

FIVE GOBS

by C. M. MILLER

Five gobs stranded in a motor boat didn't amount to a tinker's damn when that periscope sneaked up. The U.S.S. Leichester turned seaward and ran like the devil—leaving those five to play with a Heinie sub.

BOATS" Whipple joined the navy for the express purpose of making the Kaiser eat humble pie and he wasn't letting anyone shirk his duty when he was around.

"Scar, damn your lazy hide, get to work. You joined this outfit because the cops were interested in you, and you're not goin' to soldier on the job—not in my division." Boat's gray eyes crackled and disgust showed on his weathered face. A face that would not tan—it turned red.

"Yeh! What if I did want to dodge the cops? It ain't any of your biz." Scar's piglike eyes glittered and his thin bloodless lips twitched over yellow teeth.

Boats wore his two chevrons proudly and seriously—Scar thought too seriously—but Boats was careful about his work while the five-foot Scar dodged as much of his share as he could.

"Man overboard!"

The cry rang about the *U.S.S. Leichester's* decks as she plowed her snub nose through the Irish sea. Engine-room bells jangled. A man threw over a cork life ring. It landed near a struggling seaman and he clawed his way to it in frantic haste.

Boats leaped up from the bit on which he was sitting, dropped his palm and needle, and ran to the ship's only motor boat. The *Leichester* had just come through a bad blow, and the motor sailer was the only whole boat that remained.

"Hey Scar, get in here. You too, Baker and Horton. Come on." Boats leaped into the sailer and began uncovering the engine.

By the time she was hoisted out board and lowered into the water, the struggling seaman was far astern but plainly visible.

The little forty-foot boat spun around and raced away to his help. He was quickly drawn aboard, the cork ring lifted into the boat and they began the half mile return to the ship.

"Hey, Boats, look at that." Baker pointed toward the *Leichester's* stack.

A cloud of steam rose straight into the calm air. "Aw, she's getting under way. Somethin's gone wrong."

The dull bellow the ship's siren came over the water—a single blast followed by several short toots.

"General quarters!" gasped Boats.

"What the dev—a sub—*Look!* There's her periscope."

A vicious-looking stick cut through the sea at the apex of a V of waves in the oily water.

Crash! Boom! The two guns on the *Leichester* were in action. Spurts of water shot up near the periscope and it quietly slid out of sight.

A bubble, followed by a blast of air under compression, broke surface near the motor sailer.

"Damn his greasy hide! He sneaked over near us so they can't shoot. Look! There goes a torpedo." Boats stood at the tiller and pointed to a yeasty streak of water that was rapidly nearing the turning ship.

The wily sub commander had placed his boat so near the motor sailer that the ship's guns dared not fire for fear of hitting their own men.

"Ray!" The sailer's crew cheered. "He dodged that torpedo." True the ship had maneuvered to safety, but she also was running away from the sailer.

"Hey! My God, he can't do that Leave us out here—alone," whined Scar.

"He can't, can't he? Well looks like that's what he's doin'," answered Boats. "What does five lousy gobs amount to, tell me that? Department's orders anyway. All non-combatant ships are to get away from subs—not fight 'em. Hell, we got a good boat. Plenty of rations, lots of water, guns, ammunition and a sail. Even got a compass. What more do you want?"

Scar may have been a second story man—even a gunman—he kept quiet about the details—but he had no courage to face a crisis. He was now in the bottom

of the boat, blubbering and whining while the four men watched him—disgusted.

“Here’s the Heinie,” gasped Horton.

The slimy sides of the sub’s conning tower, with a white U-28 painted thereon, broke water. She had missed with the torpedo, and the range was now too great for another shot so she had abandoned the fight.

A tired-looking officer climbed from the conning tower to the deck and called, “Motor boat, ahoy!”

“Ahoy yourself, and see how you like it,” answered Boats through cupped hands.

“That, I suppose, is Yankee humor. What are you doing away from your ship?”

“Who wants to know? Guess you chased him away and we can’t keep up,” Boats responded.

“Hey, Boats, shall I wing him?” questioned Baker in a stage whisper. He was lying down in the boat and held a Springfield in his hands. “I can’t miss at that distance.”

“Lay off that. We can’t fight that guy,” Boats ordered, then raising his voice he interrupted the angry German. “Nope, can’t keep up with her. We picked up a man overboard, then you came along.”

“Set your course north-northwest and you’ll come to land.” He turned, climbed the conning tower, glanced around the horizon and went below. Soon the sub slid under water and was gone from sight.

“Say, Baker, put that gun away. If you had shot that guy they would have mopped up the ocean with us. Lucky we had a crazy Old Man though. No one else would put guns in a boat and keep ’em there.”

“Boats, damn you, you got me in this boat and I’m goin’ to get you,” wailed Scar as he beat the thwarts with his hands. “Watch me.”

“I’ll watch you, you skunk. Howling about your good for nothing hide.” Boats began unlash the mast. “Come on you fellows, let’s step this mast and rig the sail. No use wasting good gas, we might need it.”

The mast was soon stepped and they got under way, pushing little ripples of water from the bow as the sail bellied out to a breeze that was steadily rising.

“JOIN the navy and see the world,” sang Horton. “By golly, the recrutin’ officer didn’t tell me about this.” Boats was gazing anxiously about the horizon. The *Leicester* was a mere smudge that rapidly became smaller, then merged with the late afternoon haze. The submarine was gone.

“I hope the skipper radioed a destroyer to pick us up,” he said as he pushed over the tiller and swung the

boat so the sail would gather the growing breeze. “Say, Horton, cut that howling—guess you call it singing—and break out some rations.”

The men ate hungrily, and Scar called for more. His fright had not affected his appetite.

“Nothin’ doin’ Scar, we might need these rations later on and it’s better to save them now than wish we had.”

Scar mumbled something under his breath and climbed forward into the bow of the boat where he sat, alone.

“Guess we better fix watches. Horton, you and Baker can stand one, and Scar and I will stand the other. I don’t want to go to sleep with that guy near me, so watch him.”

As the sun dropped out of sight in the west, the breeze freshened. By dark it was whipping up strong, and at about nine o’clock they had to take in the sail and start the engine. By midnight the idea of the watches had been forgotten, when all hands turned to and began to bail water.

Waves splashed over the side of the boat, drenching the men and filling it rapidly. The engine turned over steadily and its noise helped to dispel some of the gloom.

The wind steadily increased, and flying spray stung the faces of the men as they labored to keep the sturdy boat afloat. Boats lashed himself in the guard rail at the tiller and kept the sailer’s nose into the sea. Horton, Baker and the sobbing Scar bailed steadily. The water gained even though they exerted themselves to the utmost. Wave after wave broke over the boat and undid all they had accomplished.

“Baker,” shouted Boats, above the wind, “get one of those ration cans and use it.”

Baker had been using his hat for a bucket. Now he jumped aft, emptied a tin ration can and used it to bail. Horton followed his suit and soon they began to gain on the seas. Scar bailed to the best of his small ability but seemed to accomplish little. On the whole, the four men ignored his existence.

“Hey, Baker, take this tiller,” shouted Boats while he unlash himself. “Lash yourself there, keep her bow onto the seas. If you don’t we’ll sure go over. I want to bail a while ’till I get warm.”

Sea after sea broke over the boat, but the example set by the hard-working boatswain kept the men bailing, and at last the sailer began to ride higher and lighter. She took the waves instead of allowing them to break over her. Finally only a little water slopped and slushed under the floor boards.

Removing the need for work was not a blessing. It gave the men a breathing spell but it also allowed them to worry about their predicament, and soon they began to feel the sharp wind as it cut through their soaked clothes.

Boats, warmed by the exercise, again took the tiller and told the four men to lie down under a tarp. As they were hauling the tarp out of its storage place, they uncovered about fifty fathoms of Manila rope with a grapnel hook attached.

“Scar, I told you to stow that grapnel gear in the hold two days ago,” shouted Boats.

“Go to hell,” mumbled Scar under his breath.

Boats, chilled to the bone, watched a gray morning spread over the sea. The sailer bounced and bobbed over huge waves as they rushed past. Spray stung his face and plastered his soaked clothes to his body.

Shouting at the top of his voice, he managed to rouse the men who were cat napping under the tarp.

“Hey, you fellows, snap out of it and one of you take this tiller while I warm up a bit.”

Horton crawled out and working his way aft, took the tiller. Boats began an Indian dance. Suddenly, the engine coughed, started, sputtered and died.

“Hell, out of gas,” Boats shouted. “This wind is too high for the sail. Get busy, you swabs, we got to rig a sea anchor.”

With no steerage way, it is impossible to hold a boat’s head into the wind. She swung about into a trough and almost capsized. Wave after wave swung her on her beam ends, while the men labored mightily to rig their sea anchor.

The grapnel line was used to lash their three tarps together, and these were dropped over astern. Soon the boat began to head up and ride the seas.

“Come on, you guys. Get busy and bail out this water.” Boats set the example by grabbing a ration tin and set to.

The boat again dry and riding high; food and water were rationed out and they ate a cold insufficient meal.

“I’m going to lay down awhile. You guys keep this boat headed into the seas, and call me if you sight a ship.” Boats crawled far forward and rolled himself into a shivering ball.

Scar gathered the men about him aft and for half an hour talked without an interruption.

“What youse guys mean—decent—didn’t he bawl me out for leavin’ that grappel line in the boat, and look if I hadn’t what would we have made a sea anchor out of, tell me that? All I want youse to do is leave me

alone. I got my sticker here and I’ll do the work.” He drew a wicked-looking knife from an armpit scabbard and held it in his hand. “That guy got us in this boat and look what happened.” Scar’s piglike eyes glittered.

He should have been a salesman or professional solicitor for some M.D. His voice held a persuasive quality hard to resist. The men were wavering to his way of thinking. But to give them credit, they were dealing with a super salesman.

“Say, how about that time Boats reported you present when you broke liberty? He saved you a court-martial sure,” spoke up Baker.

“Hell, he just wanted to make a record for his division. He wasn’t protectin’ me.” Scar slipped his knife into his sock and punctuated his statement with a stubby finger. “Hell, it would be easy. All you guys do is set still. I’ll slip up and stick the shiner between his ribs while he’s asleep. If any one ever asks us what happened to him we’ll tell ’em he fell overboard. Now youse guys just set still, and I’ll get him.

Boats, after his hard night’s work was sleeping the sleep of the just. Scar reached down, slid the knife from his sock and began crawling stealthily forward.

BAKER, Horton and the rescued seaman sat paralyzed. They wanted to shout, but their dry throats refused to form the sounds.

Boats, unaware of the danger, snored on while Scar, his knife held ready in his right hand, crept closer. He rose to his feet, looked the sleeper over as if selecting a suitable spot for the thrust then raised his right hand.

The knife glittered as he turned his wrist for the blow.

Baker, who was steering, had forgotten the tiller, and the slack in the line to the sea anchor allowed the boat to swing; and then a wave caught it on the beam. The boat jerked and swung high.

Scar, poised for the thrust, lost his balance and fell in a heap on Boat’s legs. Boats snapped to a sitting position and seemed to grasp the situation immediately.

He grabbed the gangster’s right wrist and hung on for dear life. Scar, being on top, had the advantage over Boats who was badly cramped in the bottom of the boat. Boats knew if he let loose of Scar’s right arm he would be food for the fish.

Scar drew his feet under him then snapped them out. His heels caught Boats in the stomach, and nausea drew the blood from his face, but still he held the knife wrist. Boats rolled about and tried to put his weight

into a twist that would snap Scar's arm but the blow in the stomach had sapped his strength.

Cold beads of perspiration crept down his face as Scar threw his weight on his knife hand and forced it down. Six more inches and it would have entered Boat's throat. Suddenly the boatswain drew up his knee and caught Scar in the stomach. The blow told and allowed Boats to squirm from under the sharp blade.

Scar struggled to his feet and bent over in another attempt to throw his body weight on his knife arm. Boats drew up both feet and planted them forcibly and squarely in Scar's stomach.

The blow knocked the gangster galley west. He fell backward, tripped over a thwart and struck his head against the gasoline engine. Boats staggered to his feet and looked down at the wharf rat.

Scar lay just as he had fallen. A nasty cut in his scalp streamed blood, and it slowly spread over the floor boards and mixed with the sluicing water under them.

"Damn his dirty guts. Tried to knife me. I didn't trust him," Boats whirled accusingly to the three men. "Why didn't you fellows help me out. You in with him?"

"No—no, Boats. We—I guess he just took us by surprise," they lied. To be fair with them, they were already ashamed of their silent part in the affair.

"Throw some water over that damn thing and let's bring it to," ordered Boats.

The men scrambled around in exaggerated haste and soon Scar sat up. Boats picked up the fallen knife and jabbed it at Scar. Scar winced and slid away from him.

"You're yellow, eh? Tried to stick a fellow when he was asleep. Well, I won't kill you but I'm goin' to tie you and turn you in for mutiny when we get in."

Scar whined and begged for mercy but Boats grimly bound him tight and stowed him away in the bow.

"You won't do any more of that while I'm here," he said.

The day dragged to a close and the wind went down with the sun. Morning found a heavy ground swell running, but the men were able to rig sail and set themselves on their course again.

Boats took the tiller and they were running merrily along with white water showing at the bow, when he sighted a smudge of smoke on the horizon. The watch was anxiously taken up and soon they were certain the smudge was growing larger.

A huddled group of men watched the lines of a cargo ship grow out of the sea, and saw it turn towards them in answer to their frantic waving.

Suddenly Horton screamed and pointed. A tent pole was cutting the waves a short distance away. The sub had followed them and was using them for bait.

"Horton," shouted Boats. "Get in front of that white sail and stand up, and point to that periscope so they'll see you. Quick, before he fires a torpedo."

Horton did as he was ordered and soon a long blast and several toots of the ship's whistle told them the periscope was sighted. The big vessel's stack belched smoke, her bow swung around and she ran. With her, went the aroused spirits of the five men.

"Damn, she's gone," groaned Baker.

"Sure, but she'll radio a destroyer where we are," commented Boats.

"Yeh, the other one didn't find us did she?" growled Scar.

"Shut up. Nobody asked you to say anything. Anyway, how could a destroyer find us after dark and in a rough sea like we had?"

Boats gave his attention to the sub's periscope. It followed along, perhaps a mile astern. "Man, I know just how a fishworm feels, now," he said.

THIS position was maintained until late afternoon when the sub came to the surface to charge batteries. The German held his position and cruised steadily along behind the motor sailer.

A restless night for the boat crew passed. They were making good time and nearing the English coast.

When the sea reddened with the first glimpse of the sun, Horton, who had the tiller, shouted, "Hey, Boats! There's a ship."

Boats sat up, rubbing red eyes. "What you say?" he questioned.

Horton, in his excitement, jumped up and down in the shaking boat. "There's a ship comin'. A big one too—come on, let's signal her."

Boats leaped to his feet and watched the big vessel as she drew nearer. "Say, you, where's that sub?"

They anxiously looked about them. The ship was heading directly toward the open boat at her best speed and was fast cutting down the distance. "There it is," Boats pointed off their starboard beam.

The periscope clove the water headed directly toward the big cargo vessel. A few more minutes and they would be in position to fire a torpedo. The sailer was directly between the two vessels, and the submarine used it as a cover as they crawled up on the unsuspecting steamer.

Boats shouted, "Baker, try to warn that steamer—"

shake a leg. You fellows help me get that grapnel line out. I'm going fishin'."

The submarine, if it held its present course, would dive and pass under the motor sailer, come up on the port side, and fire her torpedo.

The men, anxious to again be in the good graces of the boatswain mate, threw off the tarpaulins covering the line, and handed Boats the grapnel.

"You fellows feed me the line," he said. Then leaning far over the port side of the boat he allowed the rope to slide between his hands.

Several fathoms ran out before he checked it, then glanced anxiously back over his shoulder at the nearing periscope. On it came, neared the boat and submerged.

The men held their breath while Boats gave the line his entire attention.

Baker's frantic signals were evidently mistaken by the captain of the rescuing ship, for she steamed steadily on toward them.

Boats felt the line jerk, draw taut, then loosen. He cursed softly under his breath as it failed to hook.

Again it pulled only to slip loose once more. At last with a jerk of finality, it pulled tight—then drew between his hands. He pulled—it failed to give—he jerked and it held.

"Got him! Got him!" Boats fairly howled in his excitement. "Let that line out but keep a strain on it. Baker take in some more in the bow so as to give us some in the boat."

They paid out about two hundred and fifty feet of line, then it sang taut. The sail was taken in and they began a wild ride over the waves in the wake of the periscope.

Now that they had hooked their fish, they must again try to warn the steamer. Baker's antics had been misinterpreted, so Boats semaphored a halting warning to the big vessel. She answered with general quarters on her whistle, put her helm over and ran. Boats had told them about the grapnel line, and they assured him a destroyer would soon know too.

Boats lighted a cigarette, threw the match overboard, then turned to Horton, who still had the tiller, "Man, pretty soft if it don't get rough so we have to let go. Say—I forgot—we better get those rifles out and keep those birds from getting on deck. They'll shoot us up for fair if they do."

Each man grabbed a rifle and several clips of ammunition just as the sub broke surface. The German captain knew the boat was being towed by

his submarine although he did not know how. He had watched them through the periscope as they followed in his wake; and not being in a very good humor, for they had checkmated his bagging two ships, he intended to mop up the waves with the Americans.

The conning tower had scarcely broken surface when the hatch popped open, and an officer jumped up like a jack in the box.

Two rifles spit and he dropped limply back with both arms dangling over the tower's edge.

"Good work," growled Boats under his breath as he pumped the bolt on his Springfield.

"Say, I'm a dead shot at that distance." Baker glanced proudly at the rifle and cuddled his cheek against the stock ready for another shot.

"Say, if you can shoot so good see that little crack between the lid of that hatch and the top of the tower? Well, if you see anything behind that, get it. They might try to shoot from behind the hatch," Boats explained.

"O.K., I can hit that four out of five shots."

"There's something there now."

Crack! A shot buried itself in the thick side of the motor boat. A revolver was pointed between the hatch hinges and the top of the tower.

Baker pulled the trigger and even though the boat was bobbing the revolver clattered down the conning tower and dropped into the sea. A stream of shouted German answered the shot.

"Good for you, boy. That's shootin'," shouted Boats.

The conning tower hatch slapped shut, and the sub's Diesels started her through the water at their best speed.

A sub awash does not mind small waves but a motor sailer being towed at high speed is a different thing altogether. The sub ran at about sixteen knots and the little forty-foot boat flopped and slapped along at the end of its tow rope. Spray shot out from her bow, as it slammed down in the trough of a wave it had no time to ride.

Scar, bound and lying forward, rolled, Hopped and cursed. "Hey, you—Let me loose. I'll knock my brains out here." His nose spouted blood and both eyes were closing from a heavy blow across his forehead.

"Drag him aft. We ain't got any canvas to sew him up in if he gets killed," ordered Boats. Turning to Baker, who was sitting way aft, he said, "Baker, see if you can shoot the glass out of that guy's periscope. It'll be damned hard to hit it the way we are bouncing, but we got plenty of ammunition."

“Man, I’ll say,” said Baker as he climbed forward carrying the heavy rifle.

THE sub had now reached her maximum speed and the sailer almost aquaplaned. It leaped, like a deer, from wave crest to wave crest. It was impossible for a man to stand and if he tried he was quickly thrown to the bottom boards.

“Say, Boats, can this tub stand a knocking like this? She’s liable to open her seams,” chattered Horton. His teeth were knocking together from the rough ride. He had already bitten his tongue.

“I think so. She’s pretty heavy built. If I see she’s leaking any we’ll cut the line.”

A motor sailer is built for heavy duty and her sides are two-inch stuff. A lighter boat would have been splintered long ago.

The sub reeled off mile after mile, and still the sturdy boat hung on. Baker kept shooting every time he was able to line the sights with the periscope but, as yet, had missed every shot.

“Bet she tries divin’ pretty quick,” shouted Boats. “Hey, Baker,” he screamed above the wind. “If that guy stops, you better get them periscopes pretty quick or he’ll ram us. Say, you Horton, come on. Let’s get them oars out. We might need ’em to help us dodge after while.”

The German commander must have had his mind attuned to Boats’ for the Deisels stopped coughing and the conning tower began to sink.

Baker fired as the boat steadied, then, shouted, “Got one of ’em, Boats. Got one of ’em.” Then he rolled out of the way for Boats had rushed forward to the tow line.

The sub sank from sight and began its forward crawl, submerged. Boats anxiously watched the line as it again drew taut, then slanted down. Down—down it went until almost perpendicular. Every man in the little sailer held his breath. Would the line be long enough to hold?

It tightened and began pulling the boat’s bow under. The anxious boatswain mate slacked off a little and eased the strain. Behind him, coiled, lay about thirty feet of line. When that was gone, so was the sub.

A man gets a thrill out of a five-pound trout but imagine trying to play a three-hundred-foot fish. Again the line tightened, and a white-faced Boats slackened off some more. Around him stood the three other men. They held their breaths in an attempt to hold up the sub. Again he, grudgingly, gave the sub a

few precious feet. Only fifteen remained. The under-sea boat had now reached about two hundred and eighty feet depth.

Scar screamed in his fright and begged to be untied. Baker cursed but Boats only mumbled under his breath as he slacked a few more valuable feet.

“Baker, hold my feet so I can lean over the side. You two other fellows get the oars and pull, maybe we can get a little slack that way.” Boats gave the sub a few more feet. He now had a reserve of half a fathom.

The two men pulling, helped hold the line more straight up and down, and that eased the drag on it somewhat.

As the strain eased Boats dragged the precious inches aboard and Baker coiled them down.

“He’s goin’ deeper. Baker, grab my legs,” Boats shouted.

Baker jumped and held Boats by the heels as he slacked line. Then holding the vitter end, he leaned far over the side.

It seemed hours that he dangled half in and out of the boat, while the oars dug into the water and Baker held his breath. At last Boats, red-faced and sputtering, drew himself aboard, and in his hand he held the end of the line.

“He’s comin’ up. Baker coil this”—he stopped for a breath—“line as I take it in.”

Fathom after fathom of line were drawn aboard until only about fifty feet remained between the sailer and the sub.

“Hey, you fellows, back water on them oars,” shouted Boats, “we are too close to where he comes up. Baker, get your rifle and get that other periscope.” Boats began to slack off on the line as the boat backed away from where the submarine would break water.

Two periscopes, one good and one ruined, broke water and Baker pumped three shots into the good one before splintering glass told him the other eye was out. “Got it, Boats—got it.”

“Good boy! Cut Scar loose and give him an oar. That bird’ll try to ram us blind.” Boats reached for a loaded rifle and lay it where he could reach it easily.

“Keep your gun near you, Baker. May have to do some more shootin’.”

“OK.”

This was getting good. A blind submarine with a shooting boat’s crew in tow is not to be envied. The German knew it was certain death to try to climb on deck—and with both periscopes shot away, he was helpless. The vaunted strategy of the German

commander had been completely checkmated by an American boatswain mate. Nevertheless, he was still game.

Again the conning-tower hatch popped up, and a machine gun poked its wicked muzzle out of the opening.

“Baker, drop that oar and get up here forward with that rifle. For cripes sake, shoot straight or it’s all off.” Boats dropped the tow line and grabbed his rifle. “Hey, you guys, pull the boat over on his port side. He’s pointin’ the machine gun to starboard.”

If they could complete this maneuver and get behind the machine gun, the Germans would be unable to operate it. Boats was afraid to get either ahead or directly astern of the sub, as she would be sure to ram them if they did.

The oarsmen pulled their hardest and gradually the heavy boat swung to port of the submarine. Baker opened fire.

A hand and arm showed above the tower edge as a German struggled to get the machine gun in place. A shot from Baker’s rifle shattered the Heinie’s wrist, and brought a scream of pain.

The gun almost fell back into the hatch, but caught and hung drunkenly with the muzzle pointed skyward.

BOATS peeped through the sights of his rifle and fired. The machine jerked with the impact of the bullet and he pumped four more shells into the water jacket of the machine gun.

“I fixed it, punctured the water jacket. That gun is no good now,” he explained.

The machine gun was withdrawn, and again the hatch slammed shut. The cough of the Diesels started and the submarine got under way. Boats dropped his rifle and jumped to the tow line. “Baker, grab an oar again. You fellows keep an eye on that sub, and if he tries to ram, pull to this starboard side.”

Their wild ride over the sea started again. Lucky for them the slight breeze had died down, and the sea’s surface was now smooth.

Scar, due to having been tied, was unable to handle a heavy oar effectively, and Boats called him forward. “Scar we’re all in this now so you better work. You tend this line and I’ll pull your oar. Rub your hands and wrists, it’ll help.”

Scar growled something under his breath, and Boats took up the oar ready to row in case the German tried to ram.

The sailer sped along in the wake of the submarine

like a dog following its master. The bow ran clear of the water and the stern buried deep. White water shot from each side of its midships. An hour of this and the sub suddenly reversed her engines. Boats dropped his oar in the water and pulled with all his strength.

“Pull, you suckers,” he grunted.

The men strained to their utmost as the submarine rushed back over two-hundred feet in an attempt to crush their boat.

“Scar,” panted Boats. “Keep that line clear and don’t let him put a sudden strain on it. It might part.”

The sub came on and rushed past. They could have leaned over and put their hands on its wet side.

“Missed, by golly. Watch him he don’t try to ram us bow on.” Boats leaned on his oar, muscles tensed. The men, their eyes glittering, panted as they sat, stiffened, oar at ready, and watched the snub nose of the sub.

The commander worked blind, and he threw the submarine about like a wounded whale. The small sailer with its human engine dodged this way and that, ever on the alert. Boats shouted orders, and Scar coiled down line—only to pay it out as the submarine drew away from the small boat.

At last, the German commander thinking he had rid the sea of the little hornet, threw open the conning-tower hatch, and cautiously poked out his hand.

Baker and Boats dropped their oars and grabbed their rifles. “Hold on, don’t shoot his hand. He’ll stick his head out in a minute,” Boats whispered as he crouched in the bottom of the boat.

Horton and the seaman cautiously eased the sailer forward, nearer the tower, while Boats and Baker held their breaths and tried to steady their nerves.

The officer’s bared head showed at the hatch then slid up until his bushy eyebrows were seen. Boats took a deep breath and squeezed the trigger. The head dropped from sight.

“Beat me to it, Boats,” Baker said as he wiped his sleeve across his forehead. “You got him, too.”

The submarine’s engines lashed out astern and she jumped forward. Scar screamed. It was a scream of a man in physical anguish.

The four men whirled. Scar, entangled in the grapnel line, was jerked overboard and pulled forward. The line cut into the flesh of his body as it was drawn taut by the speeding submarine.

It pulled tight and jerking the boat forward, threw the men to the bottom where they scrambled, a bunch of arms and legs.

Boats disentangled himself and threw his body to the bow of the boat. Scar, probably halfway between the sub and the sailer, now bounced clear of the water, only to fall back with a splash and drag behind the U-boat.

The faces of the four men blanched white, and Boats felt his stomach turn as he watched the limp body.

“Come on, fellows. Lets pull up to him. It’ll take us all to do it.” Boats reached for the tow rope and pulled. The other three men threw their weight behind his, and hand over hand, they drew up to the body.

Tenderly they disentangled him and laid him in the bottom of the boat. “Fellows, he tried to kill me. He wouldn’t work. Maybe he was a murderer before he joined up—but he did do a good job tending that grapnel line while we dodged back there.” Boats wiped a bleeding hand over his white face, and gave his attention to the grapnel line.

“Boats!” screamed Horton. “There’s a destroyer.”

Every man jumped to his feet, a new hope shining on his face. The unmistakable lines of an American destroyer were cutting their way to them. White water

showed high on her bows and her stern rode close to the waves. Positive signs of full speed.

They danced and threw their arms in the air, and answering signs of delight came from the destroyer’s decks.

“Let that grapnel line out to the end,” shouted Boats. “We got the sub now sure. We got to get back so they can shoot.”

The German, unmindful of the destroyer, plowed steadily on with the sailer in tow.

The destroyer drew alongside the bouncing sailer, and dropped a small buoy into the boat. An officer on the destroyer’s deck shouted through a megaphone. “Make that fast to your line then cut loose.”

Boats grabbed the buoy, tied it to the grapnel line, and threw it overboard just as another officer, on the submarine put his head out of the open hatch. The sight must have sickened him for he bobbed below, and soon a white rag popped out of the hatch, and was followed by a crew with up-raised arms, and shouts of, “*Kamerad.*”

“Golly, that was some fishin’ trip,” commented Boats as he climbed the destroyer’s side.