



# Flyers of Fortune

By  
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**I**F you'd been on the coast that year, anywhere between Shanghai and the Malay States, you'd have heard lurid, unsavory tales anent two soldiers of fortune—Gales and McGill, one-time lieutenants in the American air service. It began when these two bird-men, flying a battered hydroairplane, aided in manipulating the escape of a native prince from a vile dungeon in the neighborhood of Canton. They did it for a price, of course, and it was most unfortunate that during the rescue certain well-laid plans went to pot, calling for the immediate use of

automatic pistols and resulting in a number of casualties for the other side.

Thereafter they were suspected of various outrages ranging from theft to kidnaping and on up to rank, raw murder. On the Yangtse two attempts were made to blow up the plane, and one night in a black back-alley of Chinkiang McGill, carrying more liquor under his belt than was good for any man—especially in Chinkiang—got a flung knife in the ribs and almost passed out of the picture.

Then on a hot, sultry day, brassy with

the glare of the equatorial sun, the populace of Bangkok, that maudlin, wicked, colorful city, looked up to see a silver-winged monster droning down out of the blue. A yellow-robed monk in a dug-out canoe, bent on collecting alms from the river craft, looked once and then headed for shore, where he took up a watchful position under a sacred Bo-tree. Sampans, house-boats and canoes scattered from the face of the Menam River and drove to hug the protection of the wharves and the wooded banks.

The plane circled the city, its wings flashing in the sunlight, its motor roaring even above the din and clamor of the most turbulent of Eastern cities. Then it was over the river again, and suddenly it slanted. The motor died. Like a graceful bird, the plane descended. Its pontoons kissed the water, skimmed along free for an instant, then touched again and threw aside ribbons of milky foam. It missed hitting a sampan by no more than a foot, passed perilously between two anchored schooners, and glided to a stop in the lee of a dumpy river packet.

Bill Gales pulled off his goggles and turned to grin his youthful dare-devil grin at his older partner.

“Well, Mike, pretty nifty, that landing, eh?”

“Couldn’t have done better myself, Bill. Got a butt?”

“Sure.” Gales passed back a packet of cigarettes and chuckled. “That guy in the sampan we almost hit has made the shore and is still running. Well, here we are in Bangkok, just about out of gas.”

“And not enough dough to get drunk on,” supplemented McGill. “What a tough break!”

“Never mind, Mike. We’ll get some somehow. We’ve been recognized by this time, and if it comes to the worst, these officials here will supply us with gas just to get rid of us.”

“Ten to one they’ll pitch us in jail and stick the old boat in a museum. Bill, this country is getting too damned hot for us and I don’t mean the climate either.”

“Cheer up, Mike!” Gales chuckled. “I know you miss your liquor, but cheer up. We’ll anchor here and I’ll get a native to row me ashore.”

As a matter of fact, it was some little time before Gales managed to convince Bangkok’s port dignitaries that he had no intentions of robbing the crown jewels, murdering the King of Siam, or plundering Wat Phra Keo, the Temple of the Emerald Buddha.

But he did land, a long, rangy, bronzed young man, with twinkling blue eyes, a slow, engaging smile, and a devil-may-care tilt to his lean, hard jaw. Word that he had landed traveled rapidly, from mouth to mouth, from shop to shop, all the way from the European section downtown, through the reeking brothels and opium joints of the Sampaeng, on northward to the boulevards of the nobility. The houseboat-cluttered canals buzzed with wonderment at the arrival of the winged monster, and many white men along New Road shook their heads dourly and suspected the worst. For the flyers of fortune—Gales and McGill—had a past crimsoned by the broad brush of gossip and ill-founded rumor.

Gales, roving the city aimlessly, wandered presently into a gaming house in the raw maw of the Sampaeng. He was not there five minutes when a fat, heavy-lidded Chinese approached him and in a very direct manner asked him how much he would charge to drop a bomb on a certain gaming house at the other end of the district.

Gales laughed. His eyes twinkled merrily. He said:

“You’ve been misinformed, my friend. We don’t go in for that sort of stuff. Sorry!”

He wandered out of the dive, weaved his way through the crooked, evil streets, and

before dusk settled he had turned down three similar offers. When he returned to the waterfront he found McGill pacing up and down a rickety wharf in sight of the plane.

"No luck, Mike," he greeted. "It seems all these birds go in for nothing short of murder."

McGill, who was short and spare and nervously alert, with keen little eyes, stopped his pacing and jammed his hands to his hips.

"Bill," he said, "you should have hung around, dammit. About an hour after you left a stranger came down to the wharf here and motioned me to come ashore. Maybe we've got a job,"

Gales snapped a match to a cigarette and clipped:

"Shoot, my boy!"

"Sure. A white man, Bill, tall and skinny and not so healthy-looking, what I mean. But he must have dough all right. Looks and speaks that way."

"Mike, get to the point!"

"Gimme time. Here's the idea. We're to take him in our bus and head for the Gulf of Siam and look for a ship called the *Bangkok Belle*, which is bound for Saigon. All right. We're to land on the water near the ship and make signs that we want her to pick up our passenger. We can say he's sick or something."

"What else?"

"That's all, so far as details are concerned. He won't tell any more. Well, what the hell? Who cares? There's a thousand dollars in it. With that money we can stock up on provisions and fuel later on and run arms from Singapore to the insurgent tribes in the Celebes."

"Where is this angel?" asked Gales, interested.

"Be here at five o'clock. Told him to. I said everything would be O. K. with me, but I'd have to speak to you, too."

"O. K. by me," chuckled Gales,

blowing smoke through his nostrils. "Well shove off at dawn. He pays in advance and we load our tanks this evening."

At precisely five o'clock the slim, well-dressed stranger arrived at the wharf. He was in his forties, perhaps; a sallow, bony man, with large, pale eyes and a bad set of nerves.

"So you are Mr. Gales?" he smiled wanly at the younger of the two partners.

"Yes, I'm Gales. We'll be very glad to fly you."

"Call me—well, Smith. What does it matter?"

"Good as any," chuckled Gales lightly.

"All right, Mr. Smith. Tomorrow at daybreak. Of course, the payment in advance, you know."

"To be sure," agreed Smith, and turned away to cough brokenly. "If you'll come to my hotel I shall be glad to settle the matter." He sighed. "And we must get away as soon as possible. It is very, very urgent, I assure you. Someone . . . Well, to my hotel then," he ended.

GALES and McGill worked most of the night on their plane. They loaded the gasoline tanks to capacity, put in fresh motor oil, and time and again drew a wondering crowd when they roared and tested their engine. When they both agreed that the motor was in perfect shape, McGill perched on the edge of the forward cockpit and rubbed his grimy face with a grimy hand.

"Bill," he said. "I think I'll just drop ashore for a little while and tuck a few drinks away."

"Go to it, partner, but don't get lost," was the hearty rejoinder.

So McGill set out to tuck away a few drinks. How many drinks he did tuck away remains matter for conjecture, but he returned to the wharf well after midnight singing a bawdy song and steering a wobbly course. He

refused the offer of a sampan, fell overboard and decided to swim out to the plane. Gales hauled him out of the river, piled him into the rear cockpit and left him to sleep it off. At daybreak McGill was perfectly sober and primed for action.

"I feel like a new man," he explained, chafing his hands gingerly. "I needed that. Honest, Bill, you can get some good liquor in this here burg."

"Ready for anything, eh, Mike?" grinned Gales.

"Ready for anything, Bill!"

Both partners were in fine spirits when the man called Smith joined them. Gales was enthusiastic, eager to be off, and his boyish, reckless grin was contagious. McGill was alert, crawling around the plane, giving a final and thorough inspection. Then Smith was helped into one of Gales' spare flying outfits and stowed in the front cockpit which he was to share with McGill.

It is pretty safe to say that no one in Bangkok expected them to leave so suddenly. Hence there was not much of a crowd to witness their departure. The roar of the engine did draw a few, however, and more came running down to the wharves.

Hooded and goggled, Gales sat in the after cockpit at the controls, a duplicate set of which was likewise in the front cockpit. He smiled to himself as his eyes roamed over the instrument board and the engine thundered. He saw McGill turn and arch inquisitive eyebrows, then pull on his goggles. Gales grinned back and nodded.

He was happy, eager, tingling all over. The thrill of the game never deserted him. He was a natural flyer, and fear in the air was something he did not know. As his plane began to slide over the surface of the water, gathering speed, he turned his head to watch the city of Bangkok sweep by. He waved joyously to the watchers on the shore.

Then he was in the air, driving for

altitude. Soon the city of domes and spires and dank canals was below and behind. Ahead of him stretched the jungle and the Menam River winding toward the Gulf of Siam. The wind hummed by his ears, twanged and rattled in the struts. Smith had said that they should sight the *Bangkok Belle* in the vicinity of Cambodia Point. That would be four hundred-odd miles from Bangkok, and about five hours of flying.

When Gales' altimeter registered three-thousand feet he rattled the controls and saw McGill lean forward to take over the flying. Then he removed his hands from the joy-stick and his feet from the rudder bar and doubled in the cockpit to light a cigarette.

McGill took the boat up another thousand feet and for the sake of variety volplaned, banked sharply and then zoomed up to six thousand feet, when he shoved the control stick forward almost to the instrument board and leveled the plane's flight. He looked around at Gales and grinned. Gales blew smoke through his nostrils and grinned back. Smith was white-faced and silent.

Neither of the birdmen had pressed Smith for other details than he had freely given. In fact, they had not even speculated between themselves as to the object of the stranger's mission. They were well used to mysteries. They were being paid to fly Smith over the Gulf of Siam, locate the *Bangkok Belle*, and get him on board. Right there their services were to end.

It looked easy. Nothing to it. Smith certainly wanted to get aboard the ship pretty badly, to pay their price. Well, that was his business, and it was their's to fly him there. After that—Singapore, and a fling at gun-smuggling.

McGill shook the controls and Gales took over the flying, dropping to three thousand feet and passing over a freighter that was plowing sluggishly through the waters of the broad Gulf. Directly ahead of him was the

newly risen sun. He dropped lower, way down to five hundred feet, on down to three hundred and still lower, until he was fairly skimming along the wave crests.

McGill turned and shook his head and pointed his finger upward. Gales grinned his reckless grin, banked and zoomed. He drove up toward the clouds—up—up—and still up to ten and then twelve thousand feet and beyond. Then he volplaned to five thousand feet and drove on at an even keel, chuckling to himself.

It was a few minutes later that he noticed Smith rising in the forward cockpit. He saw McGill yank him back into the seat, and then he saw Smith writhing in what appeared to be nothing less than agony. McGill had twisted and after throwing a puzzled glance at Gales, put an arm about Smith and shouted something near his ear. Then suddenly Smith was quiet.

A moment later McGill, his face twisted in a grimace, turned and tried to say something to Gales. Gales throttled down and leaned forward, cocking an ear.

“Gripes, Bill,” McGill was yelling, “he’s dead!”

Gales was abruptly serious. He was losing altitude and soared up to eight thousand feet before he throttled down and again leaned forward.

“Yeah!” shouted McGill. “Guess his heart was bum, Bill. Just before he passed out . . . shoved this in my hand.”

Gales reached out and received a small square of cardboard about the size of a poker card. One look revealed that it was the photograph of a young woman—a dark-haired, dark-eyed, beautiful young woman.

“What the hell!” he exclaimed under his breath.

He bent a puzzled, quizzical glance on McGill, and McGill shrugged his own puzzlement and spat disconsolately overside. Gales shook the controls, and McGill handled

the flying, feeling not so almighty comfortable with a dead man beside him.

Gales looked at the photograph again, wondering what Smith’s motive had been in thrusting the picture into McGill’s hand. This was something they had not bargained for. Yet Gales was well used to meeting the unexpected. You get that way after you’ve flown for ten years. He leaned forward and tapped his partner on the head. McGill twisted around and throttled down to listen.

“Keep heading for Cambodia Point,” Gales snouted. “See if we can pick up the *Bangkok Belle*. I’ve got an idea.”

McGill, who had become used to relying on Gales’ ideas, nodded and climbed another thousand feet. They were heading southeast down the coast of Cambodia. Point Samit was on their left and Koh Rong lay ahead. Below them creamed the waters of the Gulf, and a barkentine was beating down the wind.

Clouds were gathering in the east and trooping across the face of the sun and huge rollers were breaking on the jungle shore far below. Off Phu Quog Island Gales, who was at the controls, sighting a steamer, bore down and shot close by with his binoculars pressed to his eyes. He could see an officer on the bridge wave. It was not the *Bangkok Belle*, however, and Gales zoomed and soon was tearing along at eight thousand feet.

McGill turned and swung a suggestive arm toward the dull clouds that were rolling out of the east. Gales nodded. The sun was obscured and the waters below were being piled high. The plane was driving into strong head winds, high over Rach Gia Bay. Twice more Gales flew low to peer at outward-bound ships, but neither of them was the *Bangkok Belle*.

It was off Obi Island that he sighted a small vessel belching forth black clouds of smoke from a single funnel and heading northward on a heaving, foam-mottled sea. He

indicated it to his partner, who was at the controls, and McGill swooped down and roared by in the lee of the rakish yacht, while Gales peered hard through his binoculars. Then McGill zoomed for altitude and throttled down at five thousand feet to shoot Gales an inquiring glance.

"It's it!" shouted Gales.

"But, hell, Bill," roared back McGill, "we can't land in a sea like that!"

"Know we can't. Say, Mike, search Smith's pockets and see what you can find."

McGill nodded, and Gales took over the flying, circling high above the *Bangkok Belle*. In a few minutes McGill thrust a handful of odds and ends back to Gales and indicated that he would handle the plane. Gales released the controls and examined Smith's belongings. For one thing he discovered that Smith's real name was John T. Warren, a member of a Singapore club. Also there was a packet of blank checks bearing the crest of a Singapore bank. There were a few personal letters from friends in Yokohama, and some baggage stubs, but nothing that might reveal the man's business or mission.

Gales leaned forward and McGill, looking around, quieted the engine.

"Mike," yelled Gales, "I'm going to jump with the parachute and have that yacht pick me up. Meet me in Saigon."

"What's the idea, Bill?"

"Can't explain all now," trumpeted Gales.

That was all the explanation necessary between these two birdmen.

Gales began stuffing Warren's papers into an oiled, waterproof pouch along with an automatic pistol, some money and the photograph. His parachute, of course, was already strapped on, but he removed it temporarily so that he might wriggle out of his flying suit. Also, he removed his leather boots. Then he replaced the parachute, fastened the waterproof pouch to his belt and touched

McGill on the head, motioning that he was ready to make the drop.

McGill nodded, took a look at the yacht and then shot off to the eastward so that Gales, when he jumped, would get the wind drift and be carried toward the lee of the yacht.

Gales climbed out of the cockpit and crawled out over the left wing. McGill was watching him out of the corner of his eye. Gales turned, the wind drumming in his ears and clattering his clothes. He waved a hand and grinned recklessly. McGill waved back and grinned too. These men had long ago learned to cover their inner emotions with a brazen, hard-boiled grin.

Then—suddenly—Gales was off, dropping plummet-like. A small bit of white ballooned out and an instant later the big parachute sprang open with a boom.

McGill was circling the yacht again and watching the descent of his partner. He grinned and spat sharply and climbed high up into the cloudy, windy sky.

Gales swung pendulum-like as he drifted down toward the creaming water. He kept up this motion, swinging his body back and forth so that when he landed the spread of the parachute would not envelope him. He struck well off the lee bow of the yacht and fought clear of the parachute, unfastening the straps with one hand while he swam with the other.

Free, he began swimming in a world of flying sea-spray and vaguely was aware that the yacht had altered her course and was bearing down to pick him up. Two seaman were standing in the lee bow—Malays, they were, scantily clad. The yacht drew closer, and one of the Malays braced himself to heave a line. Then the line snaked out and Gales grabbed at it, caught it in one hand and hung on grimly.

The first thing he did when he was hauled on deck was to look up and wave

toward McGill who was still circling the craft. Then the plane spiraled downward, well astern of the yacht, straightened out and roared by. McGill flung up an arm as he passed and then zoomed away, heading north.

A moment later Gales was confronted by a short, stocky, blowzy-faced man who wore the braid of rank.

“Well,” droned the captain, “what’s the bloomin’ idea of leavin’ a perfectly good plane an’ makin’ us pick you up?”

“Just got tired of the air, captain,” grinned Gales, wringing out his wet shirt. “Sorry if I’ve taken you out of your way, but I’ll pay my passage to wherever you’re going.”

“This, mister,” replied the captain, “is not a passenger ship. It’s a private yacht.”

At this point a tall, beady-eyed man dressed in spotless whites and smoking a long, mellow cigar, strolled down the deck and joined the skipper.

“Hello,” he said without smiling. “You fellows will try stunts in the most unseemly places. What do you want?”

“Just passage to wherever you’re going,” replied Gales. “I’ll pay you.”

“I’ve been intending to drop in at Saigon.”

“Suits me,” nodded Gales. “I’d like to go into the engine room, if you don’t mind, and dry up.”

The owner of the *Bangkok Belle* eyed him stonily. He said:

“You puzzle me. Really, now, why did you drop from that plane and have us pick you up?”

Gales chuckled.

“I just couldn’t get along with the pilot. He insisted on heading for the Philippines, and I wanted to hit the coast. I took a chance and dropped, thinking you might be able to land me.”

“What’s your name?”

“Gales.”

The man’s lips tightened.

“I’ve heard of you, and your partner, McGill. Well, Gales, I don’t like your story. My name is Halsey, and this is my yacht, as you know. You will have to undergo a search. Captain, please,” he said to the blowzy-faced man. “You know there are two gunboats hunting this man.”

Gales stepped back, his hands knotting. The captain advanced toward him and two seamen closed in behind him. Recklessness was ingrained in Gales. No conservative man would have dropped from a plane in order to be picked up by a yacht on the supposition that he might find thereon some clue concerning the photograph of a strange girl.

Even now he made a reckless move. He dodged sidewise, leaped across the deck and sped aft on the weather side, tearing open the waterproof pouch as he ran. From it he yanked his pistol, spun sharply hard by the saloon wall and faced the two Malay seamen who had chased him from forward. The captain came lumbering after them, and Halsey was close behind the captain. All of them brought up short when they saw the pistol in Gales’ hand.

“You put away that damned gun!” snapped Halsey, dark with rage.

“You come forward!” flung back Gales. “Snappy, mister!”

Halsey advanced, biting his lips.

“Now,” clipped Gales, “move fast! Lead to your room! My gun will be in your back. The first man makes a move I’ll riddle you! Move, with your hands up!”

Halsey muttered an oath behind clenched teeth and entered the saloon with Gales close beside him. Quickly Gales turned the lock in the saloon door. He prodded Halsey, and the latter led the way through a carpeted corridor and paused before a door at the end. Here he half-turned, black anger in his eyes.

"You'll regret this," he choked.

"Open that door—fast!" clipped Gales and jabbed the muzzle of his gun so sharply into Halsey's ribs that the man grunted.

But he drew some keys from his pocket, inserted one in the lock, turned it and pushed open the door. Gales shoved him in not too gently, pulled the keys from the lock, entered quickly and, kicking shut the door, snapped the lock from the inside.

Then he saw a girl crouching in one corner of the elaborately appointed room, and he was instantly aware that she was the original of the one on the photograph. To her he said:

"Draw the curtains on the ports—quick!"

For a moment she stood petrified, surprise and anguish storming in her eyes. Then with a catch in her breath she hurried to draw the curtains on the ports of the three rooms that constituted the quarters.

"Now," went on Gales, "run through his pockets and see if there's a gun."

She did this, nervously, but found no weapon.

"All right," nodded Gales; then to Halsey: "You sit down and see if we can get this straight."

Halsey dropped into a wicker easy chair, the girl sat down on a plush settee built in against the starboard bulkhead, and Gales, his clothes still dripping, stood in the center of the room. He bent his gaze on the girl and asked:

"What relation are you to John T. Warren?"

She started forward, her eyes dilating.

"I—I am his daughter," she whispered hoarsely.

Gales bit his lip. What he had to say would hurt, but this was no time to beat about the bush.

"Miss Warren," he went on, "your father hired my plane in Bangkok. My partner

and I were to fly him over the Gulf and put him aboard this yacht. That is all the information he gave us." He paused, steeling himself. "When we were two hours in the air your father died—possibly of heart failure."

A low moan escaped her lips and she wilted, covering her face with her hands.

"Brace up," Gales told her. "It's hard, but you've got to brace up. Before he died your father pressed a photograph of you in my partner's hand. It was the only clue. I had a hunch that he and the yacht and you were somehow related. I carried on where he left off. Now what can I do?"

She uncovered her face and sat erect with a brave effort.

"I—I don't see how you can do anything. I've been literally a prisoner aboard this yacht since it left Saigon. Just before sailing time I know my father was on board and in his stateroom. That night he was drugged and put off on the Menam River in a sampan. Both of us had considered this man"—she nodded toward Halsey—"a friend and had accepted his offer of a passage to Saigon. But—"she broke off in a sob.

"I see," nodded Gales, a little bitterly. He turned to Halsey. "So that's your game, eh?"

Halsey scowled.

"What about it? What can you do?"

Gales heard feet tramping about the deck, and excited voices, and hands knocking at the ports. True, what could he do? The outlook was, indeed, anything but cheerful. Here he was playing a lone hand against overwhelming odds. His first move had been successful, but luck had been with him. Still, there was a chance ....

He remembered that Halsey had said two gunboats were scouring the coast for him. Probably French gunboats. Indeed, as McGill had said in Bangkok, the country was getting hot for them—too hot. If the French got their hands on him, Gales realized that they would

frame up something and no doubt give him a taste of a colonial prison.

He was in a tight predicament. Here was a girl in danger. She meant nothing to him in a personal way. He had no amorous designs on her, nor intended to have any. Yet she was a woman in jeopardy, and the old protective instinct was strong within the reckless, devil-may-care heart of Gales. He would try his best to save her. As for himself, he'd take a long chance and face a prison sentence.

"Halsey," he said, "I'm in a pinch and it isn't going to take much for me to blow your brains out if you don't move the way I tell you to. Get that! And listen. You write out a message to your wireless operator and explain that you wrote it by degrees while I wasn't looking. All right. Now tell him to get in communication with one or the other of these gunboats and tell him to make it plain in the communication that you've got on board Bill Gales, the well-known cut-throat of the China coast. Watch how fast they'll get here."

Halsey frowned and shook his head.

"Get started," warned Gales, and there was an edge on his voice now. "Write that message or as sure I'm headed for jail I'll kill you!"

The girl shrank back in awe. Possibly she too had heard of Gales and McGill and was a little frightened.

Slowly Halsey rose and crossed to the bamboo table. He sat down, picked up a pen reluctantly wrote on a wireless blank as Gates directed.

"And add," pursued Gales, "that your men aboard should quiet down and stop breaking up the doors."

When the entire message was written Gales picked it up, scanned it quickly, and slid it under the door leading into the corridor. Then he helped himself to a cigarette from a humidor on the table and blew smoke streams through his nostrils.

A few minutes later there was a rush

outside the door. But it suddenly calmed down, and a moment later Gales heard receding footsteps. They had no doubt found the message.

"You are doing this for me," came the girl's voice, tenderly.

The old sparkle came back to Gales' eyes. His weather-bronzed face crinkled in a broad, boyish grin.

"It's the only way," he said lightly, rocking on his feet.

The girl fell to sobbing again, and half-reclined on the settee. Her own predicament, the death of her father, was certainly enough to wilt anybody.

Gales sat down facing Halsey.

"We'll both wait new till the French navy arrives," he chuckled. "Your men on deck are probably having a great laugh over the fact that my doom is impending."

"You damned meddler," ground out Halsey, "I'll try my best to see you stuffed in the lousiest prison imaginable!"

"Pretty sore, aren't you? We both lose, Halsey. We've both played games, though you'll have to admit that my game calls for guts, while yours ... Ho!" he ended derisively.

Thus they sat facing each other while the hours dragged by. The sea grew calm in late afternoon, as they could determine by the even motion of the yacht, and needles of sunlight pierced the curtains over the ports. It was hot and stuffy in the rooms, but Gales refused to open a single port.

Presently the girl rose from the settee, brushing a hand across her forehead, and started for the water-cooler which stood in the opposite corner. She reeled, however, before she reached it, and Gales instinctively started to catch her.

Halsey, every nerve tense, saw his opportunity and catapulted from his chair. The girl caught her balance but her position prevented Gales from bringing his gun into action. Halsey was upon him with the agility

of a cat, catching his gun-hand and swinging it aloft and bearing Gales back across the room in a mad rush.

Gales stopped short against the forward bulkhead, gritted his teeth and swung away. In close grips, they spun across the room, fell over a chair and crashed down to the floor. Gales' gun flew from his hand and slid across the floor. The girl, still seeming on the verge of a collapse, tottered toward it and picked it up.

The two men scrambled to their feet and began lambasting each other at close quarters. Gales was the quicker at this game, and in short time he had Halsey staggering blindly. The owner of the yacht fell away, breathing thickly, running perspiration. His hand closed over a whisky bottle on the table, and in desperation he hurled it. Gales ducked, but it caught him a glancing blow over the left ear and staggered him. Halsey cackled gloatingly and started for him, but the girl flashed:

“Don't! I'll shoot!”

He sagged to a standstill, his face twisted in chagrin.

Gales swung toward the girl and hastily relieved her of the gun.

“If there's any killing,” he said, “let me.” Then to Halsey: “Now sit down, you swine!”

Halsey dropped limply into a chair and Gales sat down on the settee. The girl brought him a drink and said:

“It was all my fault. I shouldn't have staggered like that, but I was a little faint—from the—strain.”

“I understand,” Gales smiled.

Night wore on. Gales snapped on a single electric light and then returned to the settee.

It must have been about eight o'clock when the three in the room heard a low drone from somewhere in the darkness. Then there was a roar increasing with the seconds,

passing close at hand, and then diminishing. A few minutes later it grew again, then ceased suddenly. The engines of the yacht reduced speed.

Five minutes later there were footsteps in the corridor. Then the captain's voice: “There's a French naval flyer here, a Cap'n de Armand, with orders from the Saigon base t' take off William Gales. They shot down his partner, McGill, off Cape St. Jacques.”

“Poor old Mike!” muttered Gales grimly. Then he stiffened, and his hand tightened on his automatic. “Miss Warren,” he said, “you'll walk out and go aboard the French plane. No argument, please. Get ready.” He turned to Halsey. “I'll keep my gun on you for three minutes and then walk out to give myself up.”

He gave the keys to the girl, and with a catch in her throat she went to the door and opened it. Halsey was standing now, and Gales was directly behind him with his gun against the man's back. The captain of the yacht started to enter, but Gales said:

“Not yet! Stay where you are!”

The girl passed out unmolested.

Three minutes later Gales lowered his gun.

“All right, Halsey. Perhaps you'd care to see me go aboard the Frenchman.”

With that he strode out on deck, and Halsey followed.

In the lee of the yacht a big French seaplane was rising and falling with the gentle motion of the calm sea. A machine gun bristled under the white moonlight.

“Ah!” called a voice. “You have heem, *oui*? Be sure he have no gun, so! And ze ma'mzelle. I am as-toneesh!”

Gales strode to the rail and with a hard little chuckle dropped his gun overside.

“Well, Halsey, the game's up. Without my partner, no use.”

He went down the companion ladder, stepped to the wing of the big seaplane and

crossed to the front cockpit. He dropped in it beside the girl.

Then the plane was off into the night, skimming along the moonlit water and finally lifting its nose and rising into the air. The big motor roared and the plane zoomed and climbed up toward the pale clouds. Then it was suddenly throttled down.

“Say, Bill,” sounded a voice in Gales’ ear, “didn’t I act like a Frenchman all right?”

Gales spun around and looked into the grinning face of McGill.

“Mike!” he exclaimed. “What the devil are you doing in this official plane?”

“I was shot down off Cape St. Jacques by this same plane. I started swimming, and the Frenchman—de Armand—picked me up.

Say, they were after us strong. Well, I got in a tussle with him. It was him or me, and I did him in. He had orders to get us. Started from Saigon on a wireless tip that you were aboard the *Bangkok Belle*. Had the wire on him.” He was fairly roaring the information. “Smith went down with our poor old boat. I’m heading for British North Borneo. All right?”

“Good as any,” shouted back Gales. “We’ll see the lady aboard a ship at Saudakan.”

“And then what?” bellowed McGill.

“Who knows?” shouted Gales, grinning.

And McGill boomed:

“What the hell!”