

SPEED ADVENTURE STORIES



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By **FELIX WEBB**

*Suddenly the whole isthmus was alive
with Japs.*



It was after the Japanese collapse that the story of Gogo was first told. Though it sounded like the romance of a fiction writer, Top-Sergeant Brunner swore to it



OUT OF THE DEEP

SOME stories of the war are censored because it is believed they may be of assistance to the enemy. This one was omitted by universal consensus of opinion, because it didn't sound real.

It sounded like the romance of a fiction writer. As time went on, it became still less credible. Some day the authorities meant to release it. But there was always

some reason for postponing the date of release, and so this matter hung fire, and was finally buried in the archives of the War Department—only then Top-Sergeant Brunner came my way, and he told me about it.

Perhaps you remember Sergeant Brunner, the man they couldn't kill. A tough old Regular—not a Marine. The Marines get all the credit, and they deserve still

more, but we mustn't forget that there were Regulars out on those Pacific Islands, too. Sergeant Brunner's war history went back to the Nicaraguan invasion, in the days before the Four Freedoms gave little nations the right to independence. He'd been wounded at Pearl Harbor, too. He had half a dozen wounds, and he had no medical justification for going on living, but there he was, somewhere between the Solomons and the Marshalls, not more than forty years old, and a fine-looking man, of the perennial bachelor type. He had broken in more colonels and general officers than any top-sergeant in the service.

It was some time after that I met the sergeant in San Francisco. It was after the sudden Jap collapse. The little Sons of Heaven had held out so much longer than anyone had credited them with being able to do, and then they folded so unexpectedly that they embarrassed us.

"They ought to have known, at Washington," said Brunner. "They ought to have known, after what happened at Gogo Island."

I pricked up my ears at that. Gogo Island was a mystery among us war correspondents. We knew there had been a defeat there—never given publicity. Also a victory there—equally suppressed. We had been trying to get the facts out of the Government for more than a year. Nothing doing. That story was not going to be released.

"So you were at Gogo?" I asked, trying to make my voice sound casual. I felt that at last I was on the trail of something big.

"The only member—the only male member of the U. S. military forces," said Brunner. And I thought, maybe the sergeant doesn't know that story was suppressed. Soldiers on active service don't follow the U. S. press.

"Have another beer, sergeant," I said.

“YOU see, those Japs don't react to things the way us civilized and enlightened peoples do, because they're living in the childhood of the human race. The childhood of the human race," re-

peated Brunner, obviously proud of his phrase. "What I mean is, to them life's all of a fairy story of gods and devils. That's their strength and that's their weakness. The Government certainly ought to have found that out. I knew they'd crack just the way they did, at the end.

"It started with their actions on one of them Solomons Islands. All of them Polynesians have got more or less the same religion, and one of their gods is Ra, the Sun-god. Now the Japs, as you probably know, believe their Emperor is descended from the Sun-god. So, when they conquered that particular island, they made a great play with the natives about their Emperor being a descendant of their Sun-god.

"It didn't work. The boys of the Solomons drew a clear distinction between their own Sun-god and the Jap Emperor. The Japs got madder and madder. Finally, they called the chiefs of the island into a conference, together with their Ra. The chiefs brought him, expecting him to receive high honor. The Japs had set up a machine-gun, and they riddled him to shreds. Then they burned what was left of the idol, by drenching it with gasoline.

"That's your Sun-god,' they told them. 'Now maybe you'll understand that we've got the real Sun-god in the Palace at Tokyo.'

"It didn't work. One of those chiefs got up and made a threat against the Jap Sun-god, whom they declined to recognize. He told them that their Ra would exact vengeance for the desecration. Of course they shot him down, and a dozen others who hadn't time to escape into the jungle, but that warning rankled.

"The Japs being in the childhood of the human race, felt that the sanctity of their Emperor had been challenged. They brooded over it. And that brings me to what happened at Gogo Island."

"Have another beer, sergeant," I said.

THE full extent of our defeat at Gogo never got into the press. Of course, certain things had to be suppressed.

We were never quite as stupid as the Japs in our suppressions, because we weren't in the childhood of the human race, as Brunner phrased it. Where they lied, we remained silent. Nevertheless, Gogo was a bad setback, and even now I can't give a total numbers of cruisers and destroyers that we lost under that concentrated hail of bombs.

What happened in effect was like this: We had landed on the south tip of the island, and set up our advanced units, our hospital and our mechanical services. Maybe it was a bit premature, but there was only a small Jap post at the northern tip, and a big push was under way, designed to clear the enemy out of the archipelago. We were certain we were going to wipe out Gogo, and nobody knew that those devils had an airfield on the island, and had concentrated a huge force of planes.

Just as the push was about to be staged, the discovery was made that we were up against an ambush. To go forward, with our present means, seemed a desperate venture. On the other hand, it would be worse to be caught flat-footed, trying to evacuate our base and hospital on the south tip.

There were three nurses there, who refused flatly to leave the wounded. They were Lieutenants Mary, Kitty and Dorothy, and the five wounded men were operational cases, and to try to evacuate them would mean death. Defiant messages were being flashed to and fro between the naval authorities and Lieutenant Mary Sheed, in charge. Intervening hourly, came fresh instructions from Melbourne, or else from Washington.

It was a mess all right. Here was that nurse refusing to obey orders from the skipper of the cruiser *Morristown*, who was himself being bedeviled with contrary orders. He had his men, his landing-barges, everything taut and ready to evacuate Gogo, and Lieutenant Sheed would just have to obey orders, because he wasn't going to leave her and the two other girls behind.

That was when Sergeant Brunner came into the picture.

OUR latest orders were (Brunner told me) that we were going to evacuate the post on Gogo, and the old man sent me with a handful of Regulars to bring the girls away.

"Bring the girls and the wounded. Bring everything human. Leave everything that's not human," the old man told me. "Unless it might be a pooch or a cat—I wouldn't let any dumb animal fall into the hands of those devils. Go and evacuate them, and bring them back. Tie those women up if they resist you."

I started off in a barge with a platoon of fellows. With me was old Texas. He was the leader of those chiefs who had escaped into the jungle, after the Japs destroyed Ra, their Sun-god.

The old boy wouldn't quit me. It appeared they'd machine-gunned all his relatives to death, and he'd lost his god, and he was crazy for vengeance. He spent most of the night howling to Ra and praying for the destruction of the Nips. In the daytime he made a pretty good mess-attendant. We were all fond of the old boy. There was just a handful of Regulars at our post on Bongo, but only the three girls had commissioned rank. The rest were boys from various units who had gone astray in the shuffling. There wasn't even a doctor. But there was a smart sentry. He plugged one of our boys through the hand before we got him to understand we weren't a raiding party of Ishoto's.

Ishoto was the Jap admiral who had shot up the Sun-god. We'd found what was left of some of our prisoners, after he got through with them, and there wasn't a thing our boys wouldn't have done to him, if they'd caught him.

We knocked some sense into that sentry's head, and we filed up softly through the pitchy darkness to our camp on Gogo. Somebody snapped on a shaded light and I found myself confronting Lieutenant Mary Sheed, commanding.

"Well, sergeant?" she snaps at me.

She was the prettiest thing, a little brunette, with a soft Arkansas voice, and, though I'd known she was the senior officer on Gogo, I was quite taken aback. Then I saw another of them, pausing in





"Four of these boys will surely die if they're moved," she said.

the hospital entrance. She was a brunette, too, and I guessed she was Lieutenant Kitty. And then from the opposite door in came a blonde, and that was Lieutenant Dorothy, from Massachusetts.

"Well, sergeant!" snaps Lieutenant Mary at me again.

"Order from Captain Hemple," I said. "All officers and wounded are to evacuate immediately. I'm sending an escort."

"I'm damned if we will," says Lieutenant Mary. "Tell Captain Hemple that."

"Well, now, lieutenant, we don't give that sort of message to them navy captains. You know, they're tough birds," I said. "They ain't got the milk of human kindness like us old Regulars."

"Suppose I refuse, what are your orders, sergeant?" she demands.

"Orders was to bring you all away," I answered.

"Do you propose to force us, sergeant?" she asks, kind of bristly-like.

"Why—why, of course not, lady—I mean, lieutenant," I answered, shocked that she could have been thinking of what I had been thinking of.

"Come here!" she says, taking me by the arm. And she pulled me inside the little one-room hospital, where Lieutenants Kitty and Dorothy were already gathered.

There were five wounded boys there. One of them was sitting back in a chair, and he had no legs. Another was lying on his back, his eyes wide open, staring up at the circle of electric light on the roof as if he didn't see it. His head was a mass of bandages. The third was bandaged up worse, and his head was in a sort of sling, and swaying gently backward and forward. The fourth was lying quiet, working his hands as if pulling taffy. And the fifth still smelled of chloroform.

"He's a hernia case," said Lieutenant Mary. "I operated on him this morning, because he'd have died. And I'm not a doctor. I took the chance, and he's going to pull through. Now do you understand what I meant when I said I'm damned if we'll evacuate?"

"Sure, lieutenant," I gulped. "Only, if them Nips come, you see, you'd all be better off aboard the *Morristown*."

"Four of those boys will die if they're moved," said Lieutenant Mary.

The two other lieutenants said, as if you'd pulled a string, "We're staying here."

SUDDENLY star lights of all sorts and colors were lighting up the sky. I said to Lieutenant Mary: "Where's your transmitter?"

"It doesn't work," she answered. "Too much humidity. Why?"

"I don't know what those signals mean," I told her. "But it looks as if the authorities have changed their minds again."

I said that when I heard a shell scream somewhere. I wasn't able to say anything more, because all hell was suddenly let loose. There was a barrage of big guns, and a barrage of little guns, and it meant only one thing to my ears. The big shots had decided not to evacuate after all, but to go ahead with the capture of the rest of Gogo Island.

The night was brighter than day by now, and I could see the invasion barges pushing in toward shore, and underneath the roar of the guns I could hear the murderous rattle of machine-gun fire.

Well, there's one rule that's been in existence since the childhood of the human race. When an old soldier gets caught unexpected in the middle of a battle, he doesn't go to anybody for orders: he just plugs in.

"Okay," I yelled to my platoon, who'd been standing around kind of sheepish. "We're attacking. Maybe those Nips have got down our way. Anyway, there's plenty of fighting going on, and we've got a barge and guns. We're landing on that beach across the bay."

And I pointed to where the barges were riding in front of a line of foaming breakers.

"All orders seem to be canceled," I said to Lieutenant Mary. "You stay in charge of your boys. We'll take care of the Nips for you."

She looked at me gratefully. Gosh, she was so swell, with those dark eyes of hers, I almost forgot my military discipline for an instant. Then I saluted her, and

got my boys into formation, and marched them down to the sea.

(I realized I was getting Sergeant Brunner's description of that mysterious battle of Gogo Island. But the sergeant hadn't seen the fight as a newspaper man might have seen it. He knew only what had happened to his own tiny outfit. He drove his barge toward the shore, where a brisk engagement was already happening, showing that the Japs were there to welcome us. All hell had broken loose, according to Brunner. And overhead swarms of Nip bombers were loosing destruction upon our ships.)

OLD TEXAS was gibbering beside me in the sheets. He'd managed to come with us, and he'd been praying to his Sun-god most of the time; but I'd always felt, so long as he was smart in serving up the chow by day, he'd got the right to follow his avocation after night-fall.

We pulled like the devil, and I quickly saw we were in an even worse mess than I'd expected. The Nip planes were everywhere, and, wherever our fighters were, they were not there that night.

Some of our boys seemed to have got ashore, and a long line of fire ran back and forward along the beaches. And suddenly—it was like a great red and yellow dent opening in the sea, almost down to the bottom of it. And where there had been a big cruiser, spouting fire from her eight-inch guns, there was no longer anything at all.

I saw two other burning ships. It didn't seem to me that anybody could be alive in them. I thought of our boys burning up there. I yelled and cursed, and the barge shot forward over the waves.

Right ahead of us, between us and the shore, was the *Morristown*, with old Captain Hemple, the senior naval officer, and in charge of the whole operation. The old ship was whanging away at the Nips ashore. That was a cheering sight, seeing those great shells landing like redhot stars, and sending the fire crackling along the lines of palm-trees. We cheered without stopping rowing. We were passing

We were spewed like a brood of flying ants from the overturned barge.



loosed that bomb. There were too many of them overhead, and the whole sea was a churning nightmare.

But I saw the cruiser suddenly outlined in hellish fire, like that other ship I'd seen that caught it.

One minute she was a great, dark bulk upon the waves, spitting fire from her

close along the *Morristown's* starboard side when it happened.

I didn't see the particular *Nip* that

starboard guns. The next, every single detail of her stood out clearly.

I saw the whole crew, some at the guns, some lying on the deck. I saw the bridge, and the old man standing there, directing the firing. And all about them that infernal fire was playing. . . .

Then the great ship plunged vertically into the depths of the sea.

AN instant later the swamp hit us. It caught our barge, lifted it high into the air, and spewed us out like a brood of flying ants. I hit the water and went down, and a thousand tons seemed to be pressing on me. I was glad of that pressure of water. I wanted to get away from the hellish screeching and roaring, and from the memory of the old man standing on the bridge of the sinking *Morristown*.

I knew that our attack had failed. I'd realized that the Nips had pulled a quick one on us. But even as I was trying to find unconsciousness, because I was sick at heart, I was thinking of those boys in the little hospital at the top of Gogo, and of Lieutenants Mary, Kitty and Dorothy.

I didn't want to go on living any more, and I didn't care if they died, but I didn't want those girls, and those boys to fall into the hands of that bloody scoundrel, Ishoto.

And I suppose it was that feeling gave me the power to fight off the pressing force of the tons of water that were on top of me. And yet I lost consciousness for awhile. I don't know for how long. I regained it suddenly, to find myself in the water, and a hand was under my chin, holding it up.

"You ori' now! You ori' now!" a voice was saying.

It was a little while longer before I understood. It was old Texas who was supporting me in the water. He was floating on his back, and guiding me.

The moon was bright on the eastern horizon. The sounds of the firing had ceased. Here and there, on the broad bay, I could see the burned out hulks of our ships, drifting on the water. No sound came from ashore, where the burning jungle growth was dully etched against

the night. The whole fury of the battle had died away.

And I guessed that we had lost. That last-hour decision to continue with the attack hadn't been so profitable. But now I saw that I was quite close to the south tip of Gogo. The current had carried me back to where I had started from with the landing-barge.

"You ori' now," said Texas.

The current was driving us ashore, and there was nothing to do but to relinquish ourselves to it. I began thinking of the five sick boys and the three lieutenants again. I wondered whether they were still in the hospital, or whether the Nips had got them.

So I let old Texas guide me until I felt sand under my feet, and then I half waded and half crawled ashore.

THE sounds of the firing had ceased, and an awful silence lay everywhere over the bay and land. I didn't know how long the fighting had lasted, and it wasn't possible for Texas to explain to me. I knew the moon had come up, and risen in the sky. There we two stood, Texas and me, and then suddenly he was down, flopping about on the ground, and making his invocations to the Sun-god, Ra, again.

I called to him, but he paid no attention. And I couldn't stop to think about Texas, because an awful thought was growing in my mind: had the Japs taken that base of ours at the tip of Gogo?

I began seeing Lieutenant Mary Sheed, and Lieutenants Kitty and Dorothy in the power of those yellow devils, and I started running up the slope toward the camp through the moonlight, and I hardly knew where I was until a slug whizzed past my head, and I realized it was the same dumb sentry who had plugged one of my boys before.

He understood my curses quick enough not to fire again, and we stood looking at each other, me cursing and him kind of sullen. "Where are the girls?" I snarled at him.

"They're okay. We're all okay. How many of you is there this time?"

"Just two," I answered. "The other

one's coming along. How many of you are there?"

"Five or six of us. What luck did you have with the Nips?"

That's what I'd like to know. I guess you saw what happened to our ships. I'm taking charge, under Lieutenant Sheed. Stay on your job. And, by the way, when that Solomons Islands guy comes along, don't blow his head off like you tried to do mine, but let him through."

I pushed my way past him into the fort. Lieutenant Mary met me at the entrance of the hospital, and she choked down a little sob, and stood staring at me, dripping sea-water.

"I guess those Nips have chalked up one," I said. "Our only chance is to get the cases onto a boat, and slip out to sea before it grows light. That's our only chance of escaping them."

"I've told my boys they can do as they like," she answered. "We women are staying with our cases, whatever happens."

"Okay," I said. "You've got one more to handle a gun. I think it's crazy myself, but you're giving orders. I'm Sergeant Brunner—Jeremy Brunner."

THERE were just six other dogfaces in the camp, and none of them was a One-A class. Two of them had been in charge of medical stores aboard a transport, two had swum there, after escaping from a small island nearby, where they'd been forgotten and two hardly knew how they got there at all, except that they'd landed in a barge which had gone off without them.

The tip of Gogo Island had never been meant for a military camp, and yet, as it began to grow light, I saw that it was an excellent military position. It was a flat rock, with some fertile land around it, and a few cocoonut palms, and from there the land fell away abruptly to a sandy, flat isthmus, devoid of covering. Beyond that isthmus was the jungle growth that swept around the curve of the bay, where we'd suffered our disaster, but between us and the jungle was a clean stretch of several hundred yards of sand and mud, with tufts of grass rising out of it.

They'd have to cross that stretch to take us, and we had two machine-guns and plenty of cartridges. It would require at least a battalion to rush that strip of ground, and I didn't believe the Japs had a battalion to spare just yet. And of course help would soon be along.

From the air we were badly off. There was no shelter on the flat rock, but there were rock gullies at the sides that offered fairly good shelter. I told Lieutenant Mary that she'd have to take the wounded out of the hospital and dispose of them down there.

I had Lieutenant Kitty and Lieutenant Dorothy on my side this time, and finally she gave way. We carried those boys out of the house and down into those rock-foxholes, and did what we could to make them comfortable. Then we began carrying out the supplies, and food. There was plenty of water; it rains every day and most of the night on Gogo.

We'd just finished the main part of our work when there came a yell from one of the lookouts. I ran back up to the top, and saw the Japs beginning to deploy at the edge of the jungle.

I called the boys back, and we lay down among the rocks, waiting for them to attack. I don't know why they didn't shell us first, or send over planes to reconnoitre; probably they didn't suppose that there were any of us left on Gogo Island.

We let them get half-way across the sandy isthmus before letting rip. Boy, that was like sending the ball down for a ten-strike. That line of Japs just disappeared into splotches of black against the yellow surface of the sand. A few little figures turned and ran back into the jungle, and that was that.

ITURNED, and saw Lieutenant Mary at my side. "Good work, sergeant," she said. "You've stopped them cold. And we ought to have help any moment now. Do you understand how to work a transmitting set?"

"That's out of my line lieutenant," I told her.

"There's nobody here knows, except the boy I operated on, and he—he mustn't

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Out of the Deep

(Continued from page 57)

be told we can't work it, or he'd be on his feet in a jiffy, and that would kill him. We can't receive any messages either. I think our tubes are gone."

"We've got plenty cartridges," I reassured her. "And we ought to get help at any minute now."

Of course I didn't believe a word of what I'd told her. Our nearest airfield wasn't too far away, but no planes had shown up during the battle the night before. Planes ain't like grasshoppers, that just have to jump into the air; they're dependent upon gas, principally, and if a shipload or two of gas had gone to the bottom, that made all the difference in the world.

I spent the day trying to make the wounded safe, and removing stores and supplies, and going back and forward between the lieutenants and our post. I knew the Nips would be flying over us pretty soon. And all we could do would be to hold out. I had thought, at the worst, it might be necessary to use force to get the women and the wounded away, but the barges that had brought them to Gogo were piled up on the coral, and none of them were seaworthy. Anyway, there wasn't time to do anything about it.

Our chances looked slimmer and slimmer. I wondered why the Jap planes didn't start operations. They didn't have to wait for dark. They must have known there was no anti-aircraft outfit on our tip of Gogo.

As a matter of fact, they weren't using up any bombers on our little rock. They had need for them elsewhere. They were bringing up their artillery, preparing to soften us up for the final rush.

The first shells started dropping about an hour before sundown. They had the buildings ablaze in a few minutes, but we were all down at the bottom of our rock foxholes, and I'd pulled back the machine-guns to behind a bank of earth, which commanded the approach. If they

were knocked out by direct hits, we'd still have our rifles.

The women were wonderful. Only Lieutenant Dorothy was a bit jittery. I found out the cause of that when she came to me and said: "You won't let us be taken alive, will you, sergeant? Promise me that."

So I promised her.

IN those black hours before the rising of the moon, the half-dozen of us lay on our bellies, watching and listening to every sound ahead of us. The shelling had stopped, and nobody had been hit. I was praying with all my soul that God would send us light before the moon rose, and then it came. The Nips started sending up star-shells, which lit up the whole ground for us.

Then I began to understand. They didn't know how many of us there were on the tip of Gogo. They might even suppose that a considerable force had been landed the night before. They were scared, and very cautious.

And then suddenly a voice came blaring out of a loudspeaker. It was a Jap voice, but the English was very good. It was what they call "mission English" out in the Orient:

"Hello, Yanks! Hello, Yanks! This is for Admiral Ishoto, commanding armies of Japan. You are in a bad fix, Yanks. You had best surrender and be treated according to honorable code of Bushido."

"The —s!" mumbled the boy beside me. "Shall I give them a burst, sarge?"

"Leave that gun alone," I whispered. "Where's that loudspeaker?"

"Over there, I think."

Those idiots sent up two more star-shells. They never had much sense of coordination. Now I saw the little group in the darkness, huddling about what must have been the loudspeaker. But I saw something more. I saw another line of Nips getting into position to rush us.

"Hold your fire," I said to the boys. "They're going to start shelling us in a few minutes, and then they'll rush us again. This is going to be the end. So hold your fire."

He was right there. The shells came over again, at first by twos and threes, then a barrage of them.

We six were lying up there in a cleft of the rock, with the women and sick men below. The bursting of the shells, the patter of the flying fragments on the rocks, the frightful concussion left us nauseated and shaken. In the back of our minds was just the one idea: when they come charging in, we must get the machine-guns working.

NOW the shelling had ceased. Now they were coming. "Hold them!" I yelled, and I was just in time, because the whole sandy isthmus was alive with Nips, line after line of them. And those damned fools behind them were still sending up star-shells.

That was what made it easy. They could have sneaked in on us in the dark, and cleaned us up. But they didn't know how many of us there were. We might have been a battalion strong, with artillery, holding our fire. These were just suicide squads, trying us out.

Our two guns sprayed them all along the line. It wilted and disappeared. Another line came on, and broke as well. Then two or three lines united in a wild, surging charge across that strip of sand. The Japs were yelling like lost souls. Little bunches of them came almost up to the muzzles of our guns, and were blotted out. Three Japs came leaping right up to me, and I shot one, and stuck the second with my bayonet. One of my boys bashed in the skull of the third.

That had been touch and go. The Japs were running back, in the light of the star-shells that those fools kept sending up. There were still a lot of them left, for they were reforming somewhere about the middle of the isthmus. And, if they chose to keep it up all night, they'd wear us down in the end. There were only six of us.

"How's it going, sergeant?" That was

Lieutenant Mary. I felt her soft hand on my shoulder. I turned and looked at her, and saw those two eyes of hers like stars.

"We're holding them. How's your folks?"

"We're all right, sergeant. Do you think we can hold them?" she asked me.

"Sure we'll hold them," I answered. "Go back to your boys and leave this job to us."

She went away. The star-shells were still going up. I could see now that the Nips were reforming, at the neck of the isthmus. They'd send over another barrage of shells, and then the rush would come.

"How's the ammunition?" I asked.

"We've got some left."

I squatted there, waiting. The shelling hadn't started yet. I was thinking of my promise to Lieutenant Dorothy. The sudden silence was awful. I couldn't stand that silence. I wanted all hell loosed again.

Then that silence was broken. There came an outburst of eerie wailing from that No Man's Land in front of us, that was littered with the bodies of the dead. It was a terrible sound, like the earth mourning over all this destruction. I felt my hair rising up, like a dog's.

And then I knew what it was. It was old Texas, wandering out there, and sending up his prayers to Ra, his Sun-god, to punish the Nips for killing all his folks, and destroying his god.

I yelled: "Come in here, you damned old fool!" It was like a miracle, how he had escaped through all that shelling and machine-gun firing.

THE shells broke on us again, the hottest barrage of all. I sweated in my hole, waiting for the final charge. It started after a few minutes that seemed like an eternity. When I popped my head out of my fox-hole, the first thing I saw was two of my boys, blown to pieces. I grabbed the gun and started feeding cartridges. The star-shells had stopped now; maybe the Nips had got wise. Anyway, they were coming on.

"You got that gun working?" I called to the other crew.

"Okay, sarge," came the answer. We were all set and ready now. What was troubling me most was how I was going to carry out my promise to Lieutenant Dorothy.

They were coming on, with a racket that would have raised the dead. It seemed about a hundred years before I realized that they weren't coming any nearer. Just that rumpus out there, those wild yells that seemed to stay put. . . .

A silver thread rose out of the east. It was the edge of the moon. It was throwing a faint light over the isthmus. Now the scene was slowly coming into view. I stared at it for a long while without understanding what happening.

I could see, very faintly, that the whole neck of the isthmus was filled with Nip soldiers, and I knew that this meant the end for us. But they weren't coming on. They were floundering about as if they had all gone crazy.

The moon began to rise above the horizon. The isthmus was fairly well lighted now. And now I saw that the whole neck was bubbling and boiling, and the little yellow bodies were trapped in it, and trying to struggle out of a sea of waist-deep mud.

(Sergeant Brunner turned to me: "The OWI ain't given out that piece of information yet," he said. "You see, it was one of them volcanic islands. And just that time had been chosen for an eruption. And maybe it was Ra, the Sun-god, who was getting on the job, on account of old Texas howling to him out there.")

The moon was up above the horizon. All hell seemed to be let loose on the isthmus. The earth had stopped boiling and bubbling. It was all water now, instead of earth. It was a million spouting geysers, and only the rock on which we had our camp stood up above the flood.

It had begun to rain, too. It was raining with the moon still brilliant. It must have been like the time when Noah went into his Ark and battened down the hatches.

The Japs were underneath now. They had stopped howling, because they were

all drowned. But that wasn't the end. Somewhere in the middle of the isthmus something was rising out of the water. It rose higher and higher. Then I let go a scream.

IT was a ship. It was the shape of a ship, clogged with mud, and slowly shaking herself free of the mud and water, until she stood up out of the mixture. It was an American cruiser, trim and snug, with all her guns ready for action.

It was the *Morristown*, that had been bombed to death the night before, and that same volcanic working had drawn her up out of her grave. She was afloat again, with her crew around her guns. And I'll swear, half-dark though it was, that I saw Captain Hemple still standing on the bridge of her.

Then suddenly the rain-clouds covered the moon, and everything went black. But I knew that Ra, the Sun-god, was on our side, and had pulled that trick to prove that there wasn't any bigger Sun-god in Nippon.

"Gosh, sarge, did you see that?" asked one of my boys.

"Yeah, I saw it. Just stay at your gun. I guess we won't have no more trouble tonight," I said. "You go down and tell them lady lieutenants that we've held them. And you don't have to tell them anything about the old *Morristown*."

Brunner was silent for so long that I said, "Have another beer, sergeant."

"Thanks," he said.

"What happened next?"

"Well, in the morning our bombers were flying all over Gogo Island. And there were about fifty destroyers and transports riding off Gogo. Before noon they'd started building up our base again. And all our wounded were doing fine. After that, the Nips just evaporated from the northern part of the island. Nobody had been killed, and old Texas came back, chattering about Ra. . . . Nobody put much stock in what he was trying to tell them.

"Gogo Island had turned into two islands, and the middle part was a waste of water, with soundings of fifty fathoms.

But there wasn't any *Morristown* afloat. I guess she'd done her job and gone back home again."

"How about another beer, sergeant?" I asked.

"I don't think Sergeant Brunner wants any more beer," said a feminine voice beside me.

She was a lovely little WAC, with dark hair and black, snapping eyes.

"I think the sergeant's had enough beer," she said. "We're going home, Jeremy."

Sergeant Brunner rose out of his chair. "Well, we saved all those boys," he said. "I'd like to tell you some more—"

But I guessed there wouldn't be any more, because Lieutenant Mary was already guiding the sergeant toward the door.
