

HEROES OF RURA-TONGA

PULP ADVENTURES
IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC

PBY SOS

By Peter Schweighofer

Get a glimpse at the *Heroes of Rura-Tonga* adventure collection, complete with source material for running a pulp campaign in the South Pacific. Run this adventure outline by customizing the *Any-System Key* stats to your favorite game system. You can find customization notes and guidelines for the *Any-System Key* at the Griffon Publishing Studio website, <http://griffonpub.home.att.net>.



While flying back to Rura-Tonga aboard Captain Sharp's seaplane, the heroes intercept an emergency SOS message on the aircraft's radio:

...Mayday! Mayday! Mayday! This is United States Navy flying boat 44-P-2 bound for Manila. We have one engine down and a fire inside the aircraft. We're going down about 300 miles northeast of Admiralty Island. I'm going to try landing near a lone island we just spotted. Any aircraft or ships in the area please....

The transmission abruptly ends with what sounds like a gunshot followed by a short burst of static.

After consulting their navigational charts, the heroes realize they're very close to the navy airplane; when they scan the skies to the north they spot a fairly recent trail of smoke descending toward a lone, dome-shaped island on the horizon. The maps, however, do not show an island, reef, or any other geographical feature in that location.

Maritime law and general aviation protocol obliges the heroes (or anyone else in the area) to respond to the mayday and assist a fellow craft in distress; however, the characters might have some qualms about diverting for a rescue mission. Remember, an American naval seaplane requires assistance...aside from national loyalties, the heroes might seek to aid a potentially powerful future ally.

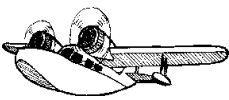
EPISODE ONE: ISLAND HAVEN

The heroes' aerial approach provides them with a good overview of the dome-shaped, circular island. Steep, rocky shores rise from the water, offering no convenient beaches or lagoons where seaplane passengers could disembark. Jungle covers the island from the cliff edge to the domed peak at the center.

Vigilant heroes easily spot the downed US Navy seaplane; it floats tied up to a rock near one of the more accessible cliff faces. Characters making *Hard notice* checks also spot a black rubber raft pulled ashore and tied up just within the tree line on another part of the island. Those making a *Challenging notice* roll realize that the waves along the island's northwestern shores seem more turbulent; watching the navy seaplane for a short time shows it veers to the southeast as if some ocean current held the island in its sway.

Landing proves no problem in the calm South Pacific seas, but approaching and tying up alongside one of the island cliffs proves challenging. The unusually strong current makes

March 22, 1938—We were flying back to Rura-Tonga from a jaunt to Kavieng when we received a distress signal from another flying boat in the vicinity. Sounds like an American Navy seaplane on transport duty experienced engine trouble and a cabin fire, then descended to land near an island they spotted. We noticed smoke in the distant sky leading down toward the ocean, but that small island doesn't seem to appear on any of my charts....

**CREDITS**

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maneuvering near a cliff a *Hard piloting* task; someone still needs to make a *Hard jump* roll to leap from the floatplane to the cliff face and climb to a point where they can tie up the line and secure the plane on shore. Characters disembarking must make a *Challenging climb* check to scale the low cliffs to the jungle above.

The dense jungle foliage looks like nothing the heroes have ever seen. The tall fronds combine the willowy appearance of an underwater kelp forest with the foamy texture of fungus. Spongy moss covers most ground surfaces on the island, though black rocks occasionally peek out through bare patches. The landscape rises steadily to the domed peak in the island's center.

The heroes have several objectives to explore in their investigation of the island and the downed navy floatplane.

PBY MOORING

The navy seaplane floats moored along one coast, tethered to the rocky shore by a line from its nose hatch. The forward hatch remains open and one engine looks like it sustained a fire, but otherwise the craft simply drifts peacefully in the current. To board the plane from the cliff the characters face the same dangers as they did disembarking from their own aircraft. Inside the heroes discover a chaotic sight. In the cockpit the pilot and co-pilot lie slumped in their seats with close-range gunshot wounds in their backs. Several shots also disabled the radio. Examining flight documents on a clipboard reveals the PBY carried a crew of four and one passenger, Army Colonel B. Gilbert, seven mail bags and four crates containing materials marked "classified."

The main cabin smells of smoke, apparently from a now-extinguished fire in the aft section of the aircraft. Two dead crewmen lie sprawled over some cargo, apparently shot in the back while they fought the small fire. The cargo consists of several duffel bags of military mail and four wooden crates. Although the heaped mailbags are all tightly tied, one was obviously removed since its contents remain strewn across the floor. Each crate has lettering stenciled on its surface:

TOP SECRET

PROPERTY OF US ARMY AIR CORPS

UNIT BOMBSIGHT, TYPE M-9

NORDEN PLANT, NEW YORK CITY

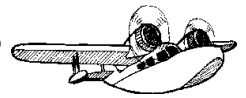
Someone apparently pried the top off one crate and removed its contents. The crates themselves seem bulky and heavy; no doubt someone removed the bombsight from the one crate and put it in a mailbag, which has handles to make it more easily portable.

The interior damage remains light, but the burned-out engine requires several hours of work and some replacement parts before it can become operational. Flying the PBY seaplane any distance on one engine is an *Improbable piloting* task that would tax the fuel and structural integrity of the craft.

RUBBER RAFT

The heroes might find a black rubber raft if they spot it during their flyby or they follow the island's coast to the navy floatplane. The raft sits near the cliff edge just beneath the dense, fungal foliage, showing definite evidence that someone dragged it into the jungle and covered it with several willowy fronds. A sole crewman in gray pants and tunic stands watch, but he quickly conceals himself a short distance away if he hears anyone approaching. Unless discovered (in which case he claims he's a shipwrecked Dutch sailor; see "Nazi Landing party" below), he leaves the characters alone, even if they steal or destroy the raft. He tries to slip away to warn the others in his party searching for Colonel Gilbert rather than stage a surprising but futile ambush.





PERISCOPE

As the heroes make their way around the island along the rocky coastline, they might spot what looks like a periscope peering at them from above the distant waves (possibly on a *Hard notice* roll). Of course, as soon as they try pointing it out to the others, it disappears below the surface. A German submarine lurks off the coast of the island, monitoring the progress of the landing party as it seeks to capture the stolen bombsight mechanism and watching for meddlers like the heroes.

SHALLOW CAVES

The heroes might decide to travel overland to reach the navy floatplane rather than stick to the coast. The dense jungle slows their progress and limits visibility. If they search the underbrush, however, they discover small, shallow cave entrances; each cavern serves as a small nest for Turzites (see below), three foot-tall insectoid parasites that live just beneath the island's surface. Each cave might offer a shallow hiding place for one character if needed, though cramming into one invariably arouses some angry Turzites. The caves do not lead very far, and do not connect.

EPISODE TWO: WAR PARTIES

Once the heroes land and begin exploring the island, they start a race against time as Colonel Gilbert and the German sub crew try to rendezvous. Various parties on the island strive to obtain their objectives despite the thick jungle foliage and interference from the heroes. Each group pursues its mission simultaneously as the characters follow their own strategy in exploring the island. The heroes might encounter these parties during their investigations, learn about their motives through interaction, and ultimately prevent the American traitor from passing along the secret bombsight to the Nazis. Any combat or loud noise draws the attention of others who act accordingly in engaging the characters.

COLONEL GILBERT

Objective: Find the Nazi landing party, turn over the Norden bombsight, and escape with them on the hidden submarine. Colonel Gilbert wanders the island hoping to intercept his Nazi conspirators. He keeps to the jungle for cover, but makes sure he can still see or at least hear the shoreline. He struggles to haul the mail duffel containing the Norden bombsight, leaving an obvious trail of broken fungi foliage. Should he encounter anyone he takes cover in a frenzied panic and waits until they wander into his visual range; he hails anyone looking like German sailors, but opens fire with his sidearm on anyone else searching for him.

NAZI LANDING PARTY

Objective: Find Colonel Gilbert and retrieve the Norden bombsight. The handful of submarine crewmen spreads out in pairs to search for Colonel Gilbert; at least one group seeks out the PBY Catalina to board and search for bombsights and other useful intelligence. (Include four to eight crewmen depending on the heroes' strengths and dramatic license, especially if other Germans might stage an unexpected ambush or flanking maneuver.) They leave one of their compatriots behind to guard the concealed raft they used to paddle from the sub to the island. The first time they encounter the heroes the men claim they are Dutch sailors who washed ashore after their fishing boat capsized in a storm. They try to maintain the ruse until an opportunity arises or necessity requires they must resort to open force, preferably in coordination with another pair of Germans waiting in ambush.

Colonel Gilbert (Boss)

Competent Skills:

command _____
dodge _____
stealth _____
tactics _____
wireless _____

Expert Skills:

bluff _____
notice _____
shoot _____

Signature Skill:

investigate _____

Gear:

pistol _____
duffel _____

U-Boat Crewman (Henchman)

Competent Skills:

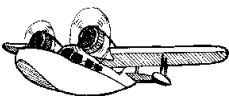
climb _____
fight _____
shoot _____
stealth _____

Expert Skill:

seafaring _____

Gear:

Luger pistol _____



Turzite (Henchman)

Competent Skills:

- endurance _____
- search _____
- stealth _____
- survival _____

Expert Skill:

- fight _____

Natural Defenses:

- pincer claws _____
- carapace _____

TURZITES

Objective: Evict the invaders (Nazis, Colonel Gilbert, and the heroes) from their island by force. If disturbed by characters hiding in their nest caves or sounds of significant combat nearby, the Turzites emerge from their nest to methodically hunt down and attack everyone else on the island. As parasites they have a nearly inexhaustible supply of reinforcements nesting in caves across the island’s surface. Their emergence and attack should come after the heroes confront Colonel Gilbert or come to blows with the Nazi landing party as tensions mount and the adventure advances toward its climax.

U-BOAT

Objective: Watch and wait submerged off the island’s coast, moving in to pick up the landing party or attacking the heroes’ seaplane with deck gun or torpedoes if needed. The submarine’s captain acts to support his landing party in its mission to intercept Colonel Gilbert and retrieve the Norden bombsight. He hopes to lurk offshore unseen, monitoring events on the island through the periscope. The sub surfaces only to retrieve the returning party in the raft or keep the heroes from thwarting the mission. When surfaced, the sub’s deck gun can fire on visible targets on the island’s surface, including the heroes or their seaplane, or can launch torpedoes to destroy the plane or explode cliffs near adversaries.

EPISODE THREE: SINKING THE CLIMAX

Neither the heroes, Nazis, or Colonel Gilbert suspect that the entire island is in fact a monstrously huge sea turtle with a seaweed-fungus forest growing from its shell. As parasites living in crevasses on the shell, the Turzites keep the turtle “clean” of any foreign bodies they detect, particularly those of the intruders on the “island’s” surface.

Should any serious damage beyond a simple gunfight “disturb” the island’s surface or shore—an explosion, deck gun shot, or torpedo hit—the giant turtle panics and begins to slowly submerge. Anyone left on the island notices the rocky shoreline starts disappearing, then the fungi forest gradually floods. The submerging island also drags under any vessel tied up along its shore, such as the PBY floatplane or the heroes’ seaplane. (Should these aircraft become lost, the heroes’ only chance remains the landing party raft or the U-boat itself.)The heroes must find a way off the island before it leaves them adrift in the middle of the South Pacific.

U-Boat

Top Speed: 18 mph
surfaced, 8 mph
submerged

Range: 7,000 miles

Crew: 44

Ordnance: 3.5-inch deck
gun, anti-aircraft
gun, torpedo tubes
(4 fore, 1 aft)

THE ANY-SYSTEM KEY

You can use this adventure with your favorite roleplaying game system. Just visit the *Any-System Key* page at <http://griffonpub.home.att.net/NESys.html> and use the guidelines there to match descriptive gamemaster character abilities and task difficulties to corresponding values in your preferred game. Use the customizable stat forms found in the adventure margins to note values for character stats in your game. You’ll also find examples of customizing stats into those of your favorite game system.

BOOK YOUR ADVENTURE TODAY!

Heroes of Rura-Tonga is a pulp-era roleplaying game supplement presenting source material outlining elements for a 1930s pulp campaign in the South Pacific and five, full-length scenarios.

Available soon at the Griffon Publishing Studio electronic storefront at YourGamesNow.com. Visit the studio website at <http://griffonpub.home.att.net> for previews and other support material for *Heroes of Rura-Tonga*.

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