

# SPEED ADVENTURE STORIES



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## To Die Is Divine

**T**HEY are the measured words of an old, weather-beaten career soldier, and they are spoken without emotion, as if the business of war were a casual, every day affair. "Gentlemen," he begins, addressing five or six junior officers, his voice a drumming monotone, "by the latest count, there are about eleven or twelve hundred of us. Our job is to remove every Jap from this island. Unfortunately, it won't be easy, because Japs would rather die than be taken prisoner. So there is just one bit of advice I can give you before we really start moving. Don't waste too much time on trying to take the enemy prisoner. Your best bet is to kill first and to ask questions later."

It is the start of another campaign for the men who go under the title of United States Marine. In about thirty days, they will have driven every Jap from the island, which is some forgotten fragment of jungle growth in the vast lonely reaches of Oceania. But first, they will meet up with every known oriental trick of the Japanese.

There will be many nights when high pitched screams will float over their fox-holes, pleading, in almost perfect English, "Joe, help me. The Japs have got me." Such screams will be designed to lure our men from the safety of their cover into the arms of waiting Japs. Soon however, they will learn to disregard such screams, although their nerves will take quite a beating in the process. It will be just another costly lesson to the Japs that marines cannot be licked by psychology, alone.

The Japanese army is supposed to follow the code of the Sumari, those feudal warriors who kept Japan in slavery until Admiral Peary opened their ports to the commerce of the western world in

1863. Under this code, capture by the enemy is the greatest national disgrace. Rather than permit capture Jap soldiers are instructed to take their own lives by their own hands. Suicide instead of capture, saves face, prevents loss of prestige. The result has been that when a Jap soldier is faced with inevitable defeat, his first thought is of hara kari. Since the Japs will often feel that odds against them are too great, the aftermath of a battle will usually be a field littered with the bodies of soldiers of the emperor who were brave enough to take their own lives, but were not brave enough to face the marines.

The Japs delight in forming suicide squads of snipers. Tiny Japs are expertly camouflaged, armed with long-range regulation .22 caliber rifles, and are tied to the tops of trees. Their job is to kill as many Americans as they can before they are found out and themselves killed. For these Japs there is no possible chance of survival, for they have been tied to their posts. Death for them is inevitable.

The actions of the Jap army private, who doesn't know any better, are not to be taken as those of the Jap officers as well. It seems that the well-educated Jap officer, regardless of loss of face, fails to see much point in committing hara kari when the odds are against him. He reasons that a live Jap is better than a dead one, especially when he is a prisoner of the Americans and well treated. So, although his emperor will doubtless feel offended, he gracefully surrenders to our men on occasion. But before he does, he generally gives orders to the men under him to commit hara kari. At least, he may reason, some Japs have voluntarily died for the emperor, even if he has chosen not to.