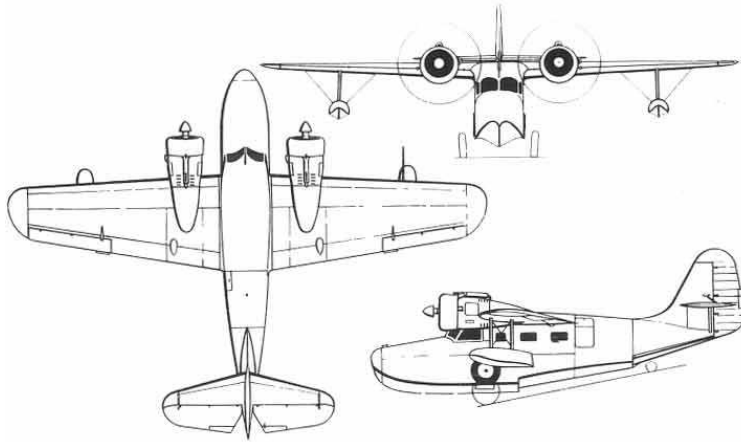


The Mechanic

by

Vixxy Fox



“Nope... wasn’t a pilot,” the old fellow croaked, “I flew once, right enough, but I was only the mechanic and it was an explosion.” He cackled and made an explosion sound the type my nephew made when playing soldier.

He’d been sitting in a rocking chair on the front porch of his shack when I walked up. His place was not all that easy to find, and I’d even had to rent a boat to get there as there were no roads in or out of this tropical paradise. I looked at him trying to discern the truth from the face before me, wondering that someone would have actually sent me on this wild goose chase. His nose was bulbous with light blue veins running across what used to be pink and his ears were like real ears of corn complete with the silky hairs coming from within. For a moment his mouth opened so he could pant a bit and I saw that what teeth he had left were severely crooked. For a Rabbit of his age, however, I suppose he was in remarkable shape.

“I’m sorry to have wasted your time,” was the only thing I could think of to say, “But I was sent here to find a particular pilot.”

“Airplane...”

“Yes, for an airplane.”

“Noooo... what type ya got?”

Shrugging my shoulders and figuring it certainly couldn’t hurt to tell him, I did so.

“Piece of crap,” he growled, “And it’s a land plane. I don’t like land planes.”

“Here now, how could you say it’s not a good aircraft if you’ve never seen...” I stopped speaking and became angry for some reason. Seeing red, I yelled at him, “You’re not even a pilot!”

I suppose I shouldn’t have shouted being I was taught to respect my elders, of which he definitely was one, but he’d managed to flip my magneto switch to ‘on’.

“Piece of crap!” he told me again even louder. “Yor just a vixen so I forgives your not knowing. Someone sold ya a bill of goods. Where ya gotta fly to?”

Now, just a bit more than annoyed, I told him my destination was Spontoon Island.

“You’ll never make it. Can ya swim?”

“Yes.”

“Then ya might last an hour or so till the sharks come round.” He made a snapping motion with his right paw. “They getcha too... just like that. Ya can’t scream underwater ya know. Sides...if the sharks don’t getcha the Natzees will.”

He smiled and his few teeth made such a comical picture I couldn’t help but smile back.

“I’m sorry, but I think you have things wrong,” I told him, adding a kindly tone to my voice. “Our German friends...”

“Natzees are Natzees and they’re all rotten. Fought’em in the first go-round and you can trust there’s gonna be another.”

I was about to respond rather acidly about his feelings for my friends, not to mention the fact that there were no Nazis’ during the Great War, when a tremendous explosion drew both our eyes.

“That’s my boat!” I yelled, about to run to it like a moth to the flame. I was stopped by a paw firmly grasping my arm.

“Not that way!” the Rabbit snarled. “It’s them, and unfortunately you led them here. Now let’s go before they get here.”

We raced down a path well hidden behind his shack and as we did, I recalled who it was that had sent me to find one fabled pilot who might actually be able to help me; and they just happened to be...

“Natzees are evil vile critters look’n to take over the world,” he said as we ran. “You can’t trust’em. They’ll steel your teeth if you give’em half a chance.”

I was about to ask if that was what happened to him, when we broke out from the path and into a small lagoon area. In the middle of this floated the sweetest little seaplane I’d ever seen.

“You said you could swim,” the old fellow called to me over his shoulder, “I hope you weren’t lying.”

I was pleased when I beat him to the aircraft and was quick enough that I was inside and reaching out to help him board.

“Forget me!” he yelled, “Get up front and pull the anchor. Do that and then grab the paddle and start a’paddl’n like your life depends on it... cuz it does!”

The aircraft was good sized for a flying boat. Moving forward, I squeezed past the pilot’s station and into the bow where I found the hatch just as if the plane were a rich person’s cabin cruiser. Pushing it open I raised myself up and found that in a standing position I was waste high to the opening and able to lean around in any direction and just about able to touch water. Untying the anchor line, I began hauling it in just as a bee buzzed past my head accompanied by a distant bang. Looking towards the noise, I saw a Wolf standing at the end of the path. He was dressed in a long coat and hat, which seemed odd as I remember thinking how hot he must be. A Mauser pistol was in his paw and pointing right at me.

“Stoppen Sie was sie tun,” he yelled.

“Stoppen this!” I heard the old Rabbit yell back and then a Lewis machinegun opened up spraying small geysers of water all around in front of the Wolf. I would have laughed at the little dance he did before disappearing back into the underbrush except I was so damned scared.

Grabbing the small mushroom anchor as it came out of the water, I gently lowered it to the cabin floor below me, and then grabbing the longish paddle I found laying on the berth cushion, I was once again standing in the little hatch and this time thrashing at the water for all I was worth. With relief I found that the floater was at least easy to get moving.

There were a few more ‘HALT’s shouted out and a few pistol shots which were responded to by the Lewis but by then we were through the coral outcroppings that guarded the lagoon and moving in the small swells of the ocean. There was a thump as the main hatch was closed up and then I heard the Rabbit call to me, “Secure the hatch and get your ass to the cockpit pronto!”

Right after that the starboard engine whirled through a few times and came to life which immediately put way on the small craft. As I followed his orders the port engine caught, revved, and then settled back down to match the first.

Climbing into the co-pilot’s seat, I asked him, “What possible reason would they have for doing this?”

“They’re Natzees,” the mechanic told me calmly, “They don’t need a reason. Buckle in... you’ve got work to do yet.”

After I strapped myself to the seat, he asked me, “You ever fly one of these before?”

“No.”

Lining up on some unseen marker, the rabbit advanced the throttles until they engines were howling.

“When we get close to their boat,” he yelled over the noise, “I want you to haul back on the yoke. She won’t be going fast enough to take off, but she’ll skip over top of’em. DO NOT STALL! Let her ease back down and then pull the throttles back and let her go like a boat. By then I’ll be back to take over.”

With that, two things happened. Releasing the yoke he got out of his seat and that forced me to take over the controls whether I wanted to or not, and I also saw the speedboat making to cut us off from the ocean.

Before I could even cuss, the old fellow was back again and heading forward with the Lewis and two fresh pancake magazines. Squeezing past me, he opened the front hatch and pushing the gun through first, opened the bi-pod legs attached to its fat barrel and then got himself into a good firing position.

By now the airplane's hull was up on the step and skimming well, the small waves made thumping thudding noises that I felt more than heard but other than this the aircraft was rock steady. As he'd instructed, I kept us dead on to the approaching boat. At five hundred yards and at a head to head approach speed of better than a hundred miles per hour, he opened up in a long burst of tracer ammunition. It reached out to the boat like the finger of death and all around it the rounds struck the water bouncing up into the air like sparks. At least three of the people on the boat jumped overboard.

The first magazine was finished and went overboard as the second was loaded. He might have actually started firing again except I'd pulled the yoke back and we went airborne. For a moment the bumping and thudding stopped though there was one crunch of a sound as the keel actually crushed the windshield on the boat which undoubtedly would have rammed us. I have no doubt of this as I'd seen the person behind the wheel jump for it just as I hauled back the yoke.

Feeling the controls getting mushy, I got the nose down and kept it there until we were just about to impact. That's when I pulled the controls back again and with a huge spray of water the aircraft's hull came back to the ocean and we were floating again. Actually... there were about five sprays of water as she skipped like a dolphin swimming in a bow wave. I at least had sense enough to pull back on the throttles. Even with the skipping, the old boy had his gun down and the hatch secured before the third rotation. By the fifth he was back in the pilot's seat and buckled in.

"I thought you said you were looking for a pilot?" he yelled at me. "Seems to me you pretty well know your way around those controls."

"I thought you told me you were a mechanic," I responded as he grabbed the throttles and pushed just the port engine's forward in order to slew the craft around so he could be sure there were no more boats.

"I am a mechanic... that's why she handles so well. I take good care of my old airplane. I don't fly her... we make love. I told the truth; the only time I ever really flew was when I got blown up. That was not a pretty sight I can tell you for sure."

With that he again lined up so the wind was in our eyes and we were off.

When the little craft rotated and shook herself free of the water, he yelled out, "Next stop, Spontoon Island," he yelled at me above the engine noise. "You might want to stuff cotton in your ears or you'll be deaf by the time we get there. You can tell me your story over drinks then and maybe we can get to the bottom of what's happening."

When he'd settled up on his chosen course, he looked over at me and smiled, his few remaining teeth looking hideously funny. "Natzees..." he yelled out, "What are they good for?"

"NOTHING!" we yelled together and then I couldn't help but laugh.