



We saw the submarine breaking water.

JOE, the Negro houseboy who holds a law degree from Columbia, and whose white serving jacket conceals a .45 automatic, let me in and silently ushered me upward through the dim old dwelling.

In the outer office of the musty attic suite, Maude, her superb blond head tilted back to keep the cigarette smoke from her fine eyes, punched away with scarlet-nailed forefingers at the ancient Underwood which represents the office equipment of Section Five, strangest of the many strange government bureaus existing in Washington today. A magnificent opal flamed and danced on Maude's busy right hand, and I reflected ruefully that my month's salary would not have paid for the imported silver-gray sweater suit she was wearing.

She rose, and my pulse broke into its usual double-shuffle. A still of Maude in that sweater suit would never get past the Hays office.

"At long last, Mike." She spoke with-

The Body Travels East

A Colonel Kaspir Story

by C. P. Donnel, Jr.

Author of "Fraulein Judas," etc.

When the behemoth boss of Section 5 shipped the airplane-fortress to England on a defenseless little freighter we all thought that this time he really was sticking his fat official neck out—but Col. Kaspir proved he could outsmart a Nazi as easily as he wolfed his cherry chocolates.



out taking the dark jade cigarette holder from her lips. Her violet eyes, on a level with my own, were inexcusably provocative. A slender thumb made the hitchhiker's gesture toward Col. Stephen Kaspir's lair. "He's waiting."

"What is it this time?" I growl at Maude for reasons which I fear are not secret to her.

"God only knows." Her tone lacked its customary sardonic edge. "Something big's on the fire. He's been stewing for two weeks now—like a chunk of tough beef."

She waved down my exclamation at the mere idea of anything worrying the self-rising Kaspir. "He even talks of going on a diet."

This floored me. Colonel Kaspir's waking hours are largely devoted to a series of high-protein meals strung together on an endless chain of chocolate cherries. Maude winked, tiptoed to the inner door and flung it open without knocking.

"Aha!" she cried. Over her shoulder I saw Kaspir's bulk galvanized into sudden and guilty movement. I knew what it was: he was trying to hide a bag of his beloved cherries. The flurry over, he faced Maude blandly, his moon face with its absurd Cupid's-bow mouth a caricature of innocence.

"Wipe your mouth," ordered Maude resignedly. "Mike Kettle's here."

Kaspir dabbed quickly with a handkerchief at clean lips, then realized he had been tricked. He transfixed the languid Maude with a martyred glare.

"It's ten to ten," volunteered Maude, glancing at her nails.

This got results. Colonel Kaspir bounded to his feet—six feet six of billowing white linen. He snatched a wad of papers and stuffed them into a coat pocket. His rotund figure—he weighs close to three hundred—is amazingly lithe in action. He rummaged in a desk drawer and came up with a rolled Panama, which he unfurled and clapped on his head.

Maude cocked a critical eye at the result. "Why don't you," she inquired acidly, "have holes cut for your ears?"

He muttered something under his breath and stalked from the room. In a second he was back.

"Whatinell's the matter with you?"

He was addressing us both, and petulantly. "Come on."

Maude shut her eyes. "What for?"

"Take notes, o'course. Minutes o'meetin'—that sorta thing."

Maude opened her eyes. "You know perfectly damn well," she announced distinctly, "that I can't take shorthand."

"Who said shorthand?" demanded Colonel Kaspir, fidgeting in the doorway. "Scribble on a pad, that's all. Look like you're doin' something. Impress 'em. Very important session."

"And what do I do?" I asked mildly.

"Look wise," instructed Kaspir, turning to go. "Look like an expert at something. Show 'em I got a smart staff."

AND he was gone. Maude plucked a floppy creation from an old hat-tree as we sped through the outer office after him, and succeeded in patting it over her perfect permanent as she clattered ahead of me down the dark oak stairway, swearing under her breath. Thirty seconds later we were crammed warmly into a taxi which Joe, the houseboy, apparently had produced from his hip pocket. Kaspir bellowed unintelligibly at the driver, who miraculously understood, and we shot away down the steaming street.

Maude, jammed between us, wriggled forward to preserve the floppy hat. Kaspir patted his foot, hummed off-key, and looked out of the window.

"I suppose," threw out Maude, in a far-away voice, "it would be too much to ask where we're going, or why."

"We're goin' to a beanfeast at Benny's." For the first time since my assignment to Section Five I detected an effort behind my chief's flippancy. "Big mad on," he explained. "Everybody scowlin'."

"Oh, talk sense."

"Fact," declared Kaspir airily, smacking his lips and peering a little too casually from the window. "Hoke and the Gen. are out for my hide. Don't like the way I'm runnin' this show. They got Benny all worried." He resumed his foot-patting and humming, convinced that he had explained everything in lucid detail. The chorus of his half-swallowed song emerged: "They're gonna hang Steve Kaspir to a sour apple tree."

I gave it up and began to chew on the

first morsel he tossed us. "Beanfeast at Benny's." Only one prominent figure in Washington is known as Benny—and as that only to initiated angels who fly high in the political stratosphere. He's the Secretary for Defense—a post in these days almost tantamount to supreme authority—and his full nickname is "Bellowing Benny." Since we could hardly be going to a beanfeast—whatever that meant—at Bellowing Benny's marine-guarded office, I abandoned the problem to time, which resolves all mysteries. Maude leaned back a little and her wrist brushed my knee, which tingled. This gave me something to think about until the cab turned up a driveway and stopped before the servants' entrance of a fat mansion on F Street.

The marine sergeant waiting inside the kitchen door seemed to be expecting Kaspir, and led us through a maze of pantries, down a broad hall, and into a large library. The curtains were drawn, and several reading lamps furnished the light.

Five men were seated around the broad mahogany table, which was cleared for action. As Colonel Kaspir had predicted, they were a grim lot. Least grim of the five was a chunky man with a prize-fighter's jaw, bright black eyes, and a Hitler forelock. This was Bellowing Benny.

The five stood perfunctorily for Maude, sat down simultaneously with her as Bellowing Benny waved us into chairs. Kaspir remained standing a moment, a tower of white linen, his survey of the board faintly hostile and frankly wary. He jerked his head toward Maude and me. "Gentlemen, my assistant, Lieutenant Kettle, my secretary, Miss Umph . . ."

A thin-lipped fellow with high collar and gold-rimmed spectacles opened his mouth. Colonel Kaspir drowned him out with a full-bodied and patently artificial cough.

"Meet Mr. Oliver Wendell Hoke," he said, pointing rudely at the thin-lipped man, who barely inclined a narrow skull topped with thinning, slicked-down blond hair. I recognized the name as that of a well-known manufacturer of military aircraft.

"Mr. Prettyman," continued Kaspir shifting his forefinger to an immensely tall skeleton of a man, a hook-nosed individual with a black patch over his right eye.

"Major Duff-Dawson"—a plump man with a red face and gray mustache nodded pleasantly, eyes on Maude. "General Tancred"—the owner of the reputed second-best brain in our Military Intelligence set-up shrunk ill-naturedly into his rumpled alpaca coat, and his saucer-like ears looked sullen. "And the Secretary for Defense," concluded Kaspir, decent respect in his voice at last.

BELLOWING BENNY smiled briefly, glanced at his watch as he stood up. He spoke directly to Colonel Kaspir.

"Two weeks ago," he snapped, "I requested you to arrange to get the last of the Hoke Giblartars to England."

Kaspir nodded over the flame of a match he was holding to a crumpled cigarette.

Tancred, the G-2 brass hat, grumbled, "I've always maintained that this decentralization of Intelligence activities is—" An irritable twitch of Bellowing Benny's expressive mouth shut him up, and he pulled sulkily at a lobeless ear.

"Mr. Hoke," continued Bellowing Benny, "refuses to complete tests on the last and latest Gibraltar type unless he approves your plan for transferring it to England. He has heard a rumor . . ."

Kaspir inspected his thumbnail, and I tingled again. That meant he was intensely interested.

" . . . that you intend to ship it from Norfolk," went on Bellowing Benny's staccato voice. Short pause, with everyone tightening up. "On a small freighter."

"Sure," said Colonel Kaspir.

Consternation! Gabbie of voices! Tancred boomed: "Most idiotic damned thing I—"

But it was Oliver Wendell Hoke who bounced to his feet, pale eyes hot behind the thin lenses of his spectacles. He managed to control his voice.

"I suppose you are aware," he addressed Kaspir, "that the Hoke Gibraltar represents England's first chance for a truly effective defense of her cities against enemy bombers."

"Sure," repeated Kaspir brightly. "Quite a plane, I bet."

"Did you know?"—Hoke's solicitous tone carried the maximum insult—"that only four Giblartars have been built—and

that three of these are now on the bottom of the ocean?"

"Sure," agreed Kaspir genially. "Shipped from Canada. U-boats picked right ship out of convoy three times runnin'. Bad leak somewhere." His baby blue eyes flickered to Tancred. "Intelligence cooperated with Canada in arrangin' sailings, didn't it?"

It was Tancred who sprang to his feet this time, furious. "Are you insinuating—"

I noted that Bellowing Benny was watching Kaspir intently.

"Insinuat' nothin'," said Kaspir softly. "But they're gone, ain't they?"

Hoke took over, fingertips on the gleaming mahogany. "It takes eighteen months—and a million and a quarter—to build a Gibraltar. They *must* be tested under war conditions before we freeze the design and produce in quantity. This last one *must* get across. And you intend to ship it on a freighter—entirely unescorted—from Norfolk?"

"Surest thing you know." Kaspir's eyes, hardening, met Hoke's angry gaze head-on.

Hoke flung out a blue-veined hand. "I appeal to you, Mr. Secretary"—emotion thickened his words—"this criminal gamble—"

"Sure it's a gamble," snapped Kaspir. "What ain't?"

Bellowing Benny, noted for a trigger mind, for once looked doubtful. "Really, Steve," he began. "A small freighter—"

"Good, clean boat," asserted Kaspir fatuously. "Fast little hooker—sixteen knots."

I couldn't blame Tancred for his disgusted, "Good Godalmighty!"

The skeleton-like Prettyman spoke for the first time. His words were delivered with a faintly British inflection. I recalled his name as that of Hoke's chief executive in Hoke Aircraft, Inc.

"Suggest a compromise, gentlemen," Prettyman put a claw-like hand to the black eye-patch, adjusted it the merest trifle. "The British cruiser *Himalaya's* at the Norfolk Navy Yard, isn't she? In for repairs? Then ship the Gibraltar on Colonel Kaspir's freighter, but wait until the *Himalaya's* ready to convoy her over. Surely a week or two—"

KASPIR looked meaningfully at the gray-mustached Duff-Dawson. Duff-Dawson's face was somber.

"I'm afraid Mr. Prettyman is not aware," he said slowly, in the ripe accents of Oxford, "that the *Himalaya* met forty Stukas near Malta."

"You mean . . .?" Prettyman's single eye lighted with quick apprehension. Obviously the man's background was British.

"It will be six months before the *Himalaya* is ready to sail," answered Duff-Dawson simply, adding, after a pregnant pause, "if at all. She's been in a week. They've not got all the bodies out of her forward compartments yet."

Once more Hoke's slender hand sought Bellowing Benny's attention. "This absurd freighter idea! I positively refuse to—"

I thought I intercepted a momentary exchange of glances between Duff-Dawson and Colonel Kaspir. Tancred was up again, insisting upon being heard.

"I back Mr. Hoke's stand most vigorously. Colonel Kaspir must not . . . Did you know," he barked suddenly at Kaspir, "that we had a report yesterday that Willie Spruhe is in the United States?"

"Willie Spruhe?" This from Bellowing Benny.

"Yes, sir. One of the—no, I'll say the best of German Intelligence men. If he's here he's certainly smelled out this Gibraltar business."

"Little Bill ain't so smart," tossed in Kaspir bumptiously. Even Bellowing Benny's hackles rose at his tone.

"You know him, I suppose?" Tancred's tone was murderous.

"Never seen him. Heard of him. Big feller, tall as me and fatter. Works with a queer bird called Major Hansa. Pulled some tricks in Budapest that were hot stuff in '36. Dead now, I hear."

"You're crazy!" exploded Tancred.

"Maybe," admitted Kaspir. His moon face suddenly acquired certain hard angles I had never seen in it before. At my side, Maude's breathing quickened and she stopped doodling on her pad. My stomach went hollow with apprehension. Colonel Kaspir was about to declare himself.

"Listen, Benny—"

I gasped. Maude's head came up. Bellowing Benny was still watching Kaspir

intently. He showed no resentment at the familiar form of address.

"Why'd you organize Section Five?" Kaspir's small mouth made the words crystal clear, and somehow he kept the question from sounding disrespectful.

Bellowing Benny did not hesitate. "To deal with emergencies outside the normal scope of Intelligence work."

"Why'd you pick me to run it?"

The Secretary for Defense hesitated this time.

"Go on." Kaspir smiled tightly. "I ain't modest."

"Because," replied Bellowing Benny in a lecture-room tone, "the Pr—because we knew that an eccentric approach will sometimes solve an abnormal problem."

"This Gibraltar business," pursued Kaspir. "It's an emergency—an abnormal problem, ain't it?"

"It most certainly is."

Kaspir treated the secretary to one long look.

"Then gimme a free hand," he demanded, leaning back in his chair, big paws folded across his chest. The room was very still.

"It's yours," announced Bellowing Benny, at length. "But if—"

"I getcha. Shot at sunrise—that sorta thing." Kaspir rose. The mantle of authority was almost visible on his bulging shoulders.

HOKE tossed a gold pencil he'd been fiddling with onto the table, where it clattered viciously.

"The plane's at the hidden field near Langley, ready to test?" Kaspir fired at Hoke.

"Yes, but—"

"But nothin'. You'll test this afternoon, dismantle at once, load 'er tonight. That freighter—what's-er-name, Dawson?"

"The *Lochgair*," supplied Duff-Dawson.

"I got barges ready on the James near the test field," said Kaspir. "We'll load the plane on them, bring 'em right downstream and up the Elizabeth River to the *Lochgair*. She's at the Army Base piers. She'll clear the Capes by daylight tomorrow."

Hoke spluttered and Kaspir bent forward threateningly.

"If you don't wanta do it," he said, "I'll commandeering the whole works and have it done m'self."

"I'll do it," muttered Hoke. He no longer went through the formality of ve-neering his personal animosity toward Kaspir.

"Good. You got your private flying boat at Anacostia, ain't you?"

Hoke nodded sourly.

"We'll fly down with you this afternoon," said Kaspir flatly. Bellowing Benny stood up and the rest of us followed suit. Maude flipped shut her notebook and I felt her trembling.

Tancred could contain himself no longer. Broad mouth bitter, he stalked up to the towering Kaspir. "If this moron's gamble of yours goes bad," he ground out, "I personally will see to it that you—"

Colonel Kaspir interrupted with something that sounded to my flustered ears like, "Ibble-dibble-dibble."

"What's that?" roared the purpling general.

From his great height, Kaspir regarded the general gravely. "Ibble-dibble-dibble," he repeated blandly.

General Tancred drew an ominous breath. "Your rank, sir, is that of colonel. There are certain formalities—"

He flounced away angrily as Kaspir clapped him on an outraged shoulder. "Keep your shirt on, old boy. Kentucky colonel only. Strictly civilian in this show."

Well! I'd served in Section Five for seven months and never known that. I was still recovering from the shock as we crowded into another overheated taxi. Maude's color was returning, but she was far from her old, ironical, biting self. She asked, very seriously: "Steve, why don't they fly the Gibraltar across?"

"Top speed's only sixty-five per," answered Kaspir absently, taking up his foot-patting.

This nonsensical retort reduced us both to a fuming silence. Kaspir stopped the cab at a glittering candy store. "See you both at Anacostia at four. Gotta have my staff along, y'know." He grimaced, waved a huge hand, and lumbered across the hot sidewalk.

I said something I'd been trying to say

for seven months: "Maude, will you have lunch with me?"

"Why, Mike, I'd love to!"

But our lunch was not the gay affair I'd planned. Kaspir and Hoke and the Gibraltar and Willie Spruhs (known to Colonel Kaspir as "Little Bill") sat as skeletons at the feast.

Maude put it succinctly, capping a silence between courses.

"Thinks he's so damn smart," she complained childishly. Then, "Mike, I'm scared."

I'd never seen her really human before. I went soft and couldn't say a word.

TWO surprises marked the flight to Norfolk for me. The first came at five thousand feet over the Potomac when Oliver Wendell Hoke's private flying boat, which on the water at Anacostia had appeared as plump and slow as a well-fed mare, overhauled and left behind the Washington-Norfolk afternoon plane, which does its hundred and fifty-nine miles in around fifty minutes.

The second surprise came a little later.

The trip down was not a gay one. Hoke ignored the lot of us. He sat poring over papers with Prettyman and radiating hostility to the world at large.

Hoke's steward, Davidson by name, a gorilla-built, middle-aged man with a flat, seamed face, resented Kaspir's bringing Joe, the houseboy from Section Five, along. Joe was relegated to a rear seat, where he dozed.

I was sulky because Kaspir had preempted the seat beside Maude.

Finally Prettyman, whose social sense apparently got the better of his feelings toward us, left Hoke and came to chat with me. I liked the man. He'd obviously knocked around the world more than a little. He talked in a way that interested me strongly—me, who had been drafted from an editorial desk on the *Baltimore Sun*, presumably to do propaganda work, and who had been out of my depth ever since. This was due, first, to an inexplicable transfer to G-2; second, to an equally inexplicable transfer to Colonel Stephen Kaspir's Section Five—that weird, anomalous bureau with headquarters in the attic of a brownstone ex-boarding house in southwest Washington.

Prettyman rambled on. He had flown ore-carrying planes in a venture beyond Burma, he told me, and after a jungle crash had cost him an eye, had landed a job as executive on one of the government-backed freight lines in South America. It was here that Hoke had discovered him and lured him north. Prettyman was up-to-date on military plane design now, and his analysis of the vulnerable points of a Messerschmitt was fascinating. But when I baited him about the Hoke Gibraltar, he shut up. "Wait'll you see her," was all he'd say. It was plain that he worshipped Hoke and the Gibraltar.

"There's Chesapeake Bay," he said at length, and went forward to talk to Dave Urban, Hoke's personal pilot, who in another hour was to take the Gibraltar on her final hop. Prettyman was back in a moment, said something to Hoke, then resumed his seat beside me. "Goin' to have a look at the *Himalaya*," he said. "We're ahead of schedule."

We swung in low over the brown Elizabeth River and ignored the city of Norfolk on our left for the sprawling, steaming activity of the great Norfolk Navy Yard, grinding away at a thousand jobs beside the narrow, deeply-channeled Southern Branch. We recognized a lean cruiser in drydock as H.M.S. *Himalaya*. Giant patches of canvas over portions of her deck and sides hid the gaping Stuka wounds, and even from the air we could spot the heavy force of guards that kept all visitors at a distance.

We wheeled north toward the James and the field where the Gibraltar awaited us. Prettyman fell silent, then, apparently to help relieve the tension that was taking hold of the cabin, called Davidson and ordered soft drinks. Hoke had abandoned his papers and was drumming absently on the table before him. Even Maude was subdued, staring out of the heavy glass window. Only Kaspir was airy, stuffing down chocolate cherries from a bag in his pocket in open defiance of Maude.

Davidson served the drinks, then carried a glass of ginger ale forward to Urban. I watched him disappear into the pilot's cabin. The man's physical strength, as evidenced in his shoulders and dangling arms, was almost frightening.

Thirty seconds later Davidson came hurrying from the pilot's compartment and his pasty gray face brought me at once to my feet. He stumbled down the aisle to where Prettyman and I were sitting, spilling ginger ale right and left from the glass he still held.

The flying boat lurched sharply, and Hoke glanced about him in quick alarm.

PRETTYMAN grabbed Davidson's white sleeve.

"Mr. Urban!" gasped Davidson. Obviously he was badly frightened. "Heart—fell over—"

The flying boat yawed sickeningly. Prettyman was away to the pilot's compartment in a flash, beating Hoke to the door by a pace, while Kaspir and I brought up the rear. Behind me Maude half-stifled a highly feminine squeal.

Hoke appeared, hauling the sagging form of Urban into the main cabin. Through the forward door I could see Prettyman folding his angular length into the pilot's chair. Immediately the low wing tip arced up and we resumed level flight.

The righting of the plane enabled Hoke to hoist Urban up into a seat, fending off, with a pointed elbow, Kaspir's attempt to help. Hoke's bloodless fingers found Urban's pulse. A second or two later he thumbed back the pilot's eyelids. Slowly he got to his feet.

Kaspir seized the opportunity to flop to his knees and go through substantially the same routine as Hoke. A shoulder pressed mine and the scent of honeysuckle told me that Maude had joined us. Hoke did not look around. He addressed the back of Kaspir's big, round head, and the venom ran deep in his voice.

"I suppose," he said, "that you will deny now, Colonel, that the Nazis are fully aware of your plans."

Kaspir looked up, eyes questioning.

"Urban was poisoned," said Hoke flatly. "Someone has tried to kill us all." If Hoke valued his own life, no quiver in his tone betrayed the fact. "It must have been done at the airport," he mused. "Timed to take effect on the way down."

Kaspir laughed, a brassy, neighing laugh that filed our nerves like fingernails scratching a blackboard.

"Relax," he told Hoke. "You're seein' bogie-men."

Hoke stiffened furiously.

"Th' poor feller's heart just quit on him," announced Kaspir. He stared at Hoke's white cheeks. "Yours'll do the same if you don't calm down."

Hoke's thin lips were framing a blistering comment on this incredibly ill-timed levity when we all pitched forward a step or two. Maude's nails nearly punctured my right biceps, but in a second we realized that Prettyman was bringing us in to a fast landing beside a small pier on the left bank of the broad James River.

But even I had noticed a condition at the base of Urban's nails, and the ghastly tinge of the lips, which told me that Kaspir's diagnosis of the pilot's death was no more than wishful thinking. And it was not until we were ashore, and gathered before a jerry-built hangar at one end of a lengthy and secluded emergency field, that the sight of the Hoke Gibraltar going aloft (Prettyman substituting at the controls for Dave Urban, deceased) dissolved the hard lump of apprehension in my chest.

For the Hoke Gibraltar broached a wellspring of optimism in me that ran dry only at the conclusion of the flight—when Colonel Kaspir began to behave in a manner that clearly indicated incipient insanity.

Of the Hoke Gibraltar I can say only this: only the fact that she flew (if you could call that awkward passage through the air flying) entitled her to recognition as an airplane.

Two broad planks laid across the ends of a coffin would give you an idea of her general lines. Two motors nestled under each of these wings. I say "wings" because, since they were of equal length, it was hard to know which one to call the tail.

As this monstrosity lumbered down the field and thunderously hoisted her dark gray bulk into the air, I realized that Kaspir's statement of her maximum speed had not been a bad joke, but the unvarnished truth.

Then it dawned on me! The Gibraltar was designed for sluggishness! For when Prettyman had her a thousand feet up,

flaps drooped suddenly from her wings and she became, to watchers from the ground, almost stationary in the late afternoon haze.

Did I tell you she was knobby as a toad? No twenty feet of her body surface but had its gunblister or gunport, and the good half of these apertures carried heavy stuff—far heavier than I had dreamed could be put upon a plane. The rest of the gunports exhibited machine-guns of bulbous design in batteries of three.

The picture of the whole took shape in my mind: dozens of these air-borne forts crawling back and forth through the sky over the cities of England, their very slowness rendering their fire amazingly accurate. I imagined a Heinkel squadron passing between two of these behemoths—or, say, through a box formation of four of them operating at different levels—and visualized grimly what would be left of the attackers after a bath in the Gibraltars' shell-streams. And fighting planes? Why, one Gibraltar could stand its ground in the clouds and rip squadron after squadron of fighters to shreds.

And so I could understand the fierce pride emanating from Oliver Wendell Hoke's ascetic face as he watched the Gibraltar settle heavily to the dusty field and put out four fat wheels to soak up the landing shock. And why Maude, shouldering back and firm chin up, winked her glistening eyes.

THE ground trembled as Prettyman taxied the Gibraltar over to the hangar. Colonel Kaspir, who had watched the test with a poker face that must have maddened Hoke, said to him: "Did'ja do what I said?"

The hangar swallowed up the Gibraltar as Hoke nodded. We walked over to it. A guard admitted us through a side door.

Maude and I gasped simultaneously, and even Kaspir's eyes widened. The Gibraltar had preceded us into the hangar by less than two minutes, but already she was coming apart. The place swarmed with mechanics. More than two hundred, I should say, had been cooling their heels in that lofty frame structure while the Gibraltar bellowed her way through the final test.

Now they were upon her. Even as I

watched, one whole gun-blister disintegrated into a collection of metal panels and sections of bullet-proof glass.

At the far end of the hangar, stacked to the ceiling, were the crates—big crates and little crates, hundreds of them. Already twenty or thirty huskies were trundling these up to the Gibraltar on squat tractors. The gun-blister I had watched dissolve disappeared like a magician's egg into one of the smaller crates, and, as a tractor drew the full crate aside, the dozen-odd men of the mechanics' crew were at work on another part of the plane.

Prettyman, pilot's role aside, was now supervisor of dismantling. His grotesquely long legs carried him swiftly about the rapidly-changing Gibraltar. His black eye-patch would hover briefly over a group of workmen. He would say something and illustrate his remark with a wave of his antenna-like hands. Then the work would go on a little faster, a shade more efficiently.

Hoke led Kaspir and Maude and me to a pine-board office. He hesitated only long enough to see us seated. When he spoke, I knew that the sight of the Gibraltar had humbled him.

"Colonel Kaspir," he began, and there was no hint of animosity in his tone, "for the last time I beg of you to reconsider your plan."

Kaspir, teetering back in a creaking wooden chair, said, "Hub?"

"I made no issue of it at the time," said Hoke. "but I feel that you know as well as I do that Urban was poisoned. This plan of yours is known."

Maude pressed her hands together until the knuckles whitened, for Hoke's voice was shaking, and you could feel, deep in you, the awful price his pride was paying for this plea.

"Well?" said Kaspir rancorously. He was going to make Hoke pay full price. Maude's violet eyes blazed at him.

"I beg of you," said Hoke simply, "to re-arrange matters so that this last Gibraltar—the best of the four—can go out adequately guarded, with at least a fair chance of reaching England."

Kaspir creaked forward until his elbows were akimbo on a low drafting table. A cigarette in his pursed lips began to bob up and down as he answered.

"Nothin' doin'," he said. Hoke's thin frame sagged. "You tried convoys outa Canada. Where'd it getcha?"

"But a freighter—a small freighter—unarmed? And this man—the spy—Spruhe, and his organization?"

We all felt Kaspir's ultimatum coming. "I got everything ready. We load tonight. And the *Lochgair* runs for it."

Kaspir's moon face darkened to an ugly red and his long, thick arm snaked out. A pudgy forefinger poked Hoke's bony shoulder, none too gently.

"Listen, feller." Hoke drew breath. "You saw those marines outside? Then get this. You try any funny stuff—callin' Washington or slowin' up the work"—he jerked his head toward the clamor beyond the thin door—"and I'll have you—yes, and Prettyman too—in the brig at Langley Field in twenty minutes. Maybe fifteen. That's all."

Maude jumped to her feet, all her pity for Hoke, all her fury at Kaspir starkly revealed in her attitude and, when she could speak, in her voice. With a tongue like a scalpel she carved Kaspir's hide and laid bare his vanity and what she aptly described as his "bull-headedness." These she held up to our scorn.

Colonel Kaspir's round blue eyes were speculative as he listened. When she finished he turned to me. "Your turn, Kettle. You got an oration on your chest, too?"

I shook my head. "I think," I said, "that Maude has covered the ground."

He was hurt, not play-acting, but genuinely hurt. "Kinda thought you two 'ud string along," he said. For a moment I softened, but the thought of his treatment of Hoke set me like plaster.

What happened next made me wonder seriously if the strain of the Gibraltar incident had not affected Kaspir's mind. I'd long suspected he was a man who could not stand opposition. He stalked from the room, and when he returned, Prettyman was with him—and a marine lieutenant.

"I'm takin' over at this point," he announced calmly. It was deep dusk outside now, and the single naked bulb in the office only emphasized the bareness of the place. "They're beginnin' to cart your baby down to the barges," he went on,

addressing Hoke. "Now listen—" This was to all of us—"You don't like my party. Well, you can just take Hoke's plane and get the hell over to the Chamberlin at Old Point Comfort and stay there. Take a coupla rooms and sit up for me. None o' you's goin' anywhere, get me? No phone calls."

He cocked an eyebrow at the marine lieutenant. "They're all yours, son. Take 'em."

OF all the petty jack-in-office stuff I ever saw, this took the grand prize! Even Maude was speechless. I had long ago decided one thing. Section Five and Colonel Kaspir were not for me. I was going to get into Propaganda, where I belonged, if I had to tear Washington apart to do it.

Silently we made our way from the clamorous hangar—the whole crew engaged on the big job now, that of crating the Gibraltar's immense body—and shuffled down through the dark and dust to the pier where Hoke's flying boat waited. Prettyman and Hoke walked together, talking in low tones. Hoke's voice was angry, Prettyman's replies growing more and more disgusted as he listened to Hoke's tale of what had taken place in the hangar office.

Thirty minutes later the marine lieutenant, who had roused my ire by his attentiveness to Maude, was herding us into a small suite high in the lofty hotel. Apologetically he collected the keys from the three doors after locking them on the inside. We paced the floors and peered from the windows into the moonless night. Far down the bay, flashes and reverberations told of night anti-aircraft practice at Cape Henry.

Twice the marine lieutenant unlocked one door. The first time was to admit a waiter bearing many sandwiches and much coffee. The second time—about two A.M.—was to admit Colonel Stephen Kaspir. I was happy to see he looked drawn and worried. Hoke and Prettyman stared at him.

"She's loaded," he said wearily. He shook his head, and for the first time I spotted self-doubt in his mind. "Bodycrate wouldn't fit the damn little hold," he said. "Hadda lash it on deck."

Hoke and Prettyman paled. That crate, on the afterdeck of a small freighter, would be an advertisement plainer than a neon sign!

Kaspir drew a chair to a window and gazed into the night, the smoke from his succession of cigarettes drifting back into the room. The marine lieutenant and Maude started a game of Russian bank. Prettyman stretched his elongated body on a bed and bored holes in the ceiling with his one eye. Hoke sat enveloped in black thoughts. In the far room Joe and Davidson slept, Davidson noisily.

At three A.M. Kaspir's shoulders straightened. "There she goes." He said it half to himself, but the room came alive in a second as we crowded to the windows.

From a high room in the Chamberlin you can almost spit into the channel that races between the boat-landing and Fort Wool—the tiny island that squats in the junction of Hampton Roads and Chesapeake Bay.

There, heading east, almost directly beneath us, was a small, furtive freighter. The dark shape of the tremendous crate on her after deck identified her as the *Lochgair*. She slid past Fort Wool, and as she stuck her nose into the bay, her half-dozen lights winked out.

Funny thing. As the *Lochgair* became one with the black bay water, I had a feeling I would see her again. This feeling persisted like a headache through the restless remainder of the night, and was still strong upon me when we boarded Hoke's flying boat off Fortress Monroe. We left the water smoothly and Prettyman pointed our blunt nose in the general direction of Washington. In those comfortable seats we settled down to our thoughts.

I WAS dozing off when Colonel Kaspir, beside me, leaned suddenly across me and looked out of the window. Idly I followed his gaze. My heart skipped a beat.

There should have been green fields and the gray-green Potomac down there. But there was nothing but open water. For some reason, Prettyman had eased the plane gently around and was heading to sea.

Colonel Kaspir rose very quietly and started up the aisle toward where Davidson stood with his back to the door of the pilot's compartment.

The cabin of Hoke's flying boat is sound-insulated, so we could hear Davidson quite plainly. He said: "Stop right there, Colonel."

I was wondering why Kaspir obeyed so promptly when, past his elbow, I saw the two heavy automatics in Davidson's stubby hands.

"Sit down!" barked Davidson. He included Hoke in this order, for the little man, who had been sharing his seat with Maude, had shot up like a jack-in-the-box.

"Sit down!" repeated Davidson harshly when Hoke was about five feet from him. Kaspir's hand caught Hoke's arm and for a second this Mutt-and-Jeff combination faced the white-coated steward. Davidson brought the gun muzzles up an inch or two.

"Better do what he says," advised Kaspir, pushing Hoke back into the seat beside Maude. "Now, my man," he began pompously, "just what is all this rigamarole?"

Now, this wasn't Kaspir's style at all, and the fact penetrated the dizzy whirl of speculation and apprehension in my brain.

For answer, Davidson drew up a foot and banged three times with his heel against the door behind him. Prettyman appeared almost immediately, stooping low to pass through the small doorway. With a single motion of his head, Davidson turned the situation over to Prettyman. He shoved the guns into Prettyman's lean hands and vanished into the pilot's compartment. At once the increasing vibration of the big boat told us that Davidson had opened up her engines to full throttle.

"Prettyman!" The amazement in Hoke's voice made one thing quite plain. This was no desperate venture to save the Gibraltar from the possible consequences of Kaspir's plan. This was something entirely different.

"Sorry, Oliver." Prettyman's tone was pure irony, and the black patch was momentarily like the evil winking of an eye. Kaspir dropped into a seat almost at

Prettyman's feet. "Keep your hands on the table," ordered Prettyman. One gun barrel wavered in Kaspir's direction.

"Here, boy, move up," called Prettyman, stretching his long neck. Quickly up the aisle came Joe, his intelligent eyes glazed, his whole face a mask of terror. At Prettyman's direction he took a seat across from me. Somehow this terror didn't strike me as Joe's style.

"We'll have no trouble," announced Prettyman. His eye blazed suddenly at Maude. "What are you doing?" he snapped.

"Powdering my nose," snapped Maude. "Take your hands off that bag." Maude's white hands drew back slowly. Prettyman, with a single five-foot stride, stepped forward and hooked Maude's white linen handbag with the little finger of one gun-hand. He hefted it. His expressive mouth broadened. "And what," he inquired archly, "were you about to do with that, me proud beauty?" He dropped the bag on the floor for emphasis, and it struck with a peculiarly heavy thud.

Maude's hands patted her permanent. "Shoot you," she answered, tucking in a stray lock. "Right through your good eye."

Prettyman chuckled. His hand went up and raised the black patch. The eye under that patch was a perfectly good one, and it blinked in the light.

"What was it?" he inquired of Kaspir, who had slumped into extreme dejection. "What was it you said yesterday at the Secretary's house: 'Little Bill ain't so smart'?"

Kaspir shot bolt upright. "Why, Willie," he exclaimed, genuinely admiring, "you cute thing. So you're Little Bill." His blue eyes ranged Prettyman's emaciated figure. "Well, I'll be damned," he said. "I'd always heard you were a fatty. How'dja lose it?" This time it was the envy that was genuine. I believe I mentioned that Kaspir weighs close to three hundred.

"Fever." Prettyman grinned. "South America. Waiting for someone like Oliver here to recognize my talents and make a place for me in American aviation. Shed a hundred and ninety pounds, Kaspir, and you'll have the best disguise

that ever was—like me. You see it's—"

But we never heard the rest of this, for the door behind Prettyman resounded to heavy knocks from the pilot's compartment. Prettyman's light manner fell away on the instant. Eyes still on our group, he opened the door a crack and hurled something over his shoulder in German. We could just catch, out of Davidson's reply, the word *Lochgair*.

IT was a different man who spoke to us through Prettyman's mouth. "Get over there." This was to Kaspir and me. He herded us into the seats opposite Maude and Hoke. Joe moved up to the seat lately vacated by Kaspir.

"Now," said Prettyman—or Willie Spruhe, if you like, "listen." He glanced at his watch and nodded to himself. "You will all remain in those seats. If anyone moves I shall kill him—or her. You may look"—he could not control the tension that was setting his lean body a-quiver—"out of the window."

The flying boat slanted slightly as Davidson sent her into a long, slow curve. We were throttled down again. We peered down. Of the five of us, Colonel Kaspir was the only one who did not cry out. Two thousand feet below, a toy boat rode through sun-dappled waters. Across her afterdeck was lashed a crate like an immense coffin. She was a tiny and very gallant object on that broad expanse of sea, but that was not what had made us cry out. The *Lochgair* was not alone. From our elevation we could see what could not be seen from her bridge.

Two long, dark shapes, perhaps half a mile apart, lay under the water like sinister gate-posts. The *Lochgair* was heading directly between them.

Davidson kept the flying boat in a giant circle with the freighter for its center. Maude's hands, on the table, were white-knuckled fists, and I found myself gritting my teeth until my jaws ached.

Beside me, Kaspir turned and spoke to Prettyman over his shoulder. "Gonna take 'er or sink 'er?" It was as though he had said, "Will you have Scotch or bourbon?"

"Sink her, of course." The stupidity of the question irritated Prettyman. "I have duplicates of the essential plans, of

course. Which is more," he added meaningfully, "than Oliver has."

A strangled sound drew my eyes to Hoke for the first time in many minutes. What little blood he had, seemed to have been siphoned out of him. Everything that had made him such a forceful, vital little figure was gone. One of Maude's hands flew to his shoulder in a spontaneous gesture of pity and sympathy.

"I am sorry, Oliver"—Prettyman's voice lost a shade of its mockery—"but I was forced to destroy the originals before we left Washington."

"Then," said Colonel Kaspir, briskly and cheerfully, "we shall have to use the ones you've brought along, Little Bill." He added, "It was you tippin' your gang about the Canadian convoys?"

Prettyman nodded. "I had to go up there, of course, to help load. And of course we managed to have a man or two on the ships."

Maude gasped. "Look, Steve!"

The submarines were breaking water—an insolent, open move that set my blood boiling. Only sure information regarding the *Lochgair's* defenseless state could warrant a maneuver like that. I shoved against Kaspir, even as Maude half-climbed over Hoke, to get a better look at something I had decided I did not want to see.

A blob of white issued slowly from the deck-gun of the sub nearest us. Davidson was bringing the flying boat lower now, for I could see the *Lochgair's* white wake fading into green and gold as her engines stopped.

And now there were men running frantically along her decks, eddying and charging about the lifeboats which flanked the great crate on the afterdeck, holding the Gibraltar's body.

Prettyman stepped closer to us, gazed down critically. "Panic!" he said scornfully. "They have nothing to fear. Our U-boats will take them all aboard—even as they will take us aboard. This will be one of the great mysteries of the sea and air."

"All gonna be very uncomfortable," said Colonel Kaspir.

There was a brittle tinkle in Kaspir's tone which I thought I alone had detected. Instinctively I looked at Pretty-

man. His ears had caught it, too. "Listen, Kaspir," he began warningly.

"Little Bill," said Kaspir solemnly, "this is gonna be kind of tough on you."

We all gaped at him.

"Lookit," he advised.

IF I'm a trifle incoherent about what happened next, forgive me. Merely thinking about it can still set my pulses pounding.

Two of the frantic groups on the *Lochgair's* decks suddenly left their work at the lifeboats to run to the sides of the great crate. Five seconds later the crate sides were down and shunted aside.

"Old stuff," grunted Colonel Kaspir to Prettyman, without turning. "Old stuff, Little Bill," he repeated, "but pretty goddam effective."

Then the crews of the two guns on the *Lochgair*, free now of the concealing crate, went to work with a vengeance. They were North Sea-trained and salty, those boys, and this in-fighting was right up their alley. The third shell from the spitting starboard gun rocked the smaller sub and spilled overboard the men who were bringing its tiny deck-gun to bear. Two more shots, planted with the lethal accuracy of a fine boxer's one-two punch, and the smaller sub was merely a blunt bow reeling drunkenly heavenwards in a boiling circle of oily foam.

But the larger sub was making a fight of it. Her commander brought her swiftly around so that, before the *Lochgair's* port gun-crew could bracket her effectively, she presented an infinitely smaller target. A ventilator beside the *Lochgair's* gun-crew disappeared as the sub's deck-gun opened fire.

Prettyman, almost at my shoulder now, yelped something in German. Then there were two ghastly explosions in the cabin, seemingly right in my ear. Maude screamed. For a second I was sure a chance shot from the fight below had found us. Then a weight fell upon me and the next instant I was on my feet and struggling blindly and awkwardly with Prettyman—until I realized that Prettyman was not fighting back and that my fingers were digging into a limp and lifeless body.

Something white across the aisle moved.

"Nice goin', Joe," grunted Kaspir, who had wheeled with the rest of us.

Joe's white teeth flashed briefly as he slid his own automatic back inside his white serving jacket. "A pleasure, Colonel," was all he said. Then I knew that Prettyman's attention must have been deflected by the shock of the events below.

Prettyman was very dead as he lay in the aisle where I had dropped him. The two big bullet holes in his forehead were not half an inch apart.

Kaspir nodded toward the pilot's compartment. "Step in there, Joe," he said, "and tickle Major Hansa's ear with that bean-shooter o' yours. Tell him to keep circling."

He looked down at Prettyman. "I wish he coulda seen this," he said regretfully, as we turned to the window. "Oh, my God!" he cried.

And Oliver Wendell Hoke echoed it hysterically and lashed out at Kaspir with both thin hands. His fists smacked sharply against Kaspir's full face. Kas-

pir caught the flailing hands, held them. Hoke struggled. He was cursing now, and tears and sobs were mixed with the flow of invective. Then I thought to look down, and knew why.

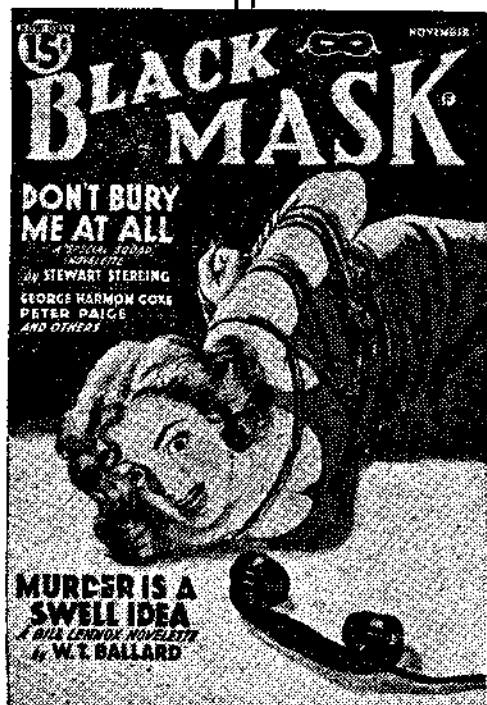
The sub was heeled over now. She was finished.

But the *Lochgair* was finished, too. One final, desperate torpedo had taken her amidships, for the black hole in her side was fully visible and she was settling fast. The gun crews and lifeboat gangs were getting her boats into the water smartly, though.

But Hoke's ravings struck home to me with re-doubled force. The subs were gone—yes. But the Hoke Gibraltar was now joining her three sisters on the bottom of the ocean. Kaspir had won the last round, all right. But he had lost the fight on points.

Kaspir's placid face, as he gripped Hoke's weakening hands, somehow infuriated me.

"Let's go for'ard," he grunted. I got out of his way. He hauled Hoke across



Is Jack the Ripper Still Alive?

... Exactly fifty years ago, in 1891, this notorious London assassin vanished from his Whitechapel haunts. Never arrested, never identified, he was believed to have escaped to the United States. Is he still alive? And in New York City?

Lurid headlines scream as Detectives Calder and O'Leahy draw their cordon around a butchering fiend, in *Don't Bury Me At All*—a "Special Squad" novelette by STEWART STERLING.

W. T. BALLARD brings back Bill Lennox of General Consolidated Pix, who decides there are times when *Murder Is a Swell Idea*.

Plus an unusual novelette by PETER PAIGE; the payoff of GEORGE HARMON COXE'S *Killers Are Camera-Shy*; and other shorts and features.

NOVEMBER issue on sale now!

Maude and hustled him up into the pilot's compartment. The flat-faced Major Hansa—lately Davidson, steward—was still at the controls, and Joe's automatic was very close to his head.

HANSA looked around with grim enjoyment at the three of us huddled in the cramped space. "You've got me, Colonel." His dark eyes glinted. "But would you not rather have had the Gibraltar?"

"Head back for Norfolk," said Kaspir. "Gonna hang you in a few weeks."

"Hang me, Colonel?" Major Hansa altered the controls slightly.

"For poisonin' that what's his name—that Urban fellow—Hoke's pilot. Slip-pin' him that quick stuff in the ginger ale," replied Kaspir. "I suppose you hadda get him outa the way so's Prettyman could fly us out here."

"Ah, yes, of course." Major Hansa was bringing the flying boat around, straightening her into level flight. "But are you not going to stop here and assist those men in the boats?"

Kaspir glanced at the rectangular watch on his beefy wrist. "There'll be somebody along in a few minutes to pick 'em up." Again that brittle note in his voice.

Hansa's eyes narrowed. "You will have much fun," he suggested, "trying to recover the remains of the Gibraltar from eighty fathoms of water." The man was trying to reassure himself of something. I discovered with a shock that he was on the verge of breaking.

Kaspir was supporting the dazed Hoke with an affectionate arm.

"Drop down to about three hundred," he instructed Hansa. Hansa shoved the wheel forward and the flying boat's nose dipped.

Kaspir was peering ahead at the gleaming ocean and his wide blue eyes were dancing as the opal had danced on Maude's hand. He inhaled suddenly. "Lookit!" he said.

So we looked. Hansa craning his neck with the rest.

At first it was nothing but a dark gray bow and some smoke. But our speed was bringing it toward us as though we were reeling it in on a drum.

Colonel Kaspir leaned closer to our

pilot. "You ain't supposin', Major," he said very softly, almost in Hansa's ear, "that I really shipped the Gibraltar out on that little ol' freighter, are you?"

Hansa's eyes must have been better than mine, just as his comprehension was, for before I could grasp the full significance of the approaching vessel, the gorilla-like major had leaped from the pilot's seat and was flying at Kaspir's crouching bulk in vain, unprofitable fury. Very vain and very unprofitable indeed, for Joe swung the blue-steel barrel of his automatic heavily against the back of the major's head. The major became a limp tangle of long arms and bandy legs. Joe opened the door to the cabin and removed his second victim.

Colonel Kaspir's small mouth stretched dangerously into a grin as he shoved Hoke gently into the pilot's chair. Hoke's hands and feet went automatically to the controls. He still stared at the oncoming ship, and he made no attempt to hide the tears.

The vessel below would pass under us in another minute. I ran back to the cabin, threw my arm around Maude's warm shoulders, and drew her to a window. Joe, the houseboy, joined us.

We looked down at the gray efficiency of His Majesty's Ship *Himalaya*, and I knew then why Kaspir and Duff-Dawson, of the Embassy, had seemed to be sharing a secret that morning at Bellowing Benny's.

The canvas patches were gone from the *Himalaya's* decks now, and there were no Stuka scars visible—because there had never been any.

Across H.M.S. *Himalaya's* afterdeck, beyond her guns, was lashed a huge, wooden, coffin-like crate, exactly like the dummy crate that had disfigured the *Lochgair's* afterdeck. But this one, I knew now, held the body of Gibraltar, just as the cruiser's hold held the remainder of Hoke's remarkable plane.

So the *Himalaya*, bearer of the Gibraltar, slipped away under us, heading east across the shining ocean—hull down for England. As you may have heard, she arrived safely.

A moon face rose over my left shoulder.

"Pretty, ain't she?" said Colonel Kaspir.