

Raider Wings

A Tug Hardwick Adventure

By Arch Whitehouse

That sleek Northrop was beautiful as it hurtled over the shimmering Sulu Sea—beautiful, that is, until its vitals were poisoned with whistling lead! Anyhow, this hot interview was something Flying-Reporter Tug Hardwick hadn't expected. Why, before his story was written it was getting punctuated—with bullets! But bullets or no, Tug was bent on tracking down his man. And he knew he was on the right track when a booming laugh brought forth—a little ship that wasn't there!

THE SURFACE of the Sulu Sea simply sizzled. With merciless intensity the sun beat down on the metal and paint of the hurtling Northrop. Every part was hot to the touch and the high speed of the fighter did not seem to ease the discomfort in any way.

For more than an hour now, Tug Hardwick and his cockpit partner, Beansie Bishop, had been scouring the far reaches of the Sulu Sea on the first legitimate news assignment the Amalgamated Press had sent them in months.

“And I say,” wailed the Bish, “that this is a dumb show. These guys are slug-nutty. Whatta they mean, a German raider—away down here?”

“You can't laugh off those poor guys who clambered from that raft at Davao the other day,” insisted Hardwick. “They didn't float about for three days just for fun. Not in this climate!”

“Well maybe not. But I wish we had o' got a straight story out of those guys.”

“But they all agreed on one thing,” reminded Tug.

“Yeah. The guy that knocked 'em off laughed at them like the Bull of Basham. All screwy skippers laugh like that. They all think they're Captain Bligh, or...or...”

“Or von Luckner. Remember him? He used to pull that ha-ha gag.”

“But these birds all came in with a different story. One day it's a schooner, the next day it's a giant submarine, then we hear that old Skipper Ho-Ho used a rusty old trawler, and—”

“And then it begins all over again,” broke in Tug. “That's why this is a real story. That's why Amalgamated is sending us out to get it,”

“I'll bet old Ho-Ho is a phony.”

“You don't dare go back and tell those Limey seamen he's a phony. He real enough to them.”

“They claim the guy just blows them out of the water and laughs at them. What the deuce sort of a story is that?”

“It's a pip—if we get it,” said Tug, peering over the side again.

They settled back and continued to fly back and forth over the area where this new high seas menace would have to be if he was using ordinary means of ocean travel. They had checked closely his every move, based on the meager reports of his activity, and they decided that he must be working from the string of islands which formed the Sulu Archipelago. From there, this boisterous German raider could work either the Sulu Sea, waylaying shipping out of Borneo, or he could scour the busy coastal routes of the Celebes Sea. There was plenty of cover and enough shipping to make this particular area a very fruitful playground for this modern pirate.

They had been cutting back and forth in their Northrop fighter persistently. They had studied every vessel that left a wake, and they had gone down low in several instances to check structure. But they had discovered nothing that would lead them to the elusive raider.

A primitive airport hacked out of the jungle near Zamboanga, on the western tip of Mindanao, was their base of operations. Today they had been

doing a series of southwesterly and northeasterly runs back and forth over Jolo until they were almost within sight of the northeastern shore of North Borneo. It was difficult territory to cover, but Amalgamated wanted the story of this new character of modern piracy for their syndicated features.

It promised to be one of the greatest yarns spun during the New World War. They had no intention of letting this one slip through their fingers to be picked up years later by some enterprising newspaperman who would make a fortune out of it.

No, Amalgamated decided to get it now, while this amazing German raider was at the height of his career. At any date, he might be trapped by the British who were steaming out of Singapore in an attempt to capture this elusive Jolly Roger. It was all very simple for Amalgamated to cable from Chicago—but an entirely different matter to follow through out here in the heat and mystery of the Sulu Sea.

Hardwick would have liked to have contacted this mad German on the surface, but he first had to find him. At first he considered a fast boat, but then he realized that he could cover more territory in the high speed Northrop. After he located the German, perhaps a secret meeting could be arranged.

“We’re just a couple of fools,” argued Beansie from the aft section of the Northrop’s control pit. “We don’t even know what we’re looking for. She might be a schooner, a submarine, or a rusty tramp. What sort of a gag is that? Meanwhile, you can just call me Beansie,” concluded the Bish, peering below again.

THEN Hardwick suddenly twisted in his seat and glanced up. He caught the glint of wings. Black wings of a fairly small pontooned seaplane banked sharply over them and suddenly came down like a bullet. Bish caught the scream of it before Tug could shout a warning. They both sat there stupefied watching the black seaplane hurtle at them.

Tug brought the fighter around hard and then sensed that the seaplane was actually firing at them.

“What the devil?” he snorted, bringing the Northrop back again and clearing with a swish of the tail as the black attacker slashed past.

Bish was trying to break out a gun of some sort to ram out of the tail slot of the nacelle and get a burst in at the mysterious raider. Tug pulled rods and loaded. He watched the pontooned fighter intently, then suddenly whipped over and ripped a short burst at her. The raider darted clear, swished her tail again, and with a wild scream came around full on the Northrop and blazed away again.

The torrent of the burst caught the Northrop stiff. She seemed to halt under the impact of the thud. Tug fought to get her clear again, and as the enemy plane slammed under them a ghostly roar of derision came rippling up from the attacker. “What was that?” yelled the Bish. “A laugh, wasn’t it? You could hear him above all this racket.”

“Never mind him. Watch out for us. We’ve stopped too much lead. We have to go down somewhere. Meanwhile, you keep that swine off.”

“But the guy laughed at us,” the outraged Bish wailed again. “I heard him. I heard him distinctly!”

There was no time for argument, however. The double-fanged fighter came at them again from below and behind. But this time Bish was ready. He tripped the trigger of his Browning and let the seaplane have it full in the nose.

The result was all that could be desired. The seaplane was halted cold. It slithered in a flat wallow for one or two, hoiked a wing-tip, then went down.

“THERE’S something to laugh about out the other side of your face,” growled the Bish, watching the seaplane go down in a series of twirls and with a fluttering of smoke behind the rudder.

“Where’s he going?” demanded Tug.

“Down into the drink. And where are you going?” queried the Bish.

“I mean, is there anything down there?”

“Not a splinter. Hey, is our boiler really conked, too?”

“Sure! We took plenty. Now, do you see that island down there?”

“I only hope there’s no head hunters on it.”

“Don’t worry. You’ll never miss yours.”

Bish ignored that, glanced over Tug’s shoulder, and gave the instruments his attention. He was trying to figure out what had happened.

“Never mind my job,” cracked Tug. “You watch that guy as long as you can.”

“Sure...Hey! Hey, wait a minute! Look back here. He’s—say, that thing wasn’t there a minute ago!”

“What?”

“I guess it must be a submarine. It just came up from nowhere.”

“Swell! Now we’re getting warmer. That guy was part of this German raider’s outfit.”

“Yeah, and he had a dirty laugh, too. And look! There he goes down right alongside of the thing. But hey! What did I say it was?”

“A submarine,” reminded Tug, giving his attention to getting the Northrop down to within an easy glide of a beach that skirted a small island.

“Well, I guess I made a mistake. It’s a sailing vessel of some kind.”

“Sailing vessel? You just said—you just said it was a submarine!”

Regardless of what they had heard, they exchanged glances of the I-guess-you-ain’t-got-all-your-marbles school and both looked back at the vessel again. A swift inspection and they went into the “marbles” questioning again.

“Gripes!” wailed the Bish. “You don’t dare turn your head in this racket. Now where did that seaplane go?”

They both stared back and Tug dared another turn to get a full view over the side. There was the sailing lugger, holding her position as neat as a pin. But the seaplane was nowhere to be seen.

“How do they do that—with mirrors?” he gaged.

“But I’m telling you, it was a submarine at first,” the Bish argued.

But they were getting dangerously low now and if they were going to make that island, they would have to get over it quick. In their interest at the transformation below, Hardwick had almost forgotten his own predicament. But now he gave it his fullest attention. He S-turned into position and finally brought the Northrop around well into the wind, nosed down for a silver strand of beach, and let her “stand” on her flaps and ease in. He

aimed her well up on the beach, not knowing how the tide would run.

The Northrop finally came to a crunchy stop on a flat section of shingle that curled a sandy finger deep into the shadows of a nipa palm clump.

Neither attempted to move for the first few moments after they were down. They simply sat there staring at nothing.

Finally Tug nailed Bish with: “Did you say you heard that guy laugh?”

“Sure, it certainly sounded like it.”

“And when you looked the first time, the—the thing on the surface was a submarine?”

“Right! And there wasn’t anything there before that.”

“Okay. We’ll let that go. Now after you looked the second time, the submarine had become a sailing vessel, huh?”

“That’s it. Then when I looked the third time, the seaplane wasn’t there.”

“It’s a good job you didn’t look still again. It would all have split apart and spelled out the name of some new breakfast food,” mooned Tug. “But let’s get out and see what made the wheels stop going around in this bus of ours.”

They clambered down and looked about them. They had landed in such a position that a spit of the land cut off their view of the sailing vessel. But at present they had plenty to keep them occupied, figuring out how they could get out of here under their own steam.

A quick inspection disclosed that the Northrop had taken quite a beating. There were fully fifty bullet holes in her sleek frame. Too many of them were in the long sleek motor cowling which covered the Allison engine, and it was with deep misgivings that they raised the upper panel and peered inside.

“Baby, oh baby!” wailed the Bish. “Look at that mess!”

One packet of slugs had perforated the ignition wire tubing and had no doubt taken out most of the cables. Another had battered the gear housing just behind the propeller. What’s more, three slugs had spanged into the Scintilla magneto and scattered it into a junk pile. The rest was too horrible to contemplate,

Bish placed the palms of his hands together, muttered something, then tenderly lowered the panel cutting off all view of the tragedy.

“Well,” he muttered. “I always wondered what it would be like to go native on a South Seas island.”

“First you’ve got to find some natives. I don’t believe there’s a soul on this bit, let alone a sarong,” Hardwick mumbled squatting down in the shade of the wing. It was pretty hot and even though they wore tropical kit, they sensed it was going to be uncomfortable.

“I think I’ll make me one of those sarongs out of my parachute,” gagged the Bish.

“Talk sense,” said Tug. “We have to think about advising someone in Davao. Is the radio working?”

“There may be some juice left in the batteries, but we won’t get far from here. Still, I’ll try.”

The Bish clambered back into the tail-cockpit and Tug sat there pondering on the situation. It was beginning to dawn on him that there were too many strange coincidences to all this. He was certain now that they had at last picked up the trail of the mysterious German raider who was playing havoc with Allied shipping in the Far East. The submarine-sailing vessel gag, the high-pitched laugh, and all the other business spread out over this particular area.

“I guess we’ve found the raider, all right,” he muttered to himself. “Now all we have to do is to get in touch with him somehow and get aboard.”

How this could be accomplished, he had no idea, since they had already had a brush with a seaplane connected with the outfit—which would take plenty of explaining.

THE BISH dropped down from the cockpit and presented a mug as long as a wet week. “I guess we better start looking for cocoanuts and a guy named Friday,” he said. “That box won’t blip a spark. Wonder when they celebrate Christmas around here?”

Hardwick had no time for Christmas. He was staring at a high-speed cutter that was now rounding the bend of the spit. It came up with a white bone in its teeth and swished around hard in a small sheltered cove. Then several men clambered over the side, splashed through the surf, and came up on the beach dripping. Obviously, they knew what they were about,

“Well, here’s Santa Claus,” said the Bish out of one side of his face. “Now what?”

“Anything can happen now. But let me do the talking. Don’t you start any fights!”

They stayed where they were, Bish leaning against the edge of the wing and Tug sitting beneath pouring sand through his fingers. The distance between the cove and the plane gave them plenty of time to inspect their visitors.

For one thing they were all armed. The men carried short carbines and heavy Mauser machine pistols were at their hips. They were led by a giant of a man with a grim black beard. He was dressed in some form of naval uniform, trim and clean. A navy cap with gold braid was atop his massive head, and enough braid was on his epaulettes to bow-leg a burro.

The stocky, beetle-browed men with him were togged out in various kinds of uniforms. Many had grease streaks across their faces and down the sides of their slacks.

The leader now stuck out his chest, which was as big as a rolled mattress, and let out a roar of laughter that literally battered back off the bullet-slashed dural of the Northrop,

“The Shadow knows,” muttered the Bish.

“Shut up! This is our raider guy.”

“They ought to plant him in a turbine and just let him laugh to furnish the power. He’d put fifty knots on a destroyer with that bellow.”

“I’ll punch you right in the nose,” husked Hardwick.

“Save your punches. You’ll get plenty of chance to use ‘em in a minute. I can see that these guys mean business.”

The leader threw back his head and laughed again. Meantime, his men formed a half-circle behind him, their carbines cradled menacingly in their arms.

“You are English—no?” the big man began, standing wide-legged before them.

“No, we aren’t English. We’re Americans,” snapped Hardwick. “And if you’re the guy I think you are, you owe me about ten grand for potting my engine. What the deuce was the idea, anyway?”

“Now don’t get into any fights,” smirked Bish in a high-pitched voice he’d souped up for the occasion.

The big man, who had a decided Teutonic accent, stopped dead in his tracks. It was evident that he had not expected this sort of reply. He was

used to men cringing before him—but this fellow was still sitting there calmly sifting sand through his fingers.

“And what’s more, I don’t like that dirty beard of yours. It’s not sanitary. Why don’t you burn it off?” added Hardwick.

“Mother’s little helper,” mooned the Bish sadly under his breath.

“Do you know who I am?” demanded the big man. Then he let out a bellowing laugh that rang amid the taipang and nipa palms, “Budt nefer mind. That does not matter. I like you, *mein freund*. We shall be friends, *nein?*”

“Look here,” came back Hardwick. “I think you’re the guy who is pestering the British down here in the Sulu Sea. You’re probably what we Americans call a heel, but I’ve met all kinds and I have to put up with that sort of thing in my business. What is more important is that I have to come all the way down here to get a story from you for my press service. Now if you aren’t the bird I’m looking for, you can shove off, advise my people in Davao, pay for the damage you caused, and then forget it.”

The big man bellowed again and slapped his thigh. And the Yanks were beginning to like him, even though they, too, were putting on an act.

“You haff come all der way here to get der story of Bolko von Reidel?” he boomed, “You must be *Amerikaners*. It is a good joke on me, eh?”

“Von Reidel?” snapped Hardwick, getting up. “You are the Bolko von Reidel? The German naval officer who—who scuttled the German fleet at Scapa Flow years ago?”

The big German stiffened. He drew himself up and assumed a more serious mien. Now he bowed slightly from the waist, and they could see that the backs of his calves were tense.

“Gentlemen,” he said solemnly. “I thank you for your memory, I am the Bolko von Reidel of which you speak. I am the man who scuttled our vessels more than twenty years ago. At least, it was my idea,” He laughed. “Yes, I planned the measure. Again, I thank you...*Herr...Herr ...*”

“My name is Hardwick—Tug Hardwick. And never mind the ‘Herr’ business,” snapped Tug believing he had found a chink in the man’s armor. “And this man,” he added, without getting

up but pointing to the Bish’s boney kneecaps, “is my partner, Mister Alton Bishop.”

“Call me Beansie,” wailed the Bish at Tug. “And never mind the ‘Mister’ business.”

The big man with the beard, who now seemed to have lost his Teutonic accent in the face of the nervy Americans, said something over his shoulder to his men and they relaxed somewhat. But they did not ground their arms.

“Look here, von Reidel,” Tug went on, determined to hold the edge in the conversation, “we’ll forget all that twenty years ago business. That’s your memory not mine. We’re simply representing the Amalgamated Press in the United States and we came to find you. To interview you. Get it?”

“Well, my friend,” von Reidel smiled, “in finding me you have done more than the whole British Navy could do—and the French navy, too, eh?”

He broke out in another booming cackle and his men managed to distort the masks of their mugs to indicate a smile. One of them now said something to von Reidel and the big man stopped his booming and glared at the two insolent Americans.

“How do I know you came simply to satisfy the curiosity of the American public?” he demanded,

“I don’t care whether you believe me on that or not,” snapped Tug. “We have about enough information for our purpose now. But I’d still like to find out why my plane was fired on—and by whom.”

NOW the big man seemed a bit puzzled. He started still another laugh but stopped it half way up and glared down at Tug.

“That was my son, Justus—Justus von Reidel. He is my—how you say, ‘spotter’? He is my son, Justus. He believed you were an Englander from one of the cruisers,”

“What, with a plane like ours?” growled Tug, pointing to the nose of the Northrop.

“Exactly. You did not know the English have such a plane? It has been under secret construction at Britain’s Phillips & Powis company for months. We thought they would be in production by now. This plane looks exactly like the Phillips & Powis machine.”

"I don't care if it looks like a Samoan eggplant, it didn't have British markings on it, did it?" argued Tug.

"Bah! The British would do anything to get me," the big German responded.

"That's your story. Now what about our plane, which your dumb son shot up?"

The big German laughed again.

"*Ach!* But that was very funny. He caught you beautifully, while you were watching him and trying to make out just what sort of plane he was flying, yes?—We saw it all—from the *Boarhund*."

Tug and Bish exchanged glances. They were both wondering what he meant by the *Boarhund*. But they concluded it must be the mystery vessel. The German broke it up: "But you can't stay here. You want a story, of course. So you will come back with us to my vessel. You will meet my son Justus. He will tell you how he shot you down. Ho! Ho!"

"You take me anywhere near him and he'll never get a chance to tell me. I'll punch all his teeth down his throat," snarled Tug.

The big German roared at that sally. "Fine!" he finally said. "Then you will come, eh?"

Tug reflected a minute. It was a risky thing, but he had to get the rest of his story somehow. He nodded to the Bish, said: "Get a camera. We'll do this thing right," Then to the German he added: "Sure, we'll come. I want to see how a modern pirate lives. But no monkey business, von Reidel—or we'll take your lugger apart,"

"Ho! Ho! Ho! How I love this man!" the big man boomed, "He should be a German. I would take him for my First Mate. This is a real man! We shall see some sport!"

"If that dopey son of yours is aboard, you will," growled Tug getting to his feet."

BISH selected a camera of the Graflex type, then secreted another, which looked like a candid Leica, in his pocket. He checked the film-pack holder of his Graflex, then nodded to Tug,

The armed men were already heading toward the water. Their boat was drawn around into a better spot so that they could climb aboard from a large flat rock. The big German took a seat in the stern and Tug and Bishop sat down beside him as

a seaman took the tiller and swung the craft out to round the spit.

Once in the clear, the Yanks caught sight of what appeared to be a somewhat disreputable schooner with a spoon bow. Neither commented, but they inspected the vessel with interest—extreme interest.

"You like her, eh?" the big German boomed.

"Not much. She looks a trifle false to me," cracked Tug.

"She looked like a submarine before," added the Bish with a leer.

The big German simply laughed at that.

As they came nearer her, Bish prepared to take a couple of pictures with his Graflex. At this, the big German let out a bellow and kicked the camera from Bish's hands. It rolled about in the laps of two of the seamen and Bish scrambled to retrieve it.

"You will not take pictures until I give you permission," the big German boomed,

"Look," broke in Tug, "if you ever do a thing like that again, von Reidel, I'll kick all your teeth in—or out, just as you wish. Get that?"

The big German doubled with mirth at that sally and slapped his thigh.

"You know," said Bish, "I don't know whether I like this guy, or whether we should dump him overboard now. I'll bet he'd go straight to the bottom,"

But Tug was really mad—fighting mad! "See that your camera is Okay. We're going to take all the pictures we like. We have enough of the story now to give Chicago all it wants. Go ahead! Take a picture of her! And if this guy gets gay, I'll slap his chops for him."

Then when von Reidel's head lifted in his next laugh, Bish—before the Teuton realized what had happened—snapped his picture in a characteristic attitude. Then Bish turned, ripped out the film pack sheet, and took a picture of the ugly vessel. He ripped out the shield sheet still again and snapped yet another.

Von Reidel gasped. Rage seemed to be in conflict with his humor for a moment, but a laugh finally broke the silence nevertheless. They both knew now that he intended that they should never get away with those pictures. His attitude was changing as they approached the vessel.

"I get it," muttered Tug, "this is an A-1 phoney. Look! The sides are simply panels that fold up from somewhere. She's really a sub. This is going the British Q-boats one better."

"A beautiful fakeroo!" agreed Bish, taking another snap.

Their boat eased around to the side of the "schooner." A section of the false hull then opened and the boat was warped in. They stepped out on a short gangway lowered from the narrow deck planking of a submarine!

The framework of the deck sides could be lowered at an angle and lie flush with the deck. The two masts could be concealed and the false sails quickly removed and stowed. They climbed up and saw the seaplane lashed down in front of a small, water-tight deck hangar. Its wings were folded back.

With determination, Tug Hardwick walked up to the man who stood beside it with a chunk of waste and a wrench in his hands. "Are you the guy who flew that thing a short time ago and fired at my Northrop?" he demanded.

"I am der pilot, if that is what you mean," the man replied.

That was as far as he got. Tug brought his right around hard and it caught the man flush on the button. The Nazi took it, though, his legs spread wide. He tried to lurch toward Tug, but his legs buckled and Tug brought in another from the other side and caught him full on the temple. The young German went to the deck like a wet bag of cement.

Tug stuck a leg out and stopped the man from rolling over the side, then he brushed his hands together and turned to the elder von Reidel:

"That's just to let you know that I mean what I say!"

The suddenness of the attack on young von Reidel left the various German seamen stunned for a moment, but now they swarmed at the two Americans with the butts of their carbines raised. Bish brought the heavy Graflex camera down the head of one and he flopped across the inert body of von Reidel. Tug dodged a blow, pivoted hard, and another German seaman fell flat on his face. At that point the elder von Reidel stepped in and took command.

"Stop it! Stop it!" he boomed, almost making the false sails belly out with his roars. He barked

at seamen and junior officers. He raged at Tug and at Bish, who was now taking a shot of the general layout aboard the deck. He started to rumble toward Bish, but he stopped and thought better of it as he saw Tug poised on the balls of his feet. The big German knew this American was tough.

"You will come below, now," he ordered, and finally managed another roaring laugh. "This way, gentlemen!"

He strode up the steps to the bridge of the conning tower. The plate door to the depths below was open and the big German led the Yanks down to the control room, passed forward to the officers' room, and pointed to some chairs set around a narrow table. As they passed through the control room, dank and oil-stained, Tug caught the dim outlines of a man in civilian clothing and a felt hat. He was small, dapper, and moved with short steps as he hurried around the periscope wheel and bent over an open drawer of a chart locker. Of one thing, Tug was certain. This civilian was not German—he was a Japanese!

"Now I don't like it," he muttered to himself as he passed through into the officers' quarters.

"What's the Jap doing aboard?" he demanded the minute he sat down.

VON REIDEL was reaching in a locker for a bottle of wine and some glasses. He turned sharply and nearly dropped two glasses. He swore quietly in German.

"The Japanese gentleman is working with me," von Reidel announced as he pulled the cork from the wine bottle with a plop. He poured into the glasses and examined the wine against the dull light overhead.

"Then that means," snapped Tug, "that you are not simply a German raider preying on merchant shipping. You are working with the Japs here and are probably laying the groundwork for some big coup in the Pacific. Am I right?"

"We will drink to that," grinned the big German, shoving the glasses into place.

"We'll drink to the success of right against might," Tug replied taking up the glass.

"As for me, I'll drink to the hope that we get off this tin fish alive," mooned the Bish.

The big German emptied his glass at a gulp and laughed: "I will now give you your story,

gentlemen. It matters not that you will never leave this vessel to publish it. That point, of course, must be obvious to you now. To allow you to go—once you have the secret of my craft—would of course be out of the question.”

“Don’t forget that we are American citizens,” warned Tug, fingering the stem of his crystal goblet.

“You are neutral, yes?”

“Sure, we are neutral. That makes it a crime for you to detain us or harm us in any way, von Reidel.”

“There is no such thing as neutrality. I have my own personal ideas on that. You are either for us or against us, and the events in the last few weeks, in my opinion, disclose that you are wholeheartedly against us. Your embargo repeal, for instance. Your obvious hatred of our Government long before the war began, for another. America can never be neutral, my friend. Americans are too outspoken. They have what they like to call a free press. How then can she be neutral?”

“We Americans inherit the right to think for ourselves, von Reidel. That includes the right to remain neutral, and neutral we’ll remain, if I have any idea of my countrymen’s wishes.”

The German’s eyes narrowed. “You came here to seek me out in the guise of a newspaper reporter. I respect that point, but I also have the right to draw the conclusion that you intend to report our position and the secret of my vessel. Is that not so?”

“That is positively not so. I have my cabled orders,” snapped Tug. “Here, you can read them for yourself.”

The big German waved the papers away. “Of course. You are a legitimate newspaperman. Your company would willingly make thousands of dollars selling the rights to this story. But they would also willingly turn over certain specific details to Britain and France, because—well, because they might hope to get another inside story on how the British caught up with me and ended my raiding career. It would make a...what you call a beautiful follow-up story, eh?”

“Your attitude,” insisted Tug, “is screwy. You trust no one. But in any event, I’m taking the stand that you can’t hold us here under any pretext. I demand that we be allowed to

communicate with officials in the Philippines and assure them of our safety and our position—that is, the position of our wrecked plane, not of your sub—so they can send help to us and get our Northrop into the air again.”

Tug’s insistence had rather stunned the big German, but somehow he managed to produce another bellowing laugh. He again reached for the wine bottle and poured before he answered: “A very smart trick, Mr. Hardwick! A very smart trick! All you wish to do is to have us use our wireless set so that you can get off and present your story and produce your pictures. Very simple, eh? Then all your British and French friends would have to do would be to take a bearing on our signals and send a searching party out for us. Very clever! But not clever enough, I’m afraid.”

“That’s not my intention at all,” Tug replied, glancing about the compartment. “You can send one message alone, get a receipt, put us ashore again, and be miles away by the time any French or British ship could get near this spot.”

“What the deuce is the idea of having that Jap aboard?” broke in the Bish suddenly.

The big German stroked his great beard reflectively, then said: “The Japanese gentleman, if you must know, is a secret agent. He is working with me down here. He sees that we are kept in supplies, and we take him where he wants to go.”

“What you really mean to say,” said Tug getting to his feet, leaning across the narrow table, and glaring full into von Reidel’s face, “is that you are a mug for this Jap. You’re not a romantic raider, as you would have the world believe. You’re just a stooge for a man who is using you to gather secret information—information which like as not would be employed later against the United States. So that makes you a partner in action against a neutral nation. You’d like to think that you’re another Count von Luckner, but I now figure you as nothing but a cheap edition of that guy. He at least sailed the seas on his own hook. He didn’t pull tricks like that. Which is why the world loved him. Yes, even the British liked that guy.”

AT THIS, von Reidel tried to find words to pour back at this barrage of contempt. He pawed

at his beard, started to get to his feet. But Tug Hardwick shoved him back with a thud.

"You wanted to become a romantic figure. You had all the makings, too. You got a sub with stage fixings, you sank enemy ships, and you built up a legend on your laugh. You even had that screw-ball son of yours get in on it with a loud-speaker laugh gag. It was all swell stuff—enough to make you a great hero."

"I haff sunk seventeen ships in ten days!" von Reidel argued, lapsing back into his German accent. "I haff allowed der crews to escape."

"Sure. I agree to all that. You may sink seventeen more in the next ten days—but you have outlawed yourself by taking on that Jap spy. We can't swallow that one, von Reidel."

"He vos only taking a few soundings around der Philippines."

"Yes, soundings to complete a plan for the future capture of the islands."

"But I haff to have supplies, oil, food, and torpedoes!" spluttered von Reidel.

"Sure! All of which is an admission that you are not the clever South China Seas raider you would want the world to believe. You are not being successful because of your own gallantry or skill. Your way was to sell out. Well, that won't read well in the papers, von Reidel."

"And you told me not to start any fights?" bleated the Bish to Tug.

"Shut up. This guy won't fight. He's a mug for the Japs," taunted Hardwick. Then he turned back to the big German: "Well, what's it going to be? Do we go free to return to our base and file a story on you and your von Luckner laugh?"

The big German gripped his wine glass nervously, twisted it back and forth in his great fingers. He stared down into the dregs with blazing eyes. Tug's barbs had pierced his thick skin and he did not like the feel of them.

He leaped to his feet screaming: "You will not escape, *schwein!* You will not spread my name across your filthy papers. You will not betray me. You have seen too much, you know too much—and I will yet live to become the great von Reidel who cleared the seas of the perfidious British. I will live to see a hundred vessels go down dragging the British flag beneath the surface of the sea! And now I will break you in my great hands as punishment for these insults of—"

But that was as far as he got. Tug made a quick gesture, knowing that he meant business. The Yank's hand found the neck of the long black wine bottle. There was a quick flip of his wrist and the bottle crashed across the big jaw of the German, causing him to gasp like a grain sack ripped open with a bayonet. Then he folded up and slid with a grunt under the table.

"Quick! Stick that film pack in your pocket. Never mind the camera," hissed Tug. "Come on, we're getting out of here."

"What do you think I am?" cried the Bish obeying orders. "I'm no Gertrude Ederle. I can't swim that far."

"Shut up. Let's go!"

"Sure! Where?"

"Next room, aft. That's the radio cabin."

THEY OPENED the heavy door quietly, glanced out. Then together they slipped through and surprised a square-headed radio man who sat at the bench with heavy earphones on his head. The poor devil didn't have a chance. He started to move, but Bish brought an uppercut up from under the bench lifting him clear off his chair. The man went over backward, and Bish fell on him and in no time had him trussed up and gagged like a capon.

"Quick!" whispered Tug. "We may be neutral, but with that anti-U.S. Jap aboard I figure this is now our fight. If this fellow can pull that against us on his own personal account, then we can fight back on our own personal account. Get TSF—that's the Kudat station in British North Borneo."

Bish flipped the call book, found the Kudat wave length, and began calling. He watched the pad as Tug printed out the message:

German raider Boarhund on surface off Jolo. Have new Arado seaplane on board. Commanded by von Reidel of German Navy. Japanese aboard also. Am being held captive. Our plane damaged on nearby island. Raider may appear either as submarine or schooner.

—Hardwick, *Amalgamated Press.*

They sent the message twice and finally got a reply:

Will try to make necessary contact.

—Cross field, *R.A.F.*

"Come on! Now for the activity," Tug muttered.

The Bish got up and fumbled in his pocket for his Leica camera.

Tug glanced at it and cracked: "I hope it works."

They started quietly out of the door—and walked smack into the Jap who stood covering them.

"So, gentlemen. It was you who were using the wireless set, eh?" the little Jap smirked. "You would betray us! Where is Commander von Reidel?"

"He's back there. Too much bottle," gagged Tug.

The Jap raised his eyebrows a trifle. He was a bit uncertain what to do next. Now Bish came from behind Tug, fumbling with his Leica. The Jap snarled: "You will please put that camera away? It is not allowed aboard here."

"All right," said Bish pleasantly. "I was only going to try getting you in this bad light."

Then something happened. There was a dull flash, a coughing explosion, and the Jap dropped the big Mauser to the metal floor. He stood there, his mouth open, holding his right arm above the wrist.

Tug stepped in quickly, gave the Jap a shove, and picked up the Mauser. "Nice work, Bish!" he laughed.

"Call me Beansie. I told you it would work,"

"Swell! Who would think you could hide a pistol mechanism in a Leica camera?"

The Jap had let out a yowl that could be heard from one end of the sub to the other. Doors slammed. Heavy sea boots ran along the alleyways, more feet skipped down the ladder from the conning tower, and orders began to blast forth from the loud-speaker system.

"Beat it!" rasped Tug. "Back into the officers' quarters. Get von Reidel!"

They darted back past the radio cabin and hurled themselves inside the cabin where they had left von Reidel. They slammed the door and dogged it behind them.

Then they stood there and glanced about.

"Where the devil did he go?" snapped Tug, waving the big Mauser about.

"Flew the coop. What a jaw that guy must have to have recovered from that!"

They searched the lockers, but the German commander was nowhere in sight. Tug finally

darted to a side wall and studied a chart giving the submarine's layout.

"Look! Through that door is the locker room where the men sleep. They keep extra torpedoes there, too. Forward of that is the bow torpedo room where they have four tubes, two on each side. Von Reidel evidently sneaked through there, then went out through the forward escape hatchway. He's probably on deck now. Let's go!"

Bish looked at the plan form and squinted. It was too much for him to assimilate in one glance, so he simply followed Tug who went on through the door, shoving the big Mauser ahead of him. They peered into the bunks, but there were no men there. They went back and dogged the watertight door, then proceeded on through into the forward torpedo room. There was a glint of light from somewhere above. That came from the forward escape hatch, which was still open.

Tug spotted two men huddling behind the torpedo release column and he quickly covered them. They backed up raising their hands helplessly.

"Okay! Play fancy and I'll fill you full of slugs. Open those tubes now!"

The men tried to look dumb, but Tug drew his fist back and they suddenly remembered that they understood English. They released the air a trifle, ripped open the tube breeches, then stood back helplessly.

"Go over and open the other two now," ordered Tug. "Keep them covered, Bish. Take this portable cannon with you."

Bish pocketed the Leica and took the Mauser. Tug moved to the torpedoes. He worked like a madman with a wrench, loosening rudder vane set-screws, twisting the rudders at a 45-degree angle, then tightened the set-screws again. Previous they had been fixed in a neutral position.

One of the Germans came forward gingerly and looked at what Tug had done.

"They will not go straight," he cried. "They will go in a circle...and..." He clapped his hand over his mouth.

"Sure! That's the idea. I'm going to torpedo this lugger with her own torpedoes. Some fun, eh, Keed?"

The German torpedoman went the color of Roquefort cheese as Tug now dashed across the

compartment and went to work on the other two torps.

“All right,” he cracked at length. Now close the tube heads and fire them—all four of them,” he ordered.

The Germans hesitated nervously. “But they will come around and strike us. We shall be blown up—all of us, you, too,” one pleaded.

“Well, now you guys are gonna know what it feels like. You’ll be able to tell the lads back home how it feels—if you ever get back home. You may even get your pictures in the newspapers,” taunted Tug.

“Say, Tug,” gasped the Bish. “How are we gonna get out of this? There’s something in what they say.”

“Don’t ask me. But it’s better than taking it sitting down. You don’t want to live forever, do you?”

“No-o-o-o! But we still ain’t filed that story and we ought to get these pictures off.”

“Put it all in that small, watertight container over there and tie it to the tail of one of these babies,” grinned Tug. “There’s no telling where it’ll go.”

Then he turned to the Germans: “Come on! Blow those tubes!”

He rammed the gun in the back of one and shoved him up to the torpedo control column. The German twisted wheels while one closed the rest of the tube covers. Air hissed and sizzled. Then the German pulled intermittently at the release lever and one by one the torpedoes went out of the tubes.

“Let’s go now!” yelled Tug. “Give me the gun. You lead the way up the ladder. These squareheads can come second—after us.”

BISH was up the ladder like a bloated cat. He came out on the deck and first saw the uproar of the water where the torpedoes had churned out of the tubes. Then, as Tug joined him, he saw that they were covered by three armed German seamen who had been awaiting them near the escape hatch.

But now the seamen were pointing at the four curling plumes of white foam that were twisting away from the disguised sub. Both Tug and Bish stood still. They could see, back beyond the conning tower and the bulge of the seaplane

hangar, that the wings of the plane had been spread out again. The false hull had been lowered out of sight.

A clack of vibrating sound now echoed along the sub. A voice, raised to an insane pitch, retched over the inter-compartment speaker system:

“Everyone overboard! Everyone overboard!”

Bish stood there, stared at Tug. Tug, noting that the attention of the Nazi seamen had been distracted, raised his pistol and fired. The Germans hesitated but a minute. They glanced out at the swirling designs being cut by the torpedoes—and went headlong into the sea and began swimming. Tug and Bish darted along and hid in the lee of the conning tower. Tug fired two more shots and a group of men went pelting along the deck, passed under the wings of the Arado seaplane, and went pell mell off the stern.

“What do we do now?” wailed the Bish.

“Work fast. Get to that seaplane as quick as you can!”

The four concentric wakes of the torpedoes were well out on their beam now and were starting to turn inward. In a minute they would be curling around for their last quarter-circle—if Tug had figured correctly.

The Americans now passed the companionway and cut along on the narrow footing that edged around the watertight hangar. Bish held up one hand and glanced back over his shoulder.

“They’re cutting the plane loose. That young von Reidel is beating it!”

“He would! His old man had more biff to him than that,” Tug growled. “We’ve got to work fast.”

Bish moved like a beefy guard and in a few strides had caught the young German about the thighs. They both went down in a heap. Tug looked out at the oncoming torpedoes, and took in the distressed faces of the men in the water. They were struggling in groups and trying to figure the converging paths of the oncoming torpedoes.

Tug shoved another man overboard and rushed toward the Arado. Its engine was ticking over idly as Bish and the young German still tangled in a heap on the deck. Tug halted, fired a shot back toward the conning tower, drove two more seamen over the side, then went over and calmly tapped young von Reidel on the skull with the butt of the Mauser.

“Stop it, you dope!” he said to Bish. “Get aboard the Arado. Quick!”

He dragged Bish to his feet shoved him toward the plane, and pushed to get the floats moving down the greased slide.

Just then something went past the stern of the sub with a roar. *Swis-s-s-s-s-s-s-h!*

“W-a-a-a-ahat was that?” gasped the Bish, standing on the float.

“One of those torps—and here comes another!”

TUG HARDWICK knew he would remember the details of that scene as long as he lived. The deck of the submarine was now nearly empty. The plane was sliding back toward the water. And young von Reidel lay there semi-conscious.

From the bridge of the conning tower, the Jap now appeared and began potting away at them with a pistol. He was screaming at the men dog-paddling in the water. Tug returned his fire as the wild, berserk torpedoes still circled the submarine, threatening at any second to plunge their war heads deep into the hollow shell of the vessel and blow the lot to smithereens.

More men came scrambling up the ladder of the conning tower, clambered over the edge, and threw themselves into the sea. Heads bobbed about, arms flashed in the sun, and putty-like faces glared from between the rollers.

The Arado finally hit the water and slithered away just fast enough to evade a torpedo which flashed by. Tug climbed up from the port pontoon and joined the Bish in the pit.

Tug fumbled for the throttle, opened her up, and fanned the tail around on opposite rudder. Then he whanged her over the rollers, keeping clear of two more torpedoes that were still running unevenly off the sub’s port bow,

“I thought you said they would come around and blow those guys out of the water!” yelled the Bish,

“I thought they would. It was worth a whirl, anyhow,”

“You think of the screwiest things,” cracked the Bish,

“What about you? For instance that one-slug camera of yours?”

“But that had sense to it—it worked,” argued the Bish as the Arado bounced away.

“Swell! But it’s a good thing for us that my idea didn’t. Now sit tight, will you, while I get this barge off the water.”

“You’d better—and darned quick. Here comes a Japanese flying circus,” raged the Bish. “Where’s the guns on this barge?”

Tug stiffened in his seat, but didn’t have time to look around. He had to give his full attention to the unfamiliar plane and her controls. She finally smacked full at a roller, zoomed up, and finally floundered into the air.

“Should have left a book of directions with her,” growled the Bish, “I thought you said you were a pilot!”

“Shut up! What about that Jap circus?”

“They’re only just behind us and they’re acting rather nasty. See the lovely tracers?”

Tug swung the Arado over, held her there a few moments for speed, then took a chance on climbing. As he came around he saw a formation of Japanese Nakajima 94’s swinging down at them from a stiff dive. Long pencil-like streams of bullets spanged into the water below their pontoons. Tug nosed down slightly and raced under them with plenty of oomph from the big B.M.W. radial up front.

THEN from behind, something began to chatter. The Bish had evidently uncorked a gun from somewhere. Tug glanced over his shoulder and saw the gleaming feed drums of a new Parabellum. The Bish was pecking off short bursts at the Jap two-seaters and getting plenty back in return. From the deck of the sub, too, now, a crew had unleashed the three-pounder mounted on her deck. Heavy concussion deafened them and they bounced around on the billows of the explosions.

They had stepped into a beautiful hornet’s nest now and Bish wailed: “Why didn’t we stay in that nice warm compartment and drink old von Reidel’s wine?”

But he went back to work on the Japs while Tug fumbled about under the instrument board to find out if there were any pop-guns for him to play with. He caught a release gadget on his stick and followed the flexible cable to the trigger release mechanism bolted to a weapon the type of which he had never seen before.

“Must be one of the new Knott Bremse guns,” he muttered. He pulled the control-stick lever just to see what would happen.

Immediately the whole ship vibrated with concussion and recoil. A wild burst of something spat across the sky and left long fiery tails,

“Lovely!” he beamed. “Now then, Jappos. Let’s see how you guys like it.”

The Arado, flying beautifully now, was in full control. Tug made the most of it and took wild chances on tight turns, but the B.M.W. was equal to the task.

“That Jap must have tipped these guys off,” he muttered as he whanged the Arado around and put her nose dead on the formation of Japs. “They’re going to bat for their spy, regardless of the outcome.”

He drew back the release gear and let her bellow. Long streaks of terrific fire spat out and tagged two Nakajimas. They folded up like box kites in a hurricane. Tug tread the rudder stirrups gently, brought her around a trifle, then let fly again. Another long streaked burst wailed out and broke the formation.

“Let me have a whirl at them?” yowled the Bish.

Tug swung over again and flew broadside to two Nakajimas, whereupon the Bish had a holiday. He poured burst after burst into their engine cowlings and saw prop blades flash off into the sunlight like great broadswords. He flipped bursts into tail surfaces and made the Nakajimas wriggle.

Then Bish let out a sudden whoop of joy. “Look! Here they come. We can beat it now and file that story!”

Tug looked and saw a beautiful formation of British Navy Albacores coming out of the southwest. He blinked, then pondered. “How the deuce did they get here?” he asked aloud.

“They must have come off a carrier somewhere in this vicinity. I suppose the British have something in this area. Boy, they look good to me!”

The remaining Japs now flew off in a hurry, not desiring to bring about an “incident” with the British. But they didn’t get away before Tug and Bish had knocked off another of them—a deed which proved to the oncoming British which side of the affair the Yank Arado flyers were on.

That was the signal for the finale. The British planes snapped in from a position above, with the leader passing close to the Arado as he came out of his dive. He waved a greeting to the Americans.

Then the Albacores curled over the submarine. The leader’s observer leaned over and snapped an Aldis signal lamp, but all he got in return was a chug from the German’s three-pounder. The shell went wide and two more Albacores came in from behind, raked the deck with Vickers lead, then pumped a storm of long projectiles into the sub from their wing racks.

The long armor-piercing missiles banged through the metal deck of the submarine and blew her apart. The curved hood of the water-tight hangar burst open leaving a great gash from which spat scarlet flame. The conning tower fell over drunkenly and pitched its upper half into the sea.

Two more Albacores darted in from a tight angle and let more bombs smack in, and now the big sub rolled over on its side, nosed down, and broke apart in the middle. Someone had launched a boat, however, and a number of men were clinging to it as it swirled away from the floundering sub. The stern half of the undersea boat now doubled in the middle, its screws came up brassy and dripping. She vomited a thousand gallons of green oil and went to the bottom.

“Well, all I hope,” muttered Tug, “is that that guy von Reidel gets away.”

“There he is in the stern of that boat—beard and all,” cried Bish. “I’m glad, too. You know you could almost like that guy if you knew him long enough—except for that Jap gag.”

“Signal the Limeys to follow us,” broke in Tug. “I’m going back to the island before those Germans get there.”

“Wait a minute,” the Bish replied. “They’re signaling to us.”

From the leading Albacore a signal lamp spluttered dots and dashes, and finally Bish waved back and then yelled at Tug,

“The guy says they have a beautiful aircraft carrier just over the horizon.”

“Tell him we’ll come along. We’ll return for the Northrop later. We’ll give this boiler to the British in exchange for some service by their

mechanics and a few spare parts. That ought to be an even swap.”

“And we can file our story from their carrier,” came back Bish. “Then we’ll kid them to fly these films of ours through—perhaps to Singapore from where they can air-mail them, eh?”

“Sure!”

“Oke! But don’t you think we sometimes do things too much the hard way—like how we got this story and the pictures?” mooned the Bish as they fell in line behind the Albacores.

“Well,” came back Tug, “when you put it that way, my dear Mr. Bish—”

“Say,” interrupted his comrade sadly, “can’t you ever call me Beansie?”