

the dark ships

BY HULBERT FOOTNER

SYNOPSIS: A young federal agent, Neil, a young federal agent, and Janet of Baltimore. She won't break a date with Prescott Fanning, whom Neil considers a crook. Trying to check on Fanning, Neil is doped by him. Next day a mysterious phone call tells Neil that Janet is in trouble on Fanning's yacht at Abasco's Harbor. He rushes there. In a locked cabin he finds Fanning shot dead and Janet in a faint, a gun beside her. Seeking a hide-out, Neil rows her to the disused liners kept up the river. When he returns to the ship after exploring the decks, Janet tells of seeing a man watching her.

Chapter 11

Into The Black Ship

NEILL suspected that this was a hallucination. Janet had been talking wildly ever since he had found her. If anybody had become suspicious of her movements, he would naturally raise an alarm. Just to hover around them watching wasn't good sense. . . . But there might be something in it! However, the die was cast now. It was too late to look for another hiding place. He intended to sink the ship, and he hoped that they couldn't be traced aboard the ship anyhow.

"It's all right, Jen," he said with assumed cheerfulness. "Just an accidental meeting in the dark. Probably a German visiting his nets. . . . He won't right away so he means us no harm."

He cast off the line and rowed back toward the ship. Before approaching the ladder, he lay on his oars listening. There was no sound. Satisfied that nobody was watching them, he rowed on and, tying the skiff to the Jacob's ladder, started up, telling Janet to follow him.

On deck he had already picked out a coil of steel cable as heavy as he could lift and a light rope. Tying the rope to the coil, he lowered it overboard, and hitching the rope to a stanchion, set Janet to watch at the corner of the deck-house, and went down the ladder again. He tied the cable to a seat of the skiff, and thrust the oars under so that they could not float free. Then tying the box of food and the rug to the end of the rope, he stood on the gunwale of the skiff until she took water, filled and sank.

Returning to the deck, he pulled up their supplies and drew in the ladder. As he was rolling up the ladder, Janet came to whisper:

"There's a man coming across the decks. He has a light."

"Take off your shoes," said Neill. He stood the rolled-up ladder alongside the others and, snatching up their belongings, ran aft with Janet at his heels. As they reached the aft, the light went out, the light was visible up forward, but they were beyond reach of its rays. They ran forward on the boat deck. With his pocket-knife, Neill cut one of the ropes that fastened the canvas cover of a life boat. Helping Janet under it, he followed her into the boat.

Peeping out under the cover, he saw the light mounting the ladder astern and coming towards them. He ducked. Soon they could hear the leisurely footsteps of the watchman. He stopped alongside where they lay, and Neill held his breath. Janet's hand convulsively gripped his. There was a moment of horrible suspense; then they heard a match struck. The man puffed at his pipe and moved on.

Neill quivered with inward laughter. "He might as well catch us as scare us to death," he said. Looking out under the cover, he saw the man going down the forward ladder. After giving him a moment, he climbed out of the boat and, creeping forward, peeped over the edge of the deck. He saw the watchman with his lantern, and let out a long breath of relief.

Down The Iron Stairs

WHEN Neill had changed to dry garments, they set about finding some way into the ship. All the cabin doors were locked, but alongside the engine room skylight above the boat deck they found a booby hatch with a door which had no lock. Neill opened it, and eased his light down into the bowels of the ship. A spidery iron stairway descended into the pit. Far at the bottom gleamed the cylinder heads of the engine.

"Come on!" he said.

"Not down there!" murmured Janet, hanging back.

It was as forbidding as the entrance to hell and Neill could not blame her. You had the feeling that there was something at the bottom of that blackness waiting for you. But he laughed it off.

"The whole ship is ours," he said. "We can go where we like."

"There's no place to sleep in the engine room."

"There must be some way down here of reaching the engineer's quarters, and from there the rest of the ship."

He started down the ringing iron stairs with Janet following gingly.

gerly. Back and forth and ever deeper into the hold without finding any opening in the smooth steel walls of the shaft. However softly they stepped, the place was full of echoes. Finally, when they had almost reached the top of the engine, they came to a steel door on a landing, and upon opening it found themselves in a little corridor. Various cabins opened off it with enameled signs over the doors: Second Engineer; Third Engineer; Engineers' Mess.

"If this is their mess, there must be some way of reaching the galley from here," said Neill. "And from the galley we can get into the dining saloon."

The cabins had been stripped of movables, but there were still quaint reminders of the officers who had once occupied them; pictures tacked to the walls, rusty pens on the desks, a stained pen-wiper. Behind one of the doors Neill found a good oilskin coat.

The air of the corridors was close and dusty. Though the vessel had long been out of use, the characteristic ship's smell still clung to her, a smell compounded of paint, oakum and grease with a faint admixture of bilge-water. As they pushed through doors and turned corners, Janet murmured fearfully: "Will we ever be able to find our way back again?"

Neill laughed. "Our motto is 'Forward, Honey!'"

They found the galley, an immense room with a cooking range extending almost the whole width of the ship.

Beyond lay bakery, butcher shop, refrigerating rooms and pantries. They pushed open a swinging door and found themselves in a saloon big enough to seat six or seven hundred people. Their flashlight was not strong enough to reach into the corners. The chairs had been removed but the tables remained fixed to the floor. Neill's light picked up a piano against the wall. Putting down his burdens, he turned back the cover and struck a few cords. "The Ocean Blues!" he said, grinning.

Janet laid her hands on his. "Don't! Don't!" "Nobody can hear us."

"It isn't that. The music fills the ship with ghosts!"

Finding The Royal Suite

FROM among the litter of things stored in the big saloon, Neill picked a coil of thin strong rope and a ball of tarred twine that he said would come in handy. Adding these things to his burdens, he led the way up the grand stairway. He figured that the saloon was on E deck, starting with the boat deck as A. On D deck they found sleeping cabins, but they were narrow and cramped.

"The most expensive accommodations are above," he said. "We might as well take the best."

On C deck the rooms were bigger and arranged en suite, each with its bathroom. They confined themselves to the port side of the vessel, that is to say the side with windows looking away from the shore. Neill did not feel satisfied until he had opened each door and looked in. Amidships they found a suite larger and more luxurious than any other. It consisted of a parlor with a bedroom on either side. The parlor had two pairs of French windows opening out on a little private veranda or deck, with a row of heavy plate glass windows overlooking the water.

"This is certainly the royal suite," he said. "Just our style."

Janet who had borne herself with good courage since coming aboard, began to shake when the strain relaxed. "Oh, Neill!" she faltered.

He took her in his arms and, dropping on a sofa, held her close until she quieted. What she had been through was too terrible to be talked about yet. Whatever had happened she was dearer to him than his life.

Afterwards he opened the windows to sweeten the air. The whole suite was paneled in rare woods. The movable articles had been carried away, but the thick carpeting covered the floor, the luxurious overstuffed couches were in place, also the built-in furniture which matched the paneling—wardrobes, cabinets, dressing tables, desks. He called Janet's attention to the stout bolts on the inside of every door.

"When I will feel safe behind those when I have to leave you."

"Leave me?" she said apprehensively.

"We can't stay here indefinitely. We only have food enough for two days and two bottles of water. I have to find out what is going on, and get you clothes and make arrangements for a complete getaway."

"Well. . . I can do it if I must." "You'll be safe here," said Neill. "The fact that they keep all the doors locked proves that they never trouble the cabins of the ships. The desks and the engines keep them busy."

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Janet tells Neill what happened on the yacht, tomorrow.

STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

For further proof address the author, enclosing a stamped envelope for reply. Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.

WILLIAM H. QUINN, Boston, Mass., CLEARED 4 FEET 3 INCHES IN A HIGH JUMP ON ICE SKATES! —1911—

THE "MOTHER OF MODERN NURSING," FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE, WAS HERSELF AN INVALID FOR OVER HALF HER LIFE! INVALIDED AT 35, SHE DIED AT 90! —AUG. 13, 1910—

THE FIRST AMERICAN FLAG TO BE CARRIED OVER ENEMY LINES IN THE WORLD WAR WAS SOLD AT AUCTION FOR \$3,250,000! —New York— (Flown over German lines by Capt. F. Libby, American volunteer in the British Flying Corps, April 7, 1917)

WHEN THE 1912 ERUPTION OF MT. KATMAI, Alaska, COMPLETELY WIPED OUT A NEARBY RUSSIAN FISHING VILLAGE, NOT A SINGLE HUMAN LIFE WAS LOST... EVERY MAN, WOMAN AND CHILD WAS AWAY ON A FISHING EXPEDITION

Three Million Dollar Flag

Following is Captain Frederick Libby's own account of the historic flight he made in carrying the first American flag over enemy lines in the world war:

"The flag was presented to me just after the United States entered the war by a British lieutenant of my squadron, while I was in the British flying corps. Being a flight commander at the time and leading formations, it was necessary for me to have streamers on my machine denoting that I was the flight leader. Up to this time my insignia had been two pieces of colored cloth tied to the wing struts, but upon being given this flag and, at the suggestion of the lieutenant who presented it to me, I had the flag cut into two

machine. The streamers went with me on my first flight, after we got the news of America's entry into the war, so they are the first American colors to cross the German lines after that memorable declaration."

Several months after this flight, Captain Libby was transferred to the American air service as an instructor. The torn strips of the flag he had carried over the enemy lines were auctioned off with a Liberty bond subscription at Carnegie Hall, New York City, for the stupendous sum of \$3,250,000 by William Furness and John P. Day in a Liberty loan drive.

Florence Nightingale Daughter of a socially prominent Englishman, William Edward Nightingale, Florence Nightingale passed

streamers, which I could use on my up the usual life of girls of her class and studied nursing. Winning a high reputation in the profession, she was put in charge of the English nursing staff in Crimea in 1854, and with superhuman effort straightened out the deplorable, unsanitary conditions there. In five months, February through June of 1855, she succeeded in reducing the hospital death rate from 42 per cent to 2 per cent.

Weakened by her work, she contracted Crimean fever and barely escaped death. Though active in her work the rest of her life, she suffered from the effects of her sickness until her death at 90 in 1910.

Tomorrow: What Plough Horse Won the English Grand National Steeplechase?

Endeavour Breaks Line

BOSTON, Sept. 16.—(AP)—Coast guard headquarters today reported the yacht Viva had radioed that Endeavour I, which she was towing back to England after the international class J sloop races, had broken her towline 170 miles east of Nantucket but did not need aid.

Watch WPA Checks

PORTLAND, Sept. 16.—(AP)—A warning went out to merchants today from William S. MacSwain, agent for the secret service, against cashing WPA checks. He said there were numerous instances recently of thefts and forgery.

PRINEVILLE, Sept. 16.—(AP)—Fire

which destroyed the Ochoco Irrigation company garage and machine shed, an automobile, a truck and other machinery here yesterday brought damage estimated at \$3,000, Glenn Cox, manager, said.

Use Mail Tribune want ads.

TAILSPIN TOMMY—Disappointment!

A LITTLE BOY OFFERED TO SHOW TOMMY AND BETTY THE SPOT WHERE THE POSSE FOUND MRS. BENTLEY'S BODY. THE BOY WAS ANXIOUS TO GO WITH THE THREE-POINT FLYERS IN THEIR PLANE, BUT RELUCTANT TO LEAVE HIS DOG BEHIND, SO TOMMY TOOK THE DOG ALONG. THEY HAVE JUST LANDED THE SHIP.

MUST HAVE BEEN HERE!

LOOK! YOU CAN SEE WHERE THE MEN AND HAWKES WERE STANDIN'!

I GUESS THAT'S ABOUT ALL WE WILL SEE.

IF THERE WAS A CLUE THEY'VE TRAPPED IT OUT, BETTY-LOU!

O-OH, TOMMY!

WOOTCHA MEAN... CLUE, MISTER?

A CLUE IS A HINT OR AN AID TO DISCOVERY OF SOMETHING.

WONDER WHERE FLASH WENT? MEBBE HE'S TRYIN' TO FIND YOUR CLUE, MISTER.

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BEN WEBSTER'S CARRER—Careful, Hetty!

HI, FOLKS!

OH, BEN, WHAT'S HAPPENED?

WE JUST SEEN TWO HIGGINS TRUCKS—

WELL—

BUT THIS NEW STORE—ALL THEM NEW CLERKS—BEN, Y'AIN'T STRETCHED THE MONEY TOO FAR—

—I MEAN T'HE BUSTIN' POINT?

HETTY! CAREFUL, NOW! REMEMBER WHAT BEN'S DONE BEFORE!

WELL—

BUT THIS NEW STORE—ALL THEM NEW CLERKS—BEN, Y'AIN'T STRETCHED THE MONEY TOO FAR—

—I MEAN T'HE BUSTIN' POINT?

HETTY! CAREFUL, NOW! REMEMBER WHAT BEN'S DONE BEFORE!

THE NEBBS—Look Out, Bruce

ALLEN F. SANDGRASS, NORTON, VA., WRITES HE THINKS A LOT OF ROTTS BUT EMMA SHOULD STAY SINGLE.

HENRY MARTIN, WINTER, WIS., WANTS EMMA TO STAY SINGLE AND MOVE OUT OF TOWN.

GEORGE HENRY, ANN ARBOR, MICH., WRITES "EMMA IS THE GUY FOR EMMA."

SAY, ROCKNEY, ABOUT THIS FELLOW, ARDLEY—I'M MUCH INTERESTED IN FINDING OUT SOMETHING ABOUT HIM. YOU SPOKE AS THOUGH YOU MIGHT HAVE MET HIM IN THE SHADY PAST. CAN'T WE FIND OUT WHO HE IS?

HE SEEMS INTERESTED IN EMMA OR RATHER HER MONEY. NOW EMMA HAS BEEN WITH ME MANY YEARS AND IF THIS FELLOW IS A COUNTERFEIT, IT'S MY DUTY TO STOP THIS COURTSHIP.

I DON'T SEEM TO BE ABLE TO PLACE THIS BIRD AND I MAY BE WRONG.

IF HE WAS A CRIMINAL, I'D RECORD IT. I'LL SHOOT A PICTURE OF HIM AND TELL MAX TO GET HIS FINGER PRINTS AND I'LL SEND THEM ON TO MY PAL, CHIEF BILL FREEMAN. QUANTITIES HE HANDED IT TO ME. I COULDN'T TAKE IT NOR LIKE IT!

THAT GUY IS AS SINCERE AS A POLITICIAN. YOU KNOW I LIKE FLATTERY. I TAKE IT UP LIKE A DRY SPONGE TAKES UP WATER BUT IN THE PAL, CHIEF BILL FREEMAN QUANTITIES HE HANDED IT TO ME. I COULDN'T TAKE IT NOR LIKE IT!

GRANGE HEADQUARTERS HEARING ON FRUIT BOX WILL BE READY OCT. 1 SLATED FOR TUESDAY

PORTLAND, Sept. 16.—(AP)—The Oregon Grange will open Portland headquarters on October 1 in the buildings formerly occupied by the Portland branch of Albany college.

The main structure, grange officials said, will house offices for the state master, secretary, fire relief association, wholesale headquarters and the Grange Bulletin. The warehouse will be in the one-story building once used as a gymnasium.

Purchase of the property was authorized at the Lebanon convention two years ago and approved again this year at the Dallas meeting.

SALEM, Sept. 16.—(AP)—A hearing on the proposed adoption of a special 25-pound pear and apple box will be held next Tuesday at the federal-state inspection office at Hood River, Fred McKennon, chief of the division of plant industry, said today.

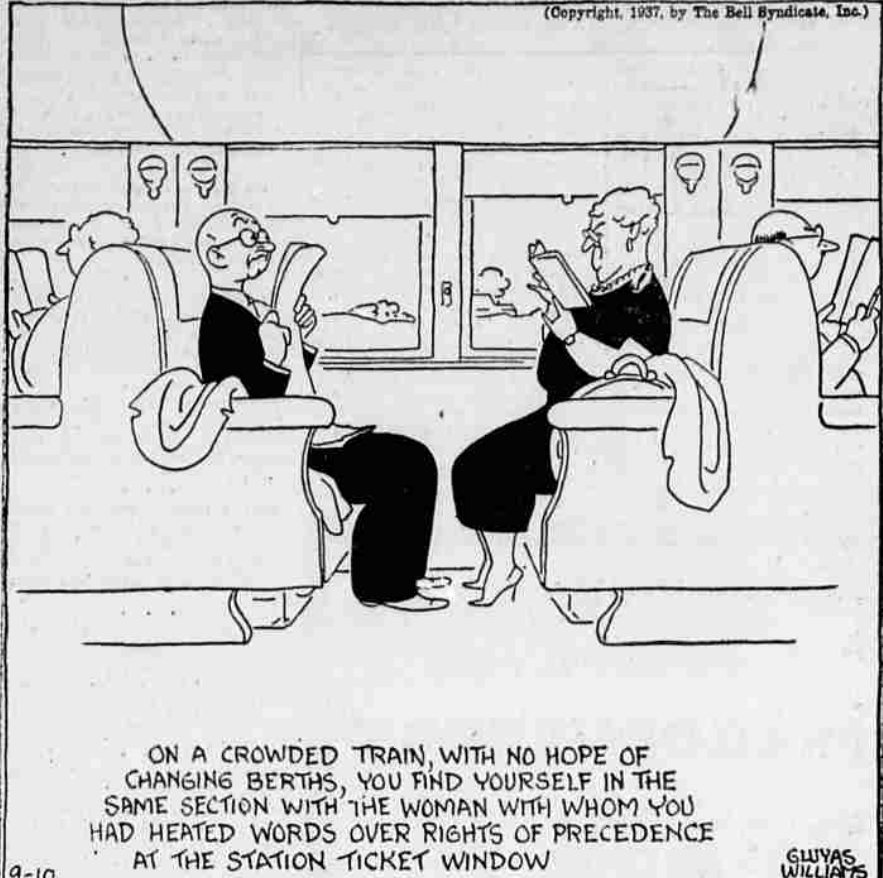
The box is 3½ inches deep, 11½ inches wide and 16 inches long, all inside measurements.

GRANTS PARK, Sept. 16.—(AP)—L. M. Mitchell, locally called "Mayor of Murphy," seven miles west of here, today started his 31st year of rural mail delivery with no intention of retiring.

THE WORLD AT ITS WORST

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS

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9-10

S'MATTER POF

By O M PAYNE



By HAL FORREST

By EDWIN ALGER

By SOL HESS