

GIVE HER THE GUN

by EUSTACE L. ADAMS

A hydroplane stranded—an approaching submarine—a rescuing destroyer—and dead men tell no tales.

ON SUCH A GORGEOUS AFTERNOON it didn't seem to be such a rotten war, after all, especially if one was an air man. The sky was bright, the wind blew steadily from the sea, so there wasn't much more work in flying the old seaplane than in driving a motor car along a country highway.

Ensigns Peter B. Hemmingway and Jack Lewis, U.S. Naval Air Service, were drowsy as they made their daily patrol. The ancient French seaport of Havre basked in the early spring sunshine some fifteen hundred feet below them. Except for the steady procession of British motor lorries wending their way through the main thoroughfare leading southward over the hills to Rouen and for the bustling activity always to be found around the busy waterfront, the town might have been asleep for all the fliers could see from their lofty seats.

Passing over the long granite moles which protected the great artificial harbor from the long swells of the English Channel they looked down upon the half-submerged decks of the South American coffee freighter which had received her death blow from a German submarine not two miles out from the lighthouse and had staggered drunkenly past the entrance to founder in shallow water almost at its pier.

Three or four miles from shore, just beyond the great diamond shaped mine field which guarded the port lay a fleet of half a hundred steamers of every kind and description. Most of them were at anchor, the rest steaming nervously back and forth, their captains not daring to risk their invaluable cargoes of troops and merchandise by dropping their hooks in a position so vulnerable in the face of a possible submarine attack.

On the outskirts of the fleet cruised tiny French torpedo boats, dipping their lean bows into the heavy rollers of the Channel. They were the watch dogs of the port, and a heavy responsibility was theirs, for the transports of British troops, the great transatlantic

freighters and the rusty little tramps from the far corners of the world, all awaiting their turn to be piloted into the already crowded wharves, offered a happy hunting ground indeed to the roving U-boat commanders who infested these waters.

Somewhere out of sight beyond the western horizon was a fleet of freighters coming from America with munitions and supplies for the British, who were using Havre as a base of supplies for their armies at the front. The fliers had received orders to keep their eyes open for the convoy and if it arrived during their patrol they were to stay with it as long as they could with their supply of gas and then to turn it over to another seaplane which would relieve them in a few hours.

Jack and Pete were contented, but slightly bored. They had been attached to the little unit of American naval aviators near Havre for a month, now, and they craved action. So far as they had been concerned, the war had not been much more thrilling than their training course, back in the States. All their thrills had come secondhand. Some of the other fliers had seen action and the station had several scalps to its credit, but the two boys had been out of luck, for as faithful as they had been on their patrols they had not had a single chance to pull their release ring and drop the ugly bomb which hung suspended from the fuselage between the twin pontoons.

Still, one could never tell. Perhaps their luck would turn and their chance would come to add to the laurels of the station. Meanwhile, they weren't having such a bad time. A good Skipper, a wonderful bunch of fellows at officers' mess and a big town nearby to play around in during liberty hours. Of course, it had been the luckiest kind of a break that they had been able to stay together ever since they had entered the service. Other friends who had enlisted together had been quickly separated by laconic travel orders from the impersonal Navy Department, but somehow they had

received the same orders each time that they had been moved. From the ground school at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to Key West for preliminary flying, then to Miami for advanced training, gunnery and navigation and at last, best of all, their foreign orders had arrived simultaneously and for the same station in France. Once there, the Commanding Officer had noted their efficiency when working together and had given them a ship, so that they might alternate with each other as pilot and observer. So far, he had not regretted this assignment.

Jack, in the forward, or observer's cockpit, could hardly keep awake. It had been quite an evening and he was several hours behind in his sleep. The steady drone of the engine and the airstream from the whirling propeller beating back on his face were like a lullaby in their combined effect. The plane was well out to sea now, and there was little to look at. The monotony of the horizon and the scintillating, white-capped seas below them gave him little to focus his eyes upon, and he nodded.

A vigorous smack on the back of his helmet brought him quickly to his senses. Pete, piloting from the rear cockpit, was too darned conscientious. Would never let him have a comfortable little snooze. So he shook himself and looked about reproachfully. Behind his pal's grinning face, Havre was now just a faint smudge in the distance. Ahead all was clear. The surface of the water showed no suspicious objects except for the bits of wreckage from sunken ships that were always to be seen hereabouts. Each floating spar, hatch cover and battered lifeboat was examined minutely by both pilot and observer as they passed over it, but not a sign of a lurking submarine which might be using the wreckage as a decoy for unwary shipmasters.

Jack was almost ready to take another quiet little nap when he saw, dim on the horizon ahead, a cluster of smoke streaks which brought him to immediate wakefulness. There was the convoy. He turned in his seat and pointed it out to his partner, who nodded, corrected his course a trifle and turned up the engine a few more revolutions. The masts of the ships were now plainly visible. In a few moments the funnels appeared and soon the hulls could be seen, though sadly confused with the sky and water in their gray zig-zagging camouflage.

There seemed to be many steamers, steering in loose formation. Suddenly Jack's eyes narrowed as he examined the tiny ships ahead. Two of them were not

moving, their engines appeared to be stopped. The masts of the ship on the left rear flank of the convoy were tilted rakishly to one side. Those little dots on the water were lifeboats. He turned and shouted excitedly to Pete, who cut down the motor and put the plane in a slow glide so that he might hear.

"Look! One of those ships has been torpedoed! Give her, the gun!"

With a quick gesture the pilot's hand shot the throttle full on and the motor responded instantly with a high-pitched roar. The wind shrieked through the wires as the vibrating old seaplane shot ahead at full speed. Both observer and pilot felt their pulses leap in tune with the engine. Action at last! And they were right on the spot with a depth bomb! Boy howdy, what luck!

Black smoke poured from the funnels of the fleeing ships, and with white crests beneath their bows they fled for safety—each one for itself. They had no guard ships, the destroyers were now all engaged in convoying troopships, and the freighters had to shift for themselves with what protection they could give themselves and each other with their bow and stern guns manned by navy gun crews.

As the fast moving seaplane sped over the first of the fleeing freighters they saw the ship which had apparently waited to pick up the survivors forge ahead, leaving a small flotilla of lifeboats bobbing behind. It was no time for her to worry about salvage when she was at the mercy of the submarine if it was still in the vicinity looking for stragglers. Looking back at the other escaping steamers the boys were amused to see how the faster ships broke away from the group and headed for port, with the slower tramps waddling along as best they could.

They were now almost to the fast sinking victim, a fine new freighter of about 10,000 tons. The enemy had scored heavily and had dealt her a death blow. The fliers searched the surrounding waters carefully, trying to find the telltale periscope. Jack's fingers clutched the bomb release-ring, itching to pull it over the U-boat, but not a trace of it was to be seen. In another moment they were directly over the doomed ship. Her bow was already under water as far aft as the well deck. As they flew around her in a wide circle and watched the scene with fascinated eyes, the stern slowly lifted, the bow dropped, and the great ship seemed to stand on its head. For long minutes she seemed to hang there, as though reluctant to sink into oblivion. Slowly at first, then more and more quickly she slid down into

the sea amid a mighty cauldron of billowing steam and leaping waters. Life rafts, spars and wooden odds and ends of all sorts rose to the surface as they were torn from the ship in her plunge to the bottom. In a moment, it seemed, the seas calmed down, and only the flotsam remained to mark the grave of another victim of the U-boat.

Jack looked back at his partner with awe in his eyes. It had been a tragic spectacle, the death of a proud ship. But the flier in the rear cockpit had throttled the motor down, and was spiraling in a slow glide, gazing fixedly at the floating wreckage. Suddenly he cut off the gas, glanced quickly at the streaks on the surface to determine the direction of the wind and shouted:

“There’s a man down there. We’re going to land and pick him up.”

Jack looked down. He knew that what seemed like tiny ripples from a thousand feet would turn into huge swells at water level, and that landing a seaplane in a heavy sea meant a crash more often than not. But a man down there—

“Shoot!” he replied, cheerfully, tightened his safety belt and braced himself for the coming bump. He knew that his pal could bring her down safely if anyone could, for he had been through many a forced landing with him.

The shrill shriek of the wind through the wires died to a soft hum as the pilot pulled her nose up to kill her flying speed as much as he could without pancaking. He veered slightly from left to right to avoid the floating bits of wreckage that he knew would punch great holes through his thin veneered pontoons if he should hit anything in landing. He prayed that the bump wouldn’t tear the bomb loose as they came down. He leveled out a few inches above the wave crests. Whew! They were bigger even than he had thought!

Crash! The two pontoons smacked down squarely on the top of the first comber. The seaplane, its flying speed almost gone, carromed over to the next wave and hit it with a spine-jarring jolt. He pulled back hard on the wheel, but it was useless. Completely out of control, the heavy ship bounced over three or four swells and then wallowed heavily through the next. It slowed down and stopped, still on top of the water.

As Pete eased on the throttle and steered towards a black head and shoulders that were thrashing their way towards the plane the somewhat shaken youth in the forward seat slipped open his belt and climbed out on the wing to inspect the damage. His heart sank, for things looked serious indeed. The strut leading up

from the left pontoon to the outside of the center wing panel had borne the full brunt of the impacts, and had pushed itself with the wing fitting straight through the panel, and had loosened up the entire structure, causing a perceptible sag to the lower wing. At least half the wires seemed to be loose.

Now they had almost reached the swimmer, who had been forging ahead with lusty strokes. They taxied well ahead of him into the wind and then cut the throttle so that they might drift back to him and not chew him to pieces with the slowly turning propeller.

The seaplane reeled wildly but the capable young pilot was a master of his ship on the water as well as in the air and in a few moments their fuselage was almost on top of the swimming man. Jack clambered down on a pontoon, and holding himself by a stay wire he seized the half-drowned sailor by the collar and dragged him to safety. His pal cut the ignition switch, joined him on the slippery pontoon and together they pulled the stranger on to the lower wing, where he gasped for a few moments before sitting up and looking about.

He had certainly stood the exposure and the long swim well, for he must have been nearly fifty. Bronzed to a deep tan, with graying hair and a network of tiny wrinkles around his keen, blue eyes, he was a typical looking seaman of the older school. But he was more than a seaman, the youngsters noticed, for his dripping blue uniform coat had three broad gold stripes on the well-worn sleeve.

“Well, fellows,” he wheezed, “that was a little too close for comfort. I was about all in.”

“Glad we stopped by,” said Jack cheerily. It was his first rescue and he didn’t know quite what the book of etiquette would say about such a situation. “Can you crawl up into the forward cockpit and rest awhile? We have a lot to do and must be getting to it.”

The newcomer grasped a strut, pulled himself up and crawled nimbly into the cockpit, where he let himself down into the leather cushioned seat with a sigh of relief.

“Did you see that damn sub?” he asked. “If you did, let’s go and get it. I’m Weatherbee, captain, or ex-captain, of the “*Sonoma*,” that just went down. Never had a chance. Just saw the periscope for a second and then, *blam!* We were finished. She was my first command,” he went on bitterly, “and a great ship. I thought I’d stay with her, but when she went down it washed me off the bridge and I just naturally started to swim.”

"Well," replied Pete, grimly, "it's more than likely we'll soon join you in a swimming race to Havre. We can't fly back with that wing flopping."

They all regarded the loose wires seriously.

"Now, old timer," remarked his comrade, "here we are, and where's the sub? And what are we going to do if it comes up and starts to get curious about us?"

"Gosh!" exclaimed the other, "that's right! Our bomb won't be much comfort to us while we're here on the water!"

"Well," drawled Jack, "I haven't exactly what you might call a "yen" to spend the rest of the war eating ersatz bread and chasing cooties in a German prison camp, nor do I crave to try taxiing away from a sub while she takes pot shots at us from her deck gun. You know they can run just about as fast as we can taxi in a sea like this without tripping our pontoons on a wave and turning a somersault."

"We can't taxi all the way to land anyway," added his pal, gloomily. "We'll break up in half an hour if we try to taxi through those seas with these loose wires."

"Say," suddenly interjected the bedraggled captain, "do you birds want to live forever?"

The boys grinned. This merchant seaman was a man after their own hearts, and he had put into speech what had been lurking in the hearts of both of them. They looked at the bomb and silently shook hands all around.

"You've said it, my old one, as the Frenchies would say!" answered Pete. "We'll stay out here seeing if we can do anything with this blasted wing and if a sub shows up we won't seem to pay any attention to her. When she gets close we'll stand quietly as if we were waiting for her to take us aboard. As it makes fast to us, you just kiss yourself 'good-bye' and give that ring there a jerk. Nature will do the rest, aided by about one hundred and fifty pounds of T.N.T. Right, Jack?"

The other nodded grimly, and swung under the fuselage to set the little propellers on the war head of the depth charge so that it would detonate just as soon as it hit the water, fins partner leaned over the cockpit and carefully explained the releasing mechanism to the captain, who listened gravely. Then the stranger stood watch while the fliers crawled over the crippled wing, testing each wire and fitting minutely. Pete even walked out to the wing tip and jounced up and down on his tip toes very gently to see how much play there was in the surface.

"Listen," he announced at last, confidently, "I think we could get off if the sea was fairly smooth, even

with three in the ship. That wobbly strut fitting has loosened up only the load wires that hold the plane rigid when she isn't flying. When she is hanging from her wings instead of resting on her pontoons it is the flying wires that stand the gaff, and they are absolutely okeh, so far as I can see."

"That's about the conclusion I was coming to," confirmed the other jubilantly. "But that doesn't do the trick until the sea calms down a bit, which it should do about sunset, for we'd certainly shake the wings off her if we tried to take off now, with three of us aboard."

They smoked quietly, watching the surrounding seas carefully lest the now unwelcome U-boat heave into sight and precipitate the action which they had determined upon, even though it meant certain death for all hands.

"What's that?" exclaimed the captain suddenly, pointing shoreward. The boys jumped as though they had been shot, and peered in the direction of his outstretched arm. First one saw it, then the other. Visible only occasionally between the white-caps was what seemed to be a slender stick moving upright through the water. It was hidden for seconds at a time, but always reappeared about the same distance away. They knew then that it was a periscope, and that the submarine commander was cutting a great circle around the seaplane examining it carefully through his reflecting mirrors.

"Lord!" exclaimed Pete, restlessly, "I feel like a mouse waiting for the cat to jump!"

"Let's start the engine and give it a run for its money," suggested the other. "If we aren't fast enough to beat it to shore we'll turn around, charge it and drop our bomb."

"Not a chance!" asserted the former, "we couldn't possibly get away and we might turn over without having had a chance to get at them. We'd better stick to our original plan."

"I sort of hate to sit here like a flea on a hot stove while they make up their slow Dutch minds what they are going to do with us," remarked the captain drily. "All I hope is that they don't decide to play safe and shell us from a half mile away."

"If they do that," replied the pilot, "we'll start the engine and try to get on top of them before they shoot us to pieces. I'd sure hate to go down without taking them along with us."

The periscope still cut through the water, having now almost completed a circuit of the seaplane. Then, as the anxious men watched, the slender stick seemed

to lengthen, and suddenly, with a great surge of the sea, the conning tower followed it out into daylight. In another moment the long low deck came to the surface. The U-boat slowed down and a hatch atop the conning tower opened. Two men in dark blue uniforms appeared and seemed to study the drifting plane through their glasses. They were very leisurely in their inspection, these wolves of the sea, and the inaction goaded their intended victims almost to desperation.

For nearly five long minutes the enemy ship moved around them at dead low speed while its officers examined the entire horizon very minutely. Then several seamen climbed out of the hatch and descended a ladder to the slippery deck where they broke out the great gun which was part of their offensive equipment. The three men on the plane, watching anxiously, could see them calmly but swiftly throw off the protective coverings, open the breechblock and thrust home the shellcase. The muzzle turned around slowly until it pointed directly at them.

Pete dived for the rear cockpit and reached for the engine starter, ready to make a last desperate charge before it became too late. The freighter captain reached for the bomb release and carefully hooked his strong fingers through it, lest he might be unable to find it in the excitement of the crucial moment of action. Jack hung on, unable to help, but watching every move of the enemy intently.

"Don't start her, Pete," he said quietly. "She is turning this way."

Very deliberately the submersible swung about and moved slowly towards them, swaying sluggishly with the heave of the sea. The gun still covered them, and the alert gunners seemed ready to pull the firing lanyard at any moment. The officers on the tiny bridge examined them closely, although one of them paid the seaplane no attention, confining himself to watching all quarters of the horizon continually, as though he feared a surprise attack.

The tension became almost unbearable. Jack reached for his cigarettes, passed them around and pressed the spring on his briquet with fingers that shook just a little. Pete smoked furiously, his face somewhat pale, but his mouth drawn into a thin grim line. The captain lounged back comfortably in his seat, but alert and ready to go into action in a moment when the time came for his last revenge upon the submarine which had sunk his beloved *Sonoma*.

Nearer and nearer came the enemy. Its deck, but a

foot or two above the surface, was festooned with long strands of brown seaweed and was continually washed by waves which broke over the low freeboard, but the gun crew, in hip boots, paid no attention to the sea which licked at their ankles. They were vigilant and ready to shoot and the boys could see the gun pointer poised at his instrument compensating his range as the deck rolled and the target crept closer. They were now within hailing distance, but the U-boat kept its course silently, coming closer and closer. Apparently the German commander intended to capture them.

Pete threw his cigarette from him with a curt gesture.

"Ready, captain?" he asked quietly.

"Ready, son," the seaman replied in a steady tone. "I think they'll be coming aboard, so I'll wait a while before I pull this string."

"Got your parachutes?" queried Jack in a well-intentioned effort to relieve the strain. The others laughed nervously and silence settled upon them again.

Suddenly the German officer who had been searching the sea with his glasses called harshly to the others beside him. He pointed and they all gazed toward the direction indicated. In a moment a guttural order rang out and those on the deck sprang into instant activity. The gun was hastily secured, the seamen scrambled up the ladder and disappeared down the hatch, followed by all the officers but one, who looked at the seaplane and hesitated. Then he whipped out a heavy service revolver and as fast as he could pull the trigger fired the entire contents of his clip at the defenseless men on the seaplane.

As he leveled his gun the two men in the cockpits slid down in their seats, while Jack crouched on the wing behind the fuselage to get what feeble protection he could from the concealing fabric. *Ping! Ping!* The bullets made neat little holes in the linen walls of the cockpit. One of them passed between the two men in their seats and another bored through a strut, but the careening seaplane offered an unsteady target and the companions endured the fusillade uninjured.

The moment his last shot was fired the officer dived into the conning tower, the cover clanged shut and the submarine submerged in a "crash dive." In less than a minute not even the periscope was visible, although air and oil bubbles followed its progress under the water for several moments.

"Now, what saved our dear little necks just in the nick of time?" ejaculated Pete, in tones of amazement.

"If I could get my two hands on that louse who

tried to shoot us down in cold blood," stated the captain flatly, "I'd tear him into little pieces!"

"Let's see what scared them off," recommended Jack.

He climbed up to the top of the upper wing and looked towards the spot the Germans had pointed to. There was a tiny black spot that grew larger each minute.

"Whoops!" he cried exultantly, "it's a destroyer! I think it's an American, and it's coming like hell!"

And so it was! Great white waves were flung wide from each bow as it came into plain view. Racing towards them, they could see that it was in the trough of the sea, rolling in great dizzy arcs, shipping water on deck, first on one side then on the other. A thin ribbon of oily black smoke stood out in a straight line behind its four squat funnels. From the short, slanting mainmast whipped the American ensign, stiff as a board in the wind. It heeled over, turning hard to starboard as it drew close and cut a great circle at railroad speed around the tossing seaplane. The boys could see a little group of dungaree-clad sailors clustered around the gun on the tossing bow. Others stood ready at the waist guns and at the stern they could make out two "ash cans" on the Y-shaped bomb thrower. On the wildly swaying bridge several officers were examining them through glasses, while in the crow's nest two lookouts were scanning the seas for the submarine.

"Gosh," muttered Pete, "I hope the sub doesn't pot her!"

"No chance," answered the captain. "She's running at least twenty-five knots and no U-boat could hit her at that speed. Besides, a destroyer is just naturally poison to the Heinies and they're probably making tracks as fast as they can for safer waters. See, they are signaling to us!"

On the wing of the bridge a seaman was perched waving two flags rapidly.

"You read it, Jack," urged his pal, "I've forgotten all the signals I learned at Tech."

"Can't," replied the other briefly. "I flunked the course!"

"Good Lord," sighed the pilot. "Now what'll we do? The blooming boat won't stop, and if we don't answer it they'll think we're all right and go away again. Then we'll probably have another meeting with our nasty friends on the sub."

"Perhaps I can read it," volunteered Captain Weatherbee. "I haven't read any wigwag for years, but

maybe I haven't altogether forgotten it. Let's see, he's waving 'attention' now."

He raised himself in the cockpit, braced himself firmly with his feet and waved both arms to acknowledge the signal. The gob on the destroyer started off with his message at full speed, and the captain read the letters aloud.

"D-O — Y-O-U — N-E-E-D — H-E-L-P?"

"Quickly, fellows, what do you want me to tell them?"

"Tell him to stand by to take you off," Jack responded instantly. "I think we have an even chance to get off with only two aboard, and then we can try to get even with those tough babies on the submarine."

Laboriously the captain sent the suggested message and a quick wave of the flags acknowledged its receipt. A moment later the destroyer put its helm hard over and slowed down, running with the wind past the seaplane. When she was well behind them she put about and came up into the wind so that she was headed in the same direction as the seaplane. Though probably her engineers were obeying an order of "One-third speed" on the engine room telegraph, she seemed to the boys to be charging up on them at such a speed that she would swamp them with her wake, if, indeed, she missed cutting them down.

Pete started the motor, so that he might maneuver the plane and asked Captain Weatherbee to climb out to the wing tip so that he might jump when the warship passed close by. Jack crawled back into the seat which had just been vacated and watched the captain with nervous eyes, while Pete kept his eyes on the movements of the fast approaching destroyer.

The seaman swung out on the heaving upper wing like a monkey.

He must have served his time in the windjammers, thought the boy, for the smooth, swaying surface seemed not to bother him at all. He suddenly stopped and quickly removed his wet shoes, then, holding on to the leading edge of the wing, he inched his way out to the end, where he crouched awaiting the moment to leap.

THE destroyer was but two or three lengths away now and was coming up fast. An officer leaned over the bridge and pointed to a little group of sailors who were standing by on the low deck just aft of the break of the forecastle, where a ladder had been lowered over the side. They seemed to be no higher than the top of the plane. Pete, watching carefully, saw at the stern the

heavy steel propeller guards projecting over the fan tail, and knew that if they struck the seaplane as they passed they would sweep the entire fuselage and wing structure clean off the pontoons.

AS THE bow forged past, its camouflaged sides studded with rivet heads, there was a jangle of bells as the telegraph in the bowels of the ship rang "hard astern." The destroyer shuddered and slowed down momentarily, while a dozen outstretched hands gripped Weatherbee as he leaped for the deck. The next moment the bells rang again as "full speed ahead" was ordered, and simultaneously the seaplane motor roared lustily as the pilot "gave her the gun." He pushed hard on the left rudder and the plane, quickly gathering momentum, sheered away just as the overhanging propeller guards swept past, not a foot away from the tail.

AT A safe distance he cut down the motor, weak from the narrow escapes of the past half hour.

"Wow, that destroyer bird didn't think what he might have done to us, did he?" he exclaimed.

"That's just like those fellows," responded his pal, "they handle those blooming tea kettles like scout planes. Look at her get away. She must be doing twenty-five knots right now, and getting up speed every minute."

It looked it, too, for the lean little ship was plunging straight as an arrow for the spot where the submarine had disappeared.

"I guess our captain has told the navy skipper all about it by now," said Jack. "Look there!"

From each side of the fantail of the speeding destroyer a black cylindrical object hurtled over and over into the air, and fell with a splash about fifty feet away on each side. A second or two later there was a deep rumble and two huge geysers of water rose in a pair of gorgeous fountains where the "ash cans" had disappeared. The plane trembled as the concussion passed through the water to its pontoons.

"Let's be leaving," suggested Pete. "We have personal reasons for wanting to get that sub ourselves. The destroyer will probably stick around until we get off, for Weatherbee has probably told them of the shape we're in."

The motor roared, full on, and the plane wallowed more and more swiftly through the water. The swiftly whirling propeller dipped its tips into the waves with a sound like a circular saw, and sent an arc of spray

up into the air. The lower wing vibrated dangerously. In a few moments they had picked up until they almost had attained flying speed. This was the most ticklish time of all, for the plane leaped from the crest of one swell to the next, each succeeding wave just checking her speed enough to hold her in the water. The pounding on the pontoons was terrific, and the boy in the observer's seat kept his eyes glued to the jumping wing expecting that it would disintegrate at any minute. At last—it seemed like an age—the sturdy engine pulled her free. She lurched a bit, sagged, slapped the next wave hard, patted the next one gently and was off, skimming easily just above the reaching waters. The loosened load wires vibrated like demons, but the flying wires were as rigid as steel rods and the wing held.

Jack unhooked his safety belt and climbed out of the seat on to the suspected wing. Holding tight to the forward struts he walked the entire length to the tip to test its strength, while the pilot held the plane steady on its course. He crawled back reassured, and as soon as he had strapped himself again to his seat, Pete zoomed her and circled back, climbing rapidly to the former scene of action. At about five hundred feet he leveled off, and two keen pairs of eyes searched the seas for their enemy.

Below them the destroyer hunted in concentric circles, dropping depth bombs now and then in the hopes of striking its mark by accident or of coming so close to it that the pressure of the explosion would burst the submarine like an overripe melon.

The fliers steered first in small circles over the spot where they had last seen the U-boat, then widened their radius, finally passing far beyond the plunging destroyer. For a half hour they hunted, their hopes slowly diminishing. Not a sign of their enemy.

Suddenly Jack almost jumped out of the plane in his excitement. He leaned far out over the side of the cockpit, shouting "Look! Look!" and pointing directly beneath them, was the dim outline of their quarry plowing along under the water. It was submerged, but not deeply enough so that its vague form could not be distinguished from the air. In a second they had passed over it, but the instant's glimpse had been more than enough.

The pilot forgot the injured wing, and put the old plane in a vertical bank, turning it as though on a pivot to return to the spot they had just left. Jack, with his finger through the release ring, felt himself trembling like a leaf from the excitement. When he had faced

almost certain death a brief half hour before he had been comparatively calm. Now he shook as if with a chill.

There it was! Just ahead of them! They dived at it. Just before they passed over it. Jack jerked the ring, then leaned far out to watch the result. The bomb seemed to drop slowly, seeming to follow beneath the plane like a pursuing projectile. It gradually turned point downward and then dropped like a plummet, striking the water only a few feet ahead of the dimly outlined bow of the submarine. The depth gauge was still set close and it exploded almost as soon as it splashed into the sea.

Pete had banked over and turned again, and both could see the spot clearly. A tremendous bubble arose and burst into a mounting waterspout. Before the upflung water had fallen again, the great gray U-boat broached! The bow flung itself high out of the water. It fell again and for a brief moment the conning tower and the entire deck came to the surface, then, for all the world like a dying sea monster it sluggishly turned over on its back amid the seething waters. Its propellers churned the air helplessly. It lilted forward and plunged into the depths. Gone, with its entire crew!

Jack felt a little sick. He didn't have the feeling of

jubilation that he had anticipated. They were enemies, of course, but still, they were men. and he could imagine them struggling down there as their ship took its last plunge to the bottom. He looked back at his friend. His face, too, was drawn and sober.

They looked down again. There, less than half a mile away was the destroyer, coming at full speed. She had seen the U-boat and was rushing to the spot. Beneath them, a film of oil, shimmering in all the colors of the rainbow, was swiftly spreading over the water, seeming to calm the seas as if by magic. The destroyer dashed into the midst of it, cleaving a strip of clear blue water in her wake, and dropped bomb after bomb. It was taking no chances. Then the youths saw a long white plume of steam from the siren on the forward funnel. The warship's scream of victory!

So they turned towards shore, victorious, knowing that they had conquered honestly, with the knowledge that tomorrow they would probably be awarded the coveted *Croix de Guerre*, yet, withal, depressed at the thought of the huge coffin now at the bottom of the Channel which, with its cargo of dead men would rock there uneasily until Judgment Day.

"Hell!" muttered Jack to himself. "It's all in a day's work."