

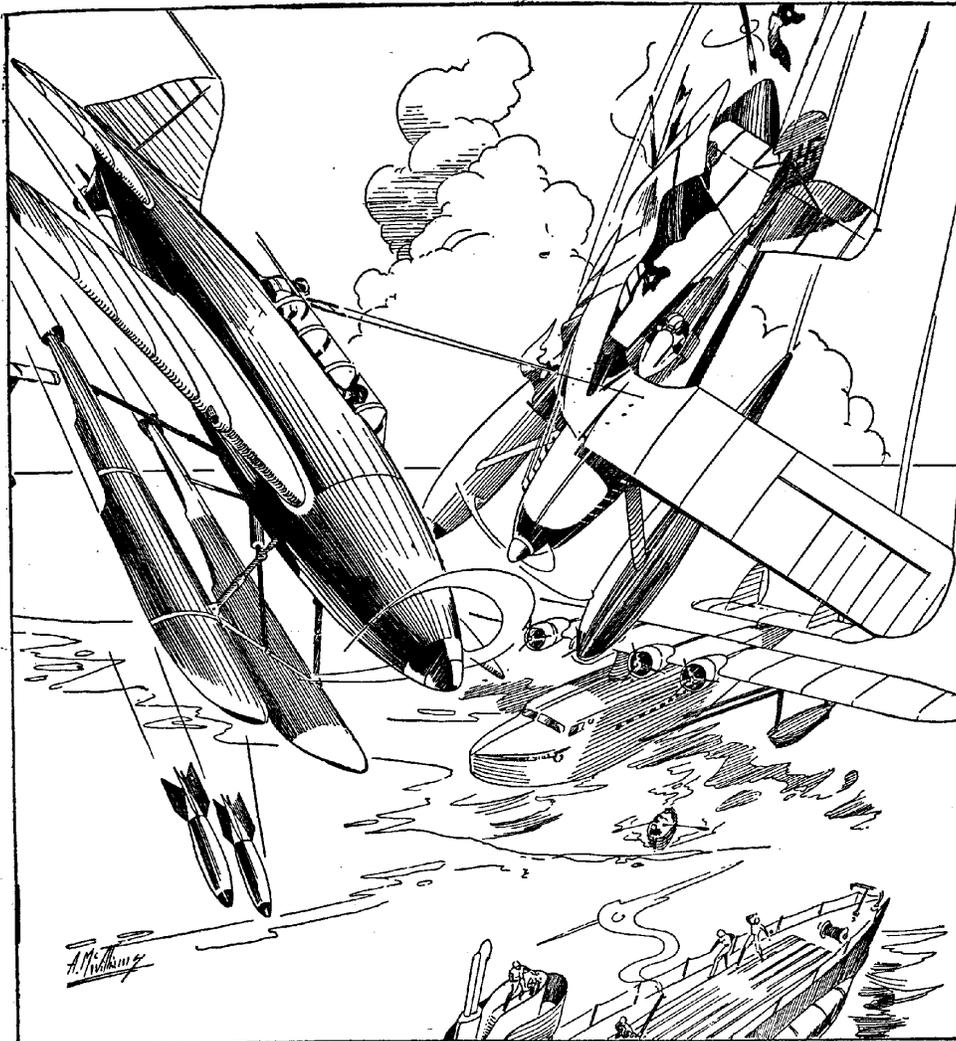
Scourge of the Sky Brood

Another Action-Packed Kerry Keen Sky Yarn

By Arch Whitehouse

Author of "Vultures' Vortex," "The Carrier Coup," etc.

Aboard that giant Clipper hurtling toward Bermuda, Layton Beale, Secret Service agent, huddled glassy-eyed in his seat. For Layton Beale was dead—murdered with an oddly shaped Ghoorka knife 4000 feet in the air! Yet not a single fingerprint on the handle of that weird weapon fitted any person on the ship! But though the police of two nations admitted defeat, that phantom, scarlet-masked figure' men called "The Griffon" simply smiled—and centered his attentions upon a strange, grayish box.



Barney poured a double stream of lead into the Arado's vitals—and that was the death blow, for she plunged downward in a tight spiral, her right wing crumpled. It was at this instant that Keen pulled his bomb toggles.

THE box was about two feet long and about nine inches across at its widest | point. It was a strange, ungainly box, obviously difficult to carry. Only the carefully screwed, black angle iron at its corners offered contrast to its steel-gray color. The woman who bore it seemed to show it all the tenderness of one who cuddled a first-born. Yet she cast furtive glances over her shoulder as she hurried with painful steps along the dimly lit street—for she was old and this precious box was to be her salvation. Her long-walk had wearied her and now a cool Fall wind had sprung up to whip her ragged skirt about her thin, bony knees.

Yes, the box meant life and a certain degree of ease. She had risked her all to get it.

"Two thousand dollars, that's what the man will give me," she mumbled to herself for the fiftieth time. "Two thousand dollars, all in five dollar bills. I could go back to County Tipperary with that—and have some left over."

She had been trudging on now for more than two hours, always heading north and east. She could have taken a streetcar, a subway, perhaps. But she was taking no chances on any public conveyance.

"Ay," she muttered again. "It'll be County Tipperary for me whin I get this over. Two thousand dollars in five dollar bills! That's a powerful lot o' money!"

The wind, stronger now, whistled down the street, and the old woman clutched the box even tighter, even though her old bones ached where

the sharp corners of the box cut deep into her flesh.

She stopped at a corner, peered up at the blue and white street sign under the light. Finally she made out the letters. Mumbling them over in her toothless mouth, she nodded and hurried on. She was right, now. In a few minutes she would find the man—the nice young man who promised her two thousand dollars in five-dollar bills.

Those visions of County Tipperary were sweet to this old scrub-lady who had worked for years to keep body and soul together in the great New World metropolis. Two thousand dollars took on the proportions of a magnificent fortune after sixty-five years of toil that had brought no material reward.

She paused at the next intersection. Then hugging the box closer to her, she bucked the wind and made for the opposite corner.

"Two thousand dollars," she muttered again. "In five—"

But that was as far as she got. A long black car suddenly purred out of the darkness, flashed its headlights on once, then flipped them off again. There was a thud, a low choked scream, then the dull retch of brakes. The old lady never knew what hit her. She rolled toward the gutter, still clutching the steel-gray box.

"Nice work, Tony," a voice said with a cruel chuckle. "Hold it a second."

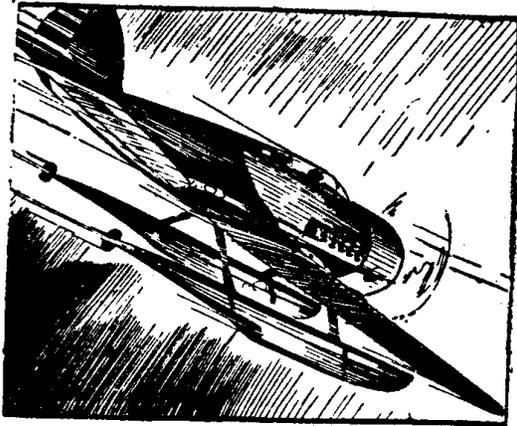
The man who had spoken darted out of the darkened car, ran to the fallen woman. He took one look at

her, kicked brutally at her twisted leg, then yanked at the box.

A voice abruptly crackled out of the gloom, and the man turned sharply, drew a blue-black automatic, and fired three times.

Then with the box in his arms he leaped for the black car again and the door slammed behind him as the gear went in with a clash of metal teeth.

Into the dull night the car crashed and lunged. It was impossible to get the license numbers.



"AV ALL the filthy jobs," the man who now hurried up said. "To kill an auld lady like that just to steal her groceries. That's what it looked like anyway. An' thin, begorra, he tries to kill me, too!"

He crouched at her side. Doors were opening now and Windows creaked upward. Faces and heavy bare arms appeared.

"How are ye? Are ye much hurt, mother?" the man said, lifting her head around with crude tenderness.

". . . thousand dollars in five-dollar bills," she said between gulps. "He said he'd give me two

thousand dollars. And then I could go to County Tipperary."

"You from County Tipperary, m'am?" the man asked. He knew she'd never get back there. "The devils hit ye—and ran off."

A crowd gathered around. The man tried to make her comfortable. He dragged her to the sidewalk, then noticed that she held one fist clenched. He fumbled with her shawl, carefully opened the fingers, and drew out a small slip of paper. He quickly stuffed it in his pocket as a bluecoat shoved his way through the crowd.

"She's done," he told the policeman. "A big black car—a Lincoln, I believe—hit her and cleared off."

The cop leaned over with a bored professional air. He'd seen so many of these things. He reached out, yanked a tattered bed quilt from the top of a refuse can, and drew it across the body. Then brushing his hands together with a gesture of finality, he said:

"Nut'in' you can do about it. Them hit-run guys will be miles away by now. Stick around while I go in that store over there and call up the wagon."

But the man who had taken the paper from the old lady's hand was nowhere to be found when the cop came back.

EXACTLY twenty-four hours later, Kerry Keen and Barney O'Dare were enjoying an evening at home. Both had pipes going and the study was tinted a pleasant blue. Keen

was working on a chart of internal ballistics on several new machine guns; he planned to display it during his coming lecture before the Army War College. Barney was wrapped up in a gaudy-covered adventure novel set in darkest Africa. Already he had consumed more than half a bottle of O'Doul's Dew and the book was getting more exciting by the minute.

Finally, the Irishman could stand the tense thrills of the yarn no longer. With a glance at the clock, he stepped over and flipped on the radio switch.

"Ah! That's right, Barney. Let's find out what's going on in the world," said Keen, looking up. "Time for the news, eh?"

"Where's Africa ?" asked Barney without glancing up.

"South of Europe—most of it," answered Keen. "What of it?"

"Ever been to a place called Angola?"

"No, I haven't. But why?"

"Well, I was just reading a story about how the cannibals down there light fires on yer stomach when they catch you, and—"

But the radio tubes were now warm and the voice "of the announcer came in gradually:

". . . most amazing crime story of the year. A United States Secret Service man named Layton Beale was mysteriously murdered aboard a Bermuda bound Clipper plane this afternoon. Beale was found stabbed to death in his seat a short time before the plane landed in Hamilton Harbor. He was found by the plane

steward, George Blott. Government officials in Bermuda are investigating the case. We hope to bring more news of this amazing affair later in the broadcast.

"And here's another item of interest: The mystery surrounding the death of Mrs. Margaret Kennedy, who was knocked down and killed by a hit-run driver last night, is still attracting the attention of police and government officials. Mrs. Kennedy was a cleaner in the Brooklyn Navy Yard office buildings and no one seems to be able to account for her being in the Maspeth section of Long Island at that time of night. She lives in a small furnished room in central Manhattan."

"Wait a minute," Barney suddenly growled. "That name—that George Blott guy."

The radio continued on with less interesting news while Barney fumbled about in his pockets. Keen watched with mild interest, unable to figure out what Barney was getting at.

"Yes, that's the same name," Barney suddenly said, peering at a crumpled piece of paper he had extracted from his coat. "Look, 'George Blott.' "

He handed the paper over to Keen, who read:

Mr. George Blott
The Waterford Cafe
64th and Grand Avenue

"What's it all about?" Keen said.

"This paper was in that old woman's hand when I got to her. I saw her knocked over, you see. But

the guys got away before I could get their number."

"The woman you were talking about last night when you came in?"

"Sure! That's the same woman. She had this paper in her hand. The guys who hit her, grabbed her groceries or whatever she was carrying."

"And this George Blott is the steward on the Clipper who found this Secret Service man dead?"

"That was the same name—but listen!" The radio had taken up the subject again:

"We have just learned that Beale, the Secret Service man, was stabbed through the heart with a strange Indian knife, believed to be a Ghoorka weapon. Bermuda officials have studied it and have found definite fingerprints on the handle. But strangely enough none of the prints fit any person aboard the plane! This is the most unusual murder mystery that has come up in years."

"Whew!" gasped Keen. "That is a beauty! A man is murdered with an Indian knife aboard a plane some 4,000 feet in the air. The knife carries fingerprints— but they don't fit any person aboard the plane! How do you like that?"

"I don't like it," muttered Barney. "It all adds up to—"

THERE was a sudden plunk of feet outside the apartment. Then the bell rang. Both Barney and Keen exchanged smiles. They knew it would be Drury Lang.

Barney let him in, first stuffing the piece of paperback into his pocket.

Lang shuffled across the room, spotted the O'Doul's Dew bottle, and headed for it under draft. He took a long swig, wiped his mouth with the back of his hand' then sat down. The radio blared on. Lang leaned over, snapped it off.

"What do you think of that Kennedy woman case?" he asked finally. "Anything missing?" spoke up Keen.

"What made you ask that?" Lang said, sitting bolt upright.

"A perfect set-up. Old lady who works in the Administration Building of the Navy Yard goes tramping across Brooklyn late at night —to be knocked down by a car."

"Go on," said Lang. "You're getting warm."

"I read the story in this morning's paper. She was knocked down on a fairly quiet street and they took a package she was carrying, according to an eyewitness. There was some shooting, too."

"Well, there is something missing," Lang said, peering about. "But we're not broadcasting it. No, it ain't the design of a new battleship, or anything like that."

"No? What is it?"

"A model of the *U.S.S. Saratoga*, incorporating a working model of a new flight-deck arrester gear. Only a few men in the Navy know how it works, and every other naval power in the world would like to get the dope on it."

"What's it do?" asked Barney.

"Arrests planes coming in for a landing on the flight decks of the Navy aircraft carriers," answered Lang with a sniff.

"What do they want to arrest them for? They ain't done nothin', have they?"

"My gosh, how do you live with a guy like this?"

Lang exploded. "How could you arrest a plane, you dumb Mick? They don't arrest—"

"But you said they did," argued the irrepressible Barney, with a twinkle in his eye.

"I mean arrest the ships," spluttered Lang.

"Oh, the battleships."

"No—the planes!" came the screeching reply. "They arrest them . . ."

"You just said they Didn't. That you can't arrest planes."

"It's an arresting gear, that—"

"Oh, a mechanical police system. Ain't the cops smart enough any more? Do they have to

"Will you shut up while I explain? It's a a thing something to stop the Navy planes from running off the deck when they are landing—that sort of an arrester. Cripes! I used to think you knew something. But I give up," Lang moaned, shaking his head.

Keen broke in at this point to get Lang started again. "I know what you mean, Lang. Go on with the story."

"I'm glad some one knows something about something. To think that I came up to this funny factory to get some help."

"We don't know nothin'," scowled Barney.

"You don't know nothin'," agreed Lang. "But this mug over here knows plenty," he added, indicating Keen.

"Here comes the 'Griffon' gag again," laughed Keen.

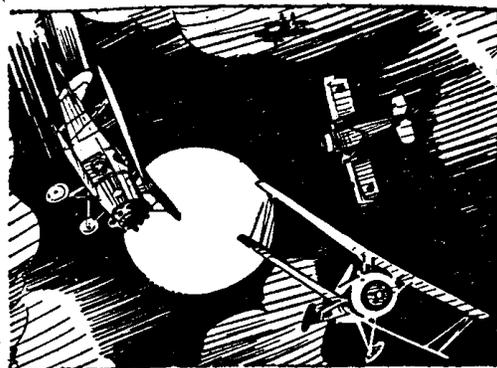
"I suppose it was the Griffon who killed the Secret Service man on that Clipper ship. Find any cards yet?"

"Shut up! I might be the next one," Lang said. "I got to go down next trip and get him."

"What are you talking about? Get who?"

"Beale was on his way down to bring back a former Navy guy—a Commander Hugh Stanwick, who was wanted by the government for selling Navy secrets. Now

I got to go and get him."



KEEN'S mind was working fast now. Things were beginning to jell — the old lady from the Navy Yard.... the man named George Blott, who was a steward aboard the Clipper ship the missing model of the aircraft carrier arrester gear and the murdered Secret Service man.

"The British," Lang continued, " nabbed Stanwick down there and we got extradition papers on him. Beale was to go down and bring him back."

"But what about that model?" Keen suddenly asked.

"Does that case hook up with this Clipper business?"

"I never thought of that," said Lang, pensively. "You know, Keen, you got a good mind. You ought to be in this racket."

"But where is the model now?"

"I thought you might have an idea. There's some real dough in it if we can get it back."

"You're going down on the Saturday Clipper to bring this man, Stanwick, back?"

"Yeh, but I don't like it."

"Um, and you'll be going down on the same plane and with the same crew that took Beale?"

"Hey, take it easy, will you?" pleaded Lang. "You could go by boat, you know."

"Sure. But it would take too long. Besides, they need me on the arrester-gear model business."

"I see," said Keen. "But don't forget what I said before. This man Stanwick may be connected in some way with the stealing of the arrester gear. He might even have it in Bermuda."

Lang sat and studied the design in the Chinese rug for some time. Finally, he wagged his head solemnly and agreed.

"That's right! Stanwick is reasonably free. He's out on some sort of parole, being a U.S. Naval officer and all that sort of thing."

"You'd better be sure he is clamped up somewhere. If the man who was going down to pick him up was killed —murdered—it should be pretty obvious that this guy Stanwick is a pretty important character. Desperate, too, by the looks of things."

"How about you, Keen?" Lang asked after another period of solemn contemplation of the rug.

"I mean, what are you doing for the lecture to reel off before the War College and I'm working on a lot of research stuff. Why?" Keen asked. He knew what Lang was after.

"We've got to get that model back," Lang said through his browned teeth. "I wish I knew where to get hold of that Griffon guy. I can't figure him out yet, Keen. I'd like to contact him, somehow, and make a dicker with him."

"Maybe the Griffon was in this thing at that. It sounds like the sort of mess he cooks up," said Keen with a serious grimace.

Lang looked at his host, unable to make out just what he meant.

"Come clean for once in your life. Keen. You know who the Griffon is, don't you?" he queried, lighting a cigarette and looking around for the bottle.

"But how would all this business interest the Griffon?"

Keen asked, avoiding Lang's question.

"There's plenty in it—for the guy who can get that model back. More than you'll get for spouting about ballistics before a War College crowd," Lang replied, equally as evasive, but pointed in his inference.

"So you still think" I'm the Griffon," Keen said with a low chuckle.

"No, I don't. But—"

"Well," interrupted Keen hurriedly. "Regardless of all that I think I'll let you get bumped off on the Clipper trip. You're becoming a nuisance, Lang. You bother me with your trifles. Yes," he added slowly, "I think

I'll let you go and get yourself bumped off."

"Tripe!" Lang blarneyed out, jumping up. "You can't scare me that way. I'll go to Bermuda and I'll bring Stanwick back. And then I'll come back and go to work on you—and the Griffon!"

"No, you mustn't forget the Griffon," grinned Keen.

"And don't forget the model of the aircraft carrier arrester-gear. That's very important."

"I won't forget," Lang continued to storm. "I won't forget you, either, when I get back."

He barged out of the door, clucking like an insulted hen.

"If you do get back," Keen hurled at the closed door.

"**WHAT** did you meanly that?" queried Barney after they heard the elevator doors clang.

"That man's in real danger. Barney," Keen said as he gathered

his papers together. "He'll get into trouble as sure as shooting—or knifing—if he goes, after that, egg Stanwick." ;

"You worrying about him?"

"In a way. I'd hate to see the old guy shoved off. He keeps us prime. I don't know what we'd do without him sticking his beak into everything. No, we can't let old Lang go like that. He's too valuable. He's ready money any time we get down on our uppers."

"I can see that we're in for something hot tonight, eh?" Barney grunted. "Who gets hit this time? Me, I suppose."

Keen did not answer. He was scotched on the corner of his big desk, fingering a yellow pencil. "The old lady had the box last night," he mumbled, talking to no one in particular, "and they got it before midnight."

"So this guy Blott, who she was looking for, probably took it to Bermuda on the same Clipper carrying that G-man Beale," offered Barney.

"Maybe," Keen said frowning. "And yet Blott would be taking an awful chance doing it that way. No, the box was not on board that trip, or they wouldn't have bumped off Beale. They got rid of Beale to keep Stanwick free a little longer. Because, you see, they want to hand Stanwick the box so he, in turn, can deliver it over to some one in Bermuda and get the dough he needs to get out of this mess."

"But suppose Blott did take the box down," argued Barney.

"He couldn't have," persisted Keen. "He knew that if Beale was to be killed, there would be a thorough check of the ship, and then the box would be found. It's going down on the next trip."

"That lets us out, then," Barney mooned. "They do a daylight show all the time."

Keen nodded at that, then took a new tack: "It is evident that the box is somewhere here—or out on Long Island near Port Washington, the Clipper base. But there's no use in trying to get it here. We must wait until we are certain of its position, and we can't be sure of that until Blott's plane leaves on Saturday. Then we'll know for certain that it is aboard, and we can work from that point on."

"Wow! Then old Lang *will* be on board with it all the time!"

"Yes. But he won't know it. He'll be so scared waiting for someone to stab him, he won't be able to figure out anything."

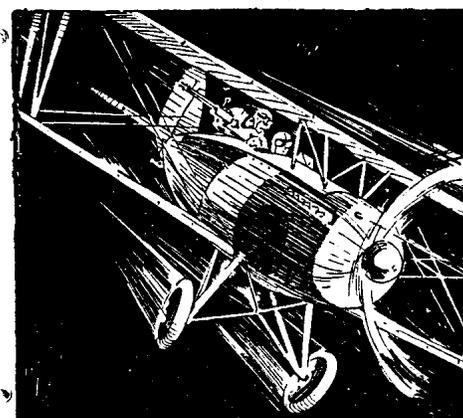
"Neither would I," said Barney.

THAT was Wednesday night, and Keen and Barney went to bed and slept on it. By noon next day, however, they were out at Graylands, Keen's small estate out on Long Island. There they checked maps, charts, and the tanks of the Black Bullet.

At 6 o'clock Barney took his dilapidated flivver and headed back toward the City, but when he was certain no one was following him, he turned north at Mineola and headed for Port Washington.

He was back again before ten o'clock. Keen listened to his story, made a quick decision. "Okay," he said quietly. "Get something to eat. After that we're heading out".

Barney lunched on a cold leg of lamb, a dish of cold spuds and a bottle of beer, while Keen muffled himself up in his black coverall, helmet, and parachute harness. When the Mick had his fill he pulled on his flying gear slowly and went



downstairs with half a bottle of beer in his hand, flicking out lights as he went.

Below, in their underground hangar, Keen was swinging the Black Bullet around on her turntable so that her nose was pointing out. He climbed up into the covered cockpit, kicked over the Avia starter, and the big 1,000-h.p. engine roared into life. He set the Skoda mufflers, then nodded down to Barney. The latter snapped off the lights, moved up to a master switch box, and drew a red handle down.

"Make it snappy," Keen called over the side' "We've got to make it fast before daybreak."

The great doors of the sunken hangar silently swung outward and

Keen ran the amphibian into the velvety darkness outside. Barney flicked the switch again, darted outside before the doors closed.

"Those suitcases were put aboard, weren't they?" Keen husked over the side.

"Sure. Everything's aboard—enough to start a circus," Barney grunted, more to himself than in an answer. Then he drew out the folding wings and Keen pressed the kingpins down with his feet. At last they were ready, so Barney climbed aboard and took his position in the rear cockpit.

Keen let the Black Bullet roll down the hard turf, past the thick foliaged, grape arbor, and into the shadow of his boat-house. The engine was throttled back to a low purr as she rolled across the hard wet sand and settled on the water. Keen drew back the levers which set the pontoons for a water take-off, then ran the plane out away from the shore. Once in the clear, he opened the Avia, whereupon the Black Bullet leaped up on her step and fought herself free of the light rollers.

Now she was away, climbing like a hawk. Keen settled back and waited until he was at 4,000 feet before he cut off the mufflers and let her roar. He finally shot her out toward the sea after turning to take a point on the Montauk Point light.

"Bermuda, next stop," he grinned.

HARDLY had he spoken the words, however, when Barney turned sharply in he seat and

reached under the cowling for his gun.

"What's up? Keen queried. They were in communication through their helmet phones now and could talk with little trouble.

Keen hunched his shoulders, turned back to his job. But in a moment, Barney jerked again and peered about. This time Keen took no notice but went to work checking his chart.

"I don't like it," Barney finally said.

"Get out and walk," was all the satisfaction he got from Keen.

"But there's something going on, somewhere. How's she flying?"

"Beautiful! What's eating you, anyway?"

"I don't know but something's screwy on this show."

"Sure—no one has shot at us yet," cracked Keen, getting on with the business.

"No, not—"

But before Barney could finish his remark they were both deafened by a series of sharp explosions that crashed all about them. The Bullet staggered as she plunged through the concussion. Chunks of screaming metal wailed all about them.

Barney ducked down. This was more than aerial gunfire. He sensed that this was heavier stuff.

Keen threw the Bullet all over the sky, tried to get a sight on the source of the trouble. As he swerved away, turning out to sea again, he almost ran smack into a giant flying boat

which seemed to be in as much distress as themselves.

There were strange flashes coming from its control cabin windows just below the giant wing.

CR-RA-SH! CRR-ASH!

Another salvo of fire now exploded all about them and the Bullet tangoed in waves of concussion. Keen; climbed her hard, sensed that Barney was breaking out his rear guns.

"No! No! Take it easy. It's not that flying boat!"

Barney turned, stared at Keen amazed. "Not that boat? Where is it from then?" he barked.

"I don't know. But look! The flying boat's getting it, too."

They both stared at the floundering transport as she took the beating from the explosions that rent the sky.

"What is it—a Clipper?"

"No, a Short Empire job."

"But the Imperial Bermuda ship is not due here until Saturday when the Clipper goes out," Barney argued.

"That's what's funny about it,"

Keen said as he cleared and ran into a thin patch of clouds.

"I think she was firing at us," Barney said, letting his lower lip fold over the upper. "I saw flashes."

"Just Aldis lamp signals from the control pit. They were trying to signal some one."

"Sure, but who? I didn't see anybody."

"I give up, too," said Keen. "But let's buzz off."

They were in the clear now. The firing had ceased and the silver Empire boat was somewhere well below them heading for Port Washington.

They raced away into the darkness on a southeast course, settled down for a four-hour run. All the way they saw nothing but the stars, a few straggling surface vessels, and the lights of that majestic liner, the Queen of Bermuda.

It was nearly 4 o'clock Bermuda time when Keen finally swung her around over Port Royal Bay. The straggling fishhook of land known as Bermuda lay 6,000 feet below.

"Well, we're here. What are you gonner do with this boiler?" demanded Barney.

"You'll see," said Keen. "I've been here before. It's perfect for prowlers like us."

"If the British Coast Guard doesn't spot you," added Barney.

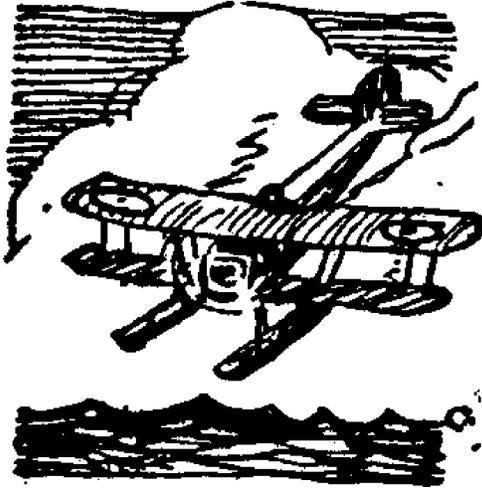
The Bullet sped on for a mile or so, then Keen snapped in the Skoda mufflers. Finally, he carefully turned her back and let her glide gently toward Church Bay. Watching carefully ahead, he let her clear the South-

West Breaker Bar, then suddenly switched her around at right angles, headed for Great Whale Point, and with careful S-turns finally brought her down on the silent waters.

Keen snapped an order.

Quickly, Barney slipped out of the cockpit and stood on the wing root.

Keen eased her in quietly, released the wing kingpins, and the Mick folded the airfoils back. Then like a wraith the Black Bullet slipped inside a black slit in the rocks and disappeared.



EIGHT HOURS later, two men in neat white linen, with well shaven chins and the early flush of a tropical sunburn, trundled black enameled bicycles along Front Street in Hamilton. They stopped in at Arundell's, had a drink, and made a few discreet inquiries. Yes, these men were Keen and Barney. Finding a newspaper, Barney quickly scanned the headlines. "They are still working on the knife theory," he whispered to Keen. "And say, how's that Planter's Punch?"

"Lovely! But what about the knife?"

"Says they have made another examination of all aboard the plane and again proved that none jibes with the prints on the handle."

"Maybe he was murdered in New York City and he walked out to Port Washington with the knife in his chest without anyone knowing it," said Keen colorlessly. Then he added: "There's something screwy about that knife business. I'd like to see that weapon."

"Let's ask the Governor-General," smirked Barney, folding up the paper.

"Oh, it can be done," Keen snapped. "Drink up and pop along with me No, that's no good. You'd better stay here and see that that bartender keeps the Planter's up to snuff."

Barney readily agreed to that, and Keen went out, threw a leg across his bicycle, and pedaled away. In a few minutes he arrived at the Council Chamber buildings and got directions to the Island Police Inspector's office.

With the aid of several cards and letters he had carefully fixed up for the event, Keen was able to get inside and ask a few questions concerning the murder of Beale. The Chief Inspector, a ruddy, bacon-faced Britisher, was brusque at first, but he gradually warmed up as he talked to Keen. Keen, however, had adopted the name of Ginsberg for the occasion, as he usually did under such conditions.

"It has left us somewhat flat," the Inspector admitted, trying to adjust the name of Ginsberg to Keen's profile. "This knife business, you know."

"That's what I was interested in," Keen added. "I'm something of an expert on weapons of that sort and

I'd like to see it. I have a theory about it."

"Of course you may see it. Anything to get on with it, you know."

The Inspector led Keen into a smaller room, nodded to a young man in civilian clothes who was working at a chemistry bench, and showed Keen the exhibits of the case. The knife was among the most prominent.

At first Keen simply stared at it without touching it. But then the Inspector spoke up.

"You can pick it up. We've done all we can with it."

Keen smiled, took the knife in his hands, and with a quick underhand movement suddenly drew the handle off the knife and handed it to the Inspector with a smile.

The Inspector was amazed. He took it gingerly, fumbled with it for some seconds. "But I say, it never came off before. It was on tight."

"They all are—until you shove this curved section of the small hilt guard down with the knuckle of your first finger. Like this—see?"

Keen demonstrated for the Inspector's benefit.

"This is a Ghoorka knife, all right," Keen explained, "but it is small—a woman's knife. They carry them for many things, and one of their features is that they can use them for sticking in pieces of meat for smoking or cooking. You see, they remove the handle until they are ready to take the meat down. But it never had the same ceremonial standing as did the regular fighting knife of the men."

"But what does it mean?" the Inspector asked, puzzled.

"Only one thing. Beale was killed on board the Clipper all right, but the handle of the knife was changed, and this one put on with a lot of misleading fingerprints on it. But hello! Look here!"

Keen was holding the knife in his hands and putting the blade back and forth inside the handle. As he fingered with it in this manner, the handle end of the blade disclosed a small piece of folded white paper.

Keen picked it up off the floor where it had fallen and examined it. He unfolded it—and they both stared at a portion of a Clipper menu.

"Get it?" said Keen.

"Not quite, except that it might have been fitted into that particular handle to make the tang of the knife fit tight at that end."

"Right! But who put it there?"

"You have me unless"

"Of course. The steward—Blott. He would have used one of the printed menus to make the tang fit, so that it would be tight after he had changed the handles. Had it been loose, you might have stumbled over that trick catch idea and realized what you know now."

"Then Blott's our man. I'd better wire New York right away," the inspector said anxiously.

"But you can't arrest him on anything as flimsy as that," Keen said in feigned horror. "You might have him traced, or carefully watched. But he'll be down here

again tomorrow afternoon. I'd wait and have him apprehended here."

"I suppose you're right," the inspector said. "Besides, I believe a Secret Service man is on his way down on that flight to get—"

"I know—to get Commander Stanwick," broke in Keen. "And there's another point, Inspector. You have charge of Stanwick, haven't you?"

"In a general way, yes. He's under some sort of parole until he goes aboard the Clipper on Sunday. Navy chap of some sort, and it's messy, that parole business."

"Your men, of course, keep a fairly good tab on him, eh?"

"As well as we can."

"Then you would know if he has received a wooden box—a special steel-gray box, well braced, and all that sort of thing. As a matter of fact, it's a U.S. Navy box of some sort. Between you and me, Inspector, it's lost—and I have a hunch that Stanwick is to get hold of it somehow."

"I'm almost certain he would not have received anything like that without our knowing it. We keep a close tab on him, you know, as far as his post and communications are concerned."

"All right. Do you have a man on the island by the name of Haageman—a Professor Haageman?" Keen asked suddenly after another examination of the knife.

"Haageman? ... Professor Haageman? Of course! He's a guest of the Governor-General. It's said

he's got something to do with a German munitions syndicate."

"Yes. I read about him being down here—and I just wondered."

"I think I understand."

"Thanks, Inspector. So if you run into this gray box, it's to be returned to the U.S. Navy—unopened. You understand that, too, eh?"

"I think we understand one another, Mr. Ginsberg. By the way, where are you staying?"

"I'm with friends—a board a yacht. I'd rather keep that quiet, too. I'll keep in touch with you during the next few days, but don't take a chance on Blott yet. He may slip out of your fingers."

"Thanks for your assistance in the matter, Mr. Ginsberg. I hope you'll come in again," the grateful Inspector replied. "I'll have Blott watched."

"I know a better plan. I'll have him watched. I'll have someone aboard the Clipper watch him. How's that?"

"I'll leave it up to you, sir," the Inspector said.

Keen went out, found the government post office and wrote a telegram to Drury Lang. It read:

KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE
CLIPPER STEWARD STOP HE
MAY BE THE GRIFFON

—GINSBERG

And with that he hurried back to Arundell's and joined Barney who had picked up more interesting information.



THEY chatted quietly in a corner, watching the colorful tourist crowd mill in and out as they talked.

Across the street, the Monarch of

Bermuda creaked against the piles of the dock. About them was the clean spicy smell that only Bermuda can provide.

"Well, what about it?" Keen finally asked. "Anything doing?"

"I got a boat and I think I can get the 'juice' later on this afternoon. I had to pay a buck a gallon, but it's aviation stuff."

"What is it in—four-gallon cases?"

"Sure, export stuff. But we got to haul it ourselves."

"Don't worry. No one will be in on this. When will it be ready?" "I take the boat around about 4 o'clock and tie it up to a small pier on this end of Morgan's Island. Then we go back after dark and clear it. I have the boat until noon tomorrow."

"That means we've got to run through Seeley's Narrows to get out on the south side of the island," Keen said reflectively as he glanced up at a lithographed map of Bermuda that was framed on the

wall. "Well, that's the best we can do, I suppose. It'll work out, I hope."

They split up again after that. Keen went to a nearby hotel and ordered dinner while Barney clambered on his bike and pedalled away. KEEN met Barney again that night at the end of a bicycle path that ran down from the main road to the sands on Burgess Point.

Barney was at the oars of a light skiff and together they rowed across to Morgan's Island, which lay about a mile away. '

They found the boat Barney had hired and climbed aboard. Below under neat tarpaulins were stacked a number of boxed cans of aviation fuel. They looked them over quickly, saw that there was enough for what they would require, plus a few gallons of oil into the bargain.

"That Limey thought I wanted it for a motor boat," Barney laughed under his breath. "He said: 'You won't 'arf be able to splather abart wiv this stuff in yer tank, mate!'"

"I hope he keeps on thinking that way," Keen answered. "And now, let's go."

The boat was an American job of a popular type. Barney had no trouble starting it and getting it under way. They shot westward at high speed and headed for Seeley's Narrows that slit Somerset into two chunks. They carried all riding lights and Keen even turned on all cabin lights to stimulate the impression that they were on a typical tourist holiday outing. For about an hour they carefully picked their way through the Narrows on a chart Barney had wisely borrowed. Then they eased

out on to the ocean side of the island and turned south to make their way to the hidden cave that sheltered the Black Bullet.

"How did you know about the place?" Barney asked, showing interest in it for the first time. * "Funny, all right, how I remembered it," Keen replied. "It actually belongs to a very close friend of mine who is in New York at the present time. The cave has been there for years and probably was used in the old days as a hide-out by the pirate trade, but few enter it today owing to the morays that infest the water."

"Morays? What are they?"

"Why, they're a form of giant eel, and they are absolutely ferocious—• have teeth like razor blades. If you fell in the water there, you'd have a rather bad time for a while. For they will attack a human being with all the vim of a barracuda."

"Oof!" grunted Barney. "You sure pick the spots."

"It's a good one. You can bet no one will go in there. No, it's a swell place for what we want."

And with that explanation they settled back for the four-mile run to their lair. Barney was at the wheel and Keen sat in the stern and enjoyed the night. They kept well outside the Great West Breaker Bar then turned toward Great Whale Point.

The headlands were ahead of them now, and Keen, deciding to play safe, doused the riding and cabin lights. Barney throttled her back and let her skim along with hardly a sound. They were riding

thus when Barney suddenly sat bolt upright. He peered about, cut the engine down even more.

He turned and looked at Keen who had caught it, too.

"Where the deuce did that come from?" Keen said in a husky whisper. "It wasn't there a few minutes ago."

"It came up out of the water," Barney said quietly. "Must be a submarine."

"There's no British submarines in these waters. I checked that this morning. Look, it's got German markings on it."

"I didn't know Germany had any submarines," Barney husked, watching the long gray wraith come out of the water.

"Lay low! Look, there's a boat out there."

They let the motor boat ease along quietly, then saw a small boat run up to the deck of the dripping submarine. Two men climbed out and got aboard the submersible. Keen and Barney watched it, their hearts in their throats.

"Beat it!" screamed Keen. "They've spotted us!"

Barney rammed the throttle up the quadrant, shot the boat up on its step. Almost at the same instant two shots rang out from the submarine and threw up two jets of water in front of them. Barney jerked the wheel back and forth, rolled the boat over on her side. Back she went like a Gold Cup chaser. Two more shots rang out, but they were well past the mark.

From his crouched position. Keen watched the activities aboard the sub. The boat was quickly taken aboard, folded up, and stowed away in a metal slot along the base of the conning tower. The men, indistinct figures, clambered up the ladder and dropped down the hatch.

A few minutes later the submarine disappeared below the water again.

"Well, there goes Commander Stanwick and Professor Haageman," Keen said as Barney throttled her down and turned back for their original destination. "From now on, anything can happen."

In a few minutes they were easing the motor boat through a narrow gash in the rocks and guiding her by shoving against the damp rock wall. Inside they could see the Black Bullet high and dry on a platform of rock that was now out of the water, owing to low tide.

They worked fast unloading their fuel crates and in another hour the plane was completely refueled. They checked her carefully and prepared her for a quick getaway in event of an emergency. While they worked, hungry morays slashed about in the black waters below snapped at chips of the crates.

Giving the craft a last careful look-over and turning her so that they could run her out with little trouble, the two conspirators now climbed back into the motor boat and eased her out into the open again.

"Yeah, let's get back. I'm afraid those Planter's punches won't hold out against the thirsts of those American tourists," moaned Barney.

They made their return trip uneventfully, but noticed that several government cutters were speeding up and down outside the Great West Breaker Bar.

"Those shots aroused someone,"

Keen reflected. "Don't stop unless you have to—and remember, we didn't see or hear anything. We have just come from around Elbow Beach way—a bathing party."

"Yeah. It came near being one," growled Barney.

But they were not bothered, since there were too many light craft racing about for them to be selected.

They got back through the Narrows and returned to Morgan's Island without hindrance. Finally they skiffed over to Burgess Point, picked up their bicycles, and cycled back to town.

HAMILTON was at fever heat in excitement. The newspaper, the *Bermudian*, had ripped out an extra, the first since the Armistice.

The story was a strange conglomerate affair concerning the escape of Commander Hugh Stanwick, an American Naval officer who had been held on parole until the arrival of Secret Service men from the States.

It seemed that Stanwick had slipped out of his hotel window by the use of a rope, had dropped down on a small cottage nearby, and had escaped. Then there was the mysterious disappearance of one Professor

Haageman, a German munitions man who had been a guest of the Governor-General. The Professor's room had been left in complete disorder. The Governor-General's private study had also been raided, several important portfolios of papers being missing. And to top it all, there was the report of movements of a submarine of some kind off Great Whale Point.

Keen sipped his punch, read the reports, and smiled across at Barney.

"Oh, what fun we shall have tomorrow," he grinned. "Old Lang is in for a tough day, but he'll have to go through with it now."

"He'll never make it," Barney muttered. "Somehow they'll pinch that Clipper—and there will go Mister Lang and the box of tricks." And Barney leaned back and let out a loud guffaw.

Keen frowned, stared at the ice in his drink. "That isn't so funny. It's too true to be funny. What time do they start tomorrow from Port Washington?"

"About noon. They'll be here about 5 o'clock—if they get here."

Keen sat gritting his teeth while Barney ordered two more Planter's punches. Keen was making plans for stopping the German submarine from getting away.

"We can do it," he muttered. "But it sounds too easy. There's a dark gent in the kindling somewhere. They are not just working with a submarine alone. There's too many chances to take. No, we've got to be ready for almost anything."

When the Mick came back, Keen mulled over the whole mess again to see if Barney had any more good ideas. They knew, for one thing, that old Lang would be on his way down on the Clipper the next afternoon, because he would want to check up on Stanwick's escape. They were certain, too, that Blott, the steward, was the killer. And in all probability the man would have the box containing the secret model of the aircraft carrier arrester gear somewhere on board.



"As a matter of fact," Keen said, "the best thing we can do is to give them a chance to show their cards. In that way we shall be sure of several points jibing up. Haageman and Commander Stanwick are no doubt aboard the sub. Blott will have the box with him. And if we pull the right strings. . . ."

"Or press the right triggers," grinned Barney, "we can nab a lot of birds with one rock."

Keen nodded, packed a new briar with some pungent shag, and

applied a match after due contemplation of the whole situation.

"But there's something in all this, somewhere, Barney, that worries me. They're not relying simply on the submarine. There's some other angle to it somewhere."

"Well," agreed Barney, torching a massive black cigar,—"we'll find out what it is—later on. For now, let's worry about that bartender."

THEY checked out quietly the next noon and had their light bags taken to a point near Gibbs Hill lighthouse and left with a cottager. They had lunch in Riddle's Bay, rode around the Warwick Camp, and watched the Sherwood Foresters winding up their morning maneuvers. Then they picked up their bags, quietly cycled away, and headed for the scrubby gorse that sheltered the pathway down to the rocks that hid the cave where the Black Bullet was sheltered.

It was well after 1 o'clock when they clambered down inside and worked their way up to the amphibian. Using small flashlights, they changed into their black flying kits, being particularly careful now to put on full length face masks under their helmets. Then they eased the plane down into the water, started the engine, and guided her out through the narrow opening and into a small cove outside. Barney quickly opened the wings and Keen jabbed the king-pins in. They held her there a few minutes until the engine warmed completely, then they took off with a roar and a milky wake

before anyone in the vicinity could figure out what had happened.

Keen hoiked her up fast, climbed her to 4,000 feet, set the throttle for cruising speed, and went to work on his avigation. Bermuda fell away fast as they headed north-west toward New York. Barney was twisted in his seat in such a way that he could watch the water below and still keep a close watch on anything above and behind.

The Black Bullet gleamed like an evil thing in the glare of the mid-day sunshine as it raced to keep a rendezvous with crime.

* * * *

THE Bermuda Clipper left Port Washington dead on the clang of noon. She carried sixteen passengers and a crew of five headed by Captain Marty Strack, First-Officer Pete Blumenthall, and Avigator Jerry Muddin. Eric Lawrence was the radioman and George Blott the steward.

The passenger list was a typical tourist crowd that included two honeymooning couples, three school teachers, several middle-aged couples of the comfortable class, and a number of unassuming men who were obviously on "tired-business-man" trips.

Drury Lang was not one of these; for while he was tired and not a little worried, he was making no effort to get into the snatches of conversation that was bantered back and forth across the cabin. He made no effort to change his seat at any time but simply sat near the window in the compartment aft of the Steward's pantry. Across the aisle,

three men in business clothes started some sort of a card game that Lang could not quite understand.

As they headed out to sea, Lang pondered on the strange message he had received from a man named Ginsberg who was in Bermuda.

"To think that that guy turned up again. I thought we were through with the Ginsberg and Pulski business. I wonder who Ginsberg is, anyway."

Then he sat thinking about the business of the escape of Stanwick, the mysterious rumors about a German submarine and the disappearance of Professor Haageman.

"I wish Keen was here," he muttered. "All this would make sense to him, the lug. I don't even know why I'm going down now that Stanwick is on the loose. Still, I don't see how the guy can get off an island like that."

The Steward now came along the gangway and dropped a printed menu on Lang's table which had been drawn out of recesses in the wall. Lang took it without looking up, then watched Blott as he moved across the cabin and handed out three more.

In a few minutes Blott came back and Lang ordered soup, cold chicken, vegetables, and coffee. The men across the aisle gave their order, too, without breaking up their card game. From farther down the aisle, gay laughter could be heard in the other compartments, and Lang wished he could find something to laugh about.

Blott stood in the doorway, consulting his watch. Then the three men in Lang's compartment quit their game and the Steward began serving the first course.

For the next half hour, Lang was occupied enough to quit worrying, and as Blott carried his dishes away and inquired whether there was anything further he could do for him, he relaxed into a comfortable position, let his chair fold back a trifle, and took it easy.

He did not know that the three men across the aisle were watching him carefully, even though they had returned to their three-handed card game.

After the ship had been on its way for about ninety minutes, Marty Strack turned the wheel over to his co-pilot, dropped down the narrow companionway, and walked down the aisle to see how his passengers were faring. He was amazed to find that practically every one was sound asleep.

"Hmm! What a lullaby trip this turned out to be," he remarked to Blott who stood near his galley doorway. "I thought we were having an easy quiet flight, but I never saw them cork off like this before. You'll have to wake them all up to get them unloaded."

"How far out are we?" Blott asked casually, turning back into his pantry.

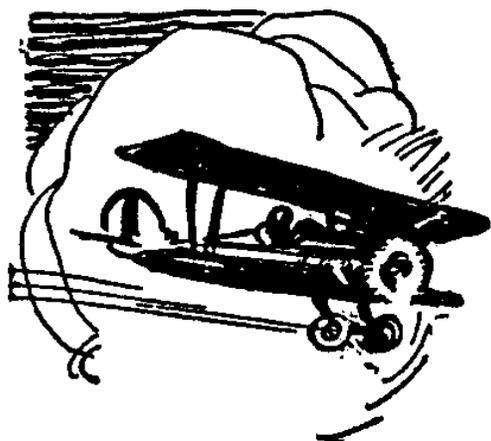
"We're about here, last check," Strack said, pointing out the position on the lithographed chart on the compartment wall.

The three card players, sleep having not as yet won them, glanced

up and saw where the Skipper had planted his forefinger. They exchanged glances, stared across at Lang. The Secret Service man was actually snoring.

Then before Strack could sense what was happening, he felt a gun rammed in his ribs.

"All right, Strack. Take it quiet now and sit down."



Amazed, the Clipper Captain turned, saw that all three men had dropped their cards and were carrying big black automatics. Strack stuck his hands up, then suddenly brought them down fast, in an attempt to grab one of the guns. But Blott quickly stepped up and smacked his Captain with a short brown leather billy. The Skipper grunted, folded up at the knees, and went down. They dragged him clear of the aisle and rammed him into one of the seats they had vacated.

Blott turned and stared at Lang. That worthy had stopped snoring and was twisting uneasily in his chair. Blott went over, gave the sleeping man a solid smack across his hair part with the billy. Lang slipped farther down into his chair.

The three men now worked fast. While Blott ran through the compartments to make certain his doctored lunch had done its trick, the others clambered forward into the control section. First, young Lawrence, the radioman, was caught cold and tied up well away from his instrument panel. Then Mundin was jerked away from his chart table, rammed against a bulkhead, and tied to the wall.

Two of the men with automatics eased up alongside Blumenthall and displayed their hardware.

"All right, Blumenthall, it's a stickup and you can live a long time if you keep your nose clean."

"What's the idea? We've got passengers aboard this boiler," young

Blumenthall argued.

"Sure, you got passengers, Blumenthall. An' you want to get them to Bermuda, Okay, eh? Well, act smart. We only want to go down on the water a few minutes and do a little business. We won't bother you after that. What do you say?" -

"What about the Captain?"

"He's all right. He's just got a headache for a while. He's back there. Okay. You'll get your name and your picture in the papers, Blumenthall."

"Yeah? In the obituary pages, I guess. What's the gag, anyway?"

"See that gray streak ahead there about two miles ahead? Well, that just happens to be a submarine. And all you got to do is to put this boiler down alongside her. Simple, eh?"

"And then what?"

"Well, after that you just get rid of us guys who don't want to go to Bermuda, see?" the beady-eyed gun-man grinned. "That's all there is to it."

"I'll put her down—but no monkey business with my passengers, remember."

"Now you're acting smart, kid. You put her down and hold her as near to that tin-fish as you can. They'll come out to get us."

Blumenthall stared ahead, saw the distinct outlines of the submarine. He eased back on the throttles and let the four big engines tick over gently.

"What country runs that sub?" Blumenthall asked.

"Never mind. Get this flying boat down—fast. But say, what the hell is that up there?"

Blumenthall looked ahead and above. He could see the distinct lines of a fast black plane. He frowned.

"So you're gonner shoot us down again when we take off?" he started to argue.

"That must be one of their jobs," one thug said to another. "They said they'd have a couple nearby—just in case."

"Yeah. But that ain't one of them," the first grunted. "Get her down fast, Blumenthall."

The big Clipper nosed down steeper and the co-pilot curled her around sharp into the wind and let her glide toward the long gray submarine which was now well out of

the water. The crew on the forward deck of the sub was breaking out the folding boat and three men stood before an A-A gun which came up through folding deck plates.

"Yer see, Blum, they ain't taking no chances. So don't try anything funny."

* * *

KEEN climbed the Black Bullet higher as he spotted the Clipper coming on. He had been watching for it for the past hour. Apparently he had timed his approach beautifully.

"There's the sub," he muttered and Barney stood up and peered over.

"Yeah," the Mick muttered moving fast. "There's the sub and here's some more trouble. Look above us."

Keen jerked his head up and spotted three silver-gray fighters bearing down on them from above. Two were Arado seaplanes with narrow, racy pontoons that looked like long torpedoes. The third, likewise, a seaplane, was a Focke-Wulf biplane.

"I get it. They've got one of those depot ships somewhere in this area, eh? I knew there was something else to this game. They're taking no chances on this gag failing with Professor Haageman aboard the sub. Let 'em have it, Barney. I'm going down for the sub—in a minute."

Barney opened fire at once and the two Arados replied in a wicked

dive. Barney slapped it at them with his Brownings while Keen held his dive until the proper time. Below, the Clipper was on the water and churning up close to the submarine.

The enemy fighters fanned out and Barney took them on one at a time as they hammered at the Black Bullet. He finally clipped one of the Arados. Pummelled by a second terrific burst from his Brownings, it twisted as though in torture. They saw the pilot stiffen, jerk up into an almost standing position, then go head first out of the cockpit and over the wing. Out of control, the plane fell away in a spinning dive. It finally hit with a terrible smash that sent up a climbing spurt of bluish-white water. A rosette of steam followed and blotted out all signs of the craft.

"That's the stuff. Barney," yelled Kerry Keen. "Hold them off long enough for me to time my dive."

Keen was now circling the submarine below and watching the Clipper ease toward her. The sub's small boat had already been launched. It was headed for the big Sikorsky.

"Hang on—and get ready to take a passenger," Keen barked.

Then they went down, hell-for-leather, toward the submersible. To repulse them, the gun crew opened fire from the deck of the undersea boat, pounding through a salvo of three-inch stuff that deafened them with steel throated screams. Archie concussion high above them added to the din. But Keen held her there. He would not pull out until he could read the small markings on the side of the conning tower.

Down down! But now the fighters were on them again. Barney spewed out another burst at the Focke-Wulf, then watched the second Arado skim past their wing-tips with but inches to spare. As it went by, the Mick poured a double stream of lead into her vitals. That was the deathblow. The raider's right wing crumpled and she plunged downward in a tight spiral.

It was at that instant that Keen pulled his bomb toggles. He yanked twice, and the Black Bullet jerked as two slim, armor-piercing projectiles flicked out of the belly compartment. They went down flashing and spinning, and Keen had to hoik out of the dive fast.

As they whipped past the submarine's deck, Barney swung his guns around, poured lead at the gun crew below, and watched two men roll away and struggle to grip the scupper rail.

Then the whole scene blanked out in a curtain of garish flame and smoke!

The Black Bullet was hurled over on her back by the force of the explosion. Keen fought to get her back, and as he eased the throttle he saw the Focke-Wulf hurtle down through the smoky haze and disappear in the mass of wreckage.

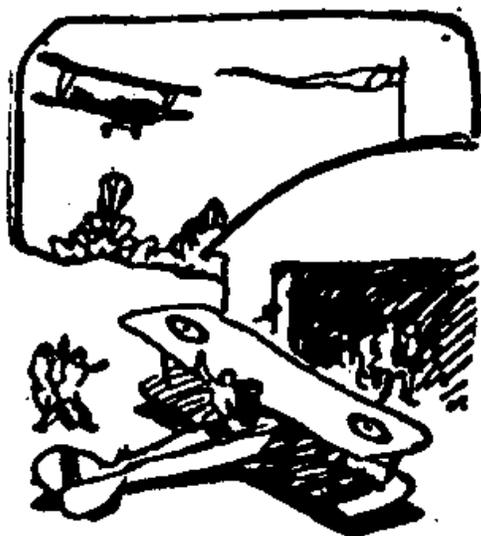
"We must have nicked the sub's magazine first shot," he screamed at Barney who stood stock-still, uncertain what to do now. "That Focke-Wulf slammed smack into the middle of it. The concussion was too much for it."

"Look! Those fellows are trying to get back to the Clipper," Barney yelled.

Keen dived at the folding boat now and poured a long burst ahead of it. The men in the boat eased up on their oars. They saw the Clipper start to move away.

"That's right. Clear off, Clipper," grinned Keen. "Cover them, Barney, while we go and do a little picking-up on our own."

Barney kept a short series of bursts battering the water around the submarine's folding dory and they saw two sailors, a man in a white mess jacket, and three other men, huddled aboard.



Keen dropped the Bullet on the water after he got his pontoons down and eased up to the boat while Barney covered them with his Brownings. They sat tense, white and plainly frightened. One of the sailors was mopping at a bad gash on his forehead with a large dirty handkerchief. One of the men in a dark business suit was standing up

holding a white handkerchief by its corners in the form of a flag.

"They give up," grinned Barney.

"What now?"

Keen eased the Black Bullet up close to the bobbing boat and opened his cockpit hatch. He raised himself a trifle and yelled:

"We want George Blott—Blott, the Steward aboard that Clipper. We want him aboard here at once and he must come with the U.S. Navy box that was stolen from the Brooklyn Navy yard. Is that clear?"

They saw the men in the boat turn to the man in the white mess jacket and expostulate.

"You've got two minutes to get him and that box aboard. So make it snappy, or I'm sinking the lot of you. Move fast now!"

There was another hasty discussion and finally Blott leaned down, picked up the gray box from somewhere, and with reluctance moved toward the prow of the boat. Keen edged the Bullet in close so that Blott could step onto the port pontoon and steady himself with the leading edge of the wing. Finally he shoved the box ahead of him and climbed up. Keen took the box, noted that the seals had not been broken. Then he ordered him to get in beside Barney.

Blott was terror-stricken and obeyed orders like a whipped dog. Barney made him sit down and stood over him still covering the boat.

"What do we do now?" someone in the boat yelled.

"Don't worry! We'll see that you are picked up. The Queen of Bermuda will be along shortly. We'll tip them off about you and see that you are taken care of—well taken care of," Keen added.

The small boat then bobbed away through the streaked oil surface of the sea while the Clipper stood off and awaited developments.

Keen rammed the Black Bullet through the water and came around on the windward side of the Clipper. Then he took out a megaphone and hailed her.

"Ahoy, Clipper!" he called. "Carry on with your trip. I'll see that Blott is taken to New York and turned over to the proper authorities. Is Mr. Drury Lang aboard?"

"Yes—but he's unconscious. Any other message?" came back from Blumenthall in the control pit.

"No, that's all. Pleasant voyage—and my respects to Mr. Lang."

"Thanks, who shall I say left that message?"

"The Griffon!" bawled Keen. "He won't believe you," he added, "but you tell him anyway."

"The Griffon?" gasped Blumenthall. "You're the Griffon? Thanks! Thanks! You did a swell job on that mob."

"The same to you," laughed Keen, "so long, and all the best. And will you advise the Queen of Bermuda to pick the rest of these thugs up?"

"I sure will. Thanks, again!"

And with that Keen threw them a cheery wave and raced the Black

Bullet away and over the rollers into the sky. Barney, in the meantime had shackled Blott's hands behind him and had fastened him securely to a cross-bracing rod.

IT was about three o'clock before they got clear, leaving the small boat bobbing about on the surface of the Atlantic, and the Clipper churning a white wake in her take-off. They had to kill several hours before they dared attempt to get into Long Island, so Keen headed her north-west again for an hour, climbing to about 7,000 feet.

"I hope that guy aboard that Clipper don't try to have us checked," Barney muttered.

"Don't worry. He's got his hands full bringing the Clipper in. But keep your eye on Blott there, and see that he don't try any monkey tricks."

"He won't. He's tied up tighter than a drum."

Keen pondered on his new problem—Blott. Then he decided to head for the long stretch of beach running north out of Cape Hatteras. There were several long dunes in that area where they could hide away for several hours until it got dark. That would give Keen time to question Blott, also, so that he could get the inside story on what actually happened.

In another hour and a half they landed again, ran the Black Bullet up out of the water, and hid her away between two high sand dunes. Barney crawled out on top, lay flat, and acted as a sentry, just in case some prowling fisherman might

stumble on them. Keen released Blott and gave him a chance to stretch his limbs. Then for about three hours they rested and Blott was induced to tell his story.

Keen took notes and stuffed them away in his pocket. Barney came back and they shared their light meal with their captive, then they carefully blindfolded him, stowed him away on board again, and took off for their flight north.

By ten o'clock they were back at Graylands where they led their blindfolded captive through the hidden hangar, up the hidden stairs, and into Keen's study. All this time neither Keen nor Barney had removed their masks and only spoke to each other with the use of the names Ginsberg and Pulski.

Barney fed Blott while Keen typed out a full report on the case, explaining how the aircraft carrier model had been stolen from the Navy Yard, and how the Secret Service man, Beale, had been murdered with a knife having two handles. He also explained Blott's tie-up with Commander Stanwick, who, he learned, had once got the Clipper steward out of a jam when both were in the Navy.

"He wasn't such a bad guy," Blott had argued in a subdued manner. But Keen pointed out from behind his mask that, after all, Stanwick had been in the Navy and pledged in the service of his country. Blott agreed sullenly that there was something to that.

"But anyway, I liked him and he was good to me," Blott doggedly continued. "I wasn't gonner let that

Secret Service guy get him if I could help it. Sure! I bumped that Beale guy off, an' the knife had two handles. I had one handle in a saloon with me the night we knocked off Old Lady Kennedy—to get it daubed up with fingerprints from fellows at the bar. I changed the handles after I drove the knife into Beale's heart. I handled it with a tissue paper napkin to keep my own fingerprints off it."

The rest was clear to Keen. He completed his report and then jerked Blott to his feet.

"All right, Pulski," he growled at Barney. "Clap the bandages on him again. Let's get him out of here."

In a short time they were racing down Long Island for New York City. Once they got rid of Blott they returned to their 55th Street apartment and went to bed.

BOTH Keen and Barney slept soundly for a full twelve hours' for they were physically exhausted by the time they had completed their job. It was well after 3 o'clock on Sunday afternoon before they were up for a meal. After that they sauntered out, entered a motion picture house on 50th Street, and sat through a two and a half-hour show.

"Well, let's get back and see what happened," Keen said. "He's had plenty of time to blow in by now."

They sauntered back to their penthouse and entered just as the Paramount Building clock showed the hour of seven. There, just as they expected, was the raving Drury

Lang, pacing up and down the corridor.

They looked at him in mock amazement, squinted at the bandage that capped his head.

"What did you do—fall out?" Keen inquired.

"Never mind me — where the hell you guys bin?" Lang demanded. "I bin here half an hour."

"How's Bermuda?" demanded Keen, ignoring the question.

"You look like you bin there yourself. Where'd you get that sunburn?"

"On Long Island. The sun still shines out there, you know," Keen parried. "And now, what happened?"

"I" got slugged on that Clipper—just as you said I would. Say you weren't on that Clipper, were you under another name, or something."

"Don't be silly. Get on with your story."

"Well, we got the guy who got Beale—and we got the arrester-gear model back."

"Good work! I was wondering about that business. How did you do it?"

"I didn't! Last night old Scott got a call to meet a guy named Ginsberg at his office—that is, Scott's office. Well, when Scott got there, he found this mug Blott tied up in a chair with the Navy box on the table in front of him—and a typewritten report of the whole thing."

Both Keen and Barney acted surprised. Neither spoke for several minutes. Lang got sore at that, too.

"Don't look at me like that. It's right enough. There was the guy—tied up tight as a—"

"But how did Blott get there?" Keen broke in.

"I don't know. It's all screwy. But he said that two guys—and get this, two guys named Pulski and Ginsberg —brought him there."

"But But Blott went to Bermuda on the Clipper, didn't he?"

"Yeah, he did—and so did I. But they took him off, swiped his box, and brought him back by plane. So that lets you out, Keen. And once they landed somewhere down along the coast near Hatteras. He doesn't know what else happened to him because they kept him blindfolded."

"Who gets the dough for the arrester-gear model, Lang?"

"Nobody. We can't figure out how Blott got there, but this guy Ginsberg was in Bermuda, too. He tipped off the Police Inspector down there how Beale was killed. If we could find Ginsberg, maybe we could get somewhere."

"Ginsberg? Ginsberg was in Bermuda, too?" gasped Keen.

"Sure. In fact, he tipped me off to watch out for Blott." Then Lang mournfully told the story of the business aboard the Clipper and how he was put to sleep while the gang captured the ship and forced the co-pilot to land alongside the submarine.

"Then Ginsberg might be the Griffon," suggested Keen.

"No. The Griffon was the guy who blew up the submarine and took Blott

—but say, maybe you're right! The Griffon nabbed Blott and the box, brought him back to New York, and planted him—" But Lang then gave up, wiped the perspiration from his nose, and reached for Barney's bottle.

"Then the Griffon is entitled to the reward, eh?"

"Sure! But who the hell is the Griffon?" moaned Lang.

"Ginsberg," suggested Keen.

"Pulski, maybe," added Barney, grabbing the bottle back.

"You know, a funny thing happened here last Friday night," Lang went on. "One of the trans-Atlantic flying boats coming down from Montreal—one of the British test boats—reported something queer."

Neither Keen nor Barney flicked an eyelash.

"Funny, in a way," Lang went on.

"The Army was doing a special anti- aircraft show on Governor's Island " and the Empire boat had not been warned. They flew smack into the restricted area. They got out of it for a time, but landed and said that they had been fired on by a strange black plane of some sort."

"They were laughed at, of course," Lang went on after another drink, "and the situation was explained to them. But the crew insisted that they had been fired on by a black plane."

"So what?" demanded Keen.

"Don't you get it?" beamed Lang. "That black plane was the Griffon ' going down to Bermuda to snatch

Blott. They just happened to be in the air over that anti-aircraft display at the same time."

"Well," agreed Keen with a stifled sigh of relief, "I suppose that's as good an explanation as any."

"Sure, and that's why I went to Bermuda, even though I knew that Stanwick had escaped. I figured I'd nab the Griffon myself."

"Boy! That was close—only you were asleep all the time the Griffon was nabbing Blott," laughed Keen.

"Never mind. I'll get that guy yet!"

"Sure! But when you do, don't forget you owe him the reward for getting Blott and the arrester-gear model."

"Oh yes. But I still wonder who Ginsberg and Pulski are," muttered Lang as he sidled toward the door.