was certain that there had been two men in it when it had driven off the Mitsubisi. The rear guns had done most of the shooting, and there had to be two men aboard to do that. But where were they?

“This is the rummiest thing I ever heard of. Why, here’s a dry Sidcot suit, helmet, goggles and scarf. Just the thing!”

As he clambered into the clothing, he began to figure it out. Was this one of these new radio-controlled ships? There was an ungodly amount of radio material fitted into the observer’s cockpit. He also noticed a complete oxygen tank equipment. There were the latest rudder-bias gear, emergency rations, bombing and charting instruments and even extra bedding stowed away in the rear of the body. All in all, it looked like the most modern flying equipment Benson had ever seen.

Finally he climbed into the pilot’s cockpit and tested the controls. They were normal and easily comprehended. The motor was a 480 h.p. Bristol “Jupiter” with normal throttle control and arrangements for plugging in a supercharger. It was all pretty simple after all. He was fumbling about with the dashboard switches when his eye caught a note pinned to the altimeter. He snatched at it, eagerly. It read:

“Here you are. Finish the job. When you’re through, hand this crate back to the CO. of H.M.S. Hermes. They might need it later.

“What does that mean, and who is W?” gasped Buzz, reading the carelessly penciled note again and again. “Here I am. Finish the job

—what job? Then hand this crate back to the C.O. of His Majesty’s Ship Hermes. That’s a seaplane carrier, and she’s anchored off Woon-sung.”

He sat and stared at the note for a minute or so. Suddenly he grinned, grabbed up the drenched map-case, and looked at the marked map. Then on a map fixed to the side of the pilot’s cockpit and equipped with a nautical protractor, he marked in a course, wrote a few figures on the compass card and glanced at the fuel gauge.

“Let’s go,” he laughed. “Trongate Castle next, and they’d better have the portcullis up. Let’s see how these new Limey ships fly.”

The “Jupiter” started with a roar on the first contact. She was still warm. Noting the streak of smoke that still trickled across the water, Buzz gave her the gun, nosed around and lifted the Wapiti into the sky. He huddled down behind the windshield and made the most of the warm flying kit. He glanced all around below, but there was not a sign of a boat or vessel within five miles. He still wondered what had become of the two men who had flown the Wapiti that far, but there was no time for puzzles now.

He had plenty of time to ponder on it later when he got his height. He put the ship up to about 3,000 feet and headed for the tip of land that jutted out into the Eastern Sea, due east of Shanghai. From there, he would set his course again and attempt to pick up the liner that was traveling under false colors. It was an hour before he could make the turn, and there was still fully 150 miles to go out to sea before he could hope to find the Trongate Castle.

The northeast wind hampered his speed somewhat, but Buzz settled back and examined his ship closely, and at the same time checked his course. He studied the bomb and torpedo release, realizing that he had but one shot to do his trick, and settle the matter of the Trongate Castle for once and for all. Nothing but a complete job would do.

AN HOUR and a half passed after he left the tip of the Chinese mainland, and no sight of the

Trongate Castle had been spotted. Buzz checked his position as best he could and stared below. Back and forth now he flitted, his fingers anxious to tug at something or press Bowden controls. The gas was getting low and he would have to do something soon or sheer off.

“I’ll stick it out as long as I have a gill of juice left,” he snorted.

Then suddenly off his port quarter a gleam of light blossomed out. He shut off his motor and glided toward it. The gleam steadied itself at last and he caught the outline of a liner. She was riding without lights!

“Hel-l-l-o! What have we here?” mused Buzz, sliding down the sky chute. Then he gasped. “Why, that’s a plane flare. Dropped near the ship. Where’s the plane?”

Without asking further questions of himself, Buzz gave his Wapiti the gun and roared toward the slinking ship. There was a belching bellow from below and something crashed with an ear-splitting roar not twenty yards off his wing tip. He banked wildly, sheered over and almost crashed into a Mitsubishi seaplane that was charging at him from out of the darkness. A storm of bullets swept through his struts and wires.

“Judas Priest! She’s after me again!” gasped Buzz, noting that it was the same ship that had attacked his motor boat. “She was beating it out here to get aboard the Castle. I’m just in time—maybe.”

The next two minutes were hair-raising. The Jap girl was flying as she had never flown before. Everything depended on it now. She was in up to her neck, and she had to get aboard the Trongate Castle somehow. The Mitsubishi slashed in and out like forked lightning. Its guns spat and flamed. Like fire-tipped lances the bullets fanged out and laced the slower Wapiti like a winged scourge.

Buzz tried every stunt he knew with the stick, but they were blazing away at him from below, too.

High explosive boomed and spat its chunks of hot metal. A strut went out on the outer bay. Buzz was almost lifted clean out of his cockpit by one crash, but he had to take it.

Meanwhile, the Mitsubishi was lashing at him again from a new angle. So far, Benson had only put one burst into the Jap fighter; he had all he could do to keep out of the deadly fire from the girl’s guns. Back and forth, in and out, up and

down they flashed through the pungent cordite smoke of the guns from below. Their sleek wings reflected the garish bursts of flame, and provided a series of highlights that would have sent a motion-picture director wild with enthusiasm. But it was no joy-ride for Buzz Benson.

Again the Mitsubishi stabbed in with twin cones of fire blazing from her grim muzzle. The sky rocked with the concussion of the heavies below. A crazy picture in spinning tracers and belching shells was being flashed on and off above them.

“Good Lord! I’ve got to get rid of this torpedo before they shoot me out of the sky,” gasped Buzz, ducking away from another burst. “Say, girl, you certainly have improved in a few hours!”

So flinging all caution to the winds, Buzz cut away from the circle of death that the Wapiti and the Mitsubishi were carving, and nosed down for the Trongate Castle. The girl in the Jap fighter saw what was up and went after him. Buzz knew that two flaming guns were behind him, but he had to take the chance.

Flipping over on one wing tip, he let the Wapiti nose down like a hawk on its prey. The wings strained, the wires screamed and the steel prop added its throaty bellowing to the chorus of insanity. He rammed his head into the sight and watched the two ominous eyeholes of the funnels come up at him. Then as the wireless aerial, stretching between the two masts, came into view in his

Aldis, Buzz yanked the torpedo release—and his stick.

There was a jerk and a distinct shiver through the length of the Wapiti. Somehow the nose came up as the pontoons tore away the wireless aerial and swerved upward in a wrenching climb.

Wher-r-r-r-ang! The t o r p e d o buried its blunt nose into the steel deck plates of the Trongate Castle and went through as though nothing but sheets of paper were blocking its way. Somewhere below, between the long row of high-pressure boilers, the delayed fuse let go.

There was a flash of lemon-colored flame that blotted out everything for an instant. Then a trembling funnel went skyward, taking with it a section of an upper deck, ventilators, life-rafts and great strips of gray metal. All this floated upward as though drawn on invisible strings. At the top of the climb it halted, floated in mid-air for an

instant and stayed there long enough to take another blow from above.

The raging Mitsubishi, following in the wake of the Wapiti, crashed into the lot with a frightful splash of metal, fabric, struts and flame.

Buzz saw this out of the corner of his eye and whipped over to see what really had happened. The mass of twisted metal, fabric and flame fell away, hurling loose lengths of iron, spruce and aluminum in all directions.

He started to nose down for the water, but two more explosions echoed up from the torpedoed liner. A magazine went up, and then a string of boilers. The great ship parted in the middle—one end swinging around with the swirl of waters that came up from below. The torpedo had blown her bottom out completely.

Men staggered across the open decks and scrambled for boats. More explosions occurred in various parts of the ship. A puff of flame billowed out, snuffing out the lives of twenty men with one dab of flame. Blood and fire were mixed in the wildest dish of action Benson had ever experienced.

He skimmed across the top of a nodding foremast and curled over through a plume of acrid smoke to find the wreck of the Mitsubishi. The call of his clan rang through his ears.

“Save the pilot!”

Then he spotted it. The ship, a tangled mass of crumpled wings, torn fabric and a shapeless fuselage, lay bobbing on the churned waters not a cable’s length from the fast—sinking Trongate Castle. What appeared to be a leather-clad pilot was crumpled up in the shattered cockpit. A shapeless pontoon had been hurled across the back of the ship, and it glistened in the glare of the burning vessel like a silver tarpon hurled across the bow of a boat.

Benson put the Wapiti down gracefully, not far from the bobbing pile of wreckage. Then taxiing carefully across the rollers, he brought his wing tip around so that it was not many feet from where the remains of the Mitsubishi lay. He shut off, grabbed a line and fastened it around his waist. Hopping out on the pontoon, he made a loop of the other end and whirled it across a broken pontoon strut and drew himself and the Wapiti closer. In a minute he was in a position to drag the girl from the cockpit and place her in the rear pit.

Without waiting for further inspection, he started the "Jupiter" again and taxied well away from the sinking ship. He knew the power of suction and took no chances. A boat or two had been launched, and frantic men were rowing away from the point where the stern half was fast sinking by the midships end while the forward section had floated away and was now listing dangerously. It was the most amazing sight Benson had ever witnessed.

He sat well clear and then climbed up and straddled the fuselage and tugged at the girl in his rear cockpit. She was still out, but restoratives snatched from the plane's first aid kit gradually brought her round. One side of her face was covered with blood from a wound well up in her scalp.

"Ar-r-r-h!" she fumed, opening her eyes. "It was that man Wilberforce. We had not—not counted on him. But you—you, Mr. Benson—you have ruined us all!"

"You mean—you mean that Wilberforce knew I was out on that junk?" stabbed Buzz, applying the bottle again.

"Yes. He must have followed you to the junk pier and seen what happened. He waylaid one of my men—found out where the junk lay. He was coming out to rescue you. I was coming to kill you—but I was too—too late."

"He came in the Wapiti? Where did he go?" snapped Buzz.

"I—I—do not know. He is not with you?"

"No, I found this ship deserted, came on to where I figured the Trongate Castle to be—and, well, you know the rest."

"You blew it up. Our plans have gone—gone up—where I hope to go—soon."

The girl squirmed in her agony and suddenly opened her eyes wider. "Look! Look! You see, they are coming! Your friends!"

Buzz whirled, stared through his center-section struts and saw the lights of a vessel of some kind steaming up under forced draft. Her funnels were belching smoke and streamers of fire. She had a white bone in her teeth and she was making glorious time.

He sat there and watched the girl slip into unconsciousness again. He turned to his right and watched the last of the Trongate Castle slip to her doom.

IT WAS the British seaplane carrier *Hermes* that came charging up. Natty midshipmen manned boats that went out and picked up the handful of survivors and then turned their attention to the bobbing *Wapiti*. They took Benson and the girl aboard, and the seaplane was hoisted clear. -

Benson was assisted up a Jacob's ladder and greeted on the quarter deck by a ruddy-cheeked British officer and a dirty, unshaven American gob.

"Wilberforce!"

"Buzz! You lucky hound!" roared the disguised American flag-lieutenant. "Meet Captain Beresford, commanding officer of the *Hermes*. Billy Buzz Benson, sir."

"Benson," said the British officer, pulling his cap further down over one eye, "you have done a splendid job. Saved us all a lot of trouble, eh, Lieutenant Wilberforce?" There was a gay twinkle in his eye.

"But—but you've got a lot of explaining to do, Wilberforce," Benson interrupted. "How—when—what—well, how the hell did you do it? I mean that business of leaving the plane for me. I thought I was seeing things for a time."

"Easy! It was easy," grinned the American. "We found out where they had you and went out to get you on the first ship we could get our hands on—one belonging to the

R.A.F. We sent a sub ahead and kept in touch with it by radio all the way. Then we saw that jane diving on you in the boat and we knew that we had to do something quickly. We drove her off and let her go. Then we dropped the flare, landed by it, tipped off the sub to pick us up and while you stood howling your head off, we slipped over the side, put on a couple of these new submarine lungs and stayed a few inches beneath the water until you had sense enough to get away and do that job that the British and American navies could not tackle."

"Well, I'll be damned! But how did you guess that I knew where the Trongate Castle lay?"

"We didn't. We just figured that you would have sense enough to follow the jane in the *Mitsubishi*. Why, how did you know?"

Buzz laughed and explained the finding of the map in the motorboat, and the fight he had in getting at the Trongate Castle to blow her up.

“Well,” broke in the British commander, “it’s just as well that you stopped her. She actually was a Japanese cruiser, touched up to look like an ordinary liner. We never could have caught her. As it is, we shall have a lot of explaining to do with this girl.”

“Don’t worry about that,” said Wilberforce. “I found out that she’s actually Amagasaki Shonogon.”

Captain Beresford raised his eyebrows.

“Yes, and the Japanese government has been looking for her for years. You know, she headed a religious sect that plotted to wipe out the Diet and actually fired upon one of the younger princes. If she lives she’ll get hers, and probably she’ll be better off going out on board here so that we can bury her at sea and cook up a tale of her cracking up in an airplane.”

“But these other survivors? What about them?” inquired Buzz.

“They’ll come up on charges of being at sea aboard an unregistered ship—mutiny and all that. We’ll take care of them. Don’t worry, they can’t prove anything. After all, the plane you used is not registered on any British or American seaplane carrier, and all British and American pilots can be accounted for. Nothing to it.” grinned Wilberforce, “thanks to Billy Buzz Benson!”

“Yes,” laughed the Englishman, “journalists are of some use after all.”

“Gosh, captain,” replied Buzz. “Don’t call me that. You know, a journalist is only a newspaperman out of work.”

“Well, you certainly have had your hands full during the past few weeks,” roared the Britisher. “We’ll be going back to Shanghai now. Will you come to my quarters? I fear you need a—just a little stimulant.”

“I certainly do,” agreed Buzz. “So that was the little Japanese girl who tried to get me from the sentry-box of an air liner, eh? Well, she had a lot of fun—while it lasted.”

He began to laugh.

“What’s the joke?” demanded Wilberforce.

“I was just thinking,” answered

Buzz, still chuckling. “I wish I could have seen you going over the side with one of those new submarine ‘lungs’ bolted to your chest. You must have looked like a Scotsman playing a set of bagpipes!”

“Well, it wasn’t so funny. You took your own sweet time about getting off, and we used nearly all the oxygen in the tank. As it was, we floated about around there just long enough to run into the junk and the rest of them, so I guess it worked out O.K., anyway. What’s yours?”

“Hot Scotch and a dash of limejuice, in honor of our British hosts,” answered Buzz.