to me. This is a mild shock, for it is his leg and therefore the instrument approach which the Newark weather demands should be his. I had thought to coast the rest of the way.

"We will now learn what it's like to make a real approach without an artificial horizon—" he points at the offending instrument which swims uselessly behind its glass face—"and a few other things which may someday be worth our knowing."

I cannot understand Ross. He is obliged to give nothing away—much less an instrument approach which could be difficult. He is not paid to be a mentor and can, in the doing, only risk his peace of mind.

"Now concentrate. Forget I'm here."

Forgetting Ross is like a slave forgetting the galley master even when he tips back his head, closes his eyes, and seems to be napping. Yet in no other way can he appear to set me on my own.

A radio range is simply a broadcasting station which transmits a monotonous though valuable program. The signals form four spokes, each narrowing and intersecting at the hub, like an ancient wheel. The spoke selected depends, of course, upon the direction from which the plane approaches the station. I pick up and begin to bracket the north spoke of the Newark range.

Basking in Ross's confidence, I move the controls gently. I am only too aware that his closed eyes are a sham. He is also listening and, like a temporarily relaxed conductor, waiting for a sour note.

When I have at length settled down to a steady course, Ross opens his eyes and presses a button on the instrument panel three times. In a moment the stewardess appears in the shadows behind us. He asks her about the passengers and how they fared through the storm.

"One man was sick. But they're laughing about it now."

Without turning from my work, I ask about the baby. I don't really care, but somehow I must know if it bawled.

"No. It slept all the way through. Anyone you know?"

"No. I was just curious."

But I brood on this for several minutes and can not decide why it seems so wonderful.

We pass over the cone of silence at Newark with very little meandering, once I have pinned down the leg. The initial descent is pleasing too—steady and nicely timed—and I can reasonably hope the rest of the performance will go as smoothly.

Then as we start the turn for the final descent, which is always the most complicated and demanding in accuracy, Ross takes a box of matches from his pocket and lights them one after another just under my nose. I gasp a protest. I am heavily engaged in trying to hold course and altitude exactly according to the book. This is the real thing. It counts.

"What the hell are you doing?"

I am bewildered. If I were not so extremely busy I would brush the flame away. It is difficult to see the instruments beyond the flame, and Ross holds it just close enough to make breathing difficult.

I blow out the match. Ross at once lights another. I am fifty feet too low, the compass is swinging in a direction it should not, and my speed is falling off.

"Steady . . ."

Ross's voice is calm and without malice or mischief. Then what in God's name is he up to? The performance, on which I was just about to congratulate myself, is rapidly going to pieces.

I fight to keep things in order, not because we are in the slightest danger at this altitude, but only because Ross has deliberately ruined what might have been a technically perfect approach. For this I cannot forgive him.

As one match after another flares before my eyes I become infuriated with Ross. He is a sadist, sick with weird complexities. He is afraid I *will* do a good job. To hell with him! I will keep everything as it should be regardless of his jealous interference.

Sweating profusely, inwardly cursing Ross's twisted sense of humor, I resolve to fly this ship safely and surely to earth in spite of any harassment. I force myself to ignore Ross's match, to see beyond it to the instruments.

As we turn in for the final descent I shove the propeller controls

to full low pitch. We are exactly at required altitude, the speed is right, and also the course.

Ross shakes out his match and sits back in his seat. I glance at him, my resentment doubling when I discover him smiling. We will have this out on the ground!

In less than a minute, at six hundred feet, the faint glow in the clouds becomes an iridescent bloom. I hold the descent. Tatters appear in the cloud base, then the runway lights, and finally the guiding ladder of red neon tubes dead over the nose. I call for full flaps, chop off the power, and we swoop down through light rain until the wheels brush the cinders. I believe that even McCabe would class the landing as better than a bare "arrival," although so short a time ago I strained his back on almost the identical spot.

As for Ross, he can take his comic-opera cap and fly in other directions. I intend to ask for a transfer.

When the engines are stopped I complete the logbook in wounded silence. Ross leaves his seat and puts on his coat. It is raining harder outside. Maybe his ridiculous cap will shrink to the size of his brain.

I snap the logbook shut and am about to stand up when I feel his heavy hand on my shoulder. My grip on the metal logbook tightens. If he tries one of his playful swings—

But his voice is surprisingly tired and so is his smile. "Anyone can do the job when things are going right. In this business we play for keeps."

When he has left the cockpit I remain in my seat listening to the rain peckle on the aluminum above my head. The matches. Why would he light matches? He could more easily have created other distractions if that had been his only intent.

I walk slowly through the rain to the operations office, not really caring if my uniform is further soaked. I decide against asking for a transfer. Ross, in his peculiar way, is making a line pilot of me. And I suppose it is a good way.

Nearly four years would pass before I would again see Ross's matches flaming before me. Then, even though distracted by the drumming of my heart, I would know their incalculable worth.