



a HUMPY & TEX adventure

JAWBONE OF AN ACE

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*Humpy And Tex, Flying Fish Of The Azores, In A Mad Scramble From Ocean Floor To Sky-Top
For Cognac And Krauts.*

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HUMPTY CAMPBELL AND “TEX” MALONE, premier enlisted cloud-crackers of Uncle Sam’s Navy, had been around a lot of bars. Now the situation was reversed. There were a lot of bars around Humpy and Tex.

They sat in the brig aboard the oil tanker *Hercules*, listening to the clatter of gear and the clumping of feet on her steel decks as the crew prepared to get her under way. Ponta Delgada’s harbor swells splashed mournfully against the hull plates, and Tex sighed and gazed sadly out of the spray spotted porthole.

Noah’s Ark, the big flying boat they had manned so long, bobbed at her mooring buoy at the edge of the seaplane ramp, fifty yards off the *Hercules’* port beam. She would stay tied up for quite a while. There was nobody else on the Azores station to fly her—

“What in hell ever gave you the idea you was a cox’n?” Tex demanded suddenly.

Humpy glared. “I was—once!” he defended. “I’ve been everything in this man’s outfit! Why, I’ve served more brig time than you have regular time! I’ve been kicked out of radio schools, hospital schools, diving schools—”

“Well, you certainly got something to learn about navigation!” the lanky observer accused. “Swiping Admiral Noah’s barge wasn’t so bad, but when you saw those red and green lights and decided to run between ’em, that was poor seamanship!”

Humpy groaned. It wasn’t so bad being busted to apprentice seaman. But being shanghaied off the Azores station, and leaving *Noah’s Ark* behind was like losing his tattooed right hand.

“Maybe we can get flying duty up at Ile Tudy, or Killingholme—or Dunkirk again!” he said hopefully. “We’ll have to lay off the liquor.”

“Yeah, so we will. But I wish we had the case of cognac that slipped off the barge when you hit that scow. I could use a shot right now.”

“Same here!”

They lapsed into moody silence. The clatter of the *Hercules’* anchor engine broke it. The engine wheezed and puffed; the ship trembled. The engine stopped, tried again, and gave up with a gasp. Salty profanity drifted back from her poop.

“I told the blasted, blithering idiots this packet didn’t have enough chain!” roared a voice. “When we dragged the hook in that blankety-blank blow yesterday, the this-and-that fouled on something!”

“Aye, aye, sir!” agreed a less authoritative tone.

“Well, don’t stand there like a blithering, blasted fool! Break out the diving gear! Send two men down to clear it!”

HUMPY showed sudden interest. He sprang to the barred door and twisted his neck in an effort to see what was going on. The brig on the *Hercules* was topside; every inch of available space below carried oil for the destroyer squadrons and the Diesels of the submarines—

“No divers aboard, sir!” reported the minor voice as heavy footsteps thumped aft toward the two incarcerated fliers. “We’ll have to send ashore—”

The skipper of the *Hercules* bounced a particularly choice epithet off the bulkhead and then became speechless with rage just outside the brig door. Humpy Campbell seized his cue.

“We can dive, sir! Let us go down, we’ll clear the mud-hook!”

Tex Malone grabbed his shipmate’s arm. “Listen!” he whispered desperately. “Where d’ye get that ‘we’ stuff? Maybe you can, but the only divin’ I ever done was a belly-buster into the creek when a locoed longhorn took after me!”

“Pipe down!” retorted Humpy. “It’s a cinch! I’ll show you how!”

“Oh!” exclaimed the skipper. “So, you can dive, eh? You can fly and dive and pilot a boat? Triple-threat men, eh?”

“Yes, sir!”

“And the admiral ordered you kept in the brig until we cleared the harbor. H’m!”

“We’d like to go down, sir! We couldn’t very well escape, Captain, with our air hoses and life lines—”

“I’ll see what you know about diving! What is the increase in pressure per foot of descent?”

“Half a ton, sir!” Humpy answered promptly.

“H’m. Very well. Mr. Carson, break out the diving equipment and get these two men into the suits. In the meantime, we’ll try the engine again!”

“Aye, aye, sir!”

The captain and the executive officer went separate ways. Tex started to explode with righteous indignation, but Humpy interrupted.

“Pipe down, you sap! I tell you, there’s nothing to it. And if we ever needed a chance to show that we can do something, it’s now. Don’t you want to fly again?”

“Sure—but there’s a lot of difference between being up in the air and being down under all this water in a rubber overcoat—”

Humpy propelled his observer toward the porthole. "Look—out there is where the scow was night before last! Between here and the ramp. That's where the case of cognac slipped off the deck of the admiral's barge. Now, all we got to do is look around on the ocean floor, before or after we clear that anchor, until we find it."

"How'd we get it aboard? Would they let us keep it?"

"Sure, we could bring it up. It's salvage. We might have to split with the skipper, but—"

"All right, you men. Come out and get into these suits!"

Humpy stripped to his underwear and emerged from the brig. Tex followed suit, still unconvinced that deep-sea diving was among the major pleasures of a nautical career. The anchor engine clattered again, wheezed and died. The two flying bluejackets climbed into the diving suits and went forward to take their place beside the air pump.

Lieutenant Carson adjusted earphones and hoisted a helmet over Humpy's head. He gave the helmet a quarter of a turn and locked it. Tex looked around over the blue brightness of the harbor, as a condemned man gazes his last upon the sun.

The harbor was virtually deserted. All the trim buckets of the Suicide Fleet were at sea, conveying a troopship, hunting U-boats. If Humpy and Tex had borrowed any other launch but the admiral's barge, they would probably have been at sea, too, flying patrol over that convoy—

"Here's your helmet!"

The phones were fitted, the helmet encased Tex Malone's head. Immediately he imagined he was smothering. And a man couldn't see much, with only a circle of thick glass in front of his face—

Clank! Clank! Clank!

Tex jumped. The diving suit began to swell under pressure from the pump. A chief machinist's mate loomed in front of him and pressed a Stillson wrench into his hand and thrust a knife in his belt. Humpy led the way toward the rail.

TEX MALONE'S head felt queer, and his ears were ringing. The blood pounded in his temples under an excess of oxygen. He wished, suddenly, that he had joined the army.

Humpy clambered down the ladder, air hose and life line paying out after him. Tex followed. The sea, a greedy monster with a million tongues, began lapping at his rubber-encased legs.

Splash!

His foot slipped. The greedy monster swallowed him. The life line brought him up with a jerk, and he gasped as the light over his face plate faded to a green dimness.

Now they were going down, side by side, steadily, slowly. The pressure inside their suits increased to offset the crushing weight from without. Strange fish shot past, curious at the necklaces of glistening bubbles that trailed from the helmet exhaust valves. Humpy was discovering he could see much farther in these tropic seas than in the cold waters off Newport, where he had attended diving school—

There was a shark—maybe! Tex gasped and grabbed at his knife. The movement of his arm frightened the fish away. Tex swallowed vainly, trying to relieve the pressure on his roaring ear drums. He had to breathe much faster now, as the surplus of oxygen grew in the suit.

The swells rolled above them, rocking them gently from the vertical. Then they reached a depth of fifty feet and found the water calm. Tex would have sworn they were down a mile.

His knees buckled under him suddenly, as his weighted boots struck the bottom and sent up a little flurry of sand. Lines and air hoses went slack.

"On the bottom!" reported Humpy, and turned to the right. Up that way, over the humping sand, they would find the wavering, spidery line of the anchor chain dropping into the depths—

"Hey!" exclaimed Tex, forgetting Humpy could not hear him. "How about thg cognac?"

"How about what cognac?" retorted the skipper's voice in his ear-phones. "Listen, you blankety-blank swabs, forget cognac for once and find that mudhook!"

"Aye, aye, sir!" chorused Humpy and Tex.

The lanky ex-cowboy followed Humpy through the weird, half light, with blood hammering thunderously in his temples and a chill of dread chasing along his spine. Their progress was slow. The sand had been piled in heaps as though drifted by wind. Ghostly seaweed, waist-high, waved its fronds like specters of the deep. The sand seemed to climb toward the left; Tex remembered the shore was only fifty yards over that way—

He sucked in a sudden grasp of horror, and his legs went weak. Something, he knew not what, was coming!

It looked like a whale. It cast its ominous, black shadow across them as it slipped out of the dim waters

just to the left. It was a great, vague shape that almost bowled them over as it slid past, settling toward the bottom until there were only inches between it and the sand—

Humpy had stopped. Both men were frozen into immobility. Tex stared wide-eyed, entranced—

“Find that anchor?” boomed the captain’s voice in their headsets.

Tex opened his mouth to speak, then clamped his jaw shut. A sudden whirring that was more felt than heard, a terrible suction that seemed to pull the two men toward the tapering stern of the sea monster—

“Submarine!” gasped Tex.

“What’s that?”

“Submarine!” Humpy agreed. “She’s here—”

Whirrrrr!

The suction of the screw slammed them against the slimy stern plates of the U-boat. They fought with desperate, agonizing effort, digging their heavy boots into the sand, shoving their hands against the cold steel hull, unheeding the captain’s frantic words in their ears.

Snap!

A sudden jangling noise, close at hand, then a dead stillness. Humpy Campbell knew what had happened, even as he saw the U-boat stop dead and rest on the sand, its propeller still.

The keen bladed screw had sucked in the slack of their lines and air hoses—had severed them sharply as a knife! The slender threads on which their lives depended had been snapped!

Hastily, the stocky pilot grabbed the exhaust valve on the top of Tex Malone’s helmet, screwed it shut. Then he closed his own to save the last breath of that precious air inside—the air that would save them from being crushed to death.

The strings of bubbles ceased. There was no end to the roaring in their ears, like surf beating incessantly on a distant shore.

Humpy looked at the submarine, and helpless, childless rage surged through his body. It was as though she had come all the way from Heligoland to do this—to send two defenseless men to a terrible, choking death—

Then he reached for his shipmate’s hand. Tex Malone’s face was a dim, white blur, as though he were already dead. But he moved in answer to Humpy’s tug.

They started walking, painfully, slowly, up the slant of heaping sand that led toward the shore. They might be able to make it; there might be enough air in the suits to last them several minutes.

THEY leaned forward, like men fighting a gale, dragging weighted feet through the sand, crushing the life out of strange, crawling creatures. They went around the stern of the submarine; Humpy saw a thin cable slanting upward toward the blessed light, and wondered what it could be. But he had no time, now, and he kept going.

The light was growing stronger. The swells swayed them in rhythmic motion with the seaweed. Lights flashed before their eyes, and their breath whistled in and out of tortured lungs. But the light was growing stronger with every uphill step— Then the sand underfoot gave place to a timbered shelf, and firm concrete. The water streamed suddenly from their face plates, leaving a dazzle that hurt their eyes. With a last supreme effort, Humpy lurched out of the water and seized Tex Malone’s helmet to unscrew the face plate.

The lanky observer’s face was drained of all color, and there was a ghastly trickle of crimson from his nose. He sucked in blessed air and collapsed on the seaplane ramp. Humpy ripped off his own faceplate and sank beside him. For a minute they panted and let the world reel dizzily about them. Then—

“Look!” gasped Humpy. “The *Hercules* is shoving off! My God, look—they’re captured!”

Tex turned, staring seaward. There was a trim, rakish merchantman beside the low oiler—and there were guns on the merchantman’s decks, all trained on the *Hercules*!

“She’s flying the German flag—now!” Humpy exclaimed. “You can bet she wasn’t, when she steamed in through the breakwater! She went alongside and made the *Hercules* slip her anchor chain!”

“But what’s the idea—a submarine and—”

“I get it! Did you see that cable running up from the sub’s conning tower? Well, that was secured to this raider! She guided the U-boat in. The submarine is a mine layer—dropping enough eggs in this harbor to blow all the Suicide Fleet to hell! And the raider has captured enough oil to supply all the Kraut subs in the Azores for months!”

Boom!

A dull explosion from the hill that overlooked the harbor. One of the ancient guns that manned the entrance was hurling defiance at the intruder. But the projectile fell short by long yards—

“Hell!” Humpy snorted. “That’s about a seventeenth century muzzle loader the Portuguese have got up there! They can’t—”

Crack!

Black smoke and garish, ragged flame leaped from the side of the trim raider. Masonry crumbled on the hill. The gun was silent.

The two sailors struggled to their feet. A crowd of excited, gesticulating men had gathered in the cobblestone streets that climbed up from the water.

Crack!

A shell whistled over the town.

Ponta Delgada scurried for cover, shrieking.

Crack!

Timbers crashed and fell. Humpy shot a glance along the shore. That was the administration building, where old Admiral John G. Noah had his staff headquarters. The building was in shambles. Probably the old sea dog lay dead in the ruins—

“Come on!” shouted the stocky pilot. “Hurry—get the engines started!”

Neither stopped to remove the cumbersome diving suits. They clambered aboard the port wing of *Noah’s Ark* and started walking toward the fuselage.

“Hey, stop that, you guys!”

It was a marine sentry, appearing from nowhere up the street. He lifted a Springfield.

Red rage swam before Humpy’s eyes. John G. Noah, the lovable old-so-and-so who had busted them to apprentice seamen and ordered them shanghaied, was up there in the twisted wreckage of the administration building—

“Go to hell!” he bellowed at the leatherneck.

“Lay off that plane, or I’ll fire! I got my orders!”

Humpy painfully lifted a leg over the pit coaming and slid down to turn on the ignition. Tex Malone manned the port pusher prop.

“I got my orders, I tell you!”

“You know what you can do with ’em!” retorted Humpy.

Crack!

A bullet struck something hard and screamed away over the water. The port engine burst into stuttering song.

Crack!

Another slug whined harmlessly past. The starboard engine roared. *Noah’s Ark* lurched as Tex clambered forward to slide into the jutting bow cockpit—

“Hey, Humpy!” he called aft. “There’s—”

Humpy drowned the words in a burst from the engines. The *Ark* tugged at her mooring line; Tex Malone cast off. The rifle from shore barked again, and lead slashed through the fuselage. Humpy gunned the cold engines and the flying boat shot forward,

breasting the swells. The pilot reached to thumb his nose, and discovered he was still wearing the helmet.

“Fine flyin’ costume!” he muttered. “Well—no time to change now, and besides, it’s all we got but our underwear! You can’t fly around in your skivvies!”

“Hey, Humpy!”

TEX MALONE was trying to tell him something. No time to listen. He waved his hand impatiently. A dash of briny spray whipped over the *Ark* as Humpy yanked back on the controls. The big ship took the air gracefully.

Flying once more! Flying *Noah’s Ark*—the ship they had piloted off the foggy headlands of Finisterre, over the war torn fields of France, over the cold reaches of the North Sea and the sun-sparkled blue of the Mediterranean! A fierce surge of joy swept through Humpy. He was ready to fight anything, now.

He looked forward and caught Tex Malone’s eye.

“Bomb sights!” he shouted.

The roaring of twin Liberties and the howl of wind in the struts drowned his words and flung them back into the muffled globe of the helmet. But Tex understood. He nodded and bent over the sights.

Humpy circled back over the harbor. He was deliberately stalling for time. Had to get that captured tanker and the German raider out of the harbor. There would be a fire, no doubt, and there might be an explosion—

Noah’s Ark roared toward the breakwater. Humpy glanced over the pit coaming, crouching down behind the cowl as best he could to keep the wind from shrieking into the place where the face plate should be. He could see the debris of the administration building, and beyond and higher on the hill, the tumbled pile of ancient masonry of the fort.

“Admiral Noah did right, I guess!” the pilot told himself. “He was a lovable old cuss. He was sure proud of this ship—”

A yell from Tex Malone—a yell that was punctuated by the sudden grisly chatter of a machine gun! Two machine guns, whipping dun smoke and stabbing flame from a fast sky ship that flashed over the *Ark*!

Rat-tat-tat-tat-tat-tat!

Humpy wobbled the stick. Tex went for the flexible Lewis and yanked it around in the Scarf ring mount. It began to flame.

Tac-a-tac-a-tac!

One short burst, scarcely enough to warm the gun, and the Fokker two-place seaplane had veered out of

range. But it was coming back with a rolling, swelling thunder of the full-gunned Mercedes, boring down at the slow ship that fought for altitude—

Rat-tat-tat-tat-tat!

Lead splashed on the engine cowling. Humpy Campbell felt a sudden, smart blow on his helmet, and knew that a slug had glanced off it. A grim grin split his face. Diving gear wasn't so bad for flying, after all—

Rat-tat-tat-tat!

Synchronized and flexible Spandau flamed in staccato concert. The Lewis crackled through a blazing halo. Tex Malone, looking like a queer, pig-tailed Cyclops as the wind lifter the short piece of lifeline back of his helmet, swung the flaming snout in a wide arc and spattered the Fokker with lead.

Tac-a-tac-a-tac-a-tac!

The black-crossed ship skidded around in a flat bank, mingling oily exhaust vapors with the delicate wisps of tracer smoke. She was coming back, now, boring in. She was sure of her kill—

Humpy kicked the *Ark* into a wing-over and got out of range for a few breathless seconds. Tex Malone was struggling with his diving helmet; the pilot wanted to give him time. Tex got it off his head and jammed it down into the pit.

Whrrrrrooom!

Twin Liberties roared a mighty symphony of power as Humpy yanked his throttle wide. Down over the starboard wingtip, the busted brigadier saw the *Hercules* rolling seaward, a prize crew on board. Captured right under the Navy's nose!

Rat-tat-tat-tat-tat!

Smoking slugs whizzed past slashing fabric on the *Ark's* wings. A wire pinged; chips flew from a strut. Once more Humpy's helmet saved him from death. He glanced forward to see Tex, bare-headed, snarling like a cornered animal and spitting curses into the slipstream as he fought the gun.

Then Humpy's eyes bulged. The helmet Tex had discarded came rising out of the pit, slowly, waveringly—

Rat-tat-tat!

The Boche observer let go a vicious burst as the Fokker pulled out of its dive and flashed overhead. Hot lead splashed off the mysteriously ascending helmet, and fragments stung Tex on the cheek. The ex-cowboy grabbed his Stillson wrench and clanged it hard on the helmet.

"Set down, you!" he roared.

The helmet sank back. Tex seized the Lewis again and whipped it around to squint through the ring sights at the Fokker.

She was going into the flat bank, a hundred yards away. The *Ark* was still climbing. Humpy ruddered the flying boat around and leveled off to meet the new attack.

It came, with the howling crescendo of straining sky engines and the metallic clatter of leaping guns. The two ships roared toward each other, headlong.

Humpy Campbell set his jaw grimly and kept a firm clutch on the control stick. The *Ark* was bigger, heavier. Let the Krauts get out of his way—

Whrrrrrooom!

The Mercedes thundered as the Boche pilot lifted her up and over. Tex Malone yanked the hot Lewis muzzle skyward and raked the ugly belly of the black-crossed ship. The flexible Spandau stabbed down at them. Lead clanged on the diving helmet just as it started again to rise beside the Texan. It sank back under the force of the blow.

"Stay down, I said!" Tex screeched, grabbing for the Stillson again.

Humpy had no time to wonder what all this mystery could be in the bow cockpit. For the Fokker changed its tactics. It went into an Immehnan above and behind the *Ark*, it dropped over on its nose and power-dived down under the tail of the flying boat. Then it came up, with a burst of fire from the synchronized gun that set the floor-boards jumping.

Rat-tat-tat-tat!

Humpy gunned his engines to the full, slanted down and then jerked the stick back against the belt of his flying suit. He was going to loop and come up under the Fokker's tail. The *Ark* needed lots of room to loop in—

Sea and sky changed places. There was the wide circle of blue water, rising flipping over like a pancake. There was the German crate, below— and then something shot out of the forward cockpit and Humpy's heart nearly stopped.

But it wasn't Tex Malone, hurtling down into the path of the Boche. It was the diving helmet, falling like a heavy, round ball, and with it were glistening fragments of glass—

Crash!

Humpy and Tex could not hear that splintering noise. But they saw the flashing prop of the Fokker suddenly vanish, and they saw the swift burst of oily smoke, shot through with living flame, streak out of the racing Mercedes.

Nose down, powerless, the black-crossed ship headed for watery oblivion. The pilot cut his switch—

and then the climbing flame licked back at him and he cringed and fought his safety belt. Humpy shuddered and looked away as the flaming wreckage shattered on the waves.

He slammed the stick into neutral and straightened out the *Ark*. Then he looked forward and saw Tex Malone clinging desperately to a small, bald-headed man who had fallen halfway out of the cockpit during the loop.

HUMPY gasped. There was a lot of gold on the small man's sleeve. Admiral John G. Noah!

"My God!" yelled the startled pilot, throttling his engines. "What's he doing here? How come him aboard?"

Tex slammed the admiral back into the seat. "He's drunk!" he shouted. "He was in the cockpit when we took off—folded up on the floor with a busted cognac bottle. You can smell the liquor a mile. He's drunk!"

"You're a liar, Malone!" boomed a voice three sizes too large for the admiral. "I'll attend to that later. I'll put you up for a general court-martial for striking an officer. I'll bust you lower than—"

"You've already done that, sir!" Tex reminded him. "There ain't anything lower than apprentice seaman!"

"I'll rate you again, then bust you!" stormed the old sea dog. "But right now—what's going on, here? Where's the *Hercules*? Where's that raider?"

Humpy pointed seaward. Admiral Noah glared.

"Fly low over them!" he ordered. "Bomb both of them!"

Tex turned on him. "But there's Americans aboard—"

"They'll have to take their chances. We can't let this fuel oil reach the enemy base, wherever it is. Fly low over them and give them a chance to jump, then come back and let 'em have it! What's that?"

For a man supposed to be drunk, the admiral's eyes were exceptionally keen. Humpy and Tex looked in the direction he pointed. A covey of small craft was cutting the sea in intricate patterns—

"Subchasers!" yelled Humpy gleefully. "They're going to meet!"

Flash!

Flame daggered from the port bow of the German raider, and black smoke whipped astern to smudge her white wake. A shell was screaming over the heaving water, to burst in the antennae of one of the trim buckets of the Suicide Fleet—

Boom!

FAINT and dim, the crack of the gun reached their ears above the throttled engines. Humpy shook his head. It was at least a five-inch—and there was nothing bigger than a three-inch on those chasers. The raider might stand them off unless they could depend upon speed and maneuverability to get in close enough to strike before being hit.

Boom!

Simultaneously with the explosion, water geysered off the bow of the squadron flagship.

"Get going, Campbell!" roared the admiral.

"Aye, aye, sir!"

Humpy hit the throttle. The *Ark* slanted down under full power, props screaming, struts howling as though she were going to shed her wings. Admiral Noah grabbed the pit coaming with one hand and held on to what was left of his hair with the other.

One more shell for the Suicide Fleet. Then another gun swung skyward and belched flame. An Archie shell streaked within a yard of the flying boat's wings and burst above and astern with a dull *pffhut*.

Tex Malone bent over his bomb sights. To hell with waiting for this ship! To hell with what Admiral Noah said—it was plain he was drunk; he smelled like a distillery on a hot day—

He yanked the release—once, twice. The *Ark* lurched as two plummeting Mark IV submarine bombs lightened her load. The first struck the after deck and the next one exploded in the bridge. Twisted and torn bulkheads, shattered deck gear and hurtling fragments of steel showered into the sea. Rigging came tumbling down; the sooty stack crumpled. Then swift fire spread over all, blotting out the scene with smoke.

The *Ark* lifted her nose and headed over the wallowing tanker. Tex saw a knot of men around a deck gun—then, suddenly, there was a rush across the deck even as the muzzle swung skyward.

"Look!" chortled the observer, nudging the admiral in the ribs with a fine disregard for discipline. "Look—the prize crew is getting theirs!"

A Luger spat fire, and a bluejacket crumpled on the deck. Others came on. Hard Yankee fists swung. Men splashed into the sea. Humpy Campbell put the *Ark* around in a tight bank. On the wings of the bridge were Germans, cracking down at the deck with pistols.

"Strafe 'em, Tex!" bellowed the pilot.

Tex grabbed for the flexible gun, but was too late. Admiral John G. Noah already had his hands on it.

Tac-a-tac-a-tac-a-tac!

Deadly lead sprayed athwartships. The Germans

fell, two of them dangling writhing hands over the rail. Down on the deck men began raising their arms and shouting for mercy.

Noah's Ark came down to an easy landing on the low swells and taxied alongside. A cheer burst from the ship as the Stars and Stripes broke out again at the masthead.

The Suicide Fleet squadron hove to off the *Ark's* port wing, and Humpy Campbell remembered something.

"There's a submarine layin' mines all over Ponta Delgada harbor!" he shouted at the admiral. "We saw her—when he were diving to clear that anchor!"

Admiral Noah glared at him, then cupped his hands to bellow at the flagship.

"Make full speed for Ponta and drop depth bombs in the harbor!" he yelled. "Mine laying submarine inside the breakwater!"

"Aye, aye sir!"

The subchasers put about in a dash of spray. Admiral Noah turned to Humpy.

"So—you saw the submarine when you were diving?" he said sarcastically. "To clear a fouled anchor, you said?"

"Yes, sir. The captain of the *Hercules* will vouch for that, sir!"

"Campbell," accused the admiral, "I believe both of you are sober. It's a rare occasion when you are that way."

"Yes, sir. Aye, aye, sir!"

The baldheaded man whirled on Tex. "But Malone charges me with being drunk!"

"No, sir. I smelled the liquor, and you were out cold when I climbed into the cockpit, so I—"

"Circumstantial evidence. When I heard the battle on the *Hercules*, I climbed aboard to get to this machine gun. You had left a bottle of cognac in the cockpit. A Luger bullet struck something on the flying boat, clipped me on the head, and broke the bottle. Naturally, liquor flew all over me. Circumstantial evidence is a strange thing."

Humpy and Tex agreed silently. The admiral eyed them for a minute, the suspicion of a smile playing about his mouth.

"I have decided it might have been that sort of evidence which convicted you in the court-martial. I shall have your ratings restored and cancel your transfer orders. Harrumph!"

"Thank you, sir!"

"Don't thank me, you—you swabs!" blinked John G. Noah. "Take off for Ponta. I think we all need a drink!"

