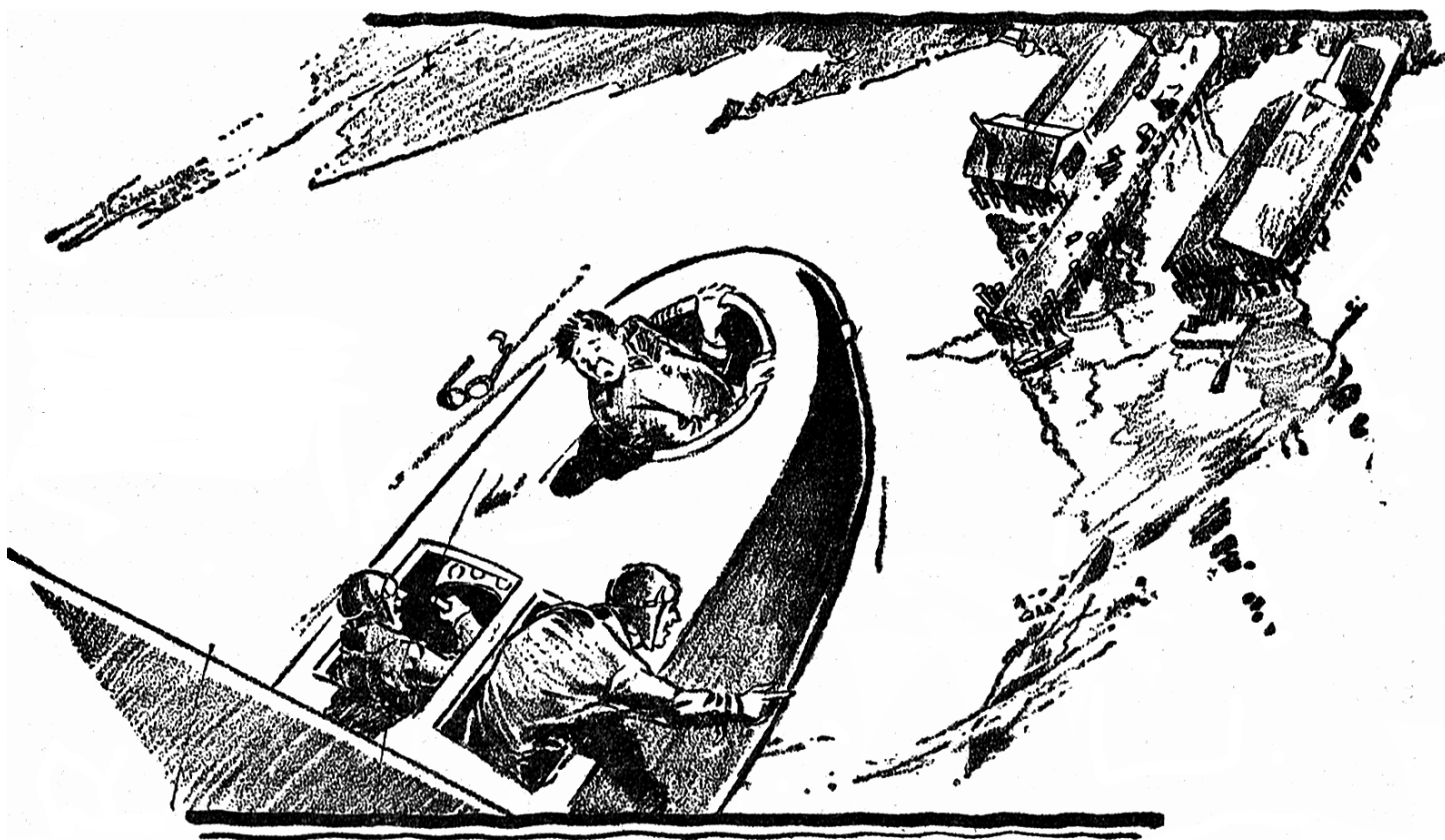




a HUMPHY & TEX adventure

NOAH'S ARK

by ALLAN R. BOSWORTH

*Noah's Ark was a nice peaceful crate 'til Humpy and Tex shanghaied an Admiral.
Then they proved that three is a crowd—for the Heinies.*

BLUE WATER ROLLED LAZILY toward tropical horizons, and the war seemed a million miles astern of the navy supply ship *Redondo* as she wallowed south. But there was a lookout in her crow's nest, scanning the surface for the slender jab of a periscope. Her skipper, watching tensely from the bridge, heaved a sigh of relief at sight of the Azores, rising like dark clouds from the skyline.

"Humpy" Campbell and "Tex" Malone, lounging topside, absorbed the morning sunlight like a pair of wet blotters after their fog-drenched months at the Ile Tudy seaplane base. Near them on the deck were stacked the crated sections of a huge flying boat, "Noah's Ark."

The *Redondo's* crew had already named the sky ship when they docked at Brest to take it and the two cloudcrackers aboard. They had heard plenty of the Azores aviation squadron so long demanded by Admiral John G. Noah, commanding the base at Ponta Delgada and reported by scuttlebutt rumor throughout the navy to be a lineal descendant of the biblical mariner.

Admiral Noah had won at last. They needed seaplanes at Ile Tudy and Killingholme and other bases which were in the war zone. But Admiral Noah got his ark, a single ship and two enlisted men to fly it.

Humpy Campbell looked at the knocked down seaplane and chuckled for the hundredth time since he and Tex had gotten their transfer papers from Ile Tudy.

"Nearly two cruises in the navy, and I fall into the softest billet this side of a recruiting duty swivel chair!" he exulted. "Imagine bein' a whole aviation unit in ourselves—you and me and the ark, there!"

"Yeah, that's it!" drawled Tex. "I've seen them one-man jobs before. Sometimes you have to relieve yourself on watch. They ain't so soft."

"It wouldn't be, anywhere except in the Azores," Humpty agreed. "But down here they ain't got any war. All they fight is spic police and Portuguese vino. And from what I've heard about this Admiral Noah, he's kinda balmy. I understand he missed too many transports out in the Asiatics. He thinks there's a submarine base somewhere in the Azores, and you know that couldn't be, with all these buckets of the suicide fleet patrollin' the—"

He stopped suddenly. It was funny how you could imagine things like hearing the drone of an engine in the sky when you knew damn well there wasn't a plane in a thousand miles.

"Listen!" Tex exclaimed, jerking himself to a sitting posture on the deck.

It was plain enough, now, that hum. Loud enough to become insistent and ominous above the bow wash and the creak and clatter of deck gear. Then there came a shout from the crow's-nest.

"Plane, ho!"

Men tumbled out on deck. All hands sensed that any plane in these waters belonged to the enemy. Then they saw it, a graceful gray bird that barely skimmed the water far off on the starboard bow and winged straight toward the slow *Redondo*.

An order was passed from the bridge. Gun crews stood by, but they were too late. The seaplane was less than a quarter of a mile away before anybody could see the black crosses on her wings and fuselage, and at that instant she swooped even nearer the gently rolling surface and let something drop.

"Torpedo!" yelled the lookout.

"By God!" gasped Humpty Campbell. "A Kraut torpedo-plane down here! I guess Noah was right!"

The *Redondo* lurched and trembled under a suddenly reversed screw. A four-inch gun aft of the bridge let go with an ear-splitting crack, and a shell screamed across the quiet water. It was fired at the gun's maximum elevation, but that was too low. The Boche plane was already roaring overhead, zooming for altitude.

Then the second explosion came, a strange, water-dulled noise like the slamming of a bank's vault door.

Tex Malone was on his feet, staring with horrible fascination at the streak of white foam which had boiled out of the sea toward the *Redondo's* bow. The deck lifted from under him in a blast of air; the next instant he and Humpty were swimming near the ship's side.

ON THE *Redondo's* listing deck an anti-aircraft gun was pouring steel after the plane, but the diminishing roar of the engine showed she was rapidly drawing out of range of effective fire.

Orderly confusion reigned aboard the *Redondo*. Her skipper ordered full speed ahead and made a hasty inspection. The forward compartment was flooded, but the engine room's prompt response to the call for reverse screw had saved the ship from destruction. Now she started slowly on her way.

Humpty Campbell spat out a mouthful of salt water and yelled as only a drowning man can use his lungs.

"Man overboard!"

The *Redondo's* crew were all safe. They weren't used to having to keep tab on passengers, especially these aviation birds. Now they discovered both of them in the water.

"Aviation unit blown overboard, sir!" a quartermaster reported to the skipper. A seaman was already throwing the two swimmers a line.

Humpty and Tex crawled on deck, dripping but safe. A ripple of laughter went around. The two flyers grinned sheepishly.

"Did you two guys say you were assigned to aviation duty—or the submarine service?" demanded a boatswain's mate as Humpty emptied the water from his shoes.

"Doctor's orders!" retorted the stocky pilot. "Said for us to take a swim every day. And we got other orders, too. Got to make the Azores safe for supply ships!"

"Get below and change your clothes!" the skipper, who had just come up from inspecting the hole in the *Redondo's* side, told them. "We'll make port all right. It looks like you men will have your hands full, patrolling the air down here!"

It was noon when the *Redondo* crawled into the sheltered bay at Ponta Delgada. The first of her cargo to be discharged was Noah's Ark, and with the aid of a detail sent ashore by the skipper and augmented by the base carpenter and repair gang, the big flying boat was assembled by nine o'clock that evening.

"You'd better have her ready to fly to-morrow, or the admiral will bust you to apprentice seamen!" warned the chief carpenter who had turned aviation

rigger for the occasion. "He's up on the hill to-night, conferring with some Portuguese officials. They're trying to dope things out; it's a cinch that the Germans have a supply base somewhere in the islands. The torpedo-plane attack to-day proved that."

"Sure it did!" Humpy agreed. "But where? I thought the islands were all under Portuguese control and were patrolled by the suicide fleet."

"That don't mean anything!" the warrant officer said. "These spies don't know who they're for. And there's too damn many hideouts in the islands. Submarines are being supplied somewhere down here, else they couldn't operate so far from a base. Maybe you can find their place from the air."

Maybe, Humpy and Tex agreed. It would be easier than the jobs the suicide fleet sailors had, anyway. Those birds put to sea in smelly, oil-burning cockleshells and spent watch after watch at their guns. Their worst foe was not the submarine, but the sudden tropical storms that lashed the Azores week after week.

"I'm tellin' you, we rate something in this navy, to get a detail like this!" Humpy insisted, as he and Tex climbed the hilly street toward the United States Restaurant. It had been recently renamed in honor of the Yankee sailors it welcomed with open arms and uncorked vino bottles.

"WELL, we didn't get off to such a good start," the observer drawled. "At this rate, we oughts be whale bait inside a week. I'll have co-neyac, what's yours?"

"More of the same!" Humpy told the waiter. A Portuguese band was making a lame attempt at jazz, supplemented now and then by some inebriated sailor who didn't care if his shipmates did laugh when he sat down at the piano.

Their waiter elbowed his way through the crowd. The air was thick with tobacco smoke, and the heavy-set quartermaster could scarcely hear the orchestra for the hubbub and chatter. He leaned across the table and stared with sudden interest at another waiter who was hovering around a near-by group of sailors, listening intently while they alcoholically argued the activities of the subchaser squadrons.

"I got it straight from the ship's writer on the *Hannibal* that the whole damn suicide fleet is goin' to be relieved!" a lanky boatswain's mate was announcing. "We're headin' for Queenstown. They'll send a division of destroyers down here because they can stand these damn hurricanes—"

The waiter brushed imaginary crumbs from their

table and pricked up his ears. He was a sawed-off runt of a man, bow-legged behind his dirty apron, and he sported a scrub-brush moustache. As he turned his face toward Humpy, the stocky quartermaster gasped.

"Hey, Tex! See that bird?"

The ex-cowpuncher surveyed the waiter casually. "Yeah, what about him?"

"Well, I know him! Hell, he used to work in old man Schnable's delicatessen back in Hoboken when I was a kid. His name's Fritz Schneider—and get this! He had put in a cruise in the German navy, and when I was home on leave in 1914, they told me Fritz had gone back to Germany to re-enlist!"

"Maybe this is as far as he got," commented Tex disinterestedly.

"Like hell!" retorted Humpy. "He's a spy! Look at the way he's takin' in everything those birds say. I'll bust him in the—"

"Sit down!" Tex ordered, grabbing his shipmate's arm. "Here's our coneyac! Watch him, that's all. He wouldn't recognize you, would he? You were just a kid when he saw you last."

Humpy didn't answer. He raised the liquor slowly.

"Well, we got one tough job!" a redheaded machinist's mate was saying at the table where Fritz hovered. "The transport *Hancock* is headed for Brest with ten thousand nigger troops aboard. We got to pick her up a hundred and forty miles west of the Azores Friday. Boy, how the old bucket acts up when she gets out of sight of land! Reminds me of the old *Tuscarora*, seventeen decks and a glass bottom—"

A chorus of jeers drowned out what he had to tell of the much maligned *Tuscarora*. But the runt of a waiter had heard real news. He was moving rapidly toward the door.

Humpy Campbell shoved back his chair and pushed through the crowd with Tex at his heels. Sailors were jostling in and out; it was easy for them to follow the waiter without arousing suspicion.

They saw him pause at the door and look into the dimly lighted street. They managed to be at his side when he beckoned to a slouchy Portuguese fisherman who leaned against a lamppost and sucked on a cornshuck cigarette.

The swarthy man cast the butt away and slunk to the waiter's side. They both looked around carefully. Nobody near but a couple of drunken sailors, and they were moving on.

"I have very important news!" the waiter said in English. "We must sail for Angra at midnight and—"

His voice sank even lower. Humpy and Tex, pretending though they were to be drunk, could not stay near without making Schneider suspect them. They moved on outside, but they had heard enough.

"ANGRA!" Humpy said. "That's where the big internment camp is, on Terceira Island. I've heard rumors that the hundreds of German sailors interned there are pretty friendly with their spic guards!"

"Let's follow that fishy bird!" urged Tex, pulling at the quartermaster's sleeve.

"Wait, I got a better idea!" rejoined Humpy. "We don't want him—he's just a boat owner, a go-between. Fritz Schneider is the guy we want. We'll watch him, knock him cold, and make him show us the way to the Boche base!"

It was past ten o'clock. Liberty was up at midnight. The two flyers went back inside the United States Restaurant to kill two hours and some more cognac. They watched Fritz Schneider listening in on the talk at every table.

The time crept by. Shore patrols began to move sailors back to their ships. Tex and Humpy, being quartered ashore, only had to show their special passes.

Finally, when the place was nearly cleared of sailors, Humpy reached across the table and nudged Tex, who was growing drowsy. Too much waiting, and too many cognacs.

"Snap out of it, sailor!" the pilot warned. "He's gettin' ready to leave. We'll go around to the side door!"

Fritz Schneider, once of the German Imperial Navy, was removing his dirty apron as he went toward the kitchen in the rear of the place. Tex downed the last of his liquor and got to his feet.

"Come on!" he said.

They stepped out into the dark street and rounded the corner. Ponta Delgada was almost deserted. There was no moon; the tropical sky stretched dark above the mountainous height of the island. Yellow squares of light marked windows of the residential section farther up the hill. Below in the breakwater-sheltered bay, the riding lights of the suicide fleet rolled gently with the swells.

Waiting at the corner for Fritz Schneider developed into an endless, tense vigil. Seconds seemed hours, minutes were four-year cruises. Humpy Campbell swore in a whisper and drew a long breath. Perhaps they had done wrong by letting Schneider get out of their sight.

"Hist!" warned Tex suddenly. Humpy's heart leaped into his throat and jammed there.

Footsteps on the cobblestones! Now they could see the little man coming down the slanting walk toward their corner.

The thing had to be done quickly and quietly. One outcry from the waiter, and spic police or fishermen would be on them. Neither of the flyers was armed.

Humpy tensed his muscles for the spring. Tex was crowding close behind, his breath hot and fast on the quartermaster's neck.

Wham! A fist thudded straight to the jaw of the sawed-off man, with all of Humpy Campbell's compact weight behind a quick, straight jab.

Tex Malone stepped in to add another, but instead, he had to grab their prisoner to keep him from falling. The little man's head rolled limply, chin forward on his chest.

"Cold as a paymaster's heart!" grunted the ex-cowboy. "Now we got to hurry!"

He hoisted the unconscious man to his shoulders, fireman's-lift fashion, and looked at Humpy. The quartermaster rubbed his bruised knuckles and led the way toward the docks, keeping on the sidestreets.

Once they passed a group of natives who appeared unexpectedly at a corner. The Portuguese laughed. Queer people, these Yankee sailors who drank so much their shipmates had to carry them back to the ship!

"I hope to hell we can clean this mess up in one scrap!" Humpy was saying. "Old Admiral Noah will be plenty surprised to find out we're on the job that quick. We might even get rated chief for this—if we find the German base."

"If we don't find it," panted Tex, "we'll probably get hell for kidnagin' a civilian!"

"Here we are!" Humpy announced, ignoring the pessimistic possibilities. "The animals are about to go aboard Noah's Ark!"

"Where'll I dump Fritz?" asked the observer. "And where's our ground crew to help get this baby outa her shed?"

Humpy considered. "We'll put him inside first, then I'll get some help from the guys down there on the boat landing," he said. "Too bad Noah ain't got his full crew together. We could use five men on this ark—about three machine gunners and a bomber!"

TOGETHER they boosted the little man into the roomy interior of the big flying boat. Tex shoved the hangar door up while the stocky pilot raised a ground

crew. They came, a half dozen sailors who wanted to know what in hell Noah's Ark was doing, shoving off on her shakedown cruise at midnight.

"Orders!" Humpy told them briefly as he started the two pusher-type engines. "We got to go on patrol. Shove off, there!"

The big flying boat rode upon wheeled trucks down the inclined runway. She dipped buoyantly into the harbor water, then moved forward under the thrust of seven hundred horse power.

Deck watches aboard the converted yachts and submarine chasers stared in amazement as the huge sky ship lifted from the dark surface and roared overhead. Humpy Campbell gripped her wheel and pointed her nose to the northwest.

"When you poke 'em, they stay poked!" Tex yelled in the pilot's ear. "How am I gonna wake Fritz so he can show us where the base—"

He shut his mouth abruptly, then it fell open again in dismay. Something had gone wrong. Their prisoner had regained consciousness, and his roaring speech was not that of a German waiter, nor even of a Kraut navy man!

"What in the blankety blank do you swabs mean? Where am I? Why, hell's bells and little fishes, I'll have somebody keelhaunched for this! Land this plane at once, do you hear?"

Humpy Campbell heard the roar above that of the twin engines at his back. His heart sank, and a dull, sick feeling rose in its place.

The stocky pilot turned around. Tex Malone was staring at the dark figure of the man they had captured. He couldn't be Fritz Schneider, suspected German spy! He was—

"If I don't have you two men strung to the yardarm, my name's not John G. Noah!" the little man roared. "Land this plane!"

They had kidnaped the admiral!

"Good God!" groaned Humpy.

"What'll we do now?"

Visions of firing squads, of the barred gate at Portsmouth naval prison, flashed before his eyes. He looked about for a means of escape. The dark sea below, the dark sky, now growing faintly light in the east, overhead. There was no way out of it.

"Well?" demanded Admiral Noah. Tex Malone ducked as though an archie shell had burst inside the big ship.

"Aye, aye, sir!" stuttered the ex-cowboy. He felt the ark dive forward on a steep slant that nearly threw him

into the snub bow. Humpy was taking a chance, setting her down on those heaving waters, but orders were orders when they came from an admiral.

Tex had no idea how far they had flown from Ponta Delgada. Time and space had been annihilated by the swift and tragic discovery of the past few minutes. Kidnaping an admiral—holy hammocks!

John G. Noah was still roaring like an enraged sea lion, and his voice belied his stature. A flare burst forth in a dazzling glow below them and marked the rolling waters. Fearful thoughts rocketed through Tex Malone's dizzy brain. What if a submarine saw that flare and captured them, or captured the admiral they had kidnaped?

Out of his wild imaginings an idea was born. By the time the big flying boat rested on the bosom of the Atlantic in a dash of spray, the ex-puncher had it all doped out.

"Perhaps you can tell me the meaning of this?" Admiral Noah began drily, as the ark lost headway and rocked on the swells with her engines idling. He lowered his voice; you couldn't have heard the last remark more than two miles away, what with the noise of the engines and the wash of the waves.

HUMPY shrank visibly at the wheel, thinking of things to say to the admiral and realizing they were not the right words. But Tex spoke up brightly.

"Yes, sir!" he said. "After we rescued you, sir, we knew you'd want to come with us to find the submarine base."

"After you *what*?" boomed the admiral.

"After we rescued you, sir! From the gang fight, I mean!"

"Gang fight? Why, I was proceeding peacefully toward my quarters, when—"

"When a couple of spic ruffians up and socked you in the puss, sir!" Tex interrupted impolitely. "You see, they didn't recognize you in civvies."

"Quite so, I have got civilian clothes on," said Admiral Noah thoughtfully. "I had done a little investigating of my own before attending this conference with Portuguese officials. Information has been leaking out to the Germans in some strange manner. Well, then, you say some one hit me. Then what?"

Humpy Campbell groaned inwardly at the mess Tex was making of things. He rubbed his bruised knuckles. Yes, some one had hit the admiral.

"A couple more spies rushed up, sir, and then we saw it was you, and we cracked them on the jaw and grabbed you and ran down the hill."

"But why didn't you take me to my quarters? Hell's bells!"

That one staggered Tex for only a moment. Then he blithely proceeded.

"Because, you see, sir, we overheard a man. we believe to be a spy telling another guy to take a message to Angra, and we believe that's where the U-boat base is, and we knew you'd want to direct the attack."

"Harrumph!" Admiral Noah cleared his throat. Tex had to admit his explanation sounded very lame. Humpy shivered in silence.

"I don't believe a word of it!" the officer said finally. "I'll see that you men are court-martialed for this. Furthermore, I smell liquor on your breath, and I don't intend to fly back to Ponta with you. We'll stay here until a boat passes within hail. Cut those engines!"

"Aye, aye, sir!" Humpy answered. He clicked the switch. There was a strained, dead silence, broken only by the mournful wash of the waves on the flying boat's hull.

"Drunk, both of you!" Noah boomed. "You'll need as many lives as a pair of tomcats to do all the brig time I'll see that you get out of this! Assaulting an officer, flying while intoxicated, kidnaping an officer, conduct unbecoming to the—"

"Pipe down!" Humpy yelled. His nerves were worn to a frazzle. They couldn't more than hang him for shutting the seagoing old foghorn's trap. There was something out there in the graying darkness he wanted to hear.

Admiral Noah gasped at such impudence. Another charge to prefer against these ruffians.

Then he heard it too, the chug-chug of an approaching motor launch. Up from the southeast it bore swiftly; they could see the running lights now, rocking in the gloom.

"Put me aboard her!" ordered the admiral. "I'll have her put about and head for Ponta. And I'll expect you two men to fly this ship back to the base as soon as it is daylight and you're sober. A fine aviation crew they sent me! Ahoy, the boat!"

He cupped his hands megaphone-wise and bellowed the challenge over the water. The lights veered away almost at once, and the launch was passing without an answer.

"Why, damn them!" frothed Noah. "I'll teach them to pass without answering our hail! Start your engines! Taxi after her and put a shot across her bow! I'm going to board her."

"Aye, aye, sir!"

The twin Liberties burst into song. Across the rolling swells the big ship moved, slowly at first, then so fast that she was touching only their tops. They overhauled the fleeing launch rapidly.

Tex Malone swung the snout of the flexible machine gun, bristling from the plane's port window, toward the boat. A vicious streak of orange fire snarled into the gloom. Another, then a rapid, short burst.

Bullets whipped into the water almost at the launch's forefoot. There were frightened cries from her deck; her engine was suddenly still. She swerved and lost way rapidly, tossing idly while the seaplane taxied alongside.

"Board her, Tex!" Humpy yelled. He put the flying boat to starboard of the launch with a skill that would have done credit to a motor sailer coxswain. The lanky Texan was already on the port

TEX leaped to the deck of the long motor boat. A light flashed on by her wheelhouse. She was a cabin cruiser, trim and fast.

"Steady, there!" bawled Admiral Noah. He was preparing to board her too, but a shout from Tex Malone halted him.

"Hold everything!" yelled the ex-cowboy. "I've got our spy. No you don't, you hash-slingin' pretzel bender! I'll take that gun!"

There was a short, sharp scuffle on the boat. Tex sprang from the shadow of her deckhouse, a revolver in his hand, and motioned the man who had carried the gun to step forward. Humpy Campbell gasped.

The light showed him the captive. It Was Fritz Schneider.

"Get aboard that plane!" ordered Tex. "Do some wing walkin'—and if you fall in, I'll fill you so full of lead you'll sink! Here, let me see what you've got there, before you try and throw it overboard!"

He grabbed Schneider's wrist in time and seized an envelope. The little waiter sullenly came aboard the seaplane. Back of them, on the launch, was the slouchy fisherman they had seen earlier in the evening. Now he volleyed explanatory Portuguese and shrugged his shoulders expressively.

"Here you are, sir!" Tex said. He handed the admiral the envelope, and the officer hastily scanned its contents in the glow of the instrument-board light.

"Good God!" he exclaimed as he saw the angular German script. "This stuff is a complete resume of our plans for the next week! It's got about the transport *Hancock*—"

"We told you so!" Tex retorted. "Now, this bird can show us where that base is near Angra!"

He punched Fritz with the revolver.

"Will you direct us to the U-boat base, or shall I blow the kraut out of you?"

Fritz shuddered.

"Don't shoot!" he begged. "I'll—I'll show you!"

"Let's hop!" roared John G. Noah. "Hell's bells, but you men were right, after all!"

"Aye, aye, sir!" answered Humpy. "This other bird don't count. We can pick him up later if you want him."

He gunned his engines. This time, Noah's Ark took the air.

Dawn tinged the top of Terceira Island with pale light. It was nothing more than a huge, volcanic mountain, split by deep ravines and scarred with lava and blackened rock. There were hundreds of inlets seen from the seaplane; any one of them large enough to be the hiding place of submarines.

Tex Malone jammed the gun into Fritz's ribs once more.

"Point it out, point it out!" he yelled above the drone of the engines. "And if you lie to me, I'll cut your black heart out and ram it down your throat!"

"I do not lie!" swore Fritz in desperation. He had lived among these Yankees for years without suspecting what atrocities they would commit when aroused. Imagine cramming a man's heart his own throat down—the idea was sickening!

He pointed a trembling finger out the window at the rough island below.

"Around that point over there!" he said. "An inlet there opens up, with camouflage. The bay wider grows—"

"All right! But if you're lying—"

"*Nein, nein!*"

Tex moved forward and imparted his instructions to Humpy. The stocky pilot nodded and bit an oversize chew of navy plug.

The big plane roared on, steady as a freighter in calm seas. Her crew strained eager eyes for the opening in the ragged shoreline.

"Stand by!" bellowed Admiral Noah.

"There it is!"

Humpy saw it too, a sheltered cove lying behind a narrow opening in the rocky hills. From their position aloft they could make out the camouflage—a wall of canvas, painted like a stage drop to represent rocks and stunted shrubs. The suicide fleet, forced to keep a mile

off the dangerous coast when patrolling those waters, might cruise past for years and never see that break in the shoreline!

HUMPY put the wheel over and headed the big sky ship toward her objective. There was a yell of warning from Tex Malone, who pointed toward the inlet with one hand and grabbed at his Lewis gun with the other.

The gray Fokker, with the first rays of the morning sun glinting on her whirling prop, was climbing from the water below like the proverbial bat out of hell!

She was faster and more easily maneuvered than the big flying boat. Humpy watched through narrowed eyes as she zoomed toward his plane with a speed nobody could get from a cold engine. The drone of the twin Liberties carried for miles; he knew the Boche peelot had been warned in advance.

Humpy glanced toward the admiral. The old sea dog was eager for the fray. He took up his position at the tunnel gun which commanded the air beneath the flying boat by firing through the bottom, and his mustache fairly bristled. Humpy shifted his tobacco from port to starboard and eased forward on the wheel. The plane swooped to the fight.

The Boche's synchronized Spandau was spitting as she climbed under them. Admiral Noah's gun answered. Humpy fought desperately to hold the advantage of top position.

A steep bank and a rapid climb on the part of the Fokker nearly put her above. Humpy kicked the big ship around on her ear to cover the move of the fighter. He knew the German plane was not burdened with torpedoes now; she climbed too fast.

Tac-a-tac-a-tac! Now she was on their starboard. Almost on a level with the heavy boat, still climbing. Tex Malone spat out a curse as he leaped from the port gun to that on the starboard side. They needed a full crew on the ark, or a guy needed four hands to keep all the guns going!

He kicked Fritz Schneider out of his way. The German toppled in a heap on the floorboards, his eyes wide with fright at being under fire from his own guns. A hail of tracers slashed through the cabin and raked the floor where he lay, and he did not rise again.

A wire pinged, and the big ship lurched. The Boche went into a tight bank and swung around their tail, her flexible gun in the observer's cockpit keeping up a steady fire.

"Hell's bells!" boomed Admiral Noah. "Such mobile targets! Not like a battleship, are they?"

"No, sir!" Tex yelled. "By God, they're out of range of this gun again!"

He and the admiral leaped for the starboard gun simultaneously, with a sudden shifting of weight that threatened to capsize the ship. John G. Noah got it.

"I'll man this gun!" he rumbled. "By God, I was taking these things apart when you wore stern-sheets!"

Bullets ripped through the wing fabric and crashed into the engine. Humpy had a fleeting glimpse of the water below; of two sleek, gray hulls lying close inshore. Submarines! No time for them now.

The Fokker was roaring out of range after that last hot attack. She veered like a swift sea bird; she was coming back to the fray with her Mercedes full-gunned and her synchronized Spandau flaming. She climbed; nothing could keep her from getting on top now.

Three machine guns, four machine guns were chattering, hurling hot lead through peaceful, tropic skies! The Boche shot above them, her pilot's gun blazing until the tracers smoked into thin air over their heads; her flexible weapon snarled without a break.

For one shot-riddled second, her belly, the blind spot of two-place ships, was exposed to the two gunners in the American plane. And in that brief interval, John G. Noah got in his work.

THE admiral fairly squeezed his small body through the window to train the machine gun at the highest range he could bring it to bear. He pressed hard on the trigger trip, right at that Fokker belly.

Tac-a-tac-a-tac! One short burst from the Lewis gun's ugly snout, poured hot and heavy into the floorboards of the German ship! Humpy Campbell, fighting the heavy crate desperately to get out from under, heard a leather-lunged yell of triumph.

"Got her, by God!"

It was Admiral Noah's voice; enough to wake anybody but the dead. Tex Malone, sagging at the port machine gun with a slug through the fleshy part of his thigh, opened his pain-shut eyes to see a trail of black smoke belch from the Fokker; he saw her twist crazily, then plunge flaming.

She shot past them on her downward journey. Her pilot, mercifully unconscious of the flames that licked out of the pounding motor and enveloped his cockpit, was sagging against his safety straps. The observer tried to leap toward the cool water far below, but he was caught in the fiery wreckage.

Tex shuddered, then slipped limply to the floorboards beside Fritz Schneider.

Admiral Noah grabbed at him, but Humpy yelled, "Bombs!" he said, and pointed to the slimy hulls down in the sheltered bay. Already men were running for safety, hard to find in that spot where the mountain walls met the sea.

"Aye, aye!" roared Admiral Noah. He reached for the release lever. Humpy leveled the slanting ship and tried to keep her on an even keel despite the broken wire. Now they were almost over the two U-boats.

He felt the ship lurch as both the heavy bombs it carried plummeted downward. There was an instant burst of flame from the ship that lay inshore, and Humpy's heart leaped with exultation before he realized that it came from the throat of a deck gun and not one of their eggs.

The shell whistled past and exploded somewhere far above. From the pent-up bay below a dull explosion boomed. The stocky pilot watched while the smoke cleared.

It drifted slowly away. Where there had been a gun crew of men brave enough to stand by in the face of death, the deck was clear. A wounded man struggled in the water; a ragged hole gaped aft of the conning tower, and, smoke of a different kind, black with oil, poured forth.

The outboard submarine was turning over. Water poured in some hole well down on her waterline; scummy oil and great bubbles rolled out. Then she sank, with her slimy belly turned to the sky, and vanished.

Noah's Ark wobbled and lurched as she cleared the crest of Terceira Island and sought safety and repair on a calming sea. Down she came like a tired bird, and rested on the water.

Tex Malone opened his eyes and looked up deliriously at John G. Noah, who was supporting him.

"Noah's Ark!" muttered the ex-cowboy. "Noah's Ark! Two by two; two jackasses who made a monkey out of the admiral, and the admiral who made shark-bait out of the Boche—"

Then he raised his head and recognized the admiral with a grin. The admiral grinned back.

"Hell's bells!" he boomed. "Damn if I'm not an ungrateful old son of a sea cook! I never did thank you lads for getting me out of that—*er*—that gang fight!"