



The Fighting Yank

By Syl MacDowell

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The Fighting Yank

A Novelet of Bluejacket Courage

By SYL MacDOWELL

CHAPTER I

First Blood

AMERICAN bluejackets who swarmed out of Pearl Harbor on Sunday liberty parties did not usually patronize the Jap hang-outs. But K. Yamato's Bamboo Gardens on lower Kaala Street in Honolulu was different. Yamato

had lived a long time in the islands. Nearly every sailor, soldier and civilian on Oahu knew this apparently friendly old son of Nippon. In that hodge-podge of mixed Orientals, Yamato was called a Jap who could be trusted.

But that wasn't the only reason Ira "Iron" Morgan spent a great part of his shore leaves at the Bamboo Gardens. Not at all. Morgan himself

Red-Headed Iron Morgan Faces Grim



Morgan let him have a slug through the body, and he dropped.

was an old hand in Hawaii; he'd served four hitches in the Asiatic fleet and a couple in and out of Oahu. With Yamato, over many a dish of sukiyaki, Morgan chatted in Japanese. The mastery of the singsong gibberish of the land of the rising sun was one of Morgan's several accomplishments.

Dawn was scarcely breaking this Sunday

morning when Iron Morgan, boatswain's mate, first-class, from the battleship *Pennsylvania*, rolled along Kaala Street and paused before the pagoda-like entrance to the Bamboo Gardens. To his amazement, he found the place already open. Giving his stitched white hat a slight tug to set it more jauntily on his crisp red head, he marched in.

Foes Who Darken the Hawaiian Skies!

Mr. K. Yamato himself was breakfasting at one of his own rickety little black-lacquered tables.

He looked up with popping eyes at the brawny figure of his American friend.

"*O-hi-yo*, Yamato," greeted Morgan in Japanese. "Are you not up with the paling stars this morning?"

Yamato sucked in a gulp of hot tea and beamed. He bobbed his round head like a pumpkin on a coil spring.

"Greetings, Iron Morgan," he answered. "And aren't you a bird who is early on the wing? No excitement starts before eight o'clock."

"I'm ashore to prevent excitement," explained Morgan, returning the grin as he glanced significantly at his husky right arm.

Yamato, near-sighted even through his thick glasses, perceived the blue SP brassard on Morgan's arm, and his smile widened knowingly.

"Ah, Shore Police, yes?"

YAMATO knew Navy ways. He understood instantly that the brassard, the belt and the canvas leggings showed that Morgan's special duty for the day was to maintain order. Shore Police, selected from the ranks of every liberty contingent, was always sent ashore ahead of parties.

A copy of the *Honolulu Advertiser* lay on the table before the Jap. Morgan craned his neck.

"Ah, news of the ambassador, yes?" he commented. "When Kurusu and that other silk hat from Tokio get things patched up at Washington this time we'll have a real and lasting peace. And forty-eight-hour leaves again, and some real rest between these everlasting war drills."

"Indeed so," beamed Yamato. "Fine gentleman—the honorable Kurusu. You will take tea with me, yes?"

"Not in my right mind," Morgan responded reproachfully as he helped himself to a crisp, curled-up almond tea cake. "What great sage thinks up these fortune-telling gems, Yamato?"

He broke the tea cake open and smoothed out the little strip of paper from its core. "Listen to this one. It says, 'Your enemy is above.' It fits me elegantly. I had a slight argument with the first lieutenant last night."

Yamato hissed through his protruding teeth.

It might have meant anything—pretended interest, amusement, bored unconcern. His beady black eyes fastened themselves on the American's ruddy face.

Morgan chuckled and went on, "Enemy above? Yes, that must mean that hardboiled bucko on the flagship. Yamato, this is positively uncanny. The only trouble is that Lieutenant Watkins is not really my enemy. But what is such a trifle between friends like you and—"

A far-off thud which distinctly shook the ground shut him off. In the sudden, startled silence there came another thud. They didn't sound like any sort of explosion, unless it was an underwater explosion of some sort—like a depth charge. Or a bomb miss into the sea!

On the heels of the two ominous thuds there came a swift drumming sound, muffled but heavy, punctuated with sharper detonations that shook the very air. All of the Bamboo Gardens became atremble. On the matting-covered wall behind Yamato two tiny criss-crossed American flags jarred loose and fluttered to the floor.

But the most amazing thing before Morgan's widening eyes was the terrible metamorphosis taking place in Yamato. The Jap was being transformed from a genially smiling billiken to a fiendish imp, and with a Jekyll-Hyde brevity. Under the startled American's gaze he was swiftly emerging from the suave shell that all of Honolulu had known as the friendly Mr. K. Yamato.

In his intense excitement he had forgotten the astounded sailor. Leaping to his feet and drawing himself stiffly erect, he uttered a sharp, triumphant shout, a cry of the ancient Japanese samurai. Then he stepped upon the little flags and ground them beneath his foot, hissing and spitting like a cat all the while.

The drumbeats were faster and heavier now. They came across sunny, green-lawned Fort Shafter from Pearl Harbor—from the jammed fleet anchorage. A rising shriek mingled with the sound, a crescendo that Morgan knew well. Dive bombers—and diving!

Attack on Pearl Harbor!

Yamato's high-pitched cry mingled with the turmoil:

"Liberty Sunday! Liberty, hah! It ends now, the years we work and wait and plan!"

SOMETHING else ended. The dazed Morgan could stomach no more. Yamato crashed back against the wall matting, his buck teeth crunching under the iron blow of one hundred and sixty pounds of American rage.

Then Iron Morgan was out in Kaala Street, running. People boiled out of doorways, gaping faces upturned. A little way along, at Lantana Boulevard crossing, came a bus from the base, jam-packed with an early liberty party. All at once, like a picture torn from a page, it vanished in an eruption of smoke and flame and dust.

The stunning detonation hurled Iron Morgan off his feet. He was up again as debris hailed on the wooden canopy that sheltered the sidewalk. The scene had cleared. Where the bus had been was now a yawning crater in the pavement. Clinging to the flattened wreckage of what had been a corner building clung shreds of white uniforms, splashed redly; those and some gory, gruesome fragments.

Six miles northwest, where Pearl Harbor was—or had been—black-and-yellowish mushrooms of smoke billowed. The din was so great now that Iron Morgan hardly heard the roar of twin motors close overhead until the shadow flitted over Kaala Street. He saw a bomber turning on wing end, so close that the figure hunched in the pilot's cage was visible. Turning, the bomber swept back along densely settled Lantana Boulevard, machine-guns streaking flame groundward.

Even more incredible than the rest was what happened now. A high electric wire, sliding along the bomber's belly, engaged landing hooks, part of the arresting gear on a carrier plane. Whipped tight, the wire snapped. But it brought the bomber down. The plane settled with a jar.

Iron Morgan raced to the intersection where the smell of fresh blood was in the air. On wide Lantana Boulevard sat the bomber. He saw the tail markings—the three and one-half star emblem of Japan in the air.

Like one hundred thousand other American sailors, Iron Morgan had been drilled to independent command; to act independently and singly, in the absence of orders or leadership.

That training was the master control in his brain now. He ran along Lantana Boulevard, as fast as his sea legs would carry him, charging the

enemy with only a billy club.

CHAPTER II

Carrier Decks

YAMATO was there first. Iron Morgan, from past SP patrols, realized there were narrow, dark alleys behind the maze of buildings that fronted Kaala Street." Yamato must have known those passageways like a rat knows its runs. The lower part of the Jap's face was blood-smeared, but fanaticism still gleamed behind his thick glasses. He brandished a pistol that looked like a Luger automatic.

His purpose was immediately evident. A knot of soldiers with a brown-skinned Hawaiian cop in a pith helmet were rushing the downed plane. Yamato's pistol cracked. The cop folded, helmet rolling. A soldier stooped for the cop's gun. Yamato let him have it. The soldier went to his knees, face twisted in agony as he tried to aim. Yamato, steadying his aim against a street light standard, callously shot him again.

That was enough. The others scattered, back to the curb, into the thickening crowd.

"Why didn't I kill that yellow devil when I had the chance?" Morgan groaned, sprinting forward.

Yamato turned at the sound of running feet, a sound that he did not hear soon enough. A final leap, a slanting smash with the billy club, and Yamato's treacherous skull popped like a smashed coconut.

Then Iron Morgan was beside the bomber, gripping the yellow traitor's automatic as a fuselage door swung open to emit a small, wiry young Jap with close-shaved head. The Jap flier hopped out, chattering excitedly.

It was a shame to waste good Luger bullets, so Iron Morgan didn't. The Luger or Mauser or whatever it was, he gripped in his right hand. But he was pretty good with his left. The little Jap's shaved head must have been very hard. For the billy club broke.

Both of the bomber's motors were going smoothly enough. They turned up now with a roar that staggered Iron Morgan with the prop wash. The plane started rolling. He hopped into the fuselage, slamming the door.

The compartment was a meat can—tail machine-gunner's pit, in Navy language. Most bosun's mates wouldn't know a meat can from a paint locker, but Iron Morgan hadn't always been a bosun's mate. On his last hitch he had put in for aviation.

A lot of other deck force sailors had done that. And many of them, like him, had bilged out. A bad memory for algebra formulas had kept Iron Morgan from becoming an aviation pilot.

So he knew this was a meat can, and under the transparent gun arc the Lantana Boulevard pavement was speeding abaft fast. The plane wasn't rolling smoothly, though. Something had happened to the landing gear in that thumping landing.

But the pilot must have been a whiz. He got her up. Iron Morgan's view widened. In a wide circle the ship climbed. Houses, some of them afire; people, like little black ants hurrying up the streets that lifted to the green Pali Mountains. The last segment of the circle brought the widespread naval establishment around Pearl Harbor into view; and Pearl Harbor itself and the Ford Island air base. The smoke mushrooms had multiplied. But between them Iron Morgan could see the heart-rending destruction below.

ONE look was enough. He closed his eyes. He was sick.

"Oh, God!" he spoke to himself. "Oh, God, how did it happen?"

He didn't stay sick. He had a job to do. That job was to get forward to the controls. He knew enough about flying to dish out a few ugly, doomful surprises to other Jap planes that dived and zoomed and clamored over Oahu from the shambles that was Pearl Harbor on across to Kaneohe Bay Naval Air Station.

He twisted around in the tight little meat can, built to fit an undersized goo-goo. He saw the broad back of the bombardier, bent over his sights, up there amidships.

Why should the filthy ape fool with his bombsights? The bomb racks were empty. He had dumped his dirty load. Maybe he was studying the ground through the powerful lenses.

Maybe, too, Iron Morgan thought, those very bombs had murdered some of his shipmates down yonder on the boulevard. He took another look at

the harbor. Not much to see now. Storage tanks were afire. He did see something that sickened him again for an instant. There, in the Utah's berth, was a ship's exposed bottom, hulking mammoth and smooth, like the back of a harpooned whale.

The whole of Oahu lay under him now, all fifty miles of it. Some American planes were rising gallantly from Wheeler Field, bright under that early Sunday sun. Iron Morgan groaned for them. Jap fighters were slicing down. What chance did the poor old Army have! Cold motors, no altitude!

Iron Morgan turned his attention to the bombardier again, his eyes grown accustomed to the dim light inside the hollow cylinder of the fuselage. The pilot would be up in the nose, ahead. But the hell of it was, a bulkhead shut off the pilot's position. And there was no opening visible. But some kind of a crawl-hole there must be. At this moment the bombardier twisted his head to grin back at his supposed companion. His grin became a grimace of outraged surprise, and he clawed at his belt.

"Just one way to find out," Iron Morgan told himself, sighting on the bombardier. "Your turn, rat."

The automatic's bark was lost in the roar of the motors. The bombardier flopped down, face against his sighting panel. Iron Morgan scrambled forward. In this pit by the dead Jap was an array of instruments, with German words on the panel of a shortwave radiophone.

This set was as dead as the Jap. The Luger bullet that had pierced his thick carcass had drilled smack into it.

The bulkhead was tight as a drum. Not even a rivet hole opening. Maybe these Jap plane crews didn't trust one another. Then Morgan understood. The bulkhead was thin but extremely hard armor, protecting the pilot's position. No Luger could penetrate it.

IRON MORGAN did some heavy thinking, then. Nothing in the Bluejacket's Manual to cover such a situation. Nothing in his experience to furnish a plan of action.

In housings strung along the longitudinal members were the wires that controlled rudder and flipper. He could destroy those with a bullet

or two. Then the bomber would crash. And he, Iron Morgan, U.S.N., would wash out, also.

"No sense in that," he told himself. "This plane's done its job already."

Back to the tail position he scuttled along the narrow catwalk. They were at sea now. Barber Point, that familiar landfall of harbor-bound and liberty-hungry sailors, was far abaft.

The course was southwest or almost. So the skibbies had a carrier out there, and this bomber was heading back to its floating nest. For days on end, American aircraft had scoured that area—all other sea approaches to the Pearl Harbor stronghold. There'd been a ghastly, terrible, ruinous slipup somewhere. Well it would never happen again. The Navy made mistakes. But it never repeated them.

Iron Morgan knew that the chance was pathetically small for Oahu-based planes to follow the returning killers, to locate and destroy the Jap carrier. The unwarned attack had blasted most of them into junk and had destroyed their runways.

But over in Lahaina Roads, fifty miles away lay the great American carriers, flight decks at ready with fast fighters. Or had the good old *Lexington* and *Saratoga* and the swift, new *Ranger* been ordered to far waters? There was no keeping track of Navy ships these days. Even the skippers operated under sealed orders.

"Too much deep thinking," Iron Morgan finally decided, settling down as comfortably as possible in the cramped meat can. "I never was cut out for it. Proved that in algebra class."

So he lit himself a smoke, which was a serious breach of regulations in a Navy plane.

"But who in blazes cares about a Jap crate?" He was talking aloud to himself now. "Anyhow, I always did want to see what a Jap carrier looked like. Maybe I can do enough damage there to pay for my life and for a few others."

CHAPTER III

Suicide Ship

FROM 15,000 feet, even the broad, flared decks of an airplane carrier look small. It was late morning when Iron Morgan looked down on this one whose treacherous mission must already have shocked the civilized world.

"Pirate from stem to stern!" Iron Morgan reflected bitterly. "Thieves' loot, every part of her! Built from secrets stolen by spies from white men's Navies! Built of good American scrap steel that we traded for 'made in Japan' rubbish! Huh, the only honest thing a Jap ever made was that teacake fortune I got at Yamato's!"

Those enemies above circled the huge craft like bees around a hive, landing at the stern apron, singly but fast. The carrier was steaming into the wind at top speed, leaving a long, white wake. Iron Morgan rough-reckoned her course to be west, squarely away from Japan. What did that mean?

The bomber slanted down and the pilot cut the gun. Iron Morgan gulped to break that lost-altitude tightness in his ears.

He had another reason to gulp. In a few minutes he would be aboard the enemy carrier. What then? He couldn't sink her with the Luger pistol. He could empty it into yellow men, then die fighting. But that wasn't enough. Dimly he realized that a unique, unheard-of and utterly tremendous opportunity was his. An opportunity to uphold the pride and honor of the United States Navy, and to avenge in some measure the outrage at Pearl Harbor. If he was lucky!

"My socks and stars, here goes for some more deep thinking!" he growled, clamping his red head between his bands as though he might squeeze an idea out of it. "Even algebra seems simple, compared to this!"

BY THE time the bomber hovered over the carrier apron, Iron Morgan was a stowaway, hidden as far back in the tail compartment as he could squeeze. He had the glimmering of a great idea. The success of it depended on escaping detection.

By feel and sound he knew a deck landing was coming. Countless times, watching great carriers of his own fleet at sea maneuvers, he had seen aircraft do this. Slowed to stalling point, the bomber pancaked heavily to flight deck and eased into the barrier cable and stopped. Around him, amid roaring activity, was Oriental jabbering as deckhands pushed the bomber to the elevator platform. Rumbling gears, a slow descent, fading of flight deck noise. On the hangar deck now. The fuselage door was flung open. Iron Morgan

glimpsed a brown, slant-eyed visage, as a dungareed mechanic poked his head in.

He jerked it out with a startled cry.

There was immediate commotion. Into the fuselage hopped an officer—the pilot no doubt. Under different circumstances Iron Morgan would have enjoyed his dismay in finding the meat can empty and the bombardier a lifeless hulk.

This was the trying moment. The dead bombardier was dragged out. All hands around the bomber were talking at once in their barbaric dialect.

A sharp order cut in. The babble stopped. Iron Morgan saw another face, topped by an officer's cap.

"Osaki shot him!" the officer snarled.

Iron Morgan found some satisfaction in his knowledge of Japanese.

"Oh, no, please!" It was the pilot, protesting anxiously. "Shooting I heard when Osaki got out! Shooting in Honolulu street!"

"Numa was shot then?"

"Must be."

Luckily for Iron Morgan, the explanation held. And lucky too it was that they had no time to haggle or look back into the dark tail section. He breathed easier as the door was slammed shut, relaxed his grip on the Luger and eased his cramped position. He wanted another smoke. But a whiff of good American tobacco now would be a dead giveaway.

At intervals he heard talk outside the thin fuselage. Some was understandable, fragments of it.

"Out of Pearl Harbor we drove their fleet!" he heard one boast. "Outside our brave subs are waiting! So nice!"

That was met with cackling laughter.

"So funny! Always the American Navy was itching to get at us!"

"Itch now stings!"

Laughter again.

"Very, very funny!" bristled the listening redhead.

"Soon we shall take California! Stupid, helpless, but so rich, yes!"

There was a hunk of news for Morgan. So blitzing the mainland was a part of the enemy plan. A heavy long stride sounded on the deck plates and a guttural voice, arrogant and

authoritative, drowned the thin, nasal Jap chatter.

"Ya, shipmates! California, America, the world! But first, the American fleet! Fuel up! Again we attack! The first blow, it was not enough!"

A call shrilled over a loud-speaker system. Up on the flight deck, planes were revving.

"Enemy patrols, of our victory they would cheat us!" boomed the German in its execrable Japanese.

Up somewhere anti-aircrafts added to the din with their clatter. The ship rocked and heeled over sharply to an abrupt change of course.

"Come on, Navy, get this tub!" Iron Morgan cheered silently. "Sink her! Don't mind me!"

The running action didn't last long. Planes were taking off. The air was hot and fetid in the hangar deck. Groping forward, Iron Morgan took a quick glance through the bombardier's cage. The plane rocked as a crew, trucking heavy bombs, began reloading the emptied racks.

HE HEARD the German raging about suicidal losses. The voice of the pilot answered coldly.

"Nothing is more glorious than to die for the Son of Heaven. Straight into big ships this time we fly."

"That means," Iron Morgan said to himself, "I got to get out o' this! These yellow beggars are treacherous rats, but nobody can honestly call them cowards. Not when they commit hara-kiri right on our doorsteps."

The flying fanatics were expending their lives in traditional Jap fashion. It did not occur to Iron Morgan that in this lone-handed raid he was as reckless of his own life, that the enemy had no monopoly on courage.

Across on the starboard side a crew of greasy baboons was refueling. Now was the time. He guardedly opened the fuselage door and dropped lightly to the deck.

The bomb-loading bunch, ten feet from him, heard the sound and fell over one another in confusion. Morgan barked a savage laugh as he brandished the Luger. One, quicker than the rest to recover from astonishment, darted at him, making ju jitsu motions. Another sailed in with a heavy wrench.

Morgan slid under the bomber's belly and at

a crouching run charged the refueling crew. Two of them scattered, hissing in surprise. The third stood stupefied, holding the nozzle at a wing tank.

Morgan let him have a Luger slug through the body, and he dropped. The nozzle slobbered gasoline on the deck.

Whipping a packet of paper matches from his blouse pocket, Morgan lighted them all. He flung the tiny torch into the pooling gas, then tailed aft as fast as he could go. A roaring wall of fire licked at him from behind, drowning out the cries of the alarmed Japs.

He saw a companionway ladder and reached it. He never went topside so fast. The ladder brought him out onto a platform under the landing apron.

A flagman was there, a Jap officer in white coveralls whose duty was to order landings. He wore a headset telephone. Binoculars hung from his neck. He whirled, blinking at this new apparition in white. The little round black muzzle of Morgan's Luger was just out of reach.

"Drop that companionway cover!" crackled Morgan, sliding past him along the rail. He jabbed the Jap hard in the ribs. "Quick, yellow-belly! Don't talk in that headpiece, savvy?"

Black smoke was gushing from the hangar deck. The Jap turned greenish. His lips moved, but no sound came. Morgan kicked him, lifting him clear of the deck, sending him halfway to the hatch.

IT WAS a two-man job to handle that heavy hatch. But, somehow, the flagman handled it alone. It dropped, the two hundredweight of it, just as a broad German face loomed. Morgan heard the big windbag's agonized bellow as the crushing weight descended.

This flagman platform, between hangar deck and flight deck, was beautifully isolated. The hatch closed it from below. The projecting apron shielded it from above.

The flagman had turned from green to gray at the knowledge of what fire would do to this ship of the Mikado. What was the holocaust in the hangar deck?

Morgan could see his confused wonder. It gave him confidence. In a crisis, in any unordered situation, Japs couldn't think any better than Nazi troops.

Seeing the smoke coiling blackly upward from below gave the fighting-mad Yank a wild and crazy idea. He pushed the Luger snout against the other's nose.

"Jerk off that headpiece, yellow-belly! Toss it!"

Morgan caught it, clamping it over his red topknot.

"*Dammerung!*" he rumbled into the mouthpiece. "Giff me der bridge, der *Kapitan!*"

He thought to himself:

"If this cockeyed scheme works I'll be mayor o' Tokio before I'm done!"

The line sputtered with crackling Japanese. It sounded like a dozen stations talking at once.

"*Kapitan!*" he roared, keeping the flagman covered. "Fire! Out of control! Stop the engines! Abandon ship at once!"

He nearly keeled over as the swift acknowledgement came. "Immediately, Colonel Schwartz. Where are you—on the flag platform?"

"Yes," Morgan clipped out. "The entire hangar deck is in flames. Make haste!" He disconnected the phone.

"You see who's boss around here?" he crackled at the flagman. "Now jump!"

He didn't have to repeat. The Jap, old ivory color now, took one look at Morgan's trigger finger and dived overside to be swallowed in the boiling wake.

Then the shudder of racing screws died and the carrier lay to. The engines were stopped. Smoke and fire were whoofing out of ventilators, and boiling from under the unbolted companionway hatch cover.

CHAPTER IV

Pennsy Calling

LUCK like this, however, couldn't last forever. Iron Morgan's mistake was failure to observe the short, vertical ladder that connected the flag platform with the flight deck. Feet thumped behind him. He spun and saw a Jap sailor with a portable fire extinguisher strapped to his back!

Morgan swung up the Luger and triggered. The hammer clicked on the empty chamber. He threw the gun at the Jap who sluggishly ducked.

The Luger glanced off his helmet. Helmeted, goggled and bundled in a cumbersome asbestos suit, this firefighter wasn't prepared for a physical encounter. But as Morgan closed in, swinging, he gamely joined battle. He proved that a squirt of chemical solution could extinguish a redheaded fireball of a raging American as well as a fire.

Blinded and half-strangled, Iron Morgan staggered back. Yapping, the fireman followed up his advantage. The stuff was pretty horrible. It grabbed hold of the lungs like chlorine.

But Morgan wasn't running from any Jap. Only he had to get that stuff out of his eyes. He ripped off the headphone, grabbed the rail and nipped over it, hurtled down and hit the drink.

Eddies whirled him under. The deep, blue Pacific was as good a place as any. Tossed like a leaf in a storm, Iron Morgan came to the top without any effort of his own and took the biggest breath of his life. He started swimming, not anywhere in particular, but just to keep afloat. His eyes weren't much use yet. He got out of the boiling water into a widening slick that eddied away from the carrier.

"Well, it was a swell idea, anyhow," he reflected grimly. "Almost succeeded, at that. But I couldn't win. A thousand Japs are a match for one white man any time."

There was still plenty of confusion in the ship. The fire fighter was a wise guy. Morgan could see him now, though his vision was blurry. The Jap was using the headphone. White smoke boiled out of the hangar deck, rising high, indicating they were holding their own with the fire with chemical extinguishers. But they weren't launching any planes or taking any more on for the present.

There were Jap destroyers all around, too. A defensive screen of the fast, low vessels. One was maneuvering in close to the stricken carrier.

All at once Morgan was glad he had been forced to abandon the flag platform. There was a muffled explosion under the apron, and a swirl of flame shot out, sending scattered debris. As it showered into the sea, Morgan sighted one welcome offering. It was a life preserver, which must have been hanging somewhere along the flag platform railing. He paddled for it, slipped under and in. He rested, arms locked over it.

"I never went to sea in a doughnut before!"

he gasped.

The far-flung bow wave of the destroyer bobbed him around like a cork and he hoped this life preserver was better than some the Japs made and sold—stuffed with old American newspaper. The carrier was getting under weigh again, keeping the flames aft. The destroyer drew alongside, hosing her sizzling side plates. They moved off south. After awhile Morgan had that part of the ocean to himself.

THE inevitable reaction set in. His throat began to ache as he recalled the shambles at Pearl Harbor. Even though he knew that American vessels and planes and subs were scouring the sea by now to avenge that dastardly blow, dry sobs shook Iron Morgan. He'd gone through the entire adventure without suffering fear. But it was creeping into him now, gripping him with a clammy hand.

It was late afternoon. In that latitude, dark followed sunset quickly. Maybe this was better than dying in a bombed barracks, like unwarned men had died on Oahu. But it was the waiting that was bad. If he were only with the American fleet chasing the nasty little yellow devils.

The sun didn't hurry any. Morgan got to thinking about sharks. There was just a light breeze. The long Pacific swell made an endless succession of little hills and valleys, gave him an illusion he was moving, not merely afloat.

He saw a triangular fin rise lazily on the crest of a swell, disappear, then come up again, nearer. Iron Morgan went into the hardest fight of his life then—a fight against panic. Maybe it wasn't a man-eater. There were basking sharks, all kinds of sharks, some harmless. To get his thoughts off that, he started to sing. He sang anything, it didn't matter. Some was sailor stuff that would have made a shark blush. Morgan left out some of the worst verses.

Oh, monkeys have no tails,
In Zamboanga.
The monkeys have no tails,
In Zamboanga.
The monkeys have no tails;
They were bitten off by whales.
Monkeys have no tails in Zamboanga.

He sang everything he knew and then got to

making up jingles. He liked one of his own a lot and kept improving on it until he was lustily whooping:

Here's your hat,
Kurusu,
We're through with you
And your dirty crew.

Evidently the shark couldn't stand it. The sinister dorsal fin didn't show up anymore. Iron Morgan wore himself down. After a while he was looking up at the first star, and he remembered it was Sunday and that the Japs had shot down the church flag.

"I never been much of a gospel hand, Oh Lord," he called out fervently, hardly realizing he was praying, "but I always played and fought square. Please give us a good, clean swipe at these heathens, and if you got any miracles left over, send a ship my way—a good American ship. Amen."

He heard rumbling gunfire, far off somewhere. It gave him hope and faith. Three salvos—that would be straddle, bracket and a hit. Maybe the smoke from that burning carrier had led avengers to it.

At intervals after that, gunfire rolled over the sea. All the stars lighted up. He watched them blink on, out of nowhere. He laid out in the life preserver and went into a half-stupor.

The moon had taken charge when he opened his eyes. The ocean was hammered silver. Something must have aroused him. Suddenly he knew. It was the irregular *slish-slosh* from a keen prow.

HIS heart thumping hard and fast, sent warmth through him. He flung a look around and located the ship, slithering along like a phantom between him and the moon.

It was very plain—four vertical stacks, high super-structure around the mainmast, gun-bristling aft turret low over the long fantail. Atop the turret was a pontoon plane. Nary a light showed.

An American light cruiser! The outline was unmistakable! Iron Morgan let go an enormous whoop and started splashing.

The ship didn't alter her speed or course. She was passing within three hundred yards, and she

was leaving him to die.

"Hey, tin can, wake up!" he screeched. "Man overboard! S-O-S! Cruiser ahoy!"

Somebody up on that high bridge had keen ears. A searchlight, stabbed out. It swung like an exploring finger until Morgan's whites fairly sizzled in the brilliance for a second. As suddenly it went out.

"What d'ya think I am, a sub?" yelled Morgan.

A Niagara lifted at the stern. The cruiser was coming about now, as only a light cruiser could, swapping ends with the powerful slash of four propellers. The suspicious searchlight took another whack at him, and Iron Morgan expressed his joy by cussing it in his deck force best.

The cruiser eased toward him, drifting. A messenger line shot out from the forecandle deck. A pilot's ladder rattled down over the side. Moments later a one-man suicide squadron drizzily saluted a tired, haggard captain in the emergency cabin on the bridge, in the center of a ring of wondering faces.

"Morgan, bosun's mate of the *Pennsylvania*, sir," reported the castaway.

Under the dim, blue battle light over the chart table Captain Vestal's eyes widened.

"But the flagship was alongside, docked!"

"I was ashore, sir," said Iron Morgan, wetly slapping his SP brassard, "when the devils attacked."

The captain ran a hand across his brow.

"You must be an excellent swimmer," he murmured.

The cruiser's executive officer tossed a dry blanket over Morgan's shoulders.

"The lad is a little dazed, perhaps, Captain," he suggested.

"So am I!" Captain Vestal declared forcibly. "How a man on Shore Police detail at Honolulu could be patrolling the Pacific Ocean four hundred miles off Diamond Head *on the same day* should daze anybody!"

"I should have explained, sir," Iron Morgan added respectfully. "I hitchhiked from Lantana Boulevard in a Jap bomber, got aboard a carrier, set her afire and—and—"

A mess attendant brought a tray of steaming java and sandwiches. Iron Morgan paused to reach for the coffee and scalded his throat with a slug of

it. Then he grabbed a sandwich and took a steam-shovel bite.

“Commander Frisby,” Captain Vestal requested the executive officer, “please send up the doctor.”

“I don’t need him, sir,” Iron Morgan protested through the sandwich.

“Well, I believe I do,” blurted the staggered skipper.

CHAPTER V

The Duck Hop

THE *Cincinnati* wasn’t a young ship. But a tough, sweating black gang could make her act young. They could coax 90,000 horsepower and a mule or two out of her nine boilers. That tremendous power sent her over the ocean highway at automobile speed as Iron Morgan finished his sandwiches—and what he had to tell Captain Vestal.

“What was the name of the Jap carrier?” asked the captain.

“It’s probably under coupla layers of paint on that life preserver,” Morgan said, knowing that in action war vessels hid their identity. The captain nodded.

“You heard gunfire. But you’re not certain that the carrier was under attack?”

“No, sir. That was after I went overboard.”

“And you were in the water how long?”

The chronometer over the chart table indicated ten to nine.

“Five hours, about, sir. She headed south.”

Captain Vestal had a quick look at the chart. Then he summoned the grizzled chief quartermaster, pacing a wing of the bridge while he waited.

“Course one-eight-zero,” he ordered tersely. “Buzz that Scotch chief engineer. Tell him we’re not in a fuel economy contest.”

Iron Morgan ostriched the last sandwich in amazement.

“Excuse me, Captain,” he said, “but how did you figure the carrier’s probable dawn position so quick?”

“I estimated your drift by knowing the speed and direction of the current in these waters. Then,” explained Captain Vestal, “it was a matter

of simple algebra.”

“My socks and stars!” exclaimed Iron Morgan. “Algebra again!”

The captain smiled faintly. The unusual circumstances made him quite informal with his rescued sailor. He indicated an area on the chart.

“You see, if x is the abscissa and y the coordinate of any point on a curve, then triangle y is the rise which brings us to the average slope of the curve, which is dy/dx . Thus, we divide distance by time to determine average speed.”

Iron Morgan’s red head was whirling like a top.

“Isn’t that something new, sir?” he gasped. “Since I was at Pensacola for flight training?”

Captain Vestal flicked a thin smile.

“Sir Isaac Newton discovered the principle in the seventeenth century. So you’ve flown, eh?”

“Yes, sir. I bilged in mathematics, but I can fly.”

The captain looked pleased, then grimly thoughtful.

“Good!” he finally decided. But he didn’t explain. “How about a wink or two, Morgan? Plenty of empty bunks. We put to sea short our own liberty party.”

“Dry clothes and some more coffee will do, sir. I don’t want to miss—”

“You’ll miss nothing, I promise you.”

In chief petty officers’ quarters, aft under the fantail, below the turret where the pontoon plane rode. Iron Morgan was made snug. It seemed that he had barely napped before a clattering bang jerked him back to consciousness. The noise resounded through the ship. He hit the deck, looking for pants, before he identified the racket. They were not under attack. The duck—the pontoon plane—was only warming up.

The captain’s colored steward trotted into the cramped quarters.

“Boy, let me rub you fo’ luck!” he exclaimed admiringly. “He’s yo’ hero clothes, sailor.”

BUT it wasn’t whites he handed over. It was flying garb.

“Cap’n craves yo’ presence on de bridge,” he reported.

Trotting forward through the aft casemate and crossing the open mid-deck, Iron Morgan saw it was dawn, a red-smearred dawn. The cruiser was

at alert with all stations manned, from guns to crow's nest lookout.

Haggard from long vigil, Captain Vestal almost pounced on Morgan as the redhead reached the bridge.

"We left the ship's flight officer ashore yesterday, also," was his abrupt greeting.

"Yes, sir. I guessed that."

"Then you can guess that I'm going to ask something rather extraordinary of you."

"Don't ask, sir. Just give me orders—flying orders."

Captain Vestal smiled and beckoned him to the chart.

"I hope this isn't some more algebra though," Morgan added.

"That's not necessary now. The lookout has just reported an enemy destroyer, bearing two-nine-seven, course two-six-three, speed ten. If the destroyer is part of a screen formation, the carrier must be beyond, northwest of us. The slow speed indicates she is crippled. I doubt if she can launch planes at ten knots, with practically no wind."

Iron Morgan could understand that.

"I propose to engage the destroyer," went on the captain. "But at our first salvo that plane would be shattered to smithereens there on top of the turret."

"Are the bomb racks loaded, sir?"

"Two one-hundred-pound demolitions."

Iron Morgan had another look at the chart.

"I'm ready, Captain," he said.

The rest happened fast. In deflated life jacket and a seat parachute under him, Iron Morgan settled in the cockpit of the single-motored observation plane. He gave the signal, and a boom lifted it clear and lowered it over the starboard side. Standing, Iron Morgan disengaged the boom cable. Rocking buoyantly on her pontoons, the duck was afloat.

Cheers came from the aft casemate. But he didn't hear them. He was revving up. The two pontoons rippled a wake, and he notched the throttle higher. The pontoons skimmed lightly, hurling spray.

There was a trick in getting these ducks off the water. Iron Morgan hadn't forgotten that trick. Rocking the flippers, he nosed her up. The pontoons left the surface, and the sea dropped away. He circled the cruiser widely. The altimeter

registered a swift climb to one thousand feet. She climbed well for an observation crate. The hot smell of the Whirlwind motor was like strong tonic. Little crusts of salt formed on the cockpit cover as the spray dried,

He swung the plane to course two-nine-seven on the compass and then saw the Jap destroyer on the horizon. She was making smoke. That told him she was speeding ahead, running away from an engagement with the cruiser.

But the *Cincinnati* would take care of that. Morgan had other business to do. He eased back the stick and left-ruddered. He was thrilled that he had made such a good takeoff. If he could handle himself as well upstairs they would yet hear about him in Tokio.

At ten thousand feet he leveled off, swinging to pass the scurrying destroyer well beyond anti-aircraft range.

He flung a look of contempt at the fleeing Jap vessel.

"Dirty fighters!" he spat. "Can't take it in a fair scrap, eh? And you call yourselves suicide fighters."

Once again he reflected that the Japs didn't have a corner on that brand of glory. The duck's tanks held about four hours' fuel supply. If the *Cincinnati* went into action, she could never pause to pick him up. And from the captain's chart table he had noted that he was a good 600 miles southwest of Hawaii.

All around the curved immensity of the broad Pacific gave no hope of help or rescue when the time came to set down. But the fighting Yank thought of Pearl Harbor, and coolly flew on.

CHAPTER VI

The Wing Guns

THE duck carried a complication of devices that Iron Morgan knew little about. It was designated as a utility type, five-purpose plane. Fundamentally it was a scout; also a patrol, a spotter to direct the aim of ship's guns, a dive bomber and a fighter. Thirty-caliber guns nestled in the wings, controlled by a stick trigger. There were two cockpit positions. With the second one empty behind him it had been possible to take off with the bomb load. True, the bombs were only

firecrackers compared to the huge eggs carried by bigger craft, but two hundred-pounders could wreak havoc on a light-armored target.

The sun seemed to emerge out of the sea, like a huge, glowing buoy behind him. If the carrier lay ahead, he could use that blinding ball of fire to his advantage. A crafty airman could hide in its brilliance.

Captain Vestal's reckoning proved right. The carrier appeared, on the far rim of the watery world, almost dead ahead. Her flared deck and massed stacks made her look like an inverted algebraic symbol.

It didn't call for algebra, or any deep thinking to tell Iron Morgan what to do now. He gunned the duck to the last notch and tried the wing guns. A short, rattling burst vibrated the plane and warmed the mechanisms.

Iron Morgan began singing his senseless songs again as he roared into battle.

You'll feel blue,
Mister Kurusu,
When I get through
With that maru.

He was closing in fast. The sun was clear of the horizon, and he had to put it between him and his target. He cut the gun, inching the stick forward. Wind whined in the struts as he slanted down, singing no more but praying silently that he had not been sighted.

He could see to great depths in the clear, blue sea, now that the sun was on the job. Scanning it for danger, he suddenly tensed, his gaze freezing on a shadowy cylinder between him and the carrier.

"Gosh! Submarine!" he croaked.

The pigboat was submerged, but, as he gazed, a thin lace of white fanned out from its bow. The wet conning tower flashed in the sun.

This changed the whole situation. It cut his chances of getting to the carrier. The first thing a sub did in coming to the surface was to scan the sky for planes. If trouble loomed, it could go into action in a hurry.

With sudden anger, Iron Morgan shortened his glide into an almost vertical dive. He was angered that this pickleboat had to bob up at precisely this time and place to cheat him of the savage joy of trying to finish his job on that

carrier.

The struts screamed now. Iron Morgan's stomach rose uncomfortably. He ruddered a little, driving an arrow course for the ugly undersea killer. He saw the conning tower hatch open and a figure emerge. The altimeter said six thousand, and it was crawling down fast over the dial. More black specks boiled up like startled cockroaches out of the open hatch. They swarmed forward to the deck gun.

AT THREE thousand feet Iron Morgan fingered the wing-gun trigger. The sub was tiny yet in the crossline sight and he was having trouble keeping the target centered.

He fought against the dizziness created by his terrific speed of descent. He clamped onto the trigger as the sub's gun swung and elevated.

His burst went wide, and he tried again for that precision of foot and hand and eye that he had only partly learned. His second burst lashed across the lean hull.

The sub's gun flashed, and he thought for a whizzing fraction of a second that it had fired. But it was the wet gunshield, reflecting the sun.

At one thousand feet he turned on the works again and spattered the sub's gun just as it erupted. He hauled out of the dive and groped with clammy hand for the bomb trips. He felt the plane surge like a live thing as they let go.

THE harassed sub gunner made a sloppy shot. The AA burst shattered the sky high above the mad-diving plane. And then the sub vanished under the wings.

Morgan peeled into a right turn, sideslipping horribly. He struggled with the controls, to keep himself in the sky. Something gave him a powerful shove, saving him by patting his inside wing down where it should be. He got a leaning view, in which sea and sky all seemed one.

It wasn't a view of the sub. All he could see was an enormous waterspout. It furnished him with a sense of equilibrium. It was a pylon around which he turned on wing-end.

He teetered off, gunned the motor and frantically worked to hold things together before he could take time off for another look.

The waterspout had sloshed down, leaving a ragged, frothy circle that boiled up from the

middle. The things that it boiled up with blobs of black, gushing oil didn't help his air-sickness.

There would be no surprise attack on the carrier now. Her anti-aircraft batteries were stabbing with jets of flame, and Iron Morgan numbly realized that he was under fire. A burst mushroomed ahead of him. Another burst almost underneath. His pair of half-empty thirty-calibers were about as useful as a fly swatter. He wobbled off, rolling and fishtailing, getting out of range before he dared to climb.

He had one consolation in giving up his main objective. The carrier's paint on stern and sides was blackened and peeled away. That gasoline fire had pulled her fangs. There was only a scattered few planes on her flight deck. And her reduced speed strongly hinted that she had been in crippling action.

Less than an hour since he had been lowered over the *Cincinnati's* side, as terrible a human thunderbolt as any Jap fanatic loaded into a suicide torpedo.

His fate was the harder because it was more suspenseful. He had three hours' gas supply to carry him over an empty ocean. Then he could set down and face his lingering end under the burning sun of the south Pacific.

It was natural that he should turn back on his course, in hopes of sighting the *Cincinnati*, although the cruiser's position was almost directly opposite to the direction of Hawaii. And every mile farther he put the islands reduced his millionth chance of rescue.

At five thousand feet he leveled and steadied the compass needle. He wondered if the duck contained emergency rations. Naval planes almost always did. The thought reminded him that he had skipped breakfast. He'd skipped a number of meals in the thousand years since he'd hopped from Oahu in the Jap bomber yesterday morning.

Another speculation was how long could he survive afloat on such meager food and water a packet of emergency rations would contain.

His gloomy outlook took a sudden turn, and he was gripped by a new excitement as he discovered a formation of planes coming up out of the southwest. They were big seaplanes in echelon, six of them.

It flashed into his mind that the Japanese-mandated islands, several groups numbering 300

or more, lay in that part of the Pacific. These planes were flying toward Hawaii. Were they going to carry on the hellish work of yesterday?

Their course was bringing them west of him. The pontoon plane was a gnat compared to those eagles. The thirty-calibers would hardly dent their armored hides.

Iron Morgan knew that. But without hesitation he swung around, notched up the throttle, and streaked at a tangent to intercept them. Gnat-like, he could delay them, anyhow, and force them to fight, so he could go out as a fighting Yank should.

CHAPTER VII

Gnats Can Sting

THE mammoth, boat-hulled craft spotted him even sooner. He knew that when they executed a turn in birdlike unison and bore straight for him.

"Gosh! Those Japs are flyin' fools!" gasped Morgan. "I've never seen that maneuver done better, not even over Hickam Field!"

It wasn't going to be long now. Like all super-sized aircraft, their speed was deceptive. Morgan was bewildered that they should want to waste precious minutes squashing him.

The cumulative speed brought them together fast. Iron Morgan was gripping the trigger when the lead plane flipped and lifted. His hand left the trigger grip like it was red-hot. On the underwing the starred cocard of the U.S. Navy loomed like a warning signal.

He sheered off, hurling back the cockpit cover. He stood up, yelling and flapping both arms. The duck sideslipped, and he dropped back to steady the stick. The seaplanes were past by the time he recovered.

He turned and flew after them, signaling with his controls. He had glimpsed a surprised pilot's face in the instant of their passing. That plane left the group now, tight-circled and passed him again, close.

Iron Morgan took another chance. He stood up, jabbering and jabbing a hand in the direction of the Jap carrier. The seaplane pilot patted his helmet, seeming to understand.

Morgan, wild with glee, plumped down again

and tooled off. The five others were swinging now. Through the cockpit cover he motioned again for them to follow.

They climbed as they came, their massive shadows crossing him and writing big patterns on the sea. Morgan fed the throttle the last notch. He looked up and saw torpedoes almost as big as the duck's fuselage. Boy, this was going to be good!

He was singing again, howling the words:

Here we come,
Full o' rum,
Looking for something
To put on the bum.

The seaplanes spread in a wide line, and Morgan, between gazing rapturously up at their broad bellies and watching the altimeter, narrowly missed a half-dozen crashes. He knew they must be cursing his clumsiness, but he didn't care. Wasn't he leading them into a scrap?

He double-checked his compass, hoping that he had the Jap carrier's bearings right without the help of Sir Isaac Newton and dy/dx . Fortunately, he had.

When the massed stacks lifted above the horizon, the seaplanes left him as though he had frozen stationary in midair.

A FIGHTING bosun's mate got a lesson in tactics, then. Low they boomed, almost to the water, splitting and parting for a circling kill. In the long minutes it took his pontoon plane to reach the action, these far-flying torpedo planes had the carrier hemmed in. Billows of smoke whirled as her eight-inch guns waged hopeless defense. The low-skimming PBs from Hickam Field worked with fierce gusto to avenge yesterday's treachery.

Iron Morgan was inside the fighting circle when the first torpedo hit. It was almost squarely amidships. Cascading tons of water hid the gaping wound for a shocking instant, then dropped like a curtain.

Close to the bow on the other side of the hull

another torpedo hurled debris up through the flight deck. Fragments of Jap planes whizzed skyward.

"I'm going to get in my two-bit's worth!" howled Iron Morgan, flying straight at the carrier.

A wiser pilot would have known that a snake is most dangerous in its death writhings. But Iron Morgan wasn't wise. He wasn't even a pilot. He was a berserk fighting Yank who didn't know when he had had enough. When he tilted the wing guns down on the careening, listing flight deck, it was a-swarm with Japs, running and leaping into the sea.

He left-turned to climb and as he was broadside he got it. From some mast position a machine-gun stuttered. He felt the impact of slugs. He didn't know where they hit or what they did. But the Whirlwind started to miss and limp. He made a long, gliding landing two miles from the sinking carrier.

A great shadow boomed over him. Again Iron Morgan stood up. He jerked off his helmet, waving desperately.

That was not necessary. The seaplane was skimming to a landing.

Luckily the Pacific was smooth, except for the long swell. The huge seaplane jockeyed in. An airman with a boathook was out on the broad nose of the PB.

"Hey, eaglet!" he shouted as soon as he was in earshot. "What ship are you from? That's the cruiser *Cincinnati's* markings, isn't it?"

"Yeah," Iron Morgan shouted back.

"Where's your ship?" demanded the PB flier.

"The flagship, *Pennsylvania*? I guess she's out chasing some of these yellow devils off the ocean."

"Huh? The *Pennsylvania*?" gurgled the rescuer as he stabbed expertly at the sinking duck with his boathook. "Are you nuts? You fly like it."

"Yeah!" Iron Morgan admitted a little crazily. "I've just been helping to make a tea-cake prophecy come true for the late K. Yamato."