

Hawks of Hate

THRILLING "KERRY KEEN" NOVELETTE

By Arch Whitehouse

Author of "Guns of the Griffon," "The Griffon's Gamble," etc.



Illustrated by C. B. Mayshark

O'Dare came down on the A-A gunners as the Vought pilot slammed a 120-pounder at the midget battleship's stern.

THE GRIFFON GAMBLES WITH DEATH!

Against a midnight sky, a sleek, knife-winged amphibian roared over the Atlantic as the Griffon set out again on one of his strange, deadly adventures—his scarlet mask hiding a smile of grim purpose. But this time, the night was to threaten defeat for the man in the red mask, and the great Avia motor was to scream its final battle song. For waiting in the grim shadows over the sea was the Fox—whose vicious fangs were to drag the wings of the Griffon fifteen fathoms down into the cold, dark waters of the Atlantic!

THE sleek, knife-winged amphibian rolled down the runway from the Griffon's secret hangar, which huddled into the south shore of Long Island. It was midnight, and black as the pit. The big Avia motor, muffled through the Skoda silencers, purred contentedly.

The Griffon fed the fuel to the amphibian gently, and let her ease into the lapping waters of

the broad Atlantic. He peered down through the glassed-in cockpit and smiled as the phosphorescent waters streamed back from the racing prows of the pontoons.

In the back seat, his gunner slammed his coupe top down and settled himself for a wild flight. The Griffon was out on a test flight. The Avia had been completely overhauled for a job that

was due to flare up any day.

"All set?" the Griffon called back.

"Let her go."

The pilot eased around on his rudder, turned the ship more into the wind and waited until the swinging beam from Montauk had swept around to the northeast. Then he gave her the juice.

Like a silent hawk, the black amphibian shot away, fighting suction to get up on her step. The man in the back seat turned and stared over the Griffon's shoulder. His eyes were glued to the air-speed indicator and the rev-meter. The big Avia, with her Skoda silencers in, raced at almost 2,000 r.p.m. The ship slapped her pontoons on the tops of the rollers and finally leaped clear in about nine seconds. The Griffon let her climb until they were somewhere near the 4,000-foot level. Then he cut out the Skodas, and the rev-needle snapped up to 2,400 and stayed there.

The man in the back seat slapped the Griffon across the shoulders and bellowed, "What did I tell you? Perfect, eh?"

The Griffon nodded and grinned over his shoulder. As he turned, however, something caught his eye.

"Look out—behind you!" he roared.

The man in the back seat never saw what was behind him. Something struck him a cruel blow across the temple and he went down in a heap, caught between his folding seat and the intricate piping systems that ran along the side of the fuselage.

A vicious rat-tat-tat battered along the metal top of the ship, and the Griffon had to throw her over, into a sharp sideslip. The something that had scored the first blow followed up with another—a terrific burst from a movable gun in the back seat of a trim-winged biplane.

The Griffon threw the amphibian back into the fray and tried to get his Darn guns on the screeching biplane, but the enemy ship seemed to be flown by a super man. When he stunted, his amazing ship seemed to do everything ten times faster than anything the Griffon had ever seen before.

The strange ship shot in and out, lancing away with short bursts either from her side or from her needle pointed nose, and the Griffon was slowly but surely being battered to bits. Even as he fought for his life, he was studying the enemy ship, a new Fairey Fox, with British markings.

The gleaming plane, in creamy silver paint,

with gaudy insignia and undeniably British numerals on the tail-fin, came at him again from a trick angle. Its tunnel guns, set low under the motor, flamed through the troughs depressed in the cowling.

That was the finish. The black amphibian with the Griffon insignia faltered, engine completely washed out. The Griffon fought her madly and turned his full attention to making some sort of a landing.

There was a movement, a struggling movement behind him, and the Griffon shouted back, "Okay, Barney? Get that axe out and inflate that boat! We're going down, and I hate swimming with my clothes on."

He turned back to his controls and saw that the Fox was making another dive on them. He worked his rudder pedals again, and then spun her a few turns. The Fox slammed down under them. The observer poured in another long burst, and then the British-marked ship screamed away out toward the velvety curtain that hung over the Atlantic.

The Griffon watched it as he eased the battered amphibian out of her slow spin. Then he coaxed her into a glide and glanced back to see his man working to get the life-saving equipment out through a panel he had chopped in the side of the body.

"What the devil did you stop back there?" demanded the Griffon.

"A creaser across my dome. Whew! Worse than a cop's billy."

"Never mind, you'll soon be able to cool it off."

"Yeah. And all my work on that boiler for nothing," growled the big Irishman in the back seat. "Put her down. I've got the hot-water bottle all ready."

The Griffon eased the ship down to the water. He watched the rollers and dabbed the pontoons down on top of one. Then he let her slide away to catch the up heaving side of another roller.

The black ship bobbed afloat for several minutes, and the man in the back seat shoved out the rubber lifeboat. He screwed in the carbon-dioxide bottle and inflated it as he straddled one pontoon. The Griffon reached in for the small oars, drew out two kapok jackets and then coolly chopped great holes in the long, sleek pontoons. They had just enough time to get inside the small rubber boat when the battered ship nosed down,

stuck her tail into the air and dived into fifteen fathoms of dark water...

IT was nearly an hour before they reached the concrete runway of Grayfields, the Griffon's Long Island estate. It was lucky that their bad break had occurred so close to the shore. All the way in, taking turns at the small oars, they had talked about the mysterious British Fox. The Griffon read the newspapers closely and knew that the U. S. Navy Air Service officials had purchased one of these crack British two-seater fighters for experimental work. He knew too, that the Navy Air Service had recently established a special experimental base at a place known only as Hurstola, somewhere along the north shore, near Port Jefferson.

When the Griffon and his man floundered up the turfed bank toward the rear entrance of Grayfields, they entered through the service entrance. By mutual consent, they made for the small cocktail bar fitted between the butler's pantry and the dining room.

The Griffon switched on a small, wide-range radio receiver while his man poured in the necessary ingredients for a cocktail. Barney then poured himself a stiff peg of O'Doul's Dew and swallowed it in a gulp.

"Nasty crack you got there, Barney," the Griffon observed as they raised their glasses again. "Lucky! A few more inches and it would have knocked you sensible."

"Sensible, is it?" growled Barney O'Dare. "That would have done me a good turn. I'd have known better than to jine up with a madman like you."

"Oh, stick around. We'll soon have another. As a matter of fact, I have an idea we might pick up a brand new Fairey Fox somewhere, and—what's that?" he snapped quickly.

The radio speaker fitted into the bar was issuing a spoken announcement.

"... believed stolen early this evening from a Navy Air Service hangar at Hurstola. The ship is a regular British Fairey Fox, a two-seater Fleet service machine fitted with pontoons. A report should be made to the nearest police station at once if such a ship is sighted. We also have Special official message for Mr. Kerry Keen, from the office of the Department of Justice in New York City. Mr. Keen is asked to report to Mr. John Scott as soon as possible. That is all,

ladies and gentlemen. We will now continue our musical program."

"Quick, Barney," the Griffon broke in. "Dab a pad and gauze on that wound. We've got to get the Dusenberg out fast. We're going to New York. I'll be out in ten minutes."

In ten minutes on the dot, Kerry Keen, the noted ballistics expert, in neat black evening clothes and a turndown black felt hat leaped into the back seat of the glittering Dusenberg. Barney, in regulation chauffeur's uniform, but with a tell-tale pad of white gauze strapped above his temple, let the gear in. The long car crunched out of the winding driveway and soon was eating up the miles of concrete ribbon at well over sixty miles an hour.

"Stop outside the Comedy Theater, first, Barney," said Keen, settling back. "Got to pick up a program and a theater ticket stub, somehow."

"So you bin to the Comedy tonight, eh? Do better if you'd stop at a bank with a can of soup and get yourself some dough. We're getting low again."

"The last hundred grand went fast, didn't it" mused Keen. "Well, you can't be charitable and hold on to your money at the same time. We paid for four operations in one week. That took nearly half of it, but those kids will be walking soon. Worth it, in the long run."

"Yeh. It'll get you a seat in a nice quiet cell, one o' these days," warned Barney. "You'll have a tough time proving all that."

"That's the fun of it, Barney."

Within an hour, they had made their stop outside the Comedy Theater. Barney wandered into the deserted lobby, picked up a folded program and then sought an orchestra seat stub. He grinned at the man on duty and winked. The man in the lobby knew the game and winked back.

Ten minutes later, Keen, with a theater program carelessly carried in one hand opened the door to his penthouse apartment on top of a building in 55th Street. He turned on the light and went to toss his hat and scarf on the library table. A small brown package caught his eye as he laid the program down beside his felt hat. Across the top of the package was written his name and address. It had evidently been delivered by a Western Union boy and brought up to his apartment by the doorman.

Glancing around the library, he lifted the

small bundle and weighed it in his hands. It was not very heavy. Then he carefully untied the cord that bound it up. As he turned back the top fold of the wrapping paper, he gave a low whistle.

Inside was a stack of currency in one-hundred-dollar bills, and a small white paper. He ran the bills through his fingers and realized that there was about one hundred thousand dollars there. He glanced at it carefully, moved a picture to one side, spun the glistening knob of a wall safe and stowed the money away. Then he went back and looked at the small square of white paper. He read:

“Lay off the Hurstola thing.
THE FOX.”

It was a Fox that had shot Keen down that night. But why was he called off the “Hurstola thing,” and what was it?

There was a loud knock at the door. Keen turned smartly and slipped his hand into his right-hand pocket, where he kept a small black automatic.

“Come in,” he called, his steely eyes set on the slowly opening door.

It was Drury Lang, his gray nemesis, the man who for years had been trying to pin something on Kerry Keen.

“HELLO, Lang,” greeted Keen. “What brings you here?”

“Why didn’t you report to Scott? Didn’t you hear that radio call?” the detective demanded.

“Radio? No, I’ve been out to the theater. Comedy Theater. No one told me anything about it.”

Lang came forward deliberately, and glanced down at the program that lay on the table. “Where’s your stub?” he demanded.

Keen fumbled in his small ticket pocket and brought out an orchestra ticket stub. Lang snatched at it and noted the position.

“Like to get up front, don’t you?” He grinned. Then his eyes flashed as he saw the note that Keen had left on the table. He snatched at it and read it.

“When did you get this?” he barked. “Who’s the Fox?”

“You’ve got me. It was here when I came in just now.”

“What else was there in it?”

“Nothing,” said Keen smoothly.

“Nothing?” stormed Lang. “What’s this

wrapping paper here? That covered something!”

He reached for the house phone and called the doorman. “Who delivered that package to Mr. Keen’s apartment?” he bellowed, when the phone was answered. “No one? You saw no one? Why, some one delivered a package here tonight, a package wrapped up in brown paper. You were on duty until after one o’clock, and didn’t see anyone? Nuts!”

He hung up the phone and looked over at Keen. The ballistics expert was oddly tense.

“That’s a honey!” snapped Lang. “You mean to say you came up here and just found this wrapping paper and the note? You’d better get yourself stuffed away in a cooler for a time, Keen. Some one’s trying to get you.”

“I’m afraid so,” agreed Keen quietly, staring about the room again.

“We sent out a broadcast for you about one o’clock,” Lang went on to explain. “The Griffon must have heard it, and came up here to steer you off.”

“The Griffon?” gasped Keen, amazed. “Why, it’s signed the Fox’.”

“Maybe so. But the Griffon stole a new ship from the Navy experimental hangar tonight. He left his card, too,” added Lang.

Keen’s face did not move a muscle. “Let’s get this straight, Lang,” he said quietly. “A British machine was stolen from the Hurstola experimental sheds tonight, and a card signed by the Griffon was left there to show who did it.”

“Right. And we were dubs, too. We were warned,” growled Lang.

“Warned? By whom?”

“Well, it’s like this. This plane was bought abroad, and the Navy sent a man over to get it, a Lieutenant Nelson Parks. Before he landed back here, after his trip, he had been commanded by some one aboard the ship to crash that Fairey Fox the first time he flew it in this country. He said the notes were left in his stateroom, and signed ‘The Griffon’. It looks like a gag to keep that Limey ship out of the country. Some manufacturing mob, scared of losing some business, want the Fox put in a bad light.”

“Rot!” snapped Keen. “There are plenty of ships of that type in this country. The Fairey Fox is a smart job, I agree, but we can turn out machines just as good here.”

“How do you know so much about aircraft?” demanded Lang suddenly.

"I don't know anything about aircraft." Keen lied for the second time that night. "I do know something about guns and gun problems aboard aircraft. I'm a ballistic expert, you know."

"Oh," gagged Lang, bottled up again.

"Lieutenant Nelson Parks was warned by the Griffon on his way over, eh?" Keen went on thoughtfully. "Of course he threw the notes away or lost them in the excitement."

"How did you know that?" Lang blurted out. "That's just what happened. We asked about them, too."

"I don't know," slammed back Kerry, reaching for a bottle and pouring himself a short drink. "I'm trying to put myself in the place of—"

"The Griffon?" said Lang, bending over the table.

"No. Lieutenant Nelson Parks. I'm just wondering about that bird."

"Why? He's all right. I saw him an hour or so ago at Hurstola."

"Still at Hurstola? What was he doing, Lang?"

"Well, they have another seaplane out there, something like the Fox, as I understand it. It has something special in motors, and this bird, Parks, was going to test the two ships on some basis."

"That's it! That's it!" Keen almost shouted. "I knew there was something about Hurstola. Engines! The seaplanes have nothing to do with it."

"What the devil are you talking about?"

"If you ever actually read the papers, Lang," Keen went on, dropping his voice almost to a whisper, "you would have noticed that something unusual is about to take place out at Hurstola. Do you know that they have a special engine out there that may revolutionize warfare?"

"What's it all about?" pleaded the mystified Lang.

"Just this, Lang. Some one in the U.S. Navy has developed a new aviation fuel, a combination of high-test aviation gasoline and liquid hydrogen. If it works out, ships that now have a range of but 500 miles will be able to stay in the air about four times as long. In other words, their range will be 2,000 miles. Think of what that means!"

"I'm not much of a mechanic," moaned Lang, "but I can see that it can raise hell."

"It's better than that," Keen went on. "With this new gas, our ships can attack points four times farther away, on the same amount of fuel as they carry today. Our bombers can reach cities across

the Pacific—or the Atlantic. I'm not certain," Keen went on, "but from what I've heard, it is a combination of ordinary fuel and liquid hydrogen. I understand that a seaplane, for instance, can carry one small tank of gasoline and a special tank of liquid hydrogen. When the hydrogen runs out, they can go down and land on the sea, suck up more water into the tank, and with a special device on the motor, can distill and split it under pressure into oxygen and hydrogen."

"But what does all this business have to do with the stealing of the Fairey Fox?" Lang demanded.

"That's what I don't understand. But we soon will," said Keen, his lips drawn in a thin, tight line. "I don't like Lieutenant Nelson Parks."

"But Parks is a trusted man, from the Navy bureau. He's been in on lots of these things. You can't pick on him," protested Lang.

"No? Who can't? The Griffon did, remember," smiled Keen.

"Yeah. There's the nigger in the woodpile," Lang grunted. "What are you going to do?"

"Scott wants me to work on this Fox business, eh?" Keen went on. "Fine! I'll work on it. Lang, you can do me one favor. Find out who came here tonight and left that—that paper and the note. I'll take care of the Fox business."

"What about the Griffon guy? He threatened Parks."

"That'll be nothing to what I'll do to him," said Keen softly.

"Who, the Griffon?"

"No. Parks."

LANG went out, mumbling, and Keen reached for his telephone. He called long distance, Anacostia, and received a full description of the test pilot who had been placed in charge of the Fairey Fox. Satisfied, he then called Barney O'Dare and ordered the car out again.

Keen changed into a neat gray business suit while Barney went after the Dusenbergs. Then he slipped out of his bedroom window and crept across the roof of the apartment building. He fumbled along the ledge for the steel wire that dangled from a heavier cable connecting the apartment building with a tall, narrow, ramshackle tenement on 54th Street. He released the wire from a false insulator, climbed up on the ledge and crouched over a small chalk mark that had been placed there as a marker.

Suddenly Keen felt that something was wrong. He hesitated a minute, and then tried the cable. He was about to leap clear and swing across, when a crunch on the roof behind him caused him to steady himself suddenly and drop back.

Crack! A bullet splattered against the three-foot retaining wall, and Keen flattened. He lay there a second or two, and fumbled for his automatic. A shadow streaked across the roof, and Keen fired once. The shadow replied, and a pencil of flame bit out. There was a low, yelping cry, and Keen started to run, in a crouching position, under the cover of the wall. Another shot crashed out, and a slug smacked at the wall, fell at his feet.

Continuing on, Keen picked up the slug, which was still hot, and dropped it in his coat pocket. He fired again, darted behind a ventilator shaft and waited.

The building on which his penthouse was located stood several stories higher than the buildings on either side, so there was no way of leaping across to another roof. He was trapped up there. There was no use in trying to get back into his apartment, for he knew, now, that the man who had brought the package of money and the note signed "The Fox" had been inside all the time. He had heard everything Keen and Lang had said.

Keen no longer banked on his escape cable. He realized that it had been fixed, filed, so that he would crash to his death the minute he leaped off. His darting glance stopped at the cross-cable from the tenement to the penthouse mast. He might make it that way....

Slipping off his light shoes, he stuffed them away, one in each coat pocket, and climbed up the side of the ventilator to the small steel pylon mast that was fitted to the top of his penthouse fireplace chimney. He fell for the steel cable from which swung his lighter line, and then hung on it with his full weight. It held.

He pocketed his gun in his trouser pocket and took the heavy cable between his hands. Then, slowly, he began to work his way along, with one knee hooked over the wire. He went silently, and watched below for movement on the apartment roof.

Hand over hand, he started across the wide abyss between the two rows of buildings. He was well toward the center of the cable before anything happened. Then, as he crossed the center of the span, he felt a strange tingling sensation passing through the cable. It seemed alive. He knew, then,

that his unknown enemy was attempting to cut the cable. Keen bit back a groan of sheer horror. Steeling his nerves, he let his legs down gently and tried a full over arm movement. He made faster time, but the pain in his racked arms was agonizing. He was within twenty feet of the tenement, when he felt two terrific jerks on the wire. Then it suddenly went slack, and he knew he was falling. With thick nausea in his throat, he caught the wire around one madly flailing leg, gripped harder, and felt himself swinging toward the wall of the tenement opposite.

Flying through space, in a thirty-foot arc, Kerry Keen hung on like a leech, shoving out his feet to take the shock. The swing seemed minutes long. Then he hit—hard, his feet taking the first thud of the shock. As he struck, his knees bent, and he twisted so that his shoulder took the blow against the brick wall. He felt his breath surging out of him, and with his last ounce of nerve, took a stronger hold on the wire. There was a series of jerks as the cable quivered in his raw palms. Then he was hanging still, suspended over the pitch-black areaway.

In the shelter of darkness, he caught his breath, waited for the mad pounding of his heart to quiet. Then, slowly, he started the long slide down the wire to the ground.

Five minutes later, he darted through an alley and came out on the street where the silent engine of the Dusenbergs purred away. He staggered into the back seat, shut the door and told Barney to step on it.

Once over the bridge, Keen suddenly sat up straight.

"Where you going?" he demanded of Barney.

"Grayfields, ain't it?" demanded the Irishman.

"Grayfields my eye! Hurstola—as fast as you can hop."

Keen lay back against the cushions, sucking in cool drafts of air and recovering his strength. Before they reached the Navy test station, he had bound up the seared palms of his hands and was ready for action again.

THE interior of the Hurstola Navy test-flight hangar was illuminated with a sharp, bluish light that seemed to be gathered into one corner by a set of movable screens, made up of a light framework, over which had been stretched panels of thin cotton cloth. The result was a somewhat theatrical effect, with distorted shadows darting

back and forth across the screen's white panels, bearing massive weapons, gigantic wrenches and enormous hammers, as the men behind the panel worked on the trim Vought seaplane mounted on a wheeled cradle.

An even more disturbing scene was taking place on the other side of the screen. A man in a tight-fitting coverall, who had evaded the Navy guard, was cautiously opening a window. In a moment, the figure slipped over the sill, drew a buckled harness tighter across his chest, and then slipped a scarlet mask over his face.

Cautiously, he crept across the concrete floor and made his way to a sheltered corner near the short side of the screened-in section of the hangar. There, he crouched and placed a small metal tank on the floor. With a nozzle-tipped length of hose, he worked silently and forced it through the cotton screen. Then he turned the small petcock wheel.

He sat back and waited, listening. Inside, two mechanics and a young officer worked around the Vought. The man in the strange costume outside had his teeth set into the rubber mouth-pad of a gas mask. His eyes twinkled through the grotesque goggles as he listened.

"You see, Lieutenant Parks," one of the mechanics was explaining, "we start the motor in the ordinary way, on the gasoline from the upper wing tanks. Then, once you are in the air, you can switch over to the hydrogen tank, first setting the new carburetor adjustment, on this lever, and run on the pressure stuff."

"I get it," replied the voice of the man who was being instructed in the new mechanism. "But how is the pressure stuff replaced, once you run out?"

"Well, the tank we are using now will give you several hours of flight, but should you stay out over that time, you can refuel by alighting on the water. Watch your pressure gauge, and when it drops to ten go down on the water, switch back to your gasoline fuel, changing the adjustment for the substitution, and then drop this rubber tube down through the floor of the cockpit, into the water. This handle here — it's marked 'Water Pump' — must be pulled over, and then your motor will pump the hydrogen-splitting tank full. Draw in the hose and let the motor run seven minutes—no more. You will see the gauge on your hydrogen tank run up to 100 again, and you can carry on."

"I get it," the young test pilot said. "I—Lord, but I feel dizzy. This bending gets" He

choked, gasped.

"Something must be leak leaking," the instructing mechanic muttered. "Wonder where" His voice trailed off thickly.

The man outside stared up at the bluish white screen and watched the shadow play continue. A mechanic, distorted by the light, was seen to throw his hands up to his forehead and slump down. There was a low thud, and another body dropped like a sack of wet meal. The third man groaned and clutched wildly at the screen frame, then fell, face-down.

Quickly, the man in the mask, outside the screen, turned off the vapor that was seeping into the enclosed space, and tucked the small cylinder up under his arm. Like a cat, he slipped through an unstitched opening in the screen and surveyed his handiwork.

First he gagged, bound and blindfolded the Navy officer and stuffed him carefully into the back seat of the Vought. The other two men were drawn carefully clear of the wheeled cradle. Then, with a final examination of the two mechanics, the masked man went back to the Vought and started the engine, making certain that the fuel was coming from the upper wing tanks. He waited a minute, rolled back two wide partitions of the framework screen, and then ran over to the switch that controlled the great daylight bulb cluster, and snapped it.

He tugged at the door and started it rolling back on its great bearings, making certain that it was open wide enough for the wings of the ship to clear. Then, climbing into the main cockpit, he eased the throttle and let the pontooned seaplane run out to the concrete ramp and roll gently down toward the water. In five minutes, he was out into the waters of the Sound, and, the wheeled cradle dropped away leaving the floats clear.

The experimental ship climbed beautifully. Once over the 3,000-foot level, the masked man tried out the mysterious liquid hydrogen tank making certain at first to change over the carburetor adjustment. The engine spluttered on the switch-over, but once the new tank fuel was sucked in, the engine picked up smoothly and ran purringly.

With a grim laugh, the pilot in the mask nosed around and headed for the flashing gleam of Montauk Light. He was delighted to find that with careful adjustment, the explosions of the motor, when running on the liquid hydrogen, could be

tuned down to a low purr. This feature, combined with a good muffler, could be used to make the ship almost silent.

The masked pilot was rudely jerked from his experiments by the muffled movement of the captured man behind him. The man in the mask turned and grinned at the bound Navy man, who sat struggling against his ropes.

"Sit still, my friend," the man up front shouted. "Hello! Who's this? The Fox again?" he added half to himself.

As he turned to inspect the captured Navy man, the pilot's eyes had caught movement above. A gleaming silver seaplane, glinting with red, white and blue circle cocardes, came down out of the thin cloud layer above. It nosed sharply at the Vought, and the pilot in the mask swished clear with a careful movement of his stick. The Fairey Fox shot past and the man in its back seat leaned over and pointed to a black insignia on the side.

"The Griffon!" gasped the man in the Vought. "He has a Griffon insignia painted on that ship now."

Like a shot, the masked pilot wheeled the Vought around and sought a position behind the Fox. Then he steadied himself, frowning. He was in a perfect spot to blow the Fox to bits, but for the first time, he realized that there were no gun triggers mounted on the control column.

The observer in the back seat of the Fox peered down and saw that there were two men in the Vought. Then, he ripped a gun out from under the camel-back where the modern Fairey mounting folds away, and directed a stiff stream of lead down at the American plane.

The Vought staggered under the battering, and the pilot slammed her out, her port wing tip just missing taking the tail off the Fox. He dived madly, but the Fox was on him like a hawk. Both ships maneuvered wonderfully, in spite of their pontoons, but there was something about the handling of the Vought that gave it the edge. The masked pilot of the American ship darted back and forth and made the Fox chase him. He went down so low once that it looked like a certain smash, but at the last second he drew her up. The Fox was sucked in so that one pontoon caught a roller and made the British ship stagger.

That was enough. The Vought had cleared beautifully, and was on her way up the chute again. The pilot of the Fox, realizing that he had had a close shave, drew out carefully, slid off toward the

east and disappeared in the early-morning mist. The Vought climbed high and then turned for the upper end of Long Island.

EARLY the next morning, at Grayfields, Kerry Keen was aroused from his bed by Barney, with the information that Drury Lang wished to speak to him on the telephone.

Keen rolled over, reached for an extension phone and answered. "Yes, this is Keen. What's up?"

"Up? Plenty. That secret seaplane thing we were talking about last night has been stolen now — and Parks, the test pilot, has disappeared!"

"What?" gasped Keen.

"It's the Griffon again. He left his card lying on one of the mechanics who was knocked out."

"I can't believe it," ranted Keen. "And the pilot chap?"

"He's gone, too. The mechanics were evidently knocked out with gas of some sort. They can't explain anything. They remember explaining to this Lieutenant Parks about the new motor — and that's as far as they seem to be able to go."

"Far enough," commented Keen. "First they have the Fox taken from under their noses, and now the secret motor thing. Fine lot of lads they have up there, Lang. The Griffon left his card, too, eh? Well, that's interesting."

"Interesting my eye! It's fatal. If that motor gets out of the country there'll be hell to pay. What are you doing about it?"

"Lying in bed, taking it easy. Have any luck last night?"

"I couldn't trace that package, you liar!" Lang rasped. "You better go to work on this, Keen. Old Scott's frantic."

"Tell old Scott to go back to bed. I'll get the seaplane back for him. I'll hand it over to you at midnight, tonight, and you can get the gravy. But lay off me—and that package, Lang."

"You'll get that seaplane back tonight at midnight?" Lang almost screamed. "Then you know where it is? You—you are the Griffon!"

"Oh, my hat, Lang!" burst out Keen. "You are looney. I was with you last night until all hours. The seaplane was stolen last night. How the devil could I steal it?"

"But you said you'd hand it over at midnight. Where?"

"I'll tell you. You be at your office on the dot of midnight. You'll be told where to go and pick it

up. Is that fair enough?"

"Something's phoney," roared Lang at the other end. "But you win, Keen. I'll take that offer."

Keen put down the phone leaped out of bed, frowning, and made for his bath, where he had a quick shower and a shave. He came back and dressed between gulps of coffee and munches of crisp toast. Then he carefully bandaged his hands again. The wounds were healing, but he drew on a pair of sterilized cotton gloves over the thin gauze bandages.

O'Dare was making up his bed as though nothing had happened.

"How's our captive, Barney?" asked Keen quietly.

"Pretty sore, but okay. Should I bring him up?"

"Yes, in a minute. Let's see, we bandaged his eyes before we brought him in, didn't we?"

"He don't know where he is, by miles," Barney assured. He asked me if this place was somewhere along the New Jersey shore. He got the light mixed up with the one at the Highlands."

Barney left, and Keen slipped on a scarlet mask that covered most of his face. Then he strode down the wide stairway, entered his library and took a seat behind his desk. In a minute, Barney came in, leading a man in Naval uniform who was tightly bound.

"Sit him there, Pulski," ordered Keen, pointing to a near-by chair and taking a massive black automatic from a drawer. The Navy man looked up at Barney and tried to adjust the name to that Irish face. He gave it up when Barney grinned. Keen's voice seemed changed, too. It was now a deep, resonant basso, with a metallic clang to it on the end of each sentence.

"Well Keihn," he opened, his eyes gleaming through the slits of the mask.

The Naval officer jerked in his seat at the words.

"You see," Keen went on, "I know you. I know how you got here. Are you going to come clean?"

"What do you want? You have me cold."

"Same old stuff, eh?" Keen sighed. "Ready to squeal for a getaway?"

"I'll tell what I know—for a chance," agreed the man in the Navy uniform.

"I'll give you as much of a chance as you gave Lieutenant Nelson Parks, the man you are supposed to be, Keihn."

"Don't worry. He's all right. They shanghaied him, and he's in Germany. He was to be released when we got clear. You can take my word for that."

"Fine. The American consul in Berlin will take care of him, then. Now, how did you work it?"

"Easy. We knew Parks was taking a Fairey Fox over to the United States. We waited until the ship was loaded and Parks was ready to go aboard the *Aquitania* at Southampton. He was snatched in the train on the way down from London. I took his uniform and passport and took his place."

"I knew something was queer when you said that the Griffon had warned you to crash the Fox. All part of the plan, eh?"

The man nodded.

"You see, I'm the Griffon," Keen said crisply. "I'm the man who snatched you last night, and the ship you had intended to get away with. I'm the man your employers tried to buy off. The money will come in handy, too. Now, what I want to know is—where is that Fox, you let them take?"

"What do you care? You've got the Vought with the trick motor. What more do you want?"

"I want the Fox. They deprived me of my ship and I need another badly. Get the idea? The Vought goes back to the U.S. Navy."

"You'll never get it," snarled the man known as Keihn.

"Why? Where is it? Crashed?"

"No, they are going to use it for something else. Just suppose, for instance, that a British Fairey Fox bombed New York, or Washington. That wouldn't make the vaunted British-American alliance so strong then, would it?"

"That's all I want to know. Now, where is it?" snapped Keen, raising the big automatic.

FOR several minutes, the captured man sat staring down at the muzzle of the grim weapon. His lips were drawn tight in a snarl. He was watching the man in the scarlet mask closely.

"Don't wonder," Keen warned him. "I'd shoot you as soon as look at you. You're a rat, and all your kind are rats. I'd be doing the peace of the world a good turn, by removing you completely."

"I won't tell!" the man almost screamed.

Bang! The automatic roared in the confines of the paneled study, and a bullet crashed past the German's ear with but a sixteenth of an inch to spare. He jerked back and let out a scream. The

eyes between the slits of the mask glinted and the lower half of the face smiled.

"Now will you tell me where that Fox is?"

"I—I don't..."

Bang! Again the automatic spoke, and a perfect semi-circle of flesh was clipped out from the edge of the cringing man's ear.

"Don't!" shrieked the bound man. "I'll give it to you—straight." His eyes blazed at the tightening trigger-finger of the man opposite him.

"All right," snapped Keen. "Let's have it—straight, too."

"It's out on a German battleship, outside Cape Sable."

"Cape Sable?" gasped Keen. "Cape Sable? You mean on the southern tip of Nova Scotia?"

"Yes. They were to escort me there last night. The Vought and the new motor were to be taken to Bremen. The Fox was to be sent off and crashed either in New York with a load of explosives—or over Washington, depending on the weather. If it was foggy, enough to let them get far enough south, it was to be Washington. If not—New York."

Keen sat staring at the man. "What battleship is that?" he suddenly demanded. "One of the new pocket craft?"

"Yes. The *Ersatz Lothringen*, Commander Groener in charge."

"I filled up that Vought," Barney broke in.

The statement made Keen jerk. "No guns," he snapped back.

"Who said so?" demanded the Mick.

"Those new Brownings?" asked Keen quietly.

"Yeah, and that Jerry Krupp rotator. Have you forgotten that lead-slinger? We had one downstairs. Plenty of brackets on the Vought to fit them." O'Dare grinned.

"Have you been to bed at all?" demanded Keen.

"No. I had a couple of swigs of O'Doul's Dew. That was enough. When do we start?"

"Cape Sable is about 375 or 400 miles from here. If that Jerry boat cleared her anchorage last night, she might be another 300 miles away—in any direction," Keen observed. "What were their plans, Keihn, if your coup failed?"

"There were no plans. We were not supposed to fail," Keihn replied coldly.

"Okay. We'll take you up with us and drop you overboard with a parachute. They can pick you up and hand out their own punishment."

The bound man lurched forward. His face became a mask of genuine terror. "No!" he almost sobbed. "No. You finish me—with your own gun. That would be easier. I can't go back now. I have failed."

Keen stood up and peered down at the man through the narrow slits of the mask. "Give him a drink, Barney," he ordered, and began pacing the room.

O'Dare poured a generous glass of brandy and held it to the man's lips. He drank hurriedly and gave the Mick a glance of appreciation. Keen came back and stared at him, then suddenly demanded, "What do you think they'll do, when that Fox returns, without the Vought?" He waited to let it soak in. Then he added, "There's a nice little trip up across the Canadian border if you give the right answer, Keihn."

"Well," he added quietly, a moment later. "What's the answer?"

"I figure this way," Keihn started. "I am not supposed to fail. They probably figured that something went wrong last night, and that I shall try again tonight. I would have done it, too, except for you."

"Go on." Keen nodded, "Let's have the rest."

"I believe they will give me one more chance, and will stand by for another twenty-four hours. After all, they are playing for a big stake, and they have taken plenty of risks so far. They will probably be somewhere inside the iceberg zone, out of the way of transatlantic shipping and the ice patrols."

"And tonight, they'll come down to their spot off Cape Sable, send the Fairey Fox off and try again, eh?" added Keen.

"I feel sure of that," replied Keihn.

"Ah. That's all I need." Keen smiled, gave Barney the high sign.

Barney took Keihn away and bolted him up in a small root cellar. He was given food and refreshment and a reasonably comfortable army cot. Then Barney and the Griffon turned their attention to the stolen Vought which had been stowed away in the hidden hangar under the house.

Fortunately, the new Vought was equipped with folding wings, which made it possible to stow it away in the confined space. It seemed strange in there, with its gay cocardes and silver-tinted duralumin panels.

"That won't do, Barney," said Keen, as he contemplated the ship in the light of the hidden

hangar. "We've got to black all that out. Get to work, while I check those guns."

Barney, nodded and reached inside a paint locker where they had several cans of quick-drying enamel. He went to work while Keen checked the guns which Barney had fitted the night before. On the regular brackets, he had bolted high-speed Colt-Brownings of the same type that were being used on all first-line service craft. They were synchronized with the regular electrical timing device. Those could be checked with ease.

Keen turned his attention to the monstrous Dutch weapon of recent design, and which lately had been purchased by the Krupp Gun Works of Germany. Keen had managed to get one from abroad, and had studied the mechanism with the intention of offering a detailed description of it before a military board in Washington. Included in the case with the weapon had been several hundred rounds of ammunition of the armor-piercing type invented by Dr. Max Gehrlich.

To take care of this weapon, Barney had removed one of the deck plates of the port pontoon, and had mounted it inside the main compartment of the pontoon, so that the five-barrel grouping of the gun was up just clear of the pontoon deck. Thus there was no need for synchronizing the gun, as it was well clear of the propeller arc. A bowden-cable control, leading up to the forward cockpit, provided contact with the trigger release.

The gun itself was a marvelous device, employing five rotating barrels. Each barrel threw about 600 rounds a minute, giving the actual fire power of 3,000 rounds a minute. It was well that the pontoons were wide enough to take the enormous load of ammunition. Even at that, the Griffon could not carry any too much, and Barney's bursts would have to be short, accurate and deadly.

In the back seat, Barney had provided himself with two light Brownings and plenty of ammo, so that while they were out to tackle a 10,000-ton battleship, and possibly brush with a Fairey Fox, they would hardly be considered unarmed.

Barney stood off, contemplating his handiwork with the brush and paint pot. Keen was watching him from the front of the gun-mounted float.

"What are you thinking about?" grinned Keen.

"Same as, you," replied the Mick, dabbing at

a strut. "We ought to take one, too. We can release it if it gets in the way."

"You're right, as usual, Barney," replied Keen. "Put one on while I get up a chart and figure out our time."

Barney joyously uncrated a 120-pound bomb from a steel-doored magazine and hung it in the center-section rack between the two pontoons.

"Now, we've got something," he beamed, and, turning back to his brush, he finished the blacking job.

PROMPTLY at nine-thirty, or as soon as it was actually dark, Keen and O'Dare wheeled the Vought out of the hidden hangar and eased it down the concrete boat ramp to the water. Then they closed the faked rock-garden doors, and Keen clambered in, while Barney guided the ship into the clear. He was wearing long rubber boots. Keen started the motor, while the little Irishman clambered up the pontoon and into the rear cockpit. Like a black shadow, the disguised Vought zipped across the rollers and climbed away into the velvety darkness.

Keen had figured that the Fox would leave the pocket battleship at about ten o'clock to contact Keihn and the captured Vought. In this way, he hoped to intercept the plane on her accepted course from Cape Sable to Montauk Light. He settled back, once they were at a safe height, and transferred over to the hydrogen tank. The special motor lapped it up and smoothed her song.

Clearing the beam of Montauk as it swept the water, Keen turned and watched the dancing card of his compass swing around and show the letters "NE" in the window. He leaned over and set the gyro-compass, and then made it a threefold check by turning the indicator lever of the Pioneer compass to the same letters. He turned back to look at his instrument board again, took note that the Pioneer dial registered zero. That was as it should be. As long as he kept the ship on the set course, the zero would remain in the slot. If he swerved off, a warning letter would appear and advise him to swing back either to the left or the right.

Barney was fumbling about in the back with the radio receiver. He plugged in his phone jack and tried several wave-lengths. After about fifteen minutes of searching, he caught a set with an unusual tone using a 160 meter wave-length. Barney snapped in Keen's jack and let him listen in.

"That's a Marconi set—used in British ships," Keen snapped.

"He's bin calling DAHJ for some minutes," Barney explained. "That's German call letter."

Keen flipped up a small sheaf of notes pinned to his dash, and nodded. "The *Lothringen's* call letters," he said grimly. "Quick! Call the Chatham Naval Compass directing station at Cape Cod!" he directed. "Their call letters are NAG. Give them our position. Say you are—let's see—tell them you are WHE, news plane of the Boston Post. Ask for the position of the ship using that wave-length. They can triangulate it for us, using our position."

"Should I tell him it's a ship flying from a Jerry battleship?"

"No! You'll have the Coast Guard out and a young war on your hands. This is a private fight."

Barney got the idea through his armor-plated skull at last, and called the Chatham compass-checking station that nestles beneath the shadow of the Chatham Light on the upper end of Cape Cod.

He gave the call letters Keen had given him, and asked for a check on the ship that was calling DAHJ. He gave his own position also for the Navy man to work from.

"What do you mean, DAHJ?" demanded the C.P.O. radio man at Chatham. "That's a German Navy call."

"Sure. She's on her way over here for a good-will tour, and we want to get aboard her for pictures and scoop the A.P.," lied Barney.

"Well, wait a minute while I check her," the puzzled radio man replied.

Finally he caught the Fox calling DAHJ, checked the direction and then triangulated the position given by Barney.

"That plane calling DAHJ is at 42:10 N., 65:30 W., or about 85 miles southeast of Cape Sable. Possibly 275 miles from your present position."

"Thanks," replied Barney, jotting it down.

"I still don't get that DAHJ business," the radio man returned. "We have no notice on it. I'll have to call Boston and check it."

"Go ahead," snapped Barney, realizing now that anything could happen. He advised Keen, who was peering above him.

"Keep on that 160-meter band and see if you can get anything else," the Griffon said.

"They're jabbering German," growled Barney. "What you looking at?"

"Plenty! Here's hoping we've got all the

speed and fuel we think we have. Look up there!"

Barney looked and spotted a formation of night-flying flying-boats of the Coast Guard Service. He reached for his guns at once.

"Take it easy, now. They're signaling for us to go down. Better run for it."

"Run, hell!" Barney cried. "They're shooting!"

The great G. A. boat came down like a ton of winged bricks. The black seaplane with no markings had attracted their-attention, and the Coast Guardsmen wanted to know all about it.

"Okay. Play with them, Barney — but no rough stuff, you know," agreed Keen. "Just a few where it will do the most good, and make them go down to cool off."

Keen nosed the Vought down, and the heavy G. A. boat came thundering after them. Tracer bullets spanged and hissed like enraged hornets. Keen played tunes on the pedals and kept the Vought out of the fire. Then suddenly he steadied, giving Barney a good platform. The Mick took it, opened up, and poured a staccato burst into the motor eggs mounted high above the wide monoplane wing.

The gunner aboard the Coast Guard ship answered wildly, and the Griffon saw the great monoplane flying-boat sweep wide and nose down steeper. One blade grouping stopped completely, and Keen realized that Barney had probably nicked their steel props so that they were off pitch and threatening to rip the motors off their standards.

"Good enough." Keen smiled. "Hated to do it, but we've got too much to do tonight to bother with Coast Guardsmen. Pick up that Fox again, if you can, and see how her signals are coming in."

Keen tested his controls again and found that nothing much had been damaged. He gave her the gun again and swung the ship around until the Pioneer dial indicated zero. They were back on their course again, heading northeast. Barney played with the radio and sat listening for the Marconi set.

"Here they are," he bellowed. "But they're getting weaker . . ."

"Means they're heading back," said Keen.

"What does '*Vergaser*' mean? He keeps yelping about a '*Vergaser*.' What the devil is that?"

"'*Vergaser*'? Why, that's German for carburetor," explained Keen. "That's it. They're turning back. Carburetor trouble. Swell!"

"What do you mean, swell?" demanded Barney. "How are we going to make the snatch?"

"That will be up to you, when I put you aboard," laughed Keen. "You'll either get her going, or you'll stay there for the German Navy to pick you up. You'll look rather startling in a Jerry uniform, doing the goose-step up and down a pocket-battleship."

"Aw, shut up!" growled Barney, making a hurried mental inspection of a Rolls Royce Duplex carburetor—just in case. Then he turned back to his set and listened for the Marconi wireless.

The signals were very indistinct now and he about gave it up when Keen suddenly spotted two flame streaks heading down toward the water.

"Here we are," snapped the pilot. "They're going down."

"And probably waiting for that Jerry ironclad to come and get them. We arrived at a swell time."

But Barney set himself for action, just the same.

THE Fairey Fox dropped on the water and staggered gently over the rollers. Keen slammed down at it and saw that the two men in it had dropped surface flares—small, floating cans filled with a phosphorus substance which ignited when brought in contact with water.

"Splendid!" Keen chuckled. "They can't put them out, and it will help. Have you figured out what's wrong, yet, Barney?"

"Yeah. Me ever meeting you and being sap enough to stick around," growled the Mick in the back seat.

"Terrible! No gratitude at all. What do you want?"

"I want to go home," moaned O'Dare.

"Okay. There's a lovely Fairey Fox down there. You can have it to fly back to Grayfields. When you get there, call up old Lang, and inform him that he can find his beloved Vought anchored at the new Wall Street seaplane mooring. I'll see you later in the city."

"Sounds swell, but if what I think is the matter with that ship, ain't," moaned Barney, "you'd better go scouring the jails for another O'Dare. There's plenty of 'em in there."

It all sounded dizzy up there, but Keen went to work systematically. He landed a few hundred yards beyond the Fox, and Barney covered the crew in the British seaplane with his guns while Keen slipped on his scarlet mask and started to

move the Vought around in a wide circle.

They eased in closer, and Keen yelled over, "Inflate your life raft and launch it. You are to leave that ship at once. Understand?"

There was a grim silence for several minutes. Then the rear guns creaked on their mountings. Barney caught it at once, and sent a short burst just over the heads of the men in the cockpit. They ducked, and finally two pairs of hands reached up in submission.

"Get overboard at once and shove off clear," ordered Keen again. "We are boarding that ship."

"Won't do you any good," some one yelled. "She won't fly."

"We'll find out about that," snapped Keen again. "Get overboard."

One of the men disappeared and came out with a rubber raft which he inflated while standing on a pontoon. Then the two men got in and pulled away with the short oars provided.

"Pull at least fifty yards off," roared Keen again. "We'll see that you are picked up by some one."

"You bet they will," snapped Barney. "Here comes that blasted battleship!"

"My hat!" gasped Keen, turning and spotting the flaming squat stack of the *Lothringen*. "I never believed they'd come and pick them up."

The raft with the two men aboard had floated clear on the swells, and as far as they were concerned, there was nothing to worry about. Barney crawled along the wing and dropped down on the pontoon of the Fox. He darted along, clambered into the front cockpit and switched on the dashboard light. For several seconds, he inspected the ship's instruments and controls, and then grinned.

"Just what I figured. They had taken off with the carburetor set for low-altitude flying, and with the supercharger cut out. When they got up to about 4,000 feet, they cut the supercharger in and forgot to change the altitude-control on the Duplexes. The dumb saps. The Jerry engines usually have an automatic altitude-control built right in, but they had not figured out this one. Here we go!"

He set the spark and throttle and wound the spring starter from the wing-root platform. Then he clambered in with a wave to Keen and opened her up. The warm motor caught, and he started to taxi away. But before he could swing around clear into the wind, another shock staggered him.

The Kestrel engine boomed out a tumultuous war song. Barney swung around toward the west, and his gun sight circled the first of three Coast Guard cutters that had evidently swept down out of the Ice Patrol area south of Nova Scotia.

"That sap!" swore Barney again. "Sent those tin wash-boiler guys out to stop a Jerry battleship. Now we've got to fight to get the suckers out again."

He ripped at the Fox's throttle, slammed the pontoons at the upward curve of a roller, and hoiked the British fighter into the sky. When he winged over to find Keen, he muttered a curse.

"Jumped me to it, eh?" rasped Barney.

The twin gleams of the Vought's exhaust ports guided him toward the great belching funnel of the *Lothringen*, which had charged into the crazy circle of ships and seaplanes.

Bong! One of the cruiser's forward turrets blazed as an eleven-incher spewed out and hurtled toward the three Coast Guard cutters.

Bong! Bong! The other two weapons spoke, and three great spumes of bluish white water went up in front of the bows of the cutters. They turned sharply, cut over and blazed away futilely with their four-inchers. Against the armament of the German pocket cruiser, there was little hope for them.

KEEN swore deeply. The impressive appearance of this high-speed monster, illuminated by the flashes of her high-angle rifles, made Keen wish he had taken some other method of getting a new plane. He darted to one side as the big guns crunched out again, and the terrier Coast Guard craft yapped back with their light weapons.

At first the Yankee gunners had the best of it, mainly because of their drill and efficiency at the breeches. The Germans were hurtling heavier stuff, but their gun-laying was none too good. Their first hit came after their fourth salvo. In reply, the gunners of the cutters blasted out the port side of the *Lothringen's* main fighting bridge.

A deadly fire followed, and the Coast Guard cutters came in for a terrific battering. Then, out of the sky, roared two seaplanes, and the German gunners were driven to give attention to their 3-inch Ack-Ack guns.

Barney slammed down first, belted everything with his Fox Vickers and set the stage for Keen to bash in with the Krupp rotator. Keen carefully selected the turrets on the side of the *Lothringen*,

and then swayed down drunkenly and opened fire with the hidden weapon.

The rasping explosions and the ear-splitting rattle of fire made his head hum, but he hung in a sideslip and poured it to them. Then he darted forward and battered a burst or two into the main bridge that silenced the action for several minutes.

By now, Barney was slamming up and down over the gunners who had attempted to man the Ack-Ack guns and get Keen. The commander of the *Lothringen* tried his big guns, but the three Coast Guard cruisers were circling with him and bringing their lighter and more movable weapons on the flush decks of the German cruiser.

Keen dived again, blasted out another turret and shot up the sky, glancing at the watch as he set her around again. He flicked a flashlight signal to Barney and sent him down to get the Ack-Ack gunners who were protected behind the aft gun turret.

Barney got it, and knew Keen was setting out to nail the steering gear. From an almost vertical position, O'Dare dropped like a tumbler pigeon, and dealt the hidden gun crews a terrible blow. Then, from a deceiving angle, Keen came in with his 120-pounder. It was a puny thing compared to a battleship, but it might give the Coast Guard terriers a chance to get her now.

He slipped in again and cleared one spray of Strange machine-gun fire. The gunners were crawling across the decks with these famous hand weapons and dragging extra barrels after them for quick changes. Keen suddenly swished his nose around and dipped. He roared on up to the bulbous stern of the *Lothringen*, and for an instant it looked as though he was going to land on her deck.

Into a bitter fire from the deck he charged, and then yanked the Vulcan release gear to let the 120-pounder flick out. At the same instant, he pulled the Vought out in a climbing stall-turn and raced away.

There was a low detonation. A sheet of flame spat out behind the *Lothringen*, and the great pocket-battleship was stopped in her tracks. Most of the rudder had been taken away, and one of her twin screws had been buckled. The Griffon drew off, then, to let the C. G. terriers cut in and nail the floundering craft.

They circled like young panthers and blasted the peppered turrets to bits. The hull then received seven torpedoes, and ripped open, as clean as a whistle. The Coast Guardsmen stood by and picked

up the handful of survivors left after her magazine blew up and tore the beautiful craft to bits.

Two days later those men were to be placed aboard a vessel at sea, and reports were to be issued that the new German packet-battleship, the *Ersatz Lothringen*, had blown up in the Atlantic while conducting speed tests.

But while the Coast Guardsmen were battering the *Lothringen* to bits, Keen and Barney were racing back for New York at breakneck speed. Barney took the Fox to Grayfields, but Keen had to slip into New York harbor and ease her gently into the Wall Street seaplane landing. He slipped overboard just as a taxi came roaring down the ramp. As Keen swam silently across the main basin, he heard Lang bellowing from the landing float.

“Damn my eyes!” the detective roared. “He

said it would be here at midnight, and here it is. But I wonder why it’s all black. I thought they said it was silver.”

A muffled laugh came across the water of the seaplane basin, and a dark figure emerged from the water and scrambled up a stringer and disappeared.

Lang had the bobbing Vought drawn in closer, and then climbed up on the wing and stared into the cockpit. The instrument board was badly damaged, but under the instrument light was stuck a small, white card, and on it was carefully written in neat script:

THE GRIFFON

“Now, how the hell can that be?” gulped the puzzled Lang.