DANGEROUS GALLANTRY

Over the mighty system comes the insistent voice of the Air Officer, "Hurry closing 15, bearing 150, distance 30 miles". The Captain orders "General quarters" sounded. Over the steady thump, thump, thump of the alarm system can be heard the distant noise of the enemy's double-flue "Battle Stations". He is hurry to his assigned stations, preparing for the coming action.

A low-flying, single-engined Jap torpedo plane had somehow slipped past the alert air patrol and is coming in on the carrier.

The Jap is only skimming the tops of the waves, and at tremendous speed. First the destroyers, then the cruisers and finally the battleship open fire on the Jap, but still he comes on. The torpedo plane is now in range of one of the carriers, coming in low and fast on the carrier's starboard bow. Suddenly the carrier's guns cut loose with a blast that shakes her deck. First the five-inch then the forty-five millimeters and finally the rows of twenty millimeters in the starboard galley sent a spray of steel and fire in all directions on that single torpedo plane. Hundreds of tons of water was pouring into the plane, but it seemed none of the Jap to mind. Big shells hit the water ahead, throwing up tall columns of water but immediately the Jap seemed to fly through them, unharmed, apparently. It looks as though every shot was a hit, but the plane doesn't seem damaged.

On deck, men look in amazement at the on-coming plane, getting ready to shoot. In a few miles an hour away, the Jap plane flies across the carrier's bow, wobbling and wobbling, trying to come up, just as the carrier's port machine guns let go and literally tear the plane apart. Flames burst out of its wing roots, then out of his fuselage by the quarter, and in one huge sheet of fire, the torpedo plane plummets into the sea a few hundred feet from the carrier.

A billion of black smoke marks the spot for about a few minutes afterwards.

The Jap's approach was perfect, the crew of the carrier feels he must have dropped his "fish", it will hit in a few moments. Every man feels his heart pulse and wildly to and helplessly. Some men seem to be dead to the news, others nervously finite; their face pale or brace themselves against the shock of the torpedo, a few men fly, some start counting seconds, without knowing why, then-bee-lee-tee-pee-true.: nothing happens. Those who had flapped, pick themselves up again in some embarrassment.

Miraculously, the explosion never comes. Evidently the pilot was badly wounded or killed in his release gear damaged or shot away and the torpedo was not released and most likely did not explode until the plane had hit the water.

As everyone in dangerous cycling all agree that the "pangs of anticipation" are greater than those of "realization".